SUSTAINABLE BERKSHIRES
Community Strategies For A Sustainable Future

Executive Summary

Key Trends

Trend 1: Population Decline and Aging
Berkshire County has declined in population since the 1970's, from 149,402 to 131,219 (2010 U.S. Census), a decrease of 18,183 people, or 12.2% and compared to the state has a much lower birth rate, has a smaller number of the 20—32 year old age group, and has a large elderly population.

Trend 2: Next Generations
Generations post baby boomers are not as well off.

Trend 3: Consumptive Development Pattern
Berkshire County has not experienced extensive development. However, more and more of that development has occurred on larger lots in rural areas.

Trend 4: Conservation and Biodiversity
Berkshire County has an extensive array of rich resources and a significant amount of protected land. However, these efforts are often not well aligned.

Trend 5: Regional Affordability Crisis
Cities and towns in the Berkshires lack affordable housing. Much of the existing affordable housing, especially in the urban areas, is aged and in poor condition with code violations common.

Trend 6: Living Wages
With the shift away from manufacturing to service and tourism jobs, the economy has fewer living-wage employment opportunities.

Trend 7: Workforce Supply and Skills
As the nation's economy moves more towards a global market, the Berkshire's work force is increasingly not competitive in that market.

Trend 8: Declining Municipal Revenue Streams
Municipalities struggle to maintain or provide services on dwindling or stagnant revenue streams caused by low property taxes due to low growth.

Trend 9: Climate Change
Municipal revenues, which are already stretched, will need to address the impacts of climate change.

Trend 10: Inclusive and Welcoming
The population is still relatively homogenous. To change population decline, the county will need to be more inclusive & welcoming of different people.

A Regional Sustainability Plan for the Berkshires

In 2010, the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) was awarded one of 45 inaugural nationwide federal Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Sustainable Communities Planning Grants. This federal program aligned funding and objectives of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and Department of Transportation (DOT) to support sustainable community solutions. The three plus year process developed a regional sustainability plan that was built on other efforts to advance regional interests, and at the same time introduced new topics for the first time on a regional scale, such as a comprehensive energy plan and climate change adaptation strategies.

One Plan—Eight Elements

The Sustainable Berkshires Plan contains eight separate Elements. Each Element is a separate report but must be considered with the other Elements. Element reports contain information about the topic area, an analysis of key issue and opportunities, a vision for a desired future, goals, policies and strategies to achieve that vision and a list of tools to accomplish the identified strategies.
The Elements are:

- Conservation and Recreation
- Local Food and Agriculture
- Housing and Neighborhoods
- Infrastructure and Services
- Economy
- Climate and Energy
- Historic Preservation
- Land Use

Adoption

Massachusetts General Law 40B states that a planning commission shall make careful studies of the resources, problems, possibilities and needs of its district and, on the basis of such studies, shall prepare a comprehensive plan to include recommendations for the physical, social, governmental or economic improvement of the region. The Sustainable Berkshires Plan was adopted by the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission on March 20 2014.

Developing Vision Statements

Vision statements for each topic area become touchstones for the setting of goals, policies and strategies. They reflect a forward thinking consideration of these topics as they create the foundation for what is important for Berkshire County. Each plan element had an individualized public outreach and inventory process, out of which the vision statements were developed. They were offered to the community for input and comment at regional workshops and forums.

Conservation & Recreation Vision

The Berkshires offer a connected system of open lands to support diverse habitat and recreational needs. Residents and visitors have, at the ready, a number of guides to what the region has to offer in the activity of their choice. Schools and businesses are able to benefit from the outdoors through equipping and facilitating tours and outings. This supports stewardship and active lifestyles now and in the future. An overarching ethic of natural resource conservation is embraced by the region, which understands and appreciates the many important values represented in the natural landscape. Conservation and development activities work to retain the integrity of the most critically important areas to biodiversity, recreation, and scenery. This is reflected in activities and practices not only in the rural areas, but also in how nature is incorporated and protected within a highly developed context, such as neighborhoods and downtowns, to ensure accessibility and stewardship are present in some way in all areas, not just parks and reserves.

Economy Vision

Berkshire County has a diverse and robust economy that offers opportunities for sustainable prosperity to all of its residents. While capitalizing on the region's heritage, intellectual vigor, cultural assets, agricultural and natural resources we encourage and excel at innovation, collaboration and harnessing the entrepreneurial spirit.

Local Food & Agriculture Vision

Berkshire County has a resilient local food system that includes a full spectrum of economically viable farms offering a diverse range of products. The community supports its farmers both as neighbors and as businesses, purchasing their food for consumption at home, school, or out to eat. Successful farm businesses are part of the region's sustainable economy, keeping more money in the economy from local spending. Regional investment in value-added infrastructure has also enabled farmers to increase production and profits. Farmers continue to care for the productivity and health of the land and community by employing best practices for soil, water, habitat, and biodiversity. Eating local, healthy foods is promoted through education, networking opportunities, and economic development activities. It is also made possible for those of limited income or mobility to access more healthy food options at affordable prices to foster a hunger-free community.

Climate & Energy Vision

The region is a leader in climate change mitigation, having exceeded the state goal of a 25% reduction in CO_2 emissions by 2020 through a combination of energy conservation and efficiency and renewable energy generation. The region works to continually reduce its carbon footprint and is constantly innovating and adapting, with a focus on triple bottom line benefits. Energy conscientiousness is the norm rather than the exception. The region has successfully balanced environmental protection and energy development to accommodate both local and global needs over the short and long-terms. Emission reduction investment has helped leverage economic development through increased demand for related goods and services, a commitment to buying local, a reduction in energy expenditures by businesses (and resulting export of dollars from the region) and a responsive workforce and economic development system. Innovation capital has allowed local students and businesses to join the energy- and efficiency-related tech sector. Homes and businesses enjoy the cost and climate savings that come from using less and cleaner energy. Growth patterns, practices, and infrastructure round out these investments - helping support reduced transportation-related emissions while also adapting the region to anticipated impacts brought on by climate change.

The Visioning Process

Visioning is a crucial step in any planning process. It is the leap from what is to what can be. The Sustainable Berkshires vision is presented in two formats: images and words. Please explore the graphic on the previous page and consider the visions developed for each plan element.

Housing & Neighborhoods Vision

The Berkshire region is home to a wide variety of housing choices, from urban lofts to rural farms. Each community includes housing options that offer types and price points to meet a range of needs, from empty nesters to young families. Neighborhoods in downtown areas have a healthy mix of incomes and have reinvested heavily in the housing stock, sidewalks, parks and community ties in those areas to foster safe and active places day and night. Traditional village areas retain their distinct identities, with compatible infill and reuse of old mill sites. Rural neighborhoods and those adjacent to important habitat and water bodies have embraced the role of stewards of their surrounding natural areas.

Historic Preservation Vision

Berkshire County residents, businesses, municipalities, and preservationists enjoy and actively work to protect the rich history of the region – its iconic landmarks, historic buildings, and heritage landscapes. Vibrant Main Street districts with active village greens are bordered by walkable historic neighborhoods with mature street trees. Rural landscapes uphold the heritage of the region, its agriculture, westward expansion links, and Native American beginnings. New balances with old in compelling ways as historic buildings take on different uses and existing neighborhoods add green features and new buildings while upholding the integrity, character, and aesthetics of the built environment. History is embedded in the pride, recreation, education, economy, and daily activities of the region and its people in tangible ways that are ever-evolving.

Infrastructure & Services Vision

Berkshire County residents and businesses are able to rely on safe and quality roads, water, schools and emergency services. Infrastructure is operated and maintained without an undue financial burden on the communities and their residents through proactive planning and budgeting. Residents enjoy a quality of life in which they feel their health and safety is protected by a robust police force, firefighters, and emergency responders. The region is served by state of the art telecommunications and is innovative in its approach to the latest technologies and approaches to deliver the highest caliber services in the most efficient way possible.

Land Use Vision

Berkshire County residents, businesses, cultural institutions and municipalities enjoy and actively work to maintain the rich landscapes and settlement forms of the county. The distinction between the rural and urbanized areas is maintained and reinforced. Rural towns maintain large blocks of undeveloped areas for resource and tourist-based economic development and environmental enhancement. Villages and town centers remain vibrant activity centers where residents and visitors meet basic needs and enjoy strong social engagement. Town centers and the region's cities are activity hubs offering a robust blend of economic and social opportunities that serve existing residents and businesses and attract new ones to the region. Investments made previously to the built environment are maintained and expanded through an extensive program of targeted reinvestment and revitalization. The region's leaders work together to develop, coordinate and implement methods to attract new development to the region which capitalizes on and enhances the region's aesthetic attributes, maintains important natural resources while allowing economic growth.

Goals, Policies, and Strategies

Goals, Policies and Strategies were established for each Plan Element. Goals were developed using public input, research into best practices, new tools for consideration and maps and graphics to help illustrate objectives or concepts. Goals and Policies are listed in each of the Element Summaries as well as the complete Plan Element. Specific Strategies are listed in the complete Plan Element. Tools to implement the Strategies are also contained in the complete Plan Element.

Planning Process

The planning process provided many opportunities for the public to participate and help craft the plan contents. Four important opportunities included: workshops, forums, stakeholder meetings and the project website.

Public Workshops

Public workshops were held throughout the planning process to share information and gather input to shape the goals, policies, and strategies in the plan.

Topic-Specific Forums

Certain topics had forums—working meetings with stakeholder groups and the general public to delve deeper into issues and strategies.

Stakeholder & Subcommittee Meetings

Certain topics had stakeholder / subcommittee meetings with groups or agencies with specialized expertise in an area and who would play a key role in implementing any strategies identified in the plan. This ensured plan policies were comprehensive and aligned with the strategic priorities of implementing entities.

Project Website

A Sustainable Berkshires website was developed and announced meetings and made draft work products, meeting summaries, and maps available to the public, allowing review and comment.

Regional Consortium

The overall process was guided by a consortium of volunteers across the region committed to the project's success.

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

The Berkshire Regional Planning Commission had overall responsibility to adopt the plan. The Commission, comprised of representatives from the 32 Berkshire municipalities, discussed aspects of plan development at regular briefings during the 3 year plan development process.
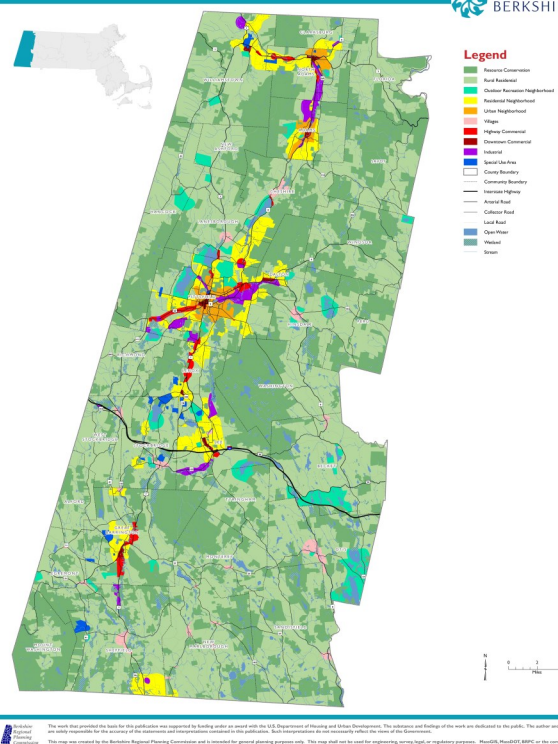
Vision Graphic

The graphic presentation on the front is an illustrative way to thread together the different visions of the public and move beyond words toward a tangible future while drawing upon the creativity of the region.

A team of Berkshire-based creatives, Chris Vlcek and Kathy Crowe, prepared the graphics. Their storyboard helps us visualize the exciting ideas and next directions for the Berkshires expressed by area residents.

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission
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FUTURE LAND USE

Implementation—Making it Happen

Sustainable Berkshires will be implemented by a variety of actors over the next decade. The plan contains numerous strategies, some of which are longer-term or "big ticket" items that will take some time and planning; others are already underway or can be implemented immediately. As a regional plan, Sustainable Berkshires is a non-regulatory document whose main purpose is to set a cohesive strategy for the Berkshire region to align actions, priorities, and investments to yield the greatest benefit to the region.

The implementation strategy for all eight elements is contained in a separate document to allow it to be used as a working document. The Implementation addendum to the plan is an administrative document that will serve three functions:

- A schedule of implementation timeframes, responsible parties, and potential funding sources to be used or pursued;

- A tracking mechanism for implementation actions taken over time to record progress as it is made; and

- A planning tool to help the Commission and its other implementation partners pull out certain strategies to pursue in one or three-year action plans to help focus effort and achieve results.

In addition to the implementation addendum, a number of data points will be tracked over time to measure change in certain metrics. These metrics were selected based on available data that relates to the goals and strategies called for in each element. The metric reports will be openly available online through BRPC's Berkshire Benchmarks program website (www.berkshirebenchmarks.org).

Conservation and Recreation
Conservation, Habitat & Biodiversity

SUSTAINABLE BERKSHIRES — Community Strategies For A Sustainable Future

Our Natural Landscape

Berkshire County and its surrounding regions are fortunate in that they are rural and largely undeveloped. Seventy-five percent of the county is blanketed in forest, providing a lush green landscape that is rich in natural, scenic and recreational qualities. Our Housatonic and Hoosic Rivers, our most densely developed corridors, nonetheless support rare species along most of their lengths as they flow through and out of the county.

Important Natural Areas - What are they?

Important and uncommon habitats that have been identified and mapped in the Berkshires include:

- **Large blocks of unfragmented forest:** important in one of the most densely developed states in the U.S; needed for interior-forest-dwelling species and wide-ranging animals like moose, bear and bobcat; hosts microhabitats for diversity.
- **Waterway and wetland buffers:** the water / land transition zone is the most highly productive inland ecosystem, serving both aquatic and terrestrial species.
- **Calcareous wetlands:** globally uncommon alkaline wetlands; some of the best examples in New England are here.
- **Vernal pools:** breeding pools of forest-dwelling rare amphibians and invertebrates; important as 1/3 of the state's amphibians are listed as Species of Special Concern.
- **Spruce/fir forests:** cooler species typical of more northern climates and located here on higher ridgetops.
- **Coldwater fisheries:** sensitive freshwater habitats; last bastion for native brook trout and similar creatures that rely on cold, highly oxygenated waters.
- **Areas of Critical Environmental Concerns (ACECs):**
  - Hinsdale Flats
  - Kampoosa Bog
  - Karner Brook
  - Schenob Brook
  - Upper Housatonic River

Kampoosa Bog , Stockbridge MA

Key Trends

Habitat

- Berkshire County hosts some of the largest blocks of contiguous forest land in Massachusetts, with large expanses that stretch into neighboring counties and states.
- The Housatonic River watershed hosts 110 plant species and 51 animal species protected by the Mass. Endangered Species Act.
- 5% of Berkshire County is mapped as being open water, streams, rivers or wetlands.
- Aquatic habitats and their surrounding riparian areas are some of our most biologically productive areas. Yet only 13% of the Housatonic River's riparian area and 17% of the Hoosic River's are protected.

Biodiversity Challenges

- Direct habitat loss and fragmentation is the greatest threat to land-based habitats. Sixty eight percent (68%) of undeveloped land in the county is privately owned.
- Residential homes constitute almost 80% of new development across the state and is the most prevalent type of development in the Berkshires, replacing field and forest. Two thousand five hundred (2,500) acres of natural land were developed in the county between 1991 and 2005—even as the population declined.
- The trend for larger, more dispersed homes uses more land to house fewer people. The average American home grew from 983 square feet in 1950 to 2,700 square feet in 2006 while the average household size decreased 24% in the same timeframe.
- Nonpoint source pollution, largely from surface runoff, is the single greatest source of pollution to our waterways.
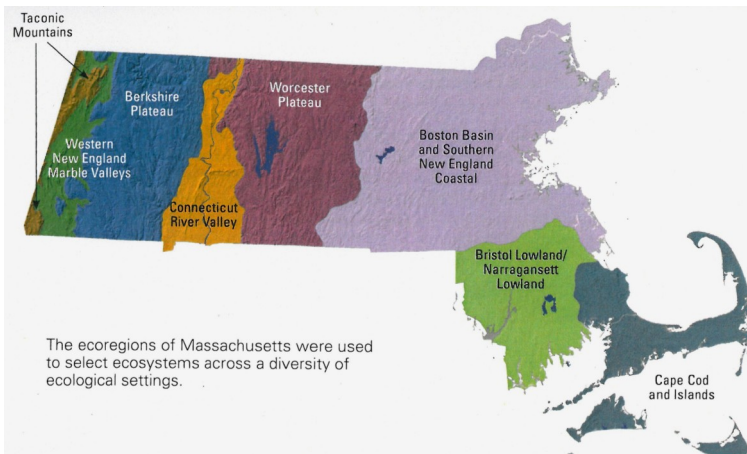
Ecological Landscape

Berkshire Bioregions

- **Western New England Marble Valley**: calcium in the marble and lime bedrock buffers the acidity of the water and soil, providing an uncommon acid-neutral environment unique in the state to the Berkshires. This ecoregion supports 125 state-listed rare species, the second highest number within a single ecoregion of the state, despite being one of the smallest in area size. Shown below in green.

- **Taconic Mountains**: geologically related to the Mt. Greylock range. Streams are high gradient and lakes and ponds are rare. Vegetation is generally northern hardwoods with some spruce-fir at higher elevations. Hosts 44 stated listed rare species. Shown below in brown.

- **Berkshire Plateau**: includes the Hoosac Range on our northeastern border and the Berkshire Hills of our central and lower eastern border, is generally comprised of northern hardwoods, with spruce-fir forests in the higher elevations. Lakes and ponds dot the landscape. Hosts 53 state-listed species. Shown below in blue.

The ecoregions of Massachusetts were used to select ecosystems across a diversity of ecological settings.

Sensitive Habitats

BioMap2 is a mapping effort that represents some of the most important natural resource areas and rare species habitats across the state. These areas are shown on a Natural Resources map that has been developed to accompany this publication.

Core Habitat: areas critical for the long-term survival of rare species and other Species of Conservation Concern. Protecting the ecological function of these habitats will help us conserve a biodiverse world for the next generation. These areas cover approximately 19% of the county and are shown in dark green on the Natural Resources map. Fifty four percent (54%) of these areas are permanently protected from development.
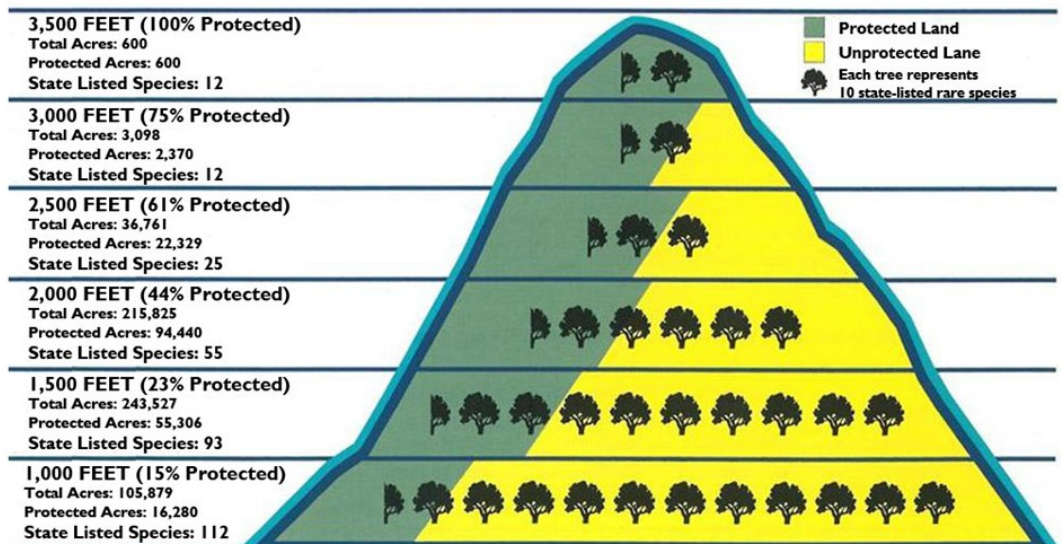
Critical Natural Landscape: large natural landscape blocks that typically surround Core Habitats and have been minimally impacted by development. These areas provide additional habitat acreage, travel corridors between habitats, help filter invasive species incursion and improve the overall resilience of a habitat to climate change impacts. These areas cover approximately 43% of the county land and are shown in yellow on the Natural Resources map. Forty five percent (45%) of these lands are protected from development.

Waters of the Berkshires: Despite being impaired by pollution, the Housatonic and Hoosic Rivers and their tributaries support a vast array of rare species. Many species of wildlife require both aquatic and terrestrial habitats to complete their life cycles; many amphibians live on land but require water for reproduction, while some turtles spend most their time in the water but need land for egg laying.

Rare Species Protection in Berkshire County (1998)

The greatest numbers of rare species in the county are found in our lowlands 1,000 feet in elevation or lower, yet only 15% of these lands are protected from development.

Inversely, the greatest proportion of conservation lands are found in our highlands 2,500 feet or higher, which supports a relatively few number of rare species.

3,500 FEET (100% Protected)
Total Acres: 600
Protected Acres: 600
State Listed Species: 12

3,000 FEET (75% Protected)
Total Acres: 3,098
Protected Acres: 2,370
State Listed Species: 12

2,500 FEET (61% Protected)
Total Acres: 36,761
Protected Acres: 22,329
State Listed Species: 25

2,000 FEET (44% Protected)
Total Acres: 215,825
Protected Acres: 94,440
State Listed Species: 55

1,500 FEET (23% Protected)
Total Acres: 243,527
Protected Acres: 55,306
State Listed Species: 93

1,000 FEET (15% Protected)
Total Acres: 105,879
Protected Acres: 16,280
State Listed Species: 112

Protected Land
Unprotected Lane
Each tree represents 10 state-listed rare species

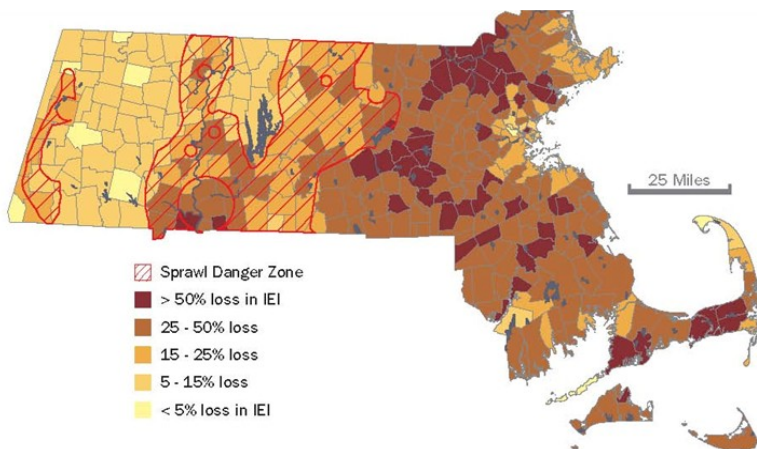# Identifying Vulnerable Habitats

Conservation Assessment and Prioritization System (CAPS)

CAPS is a mapping analysis tool that located the most intact and least fragmented forests, wetlands and landscapes. Ecological threats such as development, roads, dams, pollution and intensive agriculture were added to quantify habitat degradation. The analysis identified areas with a high Index of Ecological Integrity (IEI). These areas are shown on the Natural Resources map that has been developed to accompany this publication.

According to *Losing Ground*, a 2009 Mass. Audubon report, the IEI of the Berkshires has declined approximately 15% during a 34-year period, largely due to development and road building.

The IEI declined more sharply in a few key communities, similar to the Sprawl Danger Zone more often seen to our east (red hatched areas on the map below). In the county, this zone includes the southwest/central towns of Sheffield, Egremont, Alford, West Stockbridge, Richmond, Pittsfield and Lanesborough.

The acreage impacted by development includes not only land directly lost to buildings and yards. The Mass. Audubon study also noted that for every one acre of new development in the county, another 5 acres suffered "hidden" development, including road building, fragmentation, and the effects of runoff, invasive species and pets. For the approximately 6,640 acres of development, the ecological integrity of another 33,680 acres were diminished.

Percent Change in IEI 1971—2005

Natural Resources Maps

BRPC has created a series of maps to accompany this Natural Resources publication. They are found at www.berkshireplanning.org. Maps include:
- *Natural Resources*
- *Sensitive Habitats*
- *Open Space and Recreation*
- *Conservation Framework*

Acute Vulnerabilities

- Bats: The Berkshires provide important habitat for resident and migrating bats. The mortality rate of the bats found in Berkshire County hibernacula is alarmingly high, 95-100% in some sites. There is no known method of curing sick animals or preventing the spread of the disease to healthy populations. It is not known if effected populations can recover.

- Impervious surface area more detrimental: a new study found that 80% of stream macroinvertebrate species declined when a mere 0.5% to 2% of the watershed became covered by impervious surface area. This is much lower than the 10-20% of imperviousness that scientists currently cite is the level at which stream degradation begins to occur. Further, macroinvertebrate communities were more vulnerable in high-gradient, small-watershed streams like those in our highlands.

- Invasive Species: Invasive insects such as Emerald Ash Borer, Asian Longhorn Beetle and Wooly Adelgid threaten our forests, while the Zebra Mussel threatens our waterways. Invasive aquatic and terrestrial plants have already heavily colonized hundreds of acres of our lakes and uplands. A 1997 state-wide survey of floodplain forests found invasive plant species in every site studied, usually in disturbed areas.

- Vernal pools: There are 968 mapped potential vernal pools in the county, 78% of which are on privately owned land. Much of the development in the Berkshires occurs by clearing forest lands. Because vernal pools are only prominently noticeable part of the year when they hold water, these vital habitats are vulnerable to development.

- Housatonic Rest of River: some of the highest concentrations of PCBs in the nation are found here. The cleanup process, predicted to take several years to complete, may alter the look and natural feel of the river for years to come.

- Rare species cluster: Sheffield is listed as one of the top 10 towns in Massachusetts with the greatest density of state-listed rare species, with a total of 98 known species (27 animal and 71 plant species).

- Climate change: higher winter temperatures will create greater overland flows during winter/early spring and less groundwater recharge, causing greater spring flooding and more low flow/drought conditions. Distribution of plant communities and the animals that rely on them will creep northward, possibly resulting in loss of some who are not able to adapt.

Regional Goals and Policies

GOAL CR1.1: Implement a regional conservation strategy that emphasizes collaboration and coordination across municipal boundaries.

Policy CR1.1.1: Increase collaboration and communication of conservation partners within and adjacent to the county.

Policy CR1.1.2: Support the continued collaboration between conservation entities and other municipal, private, and non-profit partners in key areas where conservation interests overlap.

GOAL CR1.2: Improve land conservation and management capacity countywide.

Policy CR1.2.1: Improve availability of trainings for local land trusts to support their work.

Policy 1.2.2: Retain and improve the financial resources for land acquisition and management in the region.

Policy 1.2.3: Improve conservation outreach to property owners.

GOAL CR2.1: Develop and conserve in ways that will help support rich biodiversity now and in the future.

Policy CR2.1.1: Implement the conservation framework through aligning conservation policy and practice across the region.

Policy CR2.1.2: Track and report progress on Conservation Framework map implementation.

GOAL CR2.2: Improve knowledge and documentation of species of conservation concern.

Policy CR2.2.1: Improve and expand efforts to identify and protect species of concern populations.

GOAL CR2.3: Municipalities employ land use tools and practices that support habitat connectivity and minimize adverse impacts from developed areas.

Policy CR2.3.1: Provide educational materials and guides on nature-friendly development tools in order to encourage and support their use and adoption.

Policy 2.3.2: Work with the MassDOT, the region's Metropolitan Planning Organization, and local Department of Public Works (DPWs) to reduce habitat fragmentation impacts caused by transportation infrastructure.

Policy 2.3.3: Protect and improve aquatic connectivity.

GOAL CR2.4: Work collaboratively to successfully reduce invasive species impacts.

Policy CR2.4.1: Improve tracking and monitoring of invasive species.

Policy CR2.4.2: Prioritize restoration efforts to control invasive species.

GOAL CR2.5: Work to restore habitat impacted by pollution and prevent future impacts to safeguard a clean environment for future generations.

Policy CR2.5.1: Promote practices that minimize the impacts of stormwater runoff.

Policy CR2.5.2: Protect and improve shoreline habitat.

Policy CR2.5.3: Strategically continue land protection along waterways and shorelines.

Policy CR2.5.4: Work to remove Berkshire Waters from the Massachusetts Integrated List of Waters (303(d) List).

Policy CR2.5.5: Maintain or improve cold water fisheries.

Policy CR2.5.6: Create a nonpoint source pollution, particularly stormwater management, educational program for municipal officials.

Policy CR2.5.7: Strengthen and enforce wetland resource protection policies and regulations.

GOAL CR2.6: Encourage municipalities, businesses and residents to be knowledgeable and conscientious stewards of the region's natural resources.

Policy CR2.6.1: Increase the public's awareness of the region's unique ecological value.

Policy CR2.6.2: Increase the public's awareness of environmental issues.

Policy CR2.6.3: Encourage and increase public involvement in the Rest of River Cleanup.

Conservation and Recreation
Outdoor Recreation

Key Trends

- Almost 33% of the county (202,714 acres) is permanently protected open space.

- The vast majority of undeveloped lands in the county (68%) are privately owned. Approximately one half of family forest landowners (10 ac. or more) across Massachusetts are 65 or older, while the median age of working Berkshire farmers is 58 years. This indicates that the ownership of substantial open space lands may very well be changing hands in the coming decades.

Open Space Economy

- In a recent visitor survey, scenic beauty was the principal reason 88% of all visitors surveyed cited for having selected the region as their destination.

- A state study estimates that each acre of forest in the state provides $1,500 annually in economic value from forest products, water filtration, flood control and tourism. This equates to more than $7 million to the Berkshire economy per year.

- Business owners and executives state that a high quality of life is necessary to attract and keep new ventures and employees. The aesthetic and recreational benefits of open space provide increased market value to properties in close proximity.

- As documented in more than 128 Cost of Community Services Studies across the U.S. and Mass., taxes collected from residential development do not cover the full cost of the municipal services they receive. Inversely, taxes from industrial/commercial and agricultural/woodlands subsidize residential uses. Revenue from farms and forests support local families, some of which have worked the land for generations. Local farms provide fresh produce fresh produce and meat, while forests provide wood products, heating fuel and maple syrup.

Conservation and Recreation Land

Almost 33% of the county (202,714 acres) is permanently protected open space, 80% of which is open to the public for recreation.
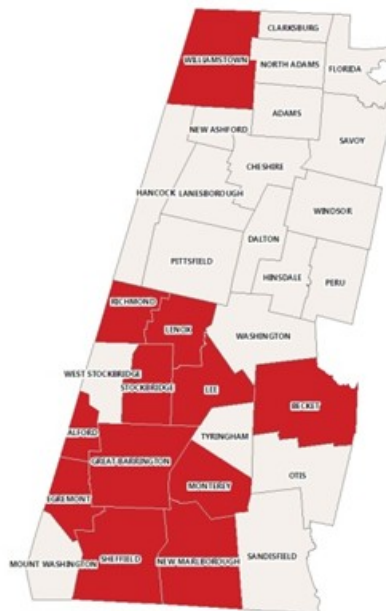
National

- **Appalachian Trail:** The Trail, with preserved land along its route through the region from Connecticut to Vermont , is a major recreation and open space corridor.

State/Statewide

- **State Parks, Forests and Reserves:** The county boasts 22 state parks, forests and reserves managed by the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). Large DCR holdings include October Mountain State Forest (~16,127 acres and the state's largest) Savoy Mountain State Forest (~11,118- acres), Mount Greylock State Forest (~12,500acres), Beartown State Forest (~12,000 acres), and Pittsfield State Forest (~10,000 acres).

- **Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs):** Wildlife Management Areas and conservation easements, managed by the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (DFW), are another important recreational resource, offering 28 properties for public use. The county hosts nine WMAs larger in size than 1,000 acres, with Chalet (6,437 acres primarily in Cheshire and Dalton), Peru (4,730 acres in Peru and Windsor) and Stafford Hill (1,592 acres in Cheshire and Windsor) being the three largest sites.

- **Non-Profit Reserves:** Mass Audubon (Canoe Meadows, Pleasant Valley, etc.) and Trustees of Reservations (Naumkeag, Goose Pond Reservation, etc.) are some of the non-profit groups who hold conservation land open for recreation in the Berkshires.

Local

- **Local Land Trusts:** Twelve of the 32 municipalities in the Berkshires have their own local land trust working to conserve land within their municipal boundaries. Berkshire Natural Resources Council is by far the largest and most active land trust, and works throughout the county.

Alford Land Trust
Becket Land Trust
Berkshire Natural Resources Council
(region-wide)
Egremont Land Trust
Great Barrington Land Conservancy
Laurel Hill Association (Stockbridge)
Lee Land Trust
Lenox Land Trust
Monterey Preservation Land Trust
New Marlborough Land Preservation Trust
Richmond Land Trust
Sheffield Land Trust
Stockbridge Land Trust
Williamstown Rural Lands Foundation

Ownership of Conserved Land

Eighty percent of permanently protected land in Berkshire County is open to the public. A 2006 state study noted that the county has the largest per capita acreage of recreation and conservation lands in MA at 1.35 acres per person.

Landowner	Acres of Berkshire County Permanently Protected Land by Ownership	Percent of Permanently Protected Land
Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)	107,292	52.9%
Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (DFW)	25,941	12.8%
Municipalities	21,186	10.5%
National Park Service	4,661	2.3%
Non-Profit Organizations	10,706	5.3%
Land Trusts	7,319	3.6%
Other (largely private lands with conservation and agricultural restrictions)	25,609	12.6%
TOTAL	**202,714**	**100.0%**

Outdoor Recreation

Land Based Recreation

Nature and Wildlife Viewing
Figures compiled by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 2006 indicate that approximately 1.9 million residents participated in wildlife viewing activities in Massachusetts. Sixty-seven viewing sites have been identified across the state as exceptional wildlife viewing areas, and six of these areas are in Berkshire County. The region hosts seven sites that have been designated by Mass Audubon as Important Bird Areas (IBAs).

Hiking and Walking
The region boasts plentiful trail options on state, municipal, and non-profit conserved lands. These accommodate a variety of trail users and offer a range of difficulty and length. The longest trails in the region are its three long-range trails:
- Appalachian Trail
- Taconic Crest Trail
- Mahican-Mohawk Trail

Mt. Greylock, photo courtesy of DCR

Mountain Biking
There are eight DCR properties with trails designated for mountain biking. Kennedy Park, a Lenox town park, is also a well known mountain biking destination. These properties are scattered across the county.

Hunting
Hunting is allowed on all state-owned conservation lands except for certain designated areas. Altogether, 21 game species are available to hunt; pheasants are stocked in seven WMAs, two state forests, and 14 other sites across the county.

Off-Road Vehicles
The Berkshires hosts all four state forests that allow ORVs: October Mountain (30 miles of trails), Beartown (25 miles of trails), Tolland (15 miles of trails) and Pittsfield (14 miles of trails). Through informal surveys, the DCR estimates that the majority of ORV users in Pittsfield State Forest were Massachusetts residents.

Snowmobiles
The Berkshires host a large portion of the Statewide Snowmobile Trail System (SSTS). This 2,000-plus mile system is unique in that it is comprised of both public and private lands that crisscross the state, reaching into nearby counties and other states.

Commonly referred to simply as the "AT", this 2,180-mile hiking trail spans 14 states along the east coast from Georgia to Maine. The 89 miles of trail that traverse Massachusetts from Connecticut to Vermont are all located in Berkshire County. Two to three million people hike various stretches of the trail each year.

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
The majority (65.7%) of permanently protected land in the county is owned by the Commonwealth, primarily by the DCR (107,292 acres) and DFW (25,941 acres).

Municipalities
Municipalities own 25,237 acres of land. Some of this is located within municipal park and recreation systems. Thirteen of the Berkshires' 32 municipalities also hold lands for the specific purpose of providing a clean supply of drinking water (water supply areas).

National Park Service
The National Park Service owns an additional 11, 299 acres along the Appalachian Trail.

Non-Profit Organizations
Conservation organizations such as The Nature Conservancy Mass. Audubon and the Trustees of Reservations collectively owner more than 10,000 acres in the county.

Land Trusts
Twelve of the 32 municipalities in the Berkshires have their own local land trust working to conserve land within their municipal boundaries. Ten of these own conservation lands. As illustrated by the map, the majority of these are concentrated in the south-central portion of the county. Today these land trusts protect more than 7,319 acres, which is approximately 4% of the permanently protected lands in the county. Of this, the Berkshire Natural Resources Council (BNRC), a region-wide land trust, owns 4,987 acres, 68% of the land trust acreage in the county. BNRC also holds 10,060 acres of land in conservation easements.

Patchworks of Conservation
The largest permanently protected contiguous block of open space area in the region is in and around October Mountain State Forest and the Darey Wildlife Management Area—almost 26,000 acres. The mix of landowners include DCR, DFW, city of Pittsfield, towns of Lee and Lenox, BNRC and the American Chestnut Nominee Trust.

Water-Based Recreation

Boating
The county has more than 30 lakes and ponds that are open to the public, twenty of which have boat launches. Most of the larger recreational lakes that better accommodate motorboats are located in the Housatonic River Watershed, with the exceptions being Cheshire Reservoir (in the Hoosic Watershed) and Big Pond and Otis Reservoir (in the Farmington Watershed).

Kayaking and Canoeing
The county's rivers serve as blueway recreational routes for canoeists and kayakers. Overall, there are more than 25 formal boat launches and canoe/kayak access sites across the county. Sections of the Housatonic and Hoosic rivers can be paddled much of the year.

Fishing /Ice Fishing
Fishing is allowed year-round in Berkshire waters. Trout are stocked in dozens of streams and river sites throughout the region in spring and during a short season in select waterways in the autumn. There are catch-and-release areas in Lee and Glendale. Broodstock salmon are stocked in Goose Pond, Onota Lake and Stockbridge Bowl. Ice fishing is a major winter activity in Berkshire County. Frozen lakes and ponds often support ice not found in the eastern portion of the state or southern New England, drawing anglers into the region. Several fishing derbies are held throughout the county, often sponsored by area sporting clubs or held as fundraising events. Fly fishing is also a popular option and some guided trips are now offered by private companies.

Swimming
Many of the county's municipalities host swimming areas with beaches. While some municipal beaches are open to the public at large, many are only open to town residents. Seven DCR state forests host public swimming beaches, although there may be a small parking fee.

Flyfishing, photo courtesy of DFW

Other Outdoor Recreation Options

The region offers a number of additional opportunities. Some are in a more urban setting, such as public parks and recreation fields. Other are established for specific uses, such as golf courses and ski areas. Camp grounds can be found throughout the region, set within state forests or on private lands, offering a home base from which to investigate nature or the many cultural attractions the county has to offer. A few outdoor opportunities include:

- Parks and Recreation Fields
- Golf Courses
- Ashuwillticook Rail Trail
- On-Road Cycling
- Downhill Skiing, Nordic skiing, Snowshoeing
- Summer Camps
- Camp Grounds
- Outdoor Events and Races

Four Seasons of Outdoor Recreation

Most people think of recreating outdoors during the three warm seasons of the region. Winter activities help to balance out the seasonality of arts-driven tourism in the region's economy by bringing in new visitors for skiing, snowshoeing, snowmobiling, and ice fishing.

Notchview in Windsor,
photo courtesy of Trustees of Reservation

	Activity	Spring	Summer	Fall	Winter
Land	Nature and Wildlife Viewing	●	●	●	●
	Birding	●	●	●	●
	Hiking	●	●	●	●
	Snowshoeing				●
	Mountain Biking	●	●	●	
	Cycling	●	●	●	
	Off-Road Vehicles	◐	●	●	◐
	Snowmobiling				●
	Hunting	●	◐	●	●
	Nordic Skiing				●
	Downhill Skiing				●
Water	Swimming		●		
	Kayaking/Canoeing/Boarding	●	●	●	◐
	Boating (Sail/motor)	◐	●	◐	
	Fishing/Ice Fishing	●	●	●	●

Regional Goals and Policies

GOAL CR3.1: Offer a comprehensive system of high-quality outdoor recreation options that maximizes health and economic benefits to the region.

Policy CR3.1.1: Identify and pursue a variety of traditional and non-traditional resources to support maintenance of outdoor recreation trails and facilities.

Policy CR3.1.2: Grow the region's notoriety as a prime outdoor recreation destination in the northeast.

GOAL CR 3.2: Cultivate an integrated trail system with a focus on diversity and connectivity.

Policy CR3.2.1: Support planning and implementation of a Western New England Greenway that integrates existing regional bike planning and implementation efforts.

Policy CR3.2.2: Continue to extend, connect and promote long-distance routes.

Policy CR3.2.3: Encourage diverse trail options to accommodate a range of use needs.

GOAL CR 3.3: Increase accessibility of recreation offerings.

Policy CR3.3.1: Strengthen linkages between conservation and recreation options in developed areas with those in the outlying rural landscape.

Policy CR3.3.2: Reintroduce Berkshire residents and children to the natural world.

GOAL CR3.4: Improve and Enhance Use and Access to Rivers and Lakes

Policy CR3.4.1: Improve river access and continuity to enhance recreational uses.

Policy CR3.4.2: Lakes protection.

Policy CR3.4.3: Enhance swimming opportunities.

Key Trends

Employment and Earnings

- The region lost 78% of its manufacturing jobs since 1970.; regional projections through 2018 predict a continued decline.
- The regional economy is now dominated by jobs tied directly to the place and people: education, government, health care, government, retail, and tourism and hospitality.
- Weekly earnings in retail trade and hospitality sectors are roughly one third those of manufacturing.

Labor Force

- In 2000, young adults with a four-year degree were about 61% more likely to live in close-in urban neighborhoods than their counterparts with less education. Now, these well-educated young adults are about 94% more likely to live in these close-in urban neighborhoods. (CEOS for Cities, 2011)
- The region has seen decades of "brain drain" and now has a median age of 44.7compared to 30.7 in 1970.
- 25% of the region's employees are aged 55 or older.
- Only 29% of Berkshire adults aged 25-44 have a bachelors degree or higher compared to 44% for that age group statewide.

Infrastructure

- The region is slated to have broadband service by 2014, the most significant improvement in the region's economic connection and access since highway and rail construction.
- Passenger rail service may be implemented from New York City as far north as Pittsfield
- East-west rail connections to Boston and Albany remain limited.
- Energy costs are high and the dwindling number of industrial users impacts the costs borne by those that remain.

Competing in the New Economy

Compared to economic development of old, which focused on financial incentives and infrastructure investments, new economic development takes a more placed based approach and a talented workforce has become as prominent of a draw as rail or highway access once was. As a region with a high quality of life amenities but that has struggled with limited physical infrastructure connections, this harbors in a new era of economic opportunity.

The Economy Element focuses on what the region needs to do to make itself competitive in this new economy.

Framework for Economic Development in the New Economy

Workforce

Local/Regional Leadership

Community

Economic Development in the New Economy

Quality of Life

Innovation and Entrepreneurship

We asked—you answered!

We held four roundtable discussions with business owners and managers across the county to ask what would make doing business in the Berkshires easier. Their top three answers:

1.Make municipal permitting faster and easier to navigate

2.Better understanding of existing services offered through municipalities and other economic development groups
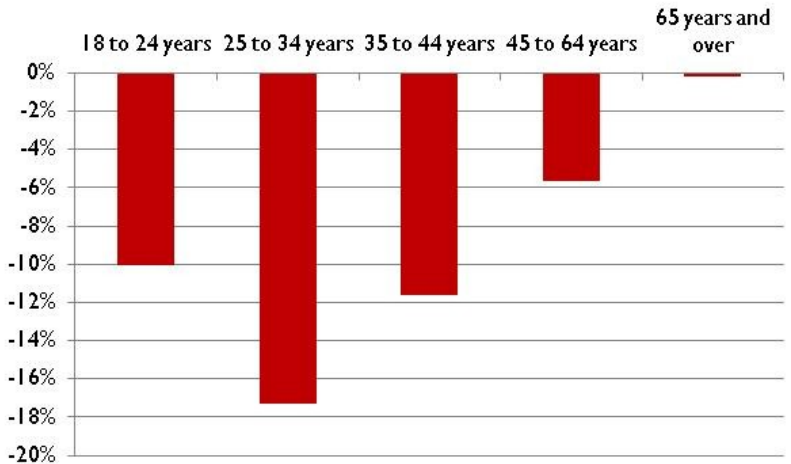
3.Better access to capital through local banks

Workforce and a Culture of Learning

Q: Do we have the workforce needed to both sustain current economic activity and grow the economy as desired?

Key Issues and Opportunities:
- The region's younger workforce lags behind peers in the state in degree attainment (see chart, right).
- This skill gap is even more critical given the aging nature of the region's workforce .
- The region is lucky to have a strong system of higher education and vocational schools, aligning this system with current sectors as well as emerging ones will be a critical step.
- Major employers and small businesses all report having a difficult time finding and retaining talented workers.
- Poverty rates have risen among younger residents and families, which are showing in school test scores.

Berkshire County percent adults with bachelors degree or higher by age group compared to the state
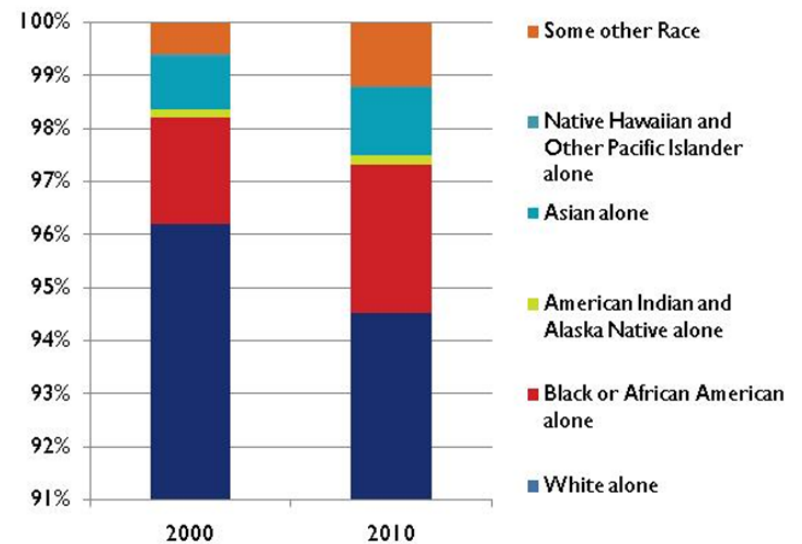

Open, Active and Inclusive Social Community

Q: Do we offer a community that is welcoming and inclusive of newcomers—whether they're from across the country or another country altogether?

Key Issues and Opportunities:
- The region, while still fairly homogenous, has increased in its levels of diversity over the past two decades, a national trend that is anticipated to increase over time.
- The region has limited organizational infrastructure to help with translation and cultural competency training.
- Diversity features strongly with current economic activity and job growth: higher levels of diversity are found in the small business community, hospitality sector (including owner operators), hospitals, Sabic, colleges, and General Dynamics.
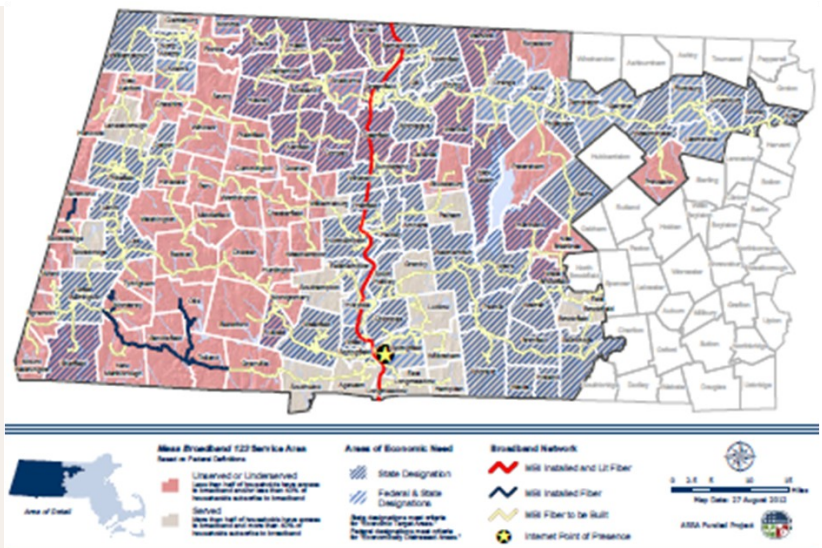

Innovation-Friendly Business Environment

Q: Do we have the right spaces, supports, and infrastructure to grow and attract innovative businesses and entrepreneurs?

Key Issues and Opportunities:
- The region is missing some financing tools/products to serve small business needs
- There are many resources for businesses, but it is difficult to navigate the system to find what you need
- Municipalities, particularly those with little or no staff capacity, can struggle with economic development and business-friendly practices
- Broadband expansion has potential for more business growth, efficiency, and telecommuting—but need to gear up locally to maximize benefit
- Region lacks talent-driven work spaces to meet modern work styles and needs.
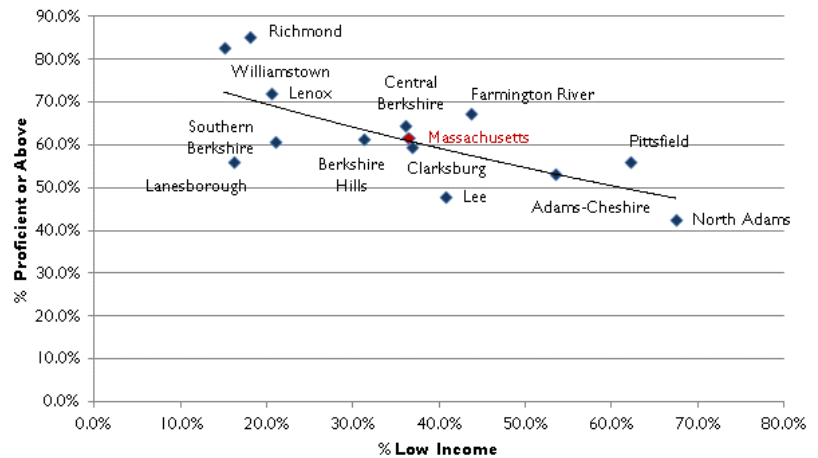
Quality of Life

Q: Do we offer a high quality of life, in all of our population centers and for different ages and backgrounds?

Key Issues and Opportunities:
- The region is renowned for its rich outdoor recreation and world-class cultural venues.
- In an economy where businesses can locate just about anywhere, being attractive in terms of "soft" variables becomes more important to the region's competitive advantage—including schools, housing costs and quality, and more entertainment options for younger workers.
- The region, while rural, is a relatively short distance from a number of mid– and major-metro areas to offer other amenities and activity options.

Berkshire 3rd Grade MCAS by Percent Low Income Students

3rd Grade English MCAS Scores Compared to % Low Income 2010-2012

Local and Regional Leadership

Q: Do we have a full spectrum of economic development functions offered by entities who collaborate well and focus on net gains of the region?

Key Issues and Opportunities:
- Regional leadership for economic development is still operating in individual versus collaborative manner.
- Economic development is still too focused on shifting jobs from one place to another within the region versus adding net new jobs.
- Leadership is fairly homogenous and not representative of talent trying to attract.

Local Leadership

Municipalities
Municipal Chambers

Subregional

Pittsfield Economic Revitalization Corporation (PERC)
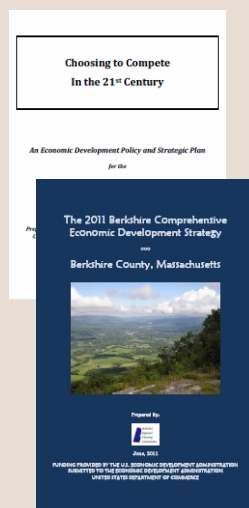Southern Berkshire Chamber of Commerce

Regional Leadership

1Berkshire
Berkshire Visitors' Bureau
Berkshire Chamber of Commerce
Berkshire Creative
Berkshire County Regional Employment Board

Aligning Economic Policy for Maximum Competitiveness

Choosing to Compete

Defines 5-steps to a competitive MA economy:

1. Advance education and workforce development for middle-skill jobs through coordination of education, economic development, and workforce development programs
2. Support innovation and entrepreneurship
3. Support regional development through infrastructure investments and local empowerment
4. Increase ease of doing business
5. Address our cost of doing business

Choosing to Compete
In the 21st Century

An Economic Development Policy and Strategic Plan
for the

The 2011 Berkshire Comprehensive
Economic Development Strategy
for
Berkshire County, Massachusetts

Prepared By:

June, 2011

FUNDING PROVIDED BY THE U.S. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION
SUBMITTED TO THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

Berkshire Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)

In 2011, the region adopted its first Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, a critical document that makes the region eligible to apply for Economic Development Administration (EDA) funds in the future. This strategy sets general goals, but also identifies and prioritizes different economic development projects.

Regional Goals and Policies

GOAL E1: Foster a culture of learning and raise educational attainment levels.

Policy E1.1: Invest in a quality PK-12 school system for children.

Policy E1.2: Support career aspirations and transitions and the success of young workers in high school and college.

Policy E1.3: Foster and support a culture that values education, personal improvement, and achievement.

GOAL E2: Connect a skilled workforce that meets employer needs to achieve economic development aspirations.

PolicyE2.1 : Identify and develop new workforce development programs to fill current gaps.

GOAL E3: Retain and attract new or return talent to the region.

Policy E3.1: Actively recruit talent to move or return to the region.

GOAL E4: Offer a region and communities that are easy to navigate and comfortable to enjoy for all residents and visitors.

Policy E4.1: Enhance the range and accessibility of guides and resources for residents and visitors of all ages.

GOAL E5: Make welcoming new residents a community rather than solely employer-based effort.

Policy E5.1: Identify the key challenge areas faced by new residents, and develop strategies to minimize their effect now and for future newcomers. The effort should include concern for new workers, their spouses or partners and family members, retirees, and potential entrepreneurs.

GOAL E6: Offer a region that makes doing business clear, predictable, innovative and competitive.

Policy E6.1: Offer high-quality commercial and industrial spaces and sites that meet a diverse range of economic activity needs and communicate that effectively and consistently to all through an open web-based platform.

Policy E6.2: Ensure all economic activity centers in the region have business-friendly practices in place to attract and support new and existing businesses

Policy E6.3: Support the economies of smaller towns and rural areas and recognize their role and contribution to the larger regional economy.

Policy E6.4: Address infrastructure costs or limits through strategic investment and collaborative action.

GOAL E7: Support a diverse and robust small business and entrepreneurial environment to drive economic growth and opportunity in the region.

Policy E7.1: Address gaps to offer complete life cycle arc of business financial needs.

Policy E7.2: Create working spaces and opportunities for entrepreneurs to grow their idea into a business.

Policy E7.3: Improve awareness about and expand the range of services available to small businesses and nonprofit organizations. Foster a number of platforms through which owners of new or established business and non-profit leaders can meet with each other, to share information and provide either services or mentorship.

GOAL E8: Build economic resilience through a focus on strengthening local economies.

Policy E8.1: Continue and expand the buy-local movement.

Policy E8.2: Facilitate access to alternative or community-based investment models.

GOAL E9: Promote green business practices.

Policy E9.1: Support businesses that use environmentally restorative practices.

GOAL E10: Expand the Berkshire marketing to reach a younger demographic.

Policy E10.1: Increase the focus and offerings of events and marketing geared at the under 40 population of residents and visitors.

GOAL E11: Create vibrant community spaces.

Policy E11.1: Target investment of time and resources to building vibrant downtowns and village centers.

GOAL E12: Establish a leadership culture that recognizes that an economic success anywhere in the region is a success for all.

Policy E12.1: Foster a culture of regionalism focused on net gain of jobs.

GOAL E13: Offer a comprehensive set of economic development services

Policy E13.1: Align efforts to eliminate duplication and negative competition.

GOAL E14: Improve the transparency of regional decision-making.

Policy E14.1: Link economic decisions to regional plan.

Policy E14.2: Work to improve the diversity of business, government and organization leadership.
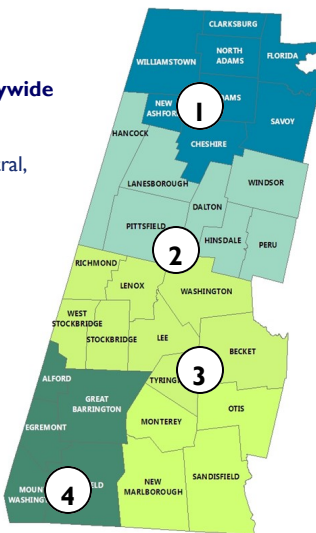
Local Food and Agriculture

Key Trends

- The region added 20 new vegetable farms between 1997 and 2007, although the total acreage in production actually decreased by 82 acres illustrating a countywide trend toward more, but smaller, farms.

- There has been growth in organic farms in the Berkshires. Since 2002 the number of acres has grown to over 1,300 acres on 20 farms.

- The Berkshire region saw a 35% decline in the number of dairy cows between 1992 and 2007. However, there was an increase in other animals for meat and fiber—including sheep, ducks, rabbit and pigeon.

- There has been an increase in the number of residents signed up for SNAP benefits between 2001 and 2009, and an increase in the number of school-aged children signed up for free or reduced lunch between 2007 and 2011.

- Between 2000 and 2011, there has been an increase in acres permanently protected via the Massachusetts Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) Program, from 4,871 acres to 21,164 acres.

Four Working Groups Countywide
(1) North,
(2) Central,
(3) South Central,
(4) Southwest

Keep Berkshires Farming (KBF)

From 2011-2013 volunteers across the region worked on an initiative - Keep Berkshires Farming - to develop local and regional strategies for building a robust and equitable local food system. Berkshire Regional Planning Commission and Glynwood helped organize and support the working teams as they worked their way through a process of inventory and goal setting: The initiative was rooted in three main components:

1. Original Food System Data

Teams of community volunteers were organized into four subareas across the county (bottom left) to conduct survey work, research strategies, and develop policy to support improved food access and strong local agricultural economics.
Volunteers surveyed:

Supply:
- Farmers

Demand:
- Consumers
- Restaurants
- Schools and institutions
- Supermarkets/markets and distributors

Food Insecurity:
- Community meal sites

2. Community Engagement

Volunteers and staff from Glynwood and BRPC also helped plan and hold public events in each of the sub-regions, including:
- Community forums
- Planning sessions
- Spring 2013 Panel Series

3. Farmer Involvement

KBF placed a strong emphasis on farmer involvement from farmer volunteers to farmer forum events and farmer pot-luck dinners.

Attendees at the kickoff meeting for the Southwest region in Great Barrington.

Key Findings

Data gathered supports initial stakeholder and community interest in:
- Improving school-age nutrition
- Slaughter and food processing facilities
- Sustainable agriculture practice
- Succession planning and new farmer land matches
- Meeting emergency food need for vulnerable populations
- Growing new or stronger farmers markets
- Continued networking and learning opportunities for farmers

From Planning to Implementation

As Keep Berkshires Farming progressed, implementation was ongoing through:
- Educational panels of experts open to farmers and other food system stakeholders
- Expanded market opportunities, such as Berkshire Grown's Holiday Markets

Though the survey work is completed, Keep Berkshires Farming will continue to be a presence in regional food and agriculture efforts, and has already helped inform the strategic plan of Berkshire Grown. Two upcoming initiatives born out of Keep Berkshires Farming include a livestock slaughter/meat processing feasibility study, and a Berkshire Farmland Access and Transition Network.

Keep Berkshires Farming: Farmer Survey

Through Keep Berkshires Farming, 106 Berkshire farmers were interviewed and/or surveyed to better understand the production component of the Berkshire food system. The 2007 Agricultural Census data indicated that the number of farms has increased over time, that more farmers are part-time versus full-time, that most farms are family farms, that average annual income has declined, and that farm land and farm product value have increased time. Given that Agricultural Census data is now five years old, the data gathered through Keep Berkshires Farming provides an up-to-date snapshot of existing conditions, challenges and opportunities.

Farms and Farmland

Farms in the Berkshire region are largely concentrated in the northwest and southwest corners, and descend the length of the county along the Hoosic and Housatonic River Valleys. Farms range in size from very small (1 to 9 acres) to very large (1,000 + acres). There are 12,420.8 acres of prime agricultural soils being farmed, and only 5.7% of these prime agricultural soils are in permanent APR protection. The majority of Berkshire farming takes place on 56,577.0 acres of non-prime soils. The Massachusetts APR program is not the only form of land conservation or preservation: 42,364.4 acres are protected via the Chapter 61/61A program. Farmers reported farming 18,109 acres while owning 12,185.5 acres, indicating that farmers lease additional land. The average number of acres farmed per farmer is 169.8 acres, with the average number of acres owned is 103.1 acres.

Where are the farms?
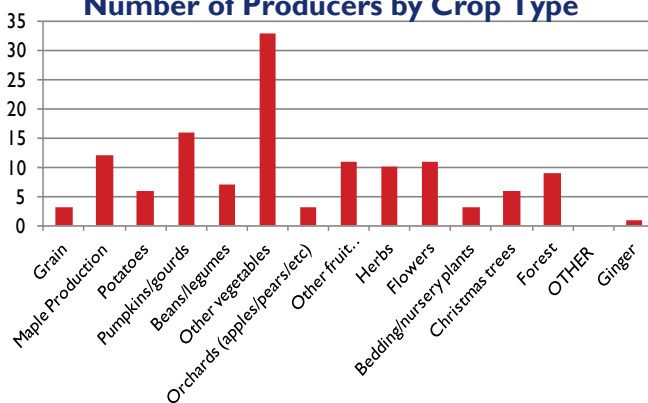*Orange depicts Berkshire Farms.*

Farmers

Berkshire farmers tend to be older, and the majority of surveyed farmers reported being between 40 years old and 60 years old. The average length of time farming is 53.95 years, and the average length of time the farm has been in the family is 92.4 years. More farmers identified as part-time farmers than full-time farmers. The 106 farmers surveyed reported spending $539,350 dollars in Berkshire county, or $5,088.20 per farmer. This results in an estimated $2,116,691.2 being spent in the Berkshire region. Farmers identified a range of agricultural practices, including crop rotation, winter cover crops, season extension, low or no till, organic and integrated pest management (IPM). T hey indicated that burgeoning interest in local food has had positive impacts on their farm operation,

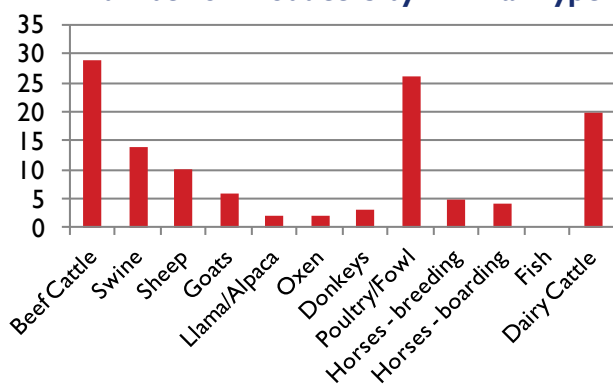**Number of Producers by Crop Type**

Farm Products

Most farmers surveyed sell between 80% to 100% of their product within the Berkshire region; those who sold less indicated that they would like to sell more product locally. Twenty-two (22) farmers indicated annual farm sales of $20,000 or less, while eleven (11) reported annual farm sales of $100,000 or more. If the land supports it, Berkshire farmers grow it.
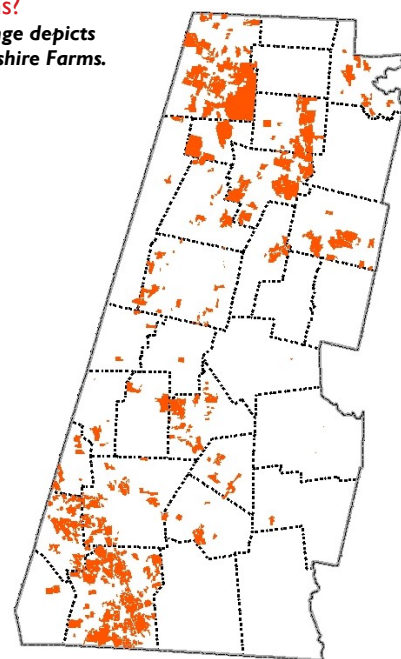

Number of Producers by Animal Type

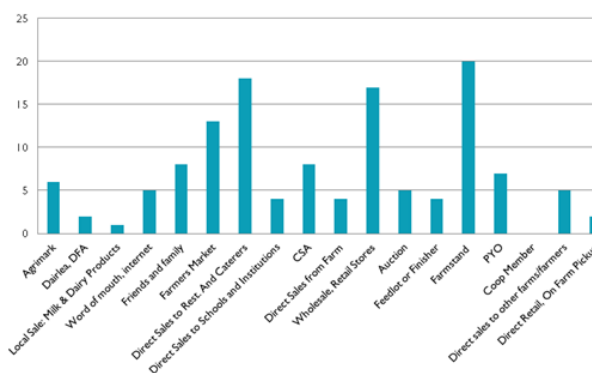### Farm Markets

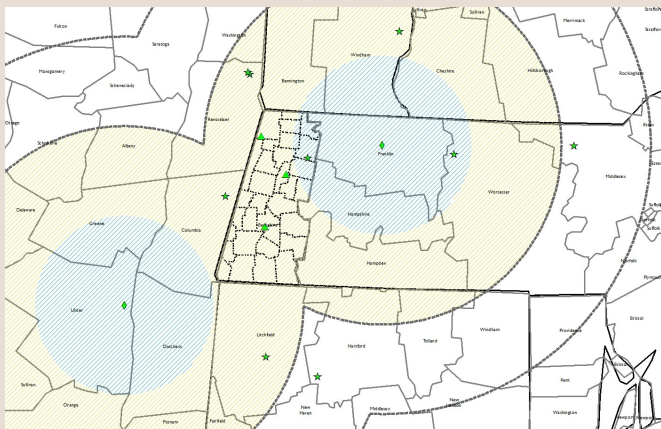Berkshire farmers rely on a variety of market outlets to distribute their product. Some sell to larger processors, such as AgriMark, Dairy-Lee and Chobani; others rely on farm stands and word of mouth. Other outlets include: wholesale distributors, regional coop markets, farmers' markets, restaurants, caterers, CSAs, PYO operations, schools and other institutions.

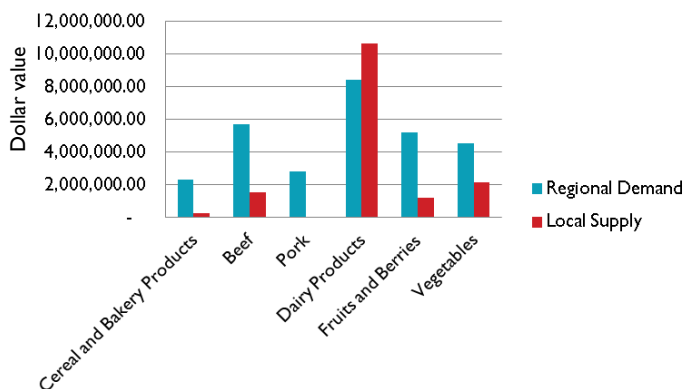**Means to Market for Local Farm Products**

Infrastructure

There are no USDA certified commercial slaughter and meat processing facilities in the Berkshire region. Farmers must travel to Vermont, New York, Connecticut or Central Massachusetts to slaughter livestock for wholesale or retail sale and consumption. The county has some custom slaughter capacity, but the sale and consumption of these custom jobs is very restricted. The county is also underserved in terms of fruit or vegetable processing. The two large, commercial processing kitchens farmers indicated using are in the Hudson Valley and the Pioneer Valley. A small portion of the county is within twenty-five miles of the Greenfield facility, even though most of the farms are beyond the twenty-five mile range of both facilities. In terms of compost facilities, the region has three operations: one in Dalton, one in Williamstown and one in Lee. The location and capacity of these facilities is important to consider as the Massachusetts's Department of Environmental Protection's new commercial food waste ban will go into affect in June 2014, and larger producers of food waste will need to find ways to compost.

Green stars depict slaughter facilities; green diamonds fruit and vegetable processing facilities; green triangles represent composting facilities. The only slaughter facility in Berkshire county is a custom butcher, which does not allow for wholesale or retail sale of meat products. The yellow striped area represents a 50 mile buffer from the processing facility to the Berkshire region.

Comparison of Supply / Demand — Local Products

Source: 2012 Consumer Expenditure Survey

Keep Berkshires Farming: Consumer Surveys

Through Keep Berkshires Farming, 694 residents, 66 restaurants, 21 institutions, 17 community meal sites, and 25 food processors and /or food distributors were surveyed to better understand current and potential regional demand for local food. The key finding from these surveys: everybody wants more local food, but face different obstacles in readily accessing and enjoying it local food.

Residents

If a Berkshire farmer is growing it, than a Berkshire resident is buying it. Seventy-seven percent of the 694 residents surveyed indicated that they would purchase more local food if they could, and about a quarter of those surveyed indicated they check to see where their food is from when they grocery shop. There is a gap in supply and demand. Residents want more meat, more grain and more dairy products than are currently being produced. They also want year-round availability of local vegetables.

Food Processors and/or Food Distributors

These included small, specialty dairy processors or butcher shops as well as wholesale distributors such as Ginsbergs, and large super stores such as Wal-Mart. The most commonly cited challenges to using more local food were concerns over food safety and liability; volume and dependability; price; communication gap; lack of local decision-making and the regional lack of processing facilities. They also expressed interest in contract growing, enhanced communication, a local food hub and enhanced processing facilities along with enhanced farmer assistance programs.

Restaurants

Restaurants represent the second largest market outlet as reported by farmers, and of the sixty-six surveyed for Keep Berkshires Farming, most would like to serve more local food. Some do not serve local food, or are not interested in serving more local food because of cost of local food for both the restaurant and customer. Restaurants identified purchasing local and non-local foods from twenty-three different distributors, some local or regional businesses, some national wholesale distributors. The most commonly frequently selected strategy to help expand farm to table opportunity for restaurants is a local food hub and direct purchasing frameworks with farmers.

Institutions

Twenty-one institutions were surveyed, including regional hospitals, school districts, private health/wellness retreats, retirement homes, private schools and institutions of higher education. Seventeen of the twenty-one institutions would purchase more local food if possible, and they all currently use at least some local food—identifying local food as between .5% and 30% of their menu. Budgets also ranged between institutions, and those with higher food budgets reported greater flexibility in where they can source food.

The top three purchasing considerations were identified to be:
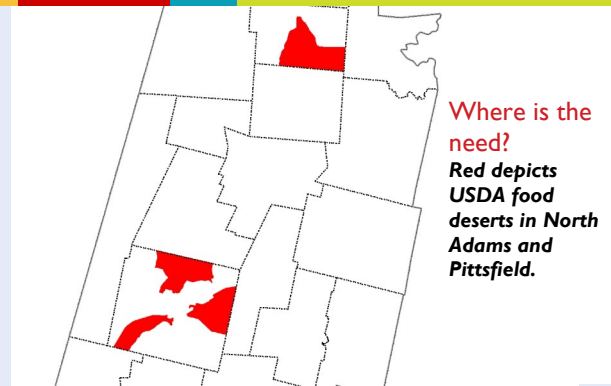- Quality,
- Freshness, and
- Price/budget.

The top four challenges identified were:
- Budgetary constraints,
- Seasonality,
- Availability, and
- Timing/frequency of deliveries.

Food Insecurity

The region is home to four USDA food deserts, and has experienced a documented increase in food pantry meals and meals on wheels served, as well as increased enrollment in SNAP benefits and free or reduced lunches. Only two farmers' markets currently accept all forms of food assistance (SNAP, WIC, senior benefits), while four accept at least one form. BRPC mapped fifty-six meal sites, and KBF volunteers surveyed seventeen of these sites. They all indicated being able to meet demand, but struggling to do so, and not always having access to local or fresh foods. They indicated financial, staff and volunteer capacity as limiting factors in their ability to source and serve additional local food.

Where is the need?

Red depicts USDA food deserts in North Adams and Pittsfield.

Regional Goals and Policies

Goal FA1: Improve access to land for current and new farmers.
  Policy FA1.1: Create Berkshire Farmland Access and Transition Network.
  Policy FA1.2: Work within existing systems to improve access to farmland conservation and financial supports.

Goal FA2: Ensure farms have succession plans in place to support keeping farms in agricultural use.
  Policy FA2.1: Promote farmer participation in succession and estate planning.

Goal FA3: Ensure agriculture and local food economic activities are prioritized within regional and local economic development strategies and investments.
  Policy FA3.1: Highlight local food and agriculture as key economic sector of the region.
  Policy FA3.2: Link economic development and infrastructure investments to agriculture economy.
  Policy FA3.3: Link farms and food businesses to small farm business supports.

Goal FA4: Facilitate more value-added products getting to market.
  Policy FA4.1: Investigate and advance slaughter facility planning and development.
  Policy FA4.2: Investigate and advance value-added dairy capacity of the region.
  Policy FA4.3: Explore feasibility of non-food processing needs.

Goal FA5: Create better linkages between farmers and markets.
  Policy FA5.1: Develop a countywide food hub at an appropriate scale for the region.
  Policy FA5.2: Continue Farm-Buyer connections via Berkshire Grown.

Goal FA6: Build a year-round local food system.
  Policy FA6.1: Explore the potential for expanding local value-added processing capacity for personal and group use for use over the winter.
  Policy FA6.2: Support farms extending their seasons for production later into the fall and winter months.

Goal FA7: Expand access to healthy, local food in all Berkshire schools.
  Policy FA7.1: Scale up farm-to-institution programs in all Berkshire schools.
  Policy FA7.2: Work with parents and kids to improve nutrition literacy and cooking know-how.

Goal FA8: Expand access to locally grown foods for low-to-moderate income households.
  Policy FA8.1: Maintain and expand programs that provide access to local, healthy foods for low-and fixed-income households.

Goal FA9: Work together to ensure regional goals and policy priorities are reflected in state and federal planning and legislation.
  Policy FA9.1: Continue and expand existing activism networks.
  Policy FA9.2: Ensure region is well-represented in state food policy and planning.

Goal FA10: Municipalities that support agriculture and local food.
  Policy FA10.1: Zoning and bylaw amendments to support agriculture.
  Policy FA10.2: Support Agricultural Commissions in all communities.

Climate and Energy
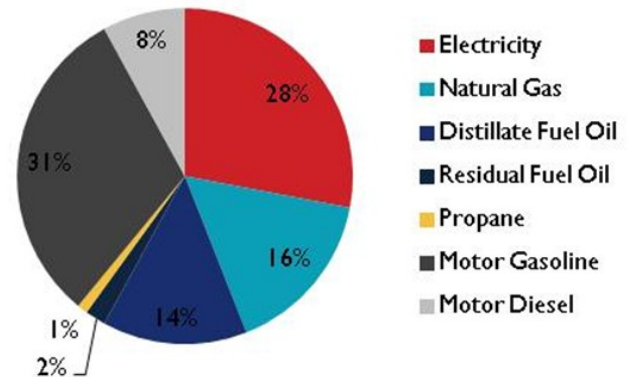

Key Trends

Energy Basics

- Burning of fossil fuels in homes, businesses and vehicles is linked to climate change.

- Climate change in the Berkshires is resulting in rising temperatures, shifting of habitats northward, increases in numbers and severity of storms, and greater risk for summer drought cycles.

- Berkshire County imports 93% of our fuel.

- The statewide importation of fuel results in export value of $22 billion per year.

- Massachusetts ranks as a national leader in energy issues — vying with California — due to its policies and programs for energy conservation, efficiency and renewable energy generation.

- Despite aggressive energy policies, the state continues to have some of the highest electricity costs — 6th highest in nation in 2011. This continues to be an economic issue for the business and municipal sectors.

Energy Challenges

- Climate change increases risks for farming, maple sugaring and the ski industry.

- A nation-wide survey revealed that 2/3 of American students know little or nothing about the link between burning fossil fuels and climate change.

- Small and medium-sized businesses could reap economic benefits from reducing energy use, but few owners have the capacity to pursue existing programs.

- Our rural, dispersed settlement patterns are a challenge to reducing transportation-related emissions.

Berkshire Energy Baseline

An inventory of greenhouse gas emissions reveals that driving habits are the greatest single source of emissions (totaling 39%), with electricity also a large emission source.

Energy Use in Buildings

Fossil fuels consumed in Berkshire County buildings emits more than 1.1 million tons of CO_2 into the atmosphere per year. More than half (52%) of the emissions from our buildings and business-related processes come from electricity, despite the fact that electricity represents only 34% of the energy

used.

Energy Use in Transportation

Fossil fuels consumed by vehicles in Berkshire County emit approximately .75 million tons of CO_2 equivalents into the atmosphere per year. When broken down by fuel, 93% of this is from gasoline powered vehicles and the remaining 7% is from diesel powered vehicles.

Energy Conservation & Efficiency

Greenhouse Gas Emission by Sector

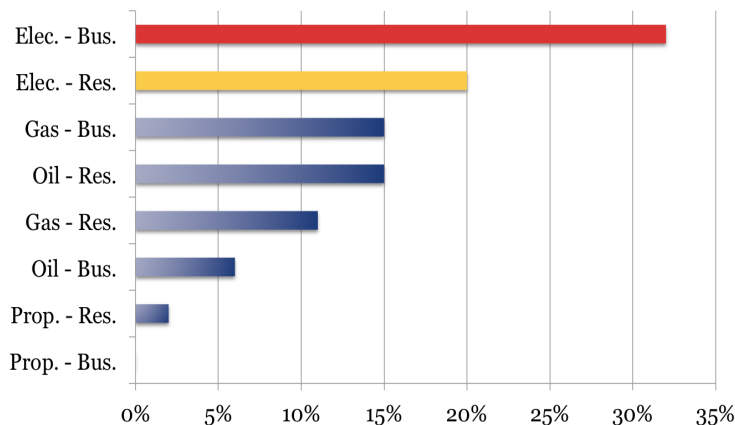Approximately 1/3 of total greenhouse gas emissions from the built environment in Berkshire County are caused by the consumption of electricity by the business/commercial sector (see graph below). The business sector includes commercial, industrial and municipal users. Electricity is used for heating, lighting and commercial and industrial processes.

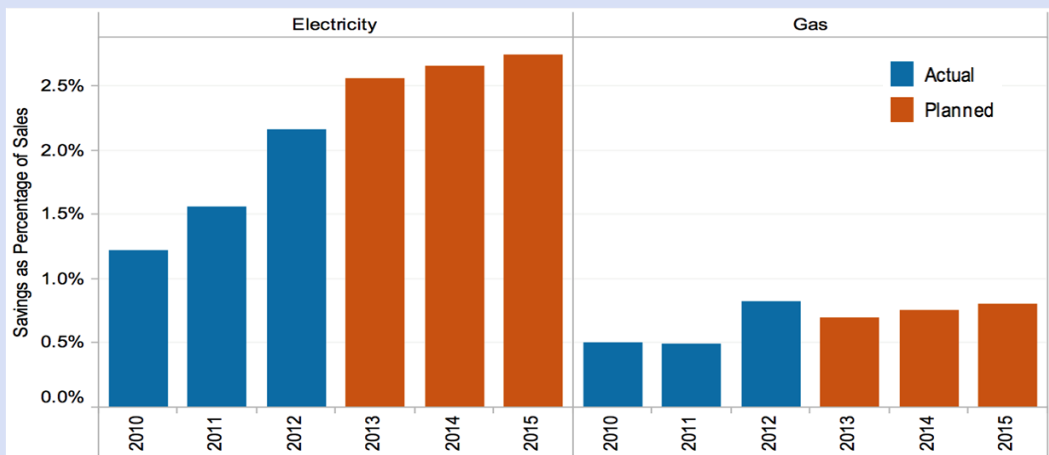*Building CO_2 Emissions 2011, Berkshire County*

Emissions from the consumption of electricity in New England is generally lower per kilowatt than other regions of the county, due largely to the burning of natural gas over coal, but electricity use is projected to incrementally increase.

Reducing electricity use not only reduces emissions, but also reduces energy costs to the business and municipal sectors, thus reducing the overall cost of doing business in the region. Reducing energy consumption brings about cost savings decreases our reliance on fuel imports, an important issue to our region which economically lags behind the rest of the state.

The business/commercial sector often achieves the most energy reduction and cost savings (see below). Although the costs of conducting energy audits and installing energy-saving measures are often offset by programs offered by the local utility companies and state and federal agencies, it can be daunting to locate the program that will fit the individual needs of residents and businesses. Locating contractors with the specific skills to install recommended improvements can also be difficult.

Efficiency Program Savings as Percentage of Utility Sales*

The three utilities in Berkshire County offer energy conservation and efficiency programs to their customers. Electric utilities are National Grid and Western Mass. Electric Company, and the gas utility is Berkshire Gas. Notable statistics for their programs show that:

- *61% of electricity in county is used by the business sector.*
- *75% in savings in electricity comes from business customers.*
- *55% of savings in natural gas comes from business sector.*

* Note: Utility territory-wide, not county specific

Renewable Energy

Berkshire Renewable Energy Projects

According to the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center, there are at least 337 renewable energy systems in Berkshire County, ranging from small residential systems to large, multi-megawatt projects. The county's renewable energy generation has grown, going from just over 1,000 kilowatt (kW) in 2005 to more than 43,000 kW by early 2013. This equates to almost 91 million kilowatt hours (kWh), equaling about 7% of the total used in the county.

Although there are more than 325 solar photovoltaic installations in Berkshire County (97% of the total number of renewable projects), the current five wind turbine projects in the county generate 77% of the total renewable energy kilowatt hours generated in the county.

System Type	Number of Systems	Capacity (kW)	Estimated Annual Generation (kWh)
Biomass	2	420	2,943,360
Hydropower	4	1,926	7,423,574
Solar photo-voltaic PV)	327	9,723	11,072,970
Wind	5	32,100	70,299,000
Totals	**338**	**44,169**	**91,738,904**

Renewable Energy and Public Sentiment

Berkshire County residents who participated in public surveys and workshops agreed that a mix of energy conservation/efficiency and renewable energy generation will be needed to meet a regional goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 25% by 2020 and 80% by 2050.

Attendees of workshops in Lenox favored solar PV energy generation over wind energy, but attendees of a similar workshop in North Adams favored a fairly even mix of solar and wind energy.

In the fall of 2012 Williams College students conducted public surveys in North, Central and South Berkshire County. Of these:

- 95% of respondents would ideally like to see the county generate at least 50% of the our electricity from local renewable energy projects.

- 69% of the respondents who had seen renewable energy projects in the county liked them.

Renewable Energy Potential

A coarse GIS analysis was conducted to map areas in the county that have the potential for renewable energy generation for wind energy, solar PV and hydropower.

- 2% of the county was identified as having the potential for commercial wind power projects. This is based on sites with the greatest potential for consistent wind and after removing sensitive habitats from consideration.

- 562 commercial buildings in the county, 15,000 square feet or larger, were identified as potential solar PV sites. This does not include large surrounding parking lots, which might also host PV arrays.

- 62 existing dams with structural heights of at least 20 feet were also identified.

SOLAR ENERGY POTENTIAL

WIND ENERGY POTENTIAL

The analysis was conducted as a general planning tool and is not site specific.

Setting an Energy Reduction Goal

- Massachusetts has established a goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 25% below the 1990 level by the year 2020, and by 80% below that level by 2050.

- Berkshire residents responding to a survey and participating in public workshops consistently voiced their desire to, at a minimum, match the state's emission reduction goals.

- Residents agreed that emission reduction goals should be achieved through a mix of conservation and efficiency programs and renewable energy projects.

- Reducing the county's greenhouse gas emissions would mean that we need to reduce our annual CO_2 emissions by almost 95,000 tons.

Reduction from baseline

	CO2 (tons)
Baseline	1,128,092
2020 Goal	846,069
Reduction needed	**282,023**

Reduction net of key trends

	CO2 (tons)
Baseline	1,128,092
Load growth to 2020	18,997
EE program savings	-149,860
RPS increases	-56,175
2020 Projection	**941,045**
2020 Goal	846,069
Reduction needed	**94,985**

Regional Goals and Policies

GOAL CE1: Support broader understanding of climate change threats and opportunities for individual action.

Policy CE1.1: Improve availability of information about local impacts of climate change, sources of greenhouse gas emissions, and opportunities to reduce impacts.

Policy CE1.2: Encourage local schools and colleges to integrate climate change- and energy-related topics and career options into curricula.

GOAL CE2: Commit to meet or surpass the state's climate emission reduction target.

Policy CE2.1: Adopt this climate and energy plan and work to implement its contents.

GOAL CE3: Maximize energy efficiency of the built environment as a means of reducing climate emissions from and operating costs to residents, businesses, institutions, and government.

Policy CE 3.1: Encourage greater participation in existing energy efficiency and conservation programs through marketing and promoting options available to residents and businesses.

Policy CE3.2: Work to address information or financing obstacles to energy efficiency.

GOAL CE4: Update municipal practices and regulations to support low-emission living.

Policy CE 4.1: Encourage and support local governments to adopt Massachusetts Green Community criteria.

Policy CE 4.2: Improve transit opportunities.

Policy CE 4.3: Encourage and support the emergence and activity of local energy committees in Berkshire County to help implement programs at the municipal level.

GOAL CE5: Offer competitive renewable energy costs now and in the future.

Policy CE5.1: Grow market demand and readiness for renewable energy sources.

GOAL CE6: Increase regional generation and use of clean, renewable energy.

Policy CE6.1: Work proactively to define the locations, types and parameters within which renewable energy development can move forward in the region.

Policy CE 6.2: Expand awareness of existing renewable energy generation and use across the region and in neighboring counties.

Policy CE 6.3: Continually track best practices for siting and technologies used to ensure any development in the region is of the highest quality and minimizes any potential negative impacts to the greatest practical extent.

GOAL CE7: Build climate resilience into the region's planning and practices.

Policy CE7.1: Integrate planning for increased temperatures into municipal and regional practice.

Policy CE 7.2: Work to reduce impacts caused by hydrologic extremes from increased intensity and frequency of storm events to periods of drought.
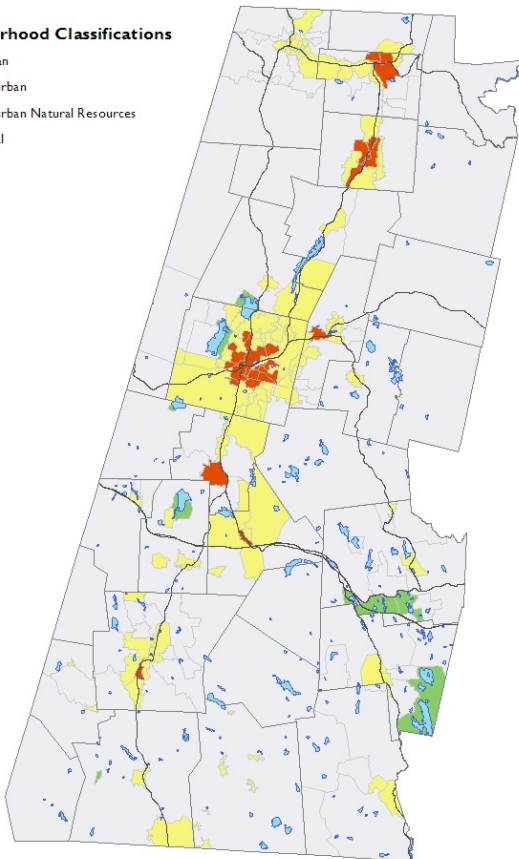
Housing and Neighborhoods

Key Trends

1. Decreasing population but increasing housing unit count
2. Population exiting largest communities while smallest rural communities grow
3. Increasing home values, rising rents, and decreasing household incomes yield affordability gaps
4. Aging population / aging homeowners
5. Increasing racial diversity and integration

The importance of context

The region has a variety of neighborhood types—from urban neighborhoods in our largest communities, to traditional village centers, to rural homes and farms. Strategies need to keep context in mind—there is no one-size fits all approach.
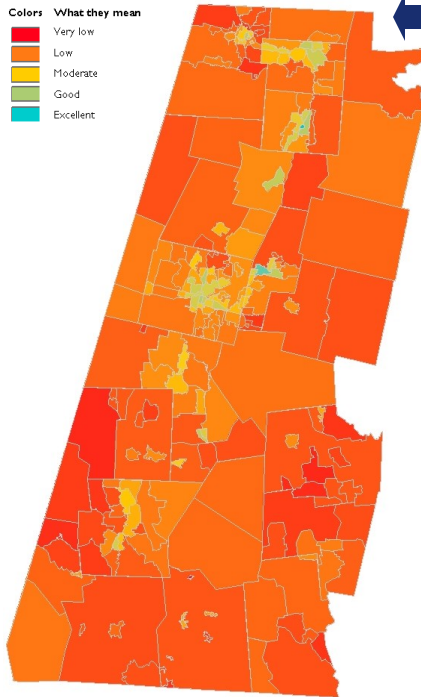

Neighborhood Classifications
- Urban
- Suburban
- Suburban Natural Resources
- Rural

What Makes a Great Neighborhood?

Using a number of variables, a mapping model was developed to "score" neighborhoods across the county in four different categories of characteristics that make for a great and sustainable neighborhood: people-friendly places and spaces, integrated and inclusive communities, safe and healthy places, and small ecological footprint. While different neighborhoods will have different strengths based on their contexts (e.g., a large-lot rural development will always have a larger footprint than a compact urban one), the results can help communities target policies and improvements to improve performance over time.

People-Friendly Places and Spaces

Colors | What they mean
Very low
Low
Moderate
Good
Excellent

What do we want to see?

Neighborhoods that have:

- Access to safe walking spaces (whether that's sidewalk, dirt roads, or a trail)
- Provide easy access to a variety of places and spaces that allow for interaction (parks, civic buildings, schools, and cultural venues)

Regional Goals and Policies

GOAL HN1: Create welcoming communities that view difference as enhancing the whole.

> **Policy HN1.1 : Support programs and initiatives that foster more community engagement and interaction, particularly between groups separated by age, tenure, culture, and economic status.**
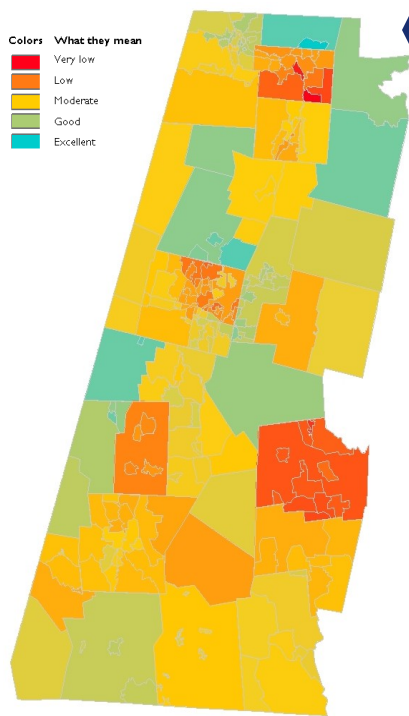
GOAL HN2: Design and retrofit neighborhoods of all types to enhance opportunities for activity and interaction.

> **Policy HN2.1: Encourage the accessibility of all types of public spaces.**

> **Policy HN2.2: Identify and create walking routes and loops in each community.**

> **Policy HN2.3: Grow a multi-modal culture to support safe non-car movement.**

Safe and Healthy

What do we want to see? Neighborhoods that have:

- Low crime rates
- Low exposure risk from brownfield sites
- Good access to quality health care
- Low domestic violence and child abuse/neglect
- Stability in terms of resident turnover

In Focus: Regional Health Priorities

The Community Health Initiative has identified and prioritized the main health-related threats. Six priorities were identified and will be the focus of initiatives over the coming years to reduce rates and improve health in the region: Smoking, obesity, substance abuse (excessive drinking), motor vehicle accidents, teen pregnancy, and depression.

County Health Rankings	Trend	2010	2011	2012
% Diabetic	0.0%		9%	9%
Uninsured	-45.5%	11%	8%	6%
Access to healthy foods	100.0%	29%	58%	58%
Smokers - adults	-5.0%	20%	20%	19%
Obesity - Adult	4.3%	23%	23%	24%
Excessive Drinking	25.0%	16%	19%	20%
Inadequate Social Support	0.0%	20%	21%	20%

Regional Goals and Policies

GOAL HN3: Offer homes that support the health and wellness of those who live there.

Policy HN3.1: Remove or minimize threats to health posed by environmental contamination and brownfield sites.

Policy HN3.2: Work to reduce toxic chemical exposure in home, work, and school environments.

Policy HN3.3: Modify older homes to remove contaminants (lead and asbestos).

GOAL HN4: Grow a violence-free community that does not tolerate domestic and other types of violence inside or outside the home.

Policy HN4.1: Reduce crime or concern of crime.

Policy HN4.2: Reduce the incidence and impacts of domestic violence and gender discrimination.

Policy HN4.3: Build a culture of social diversity and acceptance.

GOAL HN5: Support healthy aging in place.

Policy HN5.1: Facilitate soft retrofit options to enable seniors to safely stay in their homes longer.

Policy HN5.2: Focus all stages of senior housing in co-located areas next to or otherwise linked to medical services and social opportunities.

GOAL HN6: Grow a healthier region by working together to combat common health challenges.

Policy HN6.1: Support collaborative programs aimed at prevention as well as treatment of region's health challenges.
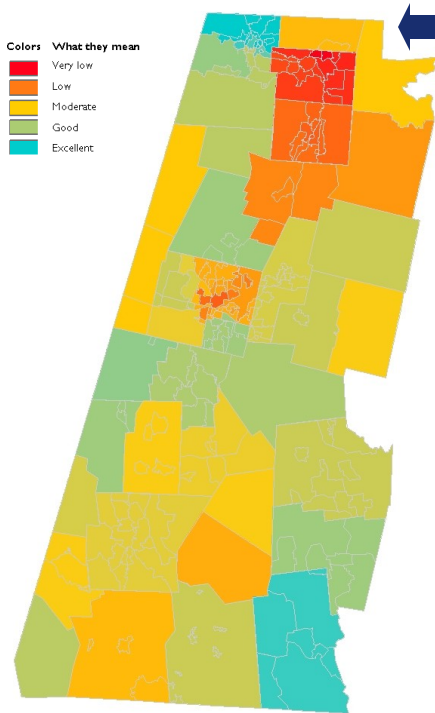
Policy HN6.2: Promote healthy lifestyles at home, work, and civic settings.

GOAL HN7: Build disaster-resilient communities.

Policy HN7.1: Complete countywide hazard mitigation planning and communicate results.

Policy HN7.2: Be proactive about minimizing natural hazard risks, particularly in areas known to experience repeat problems.

Integrated and Inclusive

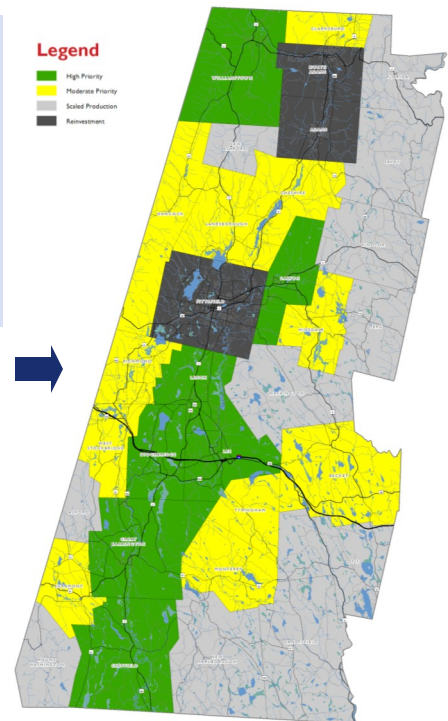| Colors	What they mean
(red)	Very low
(orange)	Low
(gold)	Moderate
(olive)	Good
(teal)	Excellent

What do we want to see? Neighborhoods that:

- Have a mix of ages, incomes, and cultural backgrounds
- Offer access to jobs and high performing schools
- Offer different housing options/choices, including rental and ownership opportunities
- Contain a mix of home values

In Focus: Linking Affordable Housing with High Resident Opportunity

The region's affordable housing is concentrated in North Adams, Adams, and Pittsfield. Those communities are struggling with neighborhood conditions and need to focus on raising opportunity scores (job access, high-performing schools, etc). Other communities have those opportunities but little to no supply of affordable housing. Moving forward, the region will work to place new affordable housing in high opportunity (green) and moderate opportunity (yellow) communities.

Legend

(green)	High Priority
(yellow)	Moderate Priority
(gray)	Scaled Production
(black)	Reinvestment

Regional Goals and Policies

GOAL HN8: Increase the supply of affordable housing across the county, both for low income and moderate income households, in a manner that relies on each municipality doing their fair share and maximizes access to opportunity for lower income households.

Policy HN8.1: Increase capacity of towns and region to develop more affordable housing and housing which is attractive to younger workers and families.

Policy HN8.2: Build a regionally inclusive collaborative environment between municipalities, CDC's, banks and other funding organizations.

Policy HN8.3: Increase capacity of community development corporations and other non-governmental organizations to maximize additional resources.

Policy HN8.4: Implement appropriate zoning tools to facilitate development of affordable housing and enhance housing mix in different community contexts.

Policy HN8.5: Work collaboratively to implement tools and practices that make the development of affordable and moderate income housing more financially viable.

Policy HN8.6: Work as a region on multiple fronts to broaden understanding of wide range of affordable housing and its role in a healthy, socially-sustainable community.

GOAL HN9: Improve opportunity scores in communities, prioritizing investment into those currently providing most of the subsidized and market rate affordable housing in the region.

Policy HN9.1: Preserve and improve existing affordable housing stock in low-income communities.

Policy HN 9.2: Prioritize economic development and job training in communities with high supply and low opportunity.

Policy HN9.3: Work collaboratively to improve educational performance in communities with lowest MCAS scores.
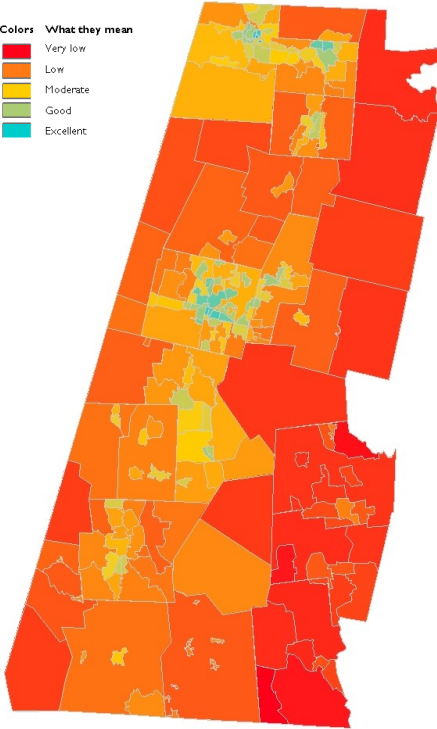
GOAL HN10: Reduce Housing and Financial Instability in the Region

Policy HN10.1: Increase the capacity of homeless shelter and transitional housing network of providers in the region.

Policy HN10.2: Enhance access to financial literacy and wealth building programs for households.

Policy HN10.3: Work with tenants and landlords to improve stable tenancy arrangements.

Ecological Footprint

Colors	What they mean
	Very low
	Low
	Moderate
	Good
	Excellent

- Minimize impact on natural resources, including access to outdoor recreation amenities
- Don't require a lot of vehicle miles traveled
- Consume less land per household

Regional Goals and Policies

GOAL HN11: Reduce the amount of waste reaching dumps and landfills.

> **Policy 11.1: Expand composting capacity of the region.**
>
> **Policy 11.2 Expanded recycling and reuse activity in the region.**

GOAL HN12: Reduce residential energy and water consumption.

> (Policies and strategies for this are contained in both the historic preservation element and the climate and energy elements of the plan. They include increasing energy efficiency of homes as well as improving individual behaviors that can reduce energy consumption from driving, lights, etc.)
>
> **Policy 12.1: Promote Water Saving Practices and Retrofits to Reduce Water Waste**

GOAL HN13: Reduce environmental impacts of residential development.

> **Policy 13.1: Reduce water runoff from residential properties.**
>
> **Policy 13.2: Wildlife-Friendly Yards and Gardens**

In Focus: A growing footprint

Making the Connection

While each section of the plan relates to all the others, our holistic approach to housing and neighborhoods mean that the decisions we make here have strong relationships to other sections of the plan, such as:

- Our ability to meet our climate reduction target by reducing vehicle miles traveled (Climate and Energy)
- Our ability to offer a high quality of life that will keep and attract new residents (Economy)
- Enable municipalities to continue to provide high quality schools, maintain roads, and provide other services (Infrastructure and Services)
- Provide outdoor recreation lands and maintain our rich biodiversity (Conservation and Recreation)
- Retain the distinct history and character of our villages and landscape (Historic Preservation, Food and Agriculture)

Historic Preservation

Historic Context

Historic assets of the Berkshires reflect its past in the present day. This includes everything from Native American history of the Mohicans to the more recent past. Historic contexts are categories of time, architectural eras, or events that help tell the story of sites and structures. A useful framework for understanding different eras of this history include:

- **The Mountains and Woodlands (Pre-History to 1725):** This era includes all of the First Nations' history prior to colonization.

- **Settling the Woodlands and Leveraging Their Resources (1725-1770):** This era includes early colonization, missionary work, iron, timber and other extractive industries, and the French and Indian War.

- **The American Revolution and Early Federal Period (1770-1800):** This era includes people and places within the county that played a role in the Declaration of Independence and American Revolution as well as some early African American and civil rights history.

- **Achievement and Advancement (1800-1840):** This era includes the beginning hydro-powered industrial activities such as paper mills that began to pepper the Housatonic River and some tributaries as well as the literary and artistic works that began to emerge from the region.

- **A United Region in a Divided Nation (1840-1870):** This era includes the Civil War and related Underground Railroad activities and writings across the region.

- **The Gilded Age (1870-1905):** The era includes the time when successful writers began to build retreat cottages in the Berkshires. This was also a time when noted industrialists constructed early mansions across the region.

- **Nature, Culture, and Harmony (1900-Present):** This era covers the past century, which is itself arguably several eras combined. Because of the long history of the region, preservation focus has tended to be placed on resources over one hundred years of age. Fifty years of age is often when consideration as an historic resource begins.

The Preservation Process

SURVEY	LIST	PROTECT
Examine and document historic resources to guide future preservation activities.	*Formally list significant historic resources on federal, state, and/ or local lists.*	*Enact measures (zoning, structural improvements, advocacy) to encourage long-term preservation.*

Key Trends

Historic Resources

Historic Surveys
Most of our communities had baseline historic survey work completed in the 1980's. At present, much of that information needs updating and additional historic resources need to be surveyed. T he Massachusetts Historical Commission has identified this as a need in every Berkshire community.

Local Historical Commissions
Only eighteen of the thirty-two municipalities in Berkshire County have *active* local historical commissions. Outreach, education and support should be directed toward local leadership, LHC members and the general public to demonstrate the important role this body can serve in a community.

Municipal Protections
Very few communities have the Massachusetts Historical Commission's minimal recommended historic resource protections in place, such as demolition delay.

Regional Coordination
Efforts are underway to consider our historic resources in a broader, regional way, with work of Housatonic Heritage, a notable player working to advance these efforts. Their work grouping heritage assets into themes has brought attention to lesser-known sites and offers a means to enhance the participant's experience. Housatonic Heritage is in the process of finalizing and seeking approval for a required management plan.

State Preservation Plan
The Massachusetts Historic Commission prepares a state plan for historic preservation every five years; currently they are using the 2011-2015 plan. There weren't representatives from Berkshire County actively participating in the production of this plan. In future plans, the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, Housatonic Heritage and other regional interests as well as local communities should take an active role in its development.

The first step in a community's preservation planning process is to identify and survey buildings, structures, objects, areas, burial grounds, landscape features, and sites that are of historical, architectural, or archaeological importance. This inventory serves as the foundation for future preservation planning and preservation activities.

The National Register of Historic Places

The National Register of Historic Places (National Register) is a listing of historic properties and districts across the United States that exhibit historic significance. This list is maintained by the National Park Service, which has final approval of nomination forms submitted through the State Historic Preservation Office. The National Register contains 173 historic resources (buildings, sites, districts, structures and objects) from the Berkshires. This includes 36 national historic districts within the Berkshire's 32 municipalities.

National Historic Landmarks

Designation as a National Historic Landmark is a rare recognition (185 in Massachusetts and fewer than 2,500 nationwide) reserved for sites that possess exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the heritage of the United States. These landmarks may be owned by private individuals, local and state governments, tribal entities, non-profit organizations, or corporations. There are grant programs which prioritize funding for these sites (i.e. the former Save America's Treasures program); federally-funded development projects affecting them are subject to review; and each year there are a small number of landmarks which may participate in an inspection and condition analysis process. National Landmarks also have additional educational and outreach opportunities available to them through the National Park Service.

- There are nine National Historic Landmarks in the Berkshires:
- Arrowhead, Herman Melville House, Pittsfield
- Crane and Company Old Stone Mill Rag Room, Dalton
- W.E.B. DuBois, Boyhood Homesite, Great Barrington
- Daniel Chester French, Home and Studio, Stockbridge
- Hancock Shaker Village, Pittsfield
- Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, Becket
- Mission House, Stockbridge
- The Mount, Edith Wharton Estate, Lenox
- Naumkeag, Stockbridge

Hancock Shaker Village is a National Historic Landmark which has succeeded in remaining a relevant site with a mix of youth programming and a focus on sustainable living.

Preservation Partners

National

- **Department of the Interior's National Park Service** maintains the National Register of Historic Places.
- The **National Trust for Historic Preservation** is a national non-profit devoted to promoting historic reservation practice in the country through education, research, awareness-raising, and capacity-building activities.

State

- The State Historic Preservation Office is the **Massachusetts Historical Commission**. It maintains a list of the state's historic and cultural resources and review designation forms.
- **Preservation Massachusetts** is a statewide non-profit historic preservation organization that provides the services of a circuit rider, to provide communities with technical assistance and troubleshooting with project development.

Regional

- The **Berkshire Historical Society** is a regional non-profit dedicated to collecting, preserving, and disseminating the history of Berkshire County in western Massachusetts.
- The **Local History Collection** in the Berkshire Athenaeum is the creation and preservation of a permanent record of important events, groups and personalities of the City of Pittsfield, which may be recorded in materials of a regional focus.
- **Housatonic Heritage** is the not-for-profit entity established to undertake and help catalyze historic preservation activities to highlight and preserve the history of the Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area It provides small grants, technical support and general education for organizations and individuals.
- The **Trustees of Reservations** is a private, not-for-profit, statewide organization aimed at preserving properties of exceptional scenic, historic, and ecological value in Massachusetts for public use and enjoyment. Four of the ten historic homes owned and operated by the Trustees are located in the Berkshires: Ashley House, Sheffield, MA; The Folly at Field Farm, Williamstown; The Mission House, Stockbridge; and Naumkeag, Stockbridge. Other notable Trustees sites with historic, cultural and/or natural value in Berkshire County include: Bartholomew's Cobble, Sheffield; Dry Hill, New Marlborough; Field Farm, Williamstown; Monument Mountain, Great Barrington; Mountain Meadow Preserve, Williamstown; Notchview, Windsor; Questing, New Marlborough; and Tyringham Cobble, Tyringham.

Local

- There are numerous historical societies and history organizations throughout the county, some representing a town or city, and others which are based at a particular site. Many of the local historical commissions and societies having overlapping geographic interests coordinate their efforts and some have members in common. In Berkshire County all but two communities have established a local historical commission; however, only eighteen (18) are fully active.

Upper Housatonic Valley

National Heritage Area

National Heritage Areas are designated by Congress as places where natural, cultural, and historic resources combine to form a cohesive landscape of national significance. The Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area was established in 2006 and is managed by Housatonic Heritage, a not-for-profit entity established for that purpose. The area covers 29 communities in northwest Connecticut and southwestern Massachusetts. Designation carries with it a certain amount of federal funding to support projects that are in line with historic preservation priorities established in the management plan for the National Heritage Area.

The gardens at Naumkeag, a Trustees of Reservations Property located in Stockbridge, MA.

Heritage Landscapes

There are two basic categories of heritage landscapes currently designated within the region:

Historic Landscapes in State Lands: The state Department of Conservation and Recreation notes a short list of important heritage landscapes across the state. Those within the Berkshires, listed by type, include:

- Bash Bish Falls State Park (Scenic Landscape)
- Mount Greylock State Reservation (Scenic Landscape)
- Natural Bridge State Park (Former Industrial Landscape)
- Pittsfield State Forest (Civilian Conservation Corps Project)
- Ashuwillticook Rail Trail (Rail Trails)
- Appalachian Trail (Uncategorized)

Historic Landscapes of Great Estates: A number of the great estates in the Berkshires have contributing lands that are also protected by preservation restrictions or zoning as part of the site or district. Examples of this type of resource include the lands of Shadowbrook (currently Kriplau Center for Yoga and Health), the land and gardens of Naumkeag, and the grounds of Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival.

PROTECT

Zoning and Other Protections

There are numerous ways to protect historic assets in a community, from a specific building to the overall community context.

Demolition Delay: Demolition delay bylaws are locally-adopted bylaws that delay the demolition of historically significant buildings (for example, listed on the National Register, eligible for listing, or of a certain age) in the hopes of finding an alternative to demolition. Property owners requesting a demolition permit through the building department must first receive approval from the Historical Commission. If the Historical Commission determines that the building is "preferably preserved," a delay period is imposed, usually 6 to 12 months to allow time to explore alternatives to demolition. However, at the end of the delay period, demolition can still occur. Five Berkshire communities currently have demolition delay bylaws with varying delay periods: Becket (6 mos.), Pittsfield (6 mos.), Stockbridge (12 mos.), Tyringham (12 mos.) and Williamstown (90 days).

Local Historic District (LHD): Vastly different from a national historic district, an LHD can be one of the strongest protective regulatory tools, regulating what is visible from the public right-of-way for groups of buildings or sites in that district. I n Berkshire County there are local historic districts in only three towns – Lenox, Great Barrington and Sheffield – while there are over 200 in Massachusetts.

Other protections: There are numerous other zoning protections which protect historic resources in some manner such as scenic road bylaws, village center zoning, and adaptive reuse overlay districts. Preservation restrictions on specific properties can also ensure that the historic integrity of a building is maintained in perpetuity.

Regional Goals and Policies

GOAL HP 1.1: Identify and protect priority assets in the region with a focus on quality and diversity.

Policy 1.1.1: Coordinate historic preservation priorities within and across municipal lines.

Policy 1.1.2: Develop and use a single regional framework for historic asset preservation in the Berkshires.

GOAL HP1.2: Maintain and expand historic resource inventories.

Policy 1.2.1: Strive to employ a 30-year age maximum for surveys.

Policy 1.2.2: Work to identify gaps in surveyed resources and develop strategies to address them.

Policy 1.2.3: Pursue National Register listing for eligible surveyed sites and districts.

GOAL HP 2.1: Collaborate to improve visibility of preservation in the region.

Policy 2.1.1: Foster and sustain media presence on historic assets and their multiple benefits to the region.

Policy 2.1.2: Improve participation and representation in state preservation plans and events.

GOAL HP 2.2: Foster local awareness, pride, and year-round use of cultural historic assets.

Policy 2.2.1: Work to expand local resident use of cultural historic sites.

Policy 2.2.2: Strive to make sites relevant to the larger community in more than one way.

Policy 2.2.3: Encourage increased school use for learners of all ages.

GOAL HP 2.3: Build municipal awareness of preservation benefits, practices, and challenges.

Policy 2.3.1: Provide opportunities for local municipal officials, boards and departments to stay updated on historic preservation materials and practices.

GOAL HP3.1: Build regional capacity to offer complete spectrum of historic preservation services and functions.

Policy 3.1.1: Explore new or expanded organizations to fulfill all aspects of preservation work.

Policy 3.1.2: Build capacity of local historical commissions and local history organizations to effectively fulfill their missions.

GOAL HP 4.1: Increase the level of protection for historic assets in the region.

Policy 4.1.1: Build support for local preservation regulations.

GOAL HP 4.2: Ensure historic preservation objectives are well supported by financial tools and incentives

Policy 4.2.1: Improve access to historic rehabilitation tax credits for commercial projects.

Policy 4.2.2: Develop incentives and technical assistance for homeowners.

GOAL HP 5.1: Link historic activities as a partner to economic development efforts.

Policy 5.1.1: Work to promote historic tourism in the region.

Policy 5.1.2: Promote and enhance the value of historic preservation to downtowns.

GOAL HP 5.2: Collaborate to support local food and agriculture.

Policy 5.2.1: Support local food production through historic property use or reuse.

GOAL HP 5.3: Use historic preservation as a tool to help define and improve neighborhoods.

Policy 5.3.1: Explore ways to highlight, redefine and protect historic neighborhoods, particularly in downtown or disadvantaged areas.

Policy 5.3.2: Work to balance public health and historic preservation aims.

GOAL 5.4: Work to advance historically sensitive green building and renewable energy improvements.

Policy 5.4.1: Support homeowners of historic properties to make cost-efficient home improvements.

Policy 5.4.2: Coordinate with green building and energy efficiency professionals on appropriate approaches for historic properties.

![Sustainable Berkshires — Community Strategies For A Sustainable Future](logo)

Infrastructure & Services

Key Facts & Trends

Transportation

- New road construction can cost between $500,000 and $5,000,000 per mile.

- Routine preventive road maintenance on a continuing basis takes on average of $20,000 per mile.

- Road resurfacing and road widening projects can cost between $200,000—$3,000,000 per mile.

- Deferred maintenance drives up long term cost; it shortens the cycle for rehabilitation, which is four times as costly. Deferred rehabilitation compounds the problem, often leading to pavement failure and the need to reconstruct the whole roadbed, at ten times the cost.

Municipal Budget

- The median excess levy capacity in the region is approximately $38,000.

- State aid to Berkshire County communities declined in 2003 before leveling off and then beginning a slow climb in 2006. However, when adjusting for inflation, state aid has not rebounded to 2000 levels and is, in fact, at the lowest level in more than a decade.

Education

- Within Berkshire County, there are 18 public school districts.

- In FY2013, there are approximately 17,000 students enrolled in grades K-12 in the region.

- Public School enrollment has declined by approximately 13% between FY2003 and FY2013.

Current Conditions

Water & Wastewater

- 16 communities in the region supply municipal drinking water to all or a portion of their community
- 5 private water companies supply drinking water to small neighborhoods or portions of towns
- In communities with no public water supply, drinking water for individual users is obtained from wells or springs
- 8 publicly owned wastewater treatment plants are operated in the region
- 1 privately owned wastewater treatment plant is operated in the region
- Many residents are served by private, on-site septic systems

Transportation

- The transportation network in the region consists of approximately:
  - 4,300 miles of state and local roads
  - 431 bridges
  - 127 traffic signals
- It is estimated that the highway system serves approximately 600,000 vehicle trips per day, which travel approximately 3,000,000 vehicle-miles per day
- Public transportation is available through the Berkshire Regional Transit Authority (BRTA), which currently operates 14 regular bus routes, running Monday—Saturday in 12 communities

Education

- Each community in the region provides the opportunity for public elementary and secondary education
- There are single town school districts, school unions of several towns, and regional school districts overseeing the education of the region's children
- 4 post-secondary schools are located in the region
- The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has a funding program to assist communities with their school facility needs through state reimbursements

Communication & Information Systems

- Construction of the state and federally-funded middle-mile network project was completed in 2013
- The middle-mile provides the fiber optic backbone and connectivity to schools, town halls, public safety facilities, community colleges, libraries and health care institutions
- Efforts are underway to advance the last mile, which will provide access to high-speed broadband to individual households and businesses
- Cell phone service is available through major suppliers including, AT&T, Sprint and Verizon. However, "dead cell zones" are scattered throughout the region

Finance Friendly

Sources of Local Revenue

In Massachusetts, municipal revenues that support local spending on education, public safety, physical infrastructure and other public services are obtained through one of four types of revenue sources. These revenue components are the property tax levy, state aid, local receipts and other sources.

Since the passage of Proposition 2½ in 1980, which caps a community's annual property tax levy, the ability to maintain or increase a community's level and/or quality of services is dependent on other revenues and careful planning.

Understanding the True Cost

Costing is a management and policymaking tool that assists a community to determine all the revenues and costs (i.e., direct costs, indirect costs and capital expenditures) of a given service. The purpose of costing a service is not simply to collect data, but to provide municipal managers and officials with information they can use to make management and budgetary decisions such as the following.

- Determine the full cost of providing a service
- Determine direct and indirect costs
- Determine operating subsidies from the tax levy
- Analyze the efficiency of a service
- Set fees and charges that will recover costs
- Establish process for annual review of revenues, costs and fees

Non-traditional Revenue Sources

The Community Preservation Act (CPA) was signed into law in September 2000. The CPA is a smart growth tool that helps communities preserve open space and historic sites, create affordable housing, and develop outdoor recreational facilities.

Municipalities must adopt CPA by ballot referendum. Community preservation monies are raised locally by cities or towns imposing a surcharge of not more than 3% of the tax levy against real property or by a city allocating funds. The CPA statute also creates a statewide Community Preservation Trust Fund, administered by the Department of Revenue, which provides distributions each year to communities that have adopted CPA.
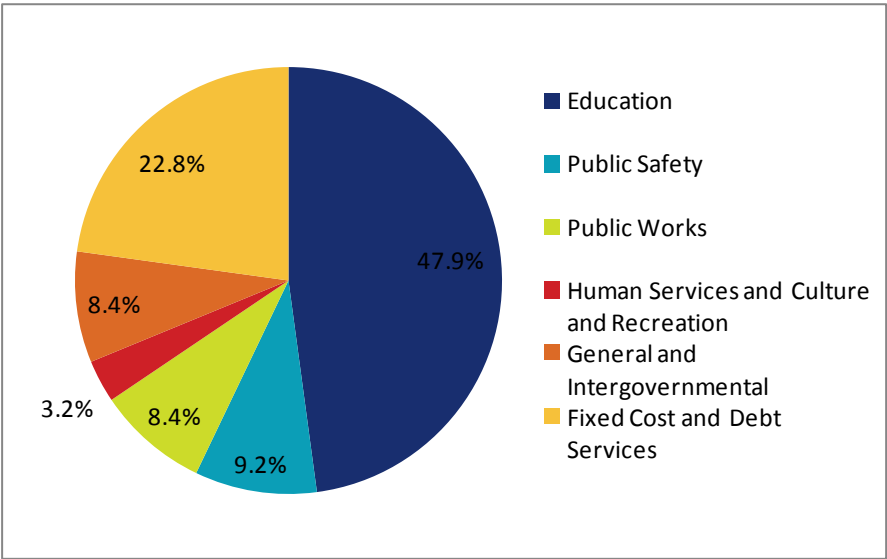
Through the CPA, a steady funding source is created to preserve and improve a community's character and quality of life. This steady funding source allows the community to fully utilize property taxes and other traditional revenue streams to fund the day-to day operating needs of safety, health, schools, roads, maintenance, and more.

The Green Communities Act was enacted in 2008 to support Massachusetts communities towards a sustainable future, specifically in terms of energy use.

The Green Communities Grant Program offers funding for communities investing in energy efficiency upgrades and policies, renewable energy technologies, energy management systems and services, and demand side reduction programs.

The Green Communities Grant Program provides funds to designated Green Communities and a mechanism to reap the financial benefits of improved energy efficiency, both of which assist the community to fully utilize traditional revenue streams to fund day-to day operating needs.

Municipal Budget Breakdown

Legend:
- Education — 47.9%
- Public Safety — 9.2%
- Public Works — 8.4%
- Human Services and Culture and Recreation — 3.2%
- General and Intergovernmental — 8.4%
- Fixed Cost and Debt Services — 22.8%

On average, Berkshire County communities allocate approximately 48% of their budget toward schools. For some communities this amount is significantly higher.

With general, intergovernmental, fixed cost and debt services absorbing an additional 31% of the budget, our communities often struggle to spread the remaining 21% of their budget across a wide variety of infrastructure and service needs.

Working with such constrained budgets becomes even more problematic when attempting to keep up with aging infrastructure, changing regulations and new state and federal mandates.

Providing Quality

Infrastructure and services are crucial to supporting various land use, neighborhood, economic development and open space initiatives. The health of an area is determined by its supporting infrastructure. All aspects from roads to public safety to education facilities need to be managed to meet the vision of creating a vibrant community with a high quality of life.

Providing quality infrastructure and services is integral to meeting quality of life objectives. For the region to grow into a place of excellence for business and residents, it must provide safe, comfortable, and convenient ways to get around.

A high quality education is important to parents, homeowners, and business owners. Parents worry over the quality of the schools their children attend because a good primary and secondary education is essential to the success of their child's transition from high school to higher education or the labor market. Homeowners, even if they do not have children in public schools, are anxious about the quality of local public schools because they know the direct positive effect it has on the resale value of their property. Finally, business owners recognize that a quality K–12 education makes the workers they employ more productive.

It will be important for the region to adjust to the changing climate. Emergency responders must plan for the potential impacts such as ice storms, high heat days, and power outages. Public works departments will need to plan for the possibility of more frequent and higher intensity storms. This may include resizing culverts and improving roadside drainage to accommodate more water during these high flow, high velocity events.

High speed internet, broadband and wireless communication are critical pieces of infrastructure that can shape the economic future of the region. As the "middle mile" is completed it will be important to move forward toward implementing the "last mile" and effectively marketing the infrastructure that is available in the region.

As we strive toward providing the highest quality infrastructure and services it will be important to invest in the region and encourage the use of innovative approaches to improve management, reduce costs, leverage funding, and create jobs.

Regional Goals and Policies

GOAL IS1: Ensure that long-term planning initiatives include the maintenance, operation and eventual replacement of existing infrastructure.

> **Policy IS1.1: Engage in a proactive planning process in all aspects of infrastructure planning including both new development and routine maintenance.**

GOAL IS2: Ensure that the maintenance and operation of existing infrastructure occurs in the most cost effective way possible and that the expansion of new infrastructure does not impose an undue financial burden on governmental resources and taxpayers.

> **Policy IS2.1: Encourage different ways of providing municipal services where it will lead to cost savings, efficiencies and/or more sustainable and natural use of resources, such as appropriate regionalization and consolidation.**

> **Policy IS2.2: Fully utilize sources of revenue available through traditional funding resources.**

> **Policy IS2.3: Support innovative and stable sources of funding to supplement traditional funding resources which have become limited or are no longer available.**

More Regional Goals and Policies

GOAL IS3: Develop a transportation system that affords mobility for all, provides appropriate access to employment, housing, services and recreation areas, is protective of the environment, enhances community livability, and operates safely.

   Policy IS3.1: Maintain and improve the mobility and accessibility of the transportation system.

   Policy IS3.2: Provide appropriate access to employment, housing, services and recreation areas.

   Policy IS3.3: Conserve the environment and mitigate the harmful impacts of our transportation system to it.

   Policy IS3.4: Manage, maintain, and enhance the transportation system as necessary to maintain safety.

GOAL IS4: Provide public schools that offer a high quality education for all of the region's children and adequate school facilities and equipment to serve every community.

   Policy IS4.1: Work with the school departments and school boards to better utilize resources, including infrastructure, in a cost effective manner.

   Policy IS4.2: Work constructively with the region's school districts to monitor and forecast school service demand based upon actual and predicted growth.

   Policy IS4.3: Work with all available resources to gain additional state adi through the updating of the Foundation Formula, Special Education reimbursements and Chapter 70 (regional school district transportation) funding.

GOAL IS5: Ensure that the region has the necessary services, facilities, equipment, and manpower required to provide for all public health, safety and emergency needs.

   Policy IS5.1: Assure that all areas of the region have the highest level of police coverage, fire protection, and emergency medical service (EMS), at the lowest possible cost, to meet existing and future demand.

GOAL IS6: Adjust as necessary to a changing climate to continue to protect health and safety as well as property and infrastructure and provide services based on the needs and demands of the residents in the county.

   Policy IS6.1: Consider the expected and potential impacts of climate change in the permitting and design of new projects and redevelopment.

   Policy IS6.2: Encourage proactive planning to reduce the loss of life, property, infrastructure, and environmental and cultural resources from natural disasters.

GOAL IS7: Maintain adequate water, wastewater and stormwater facilities and subsurface infrastructure.

   Policy IS7.1: Maintain wastewater collection and treatment systems, upgrade as necessary to mitigate current deficiencies, and improve to keep pace with changing technologies and demands.

   Policy IS7.2: Maintain a stormwater management program that minimizes flood hazards and protects water quality by employing watershed-based approaches that balance environmental, economic and engineering considerations.

   Policy IS7.3: Maintain adequate water supply, storage facilities, and delivery system to serve the needs of existing and future residents and businesses.

GOAL IS8: Make high-speed internet access available to all areas in the region and support the enhancement of the wireless telecommunications and broadband internet network and enable new economic opportunities.

   Policy IS8.1: Completion of middle mile fiber optic network and all CAI(s) are connected to the network.

   Policy IS8.2: Last mile high speed broadband internet service to all areas of the region.

   Policy IS8.3: Take advantage of new economic opportunities relating to the new high speed broadband.

GOAL IS9: Utilize a holistic approach toward infrastructure and services that accounts for regional impacts and needs now and into the future.

   Policy IS9.1: Consider both short term and long term regional impacts when managing infrastructure and services and work toward improved efficiency.

GOAL IS10: Invest in the Region as a hub of innovation in fields such as of water, wastewater, and stormwater management, using the academic, technical, and professional expertise to support innovation, and to pilot successful treatment alternatives.

   Policy IS10.1: Encourage the use of innovative approaches to the management of water, wastewater and stormwater to improve management, reduce costs, leverage funding, and create jobs.

Land Use

Key Trends

Land Use

- The total population and number of housing units in small towns (those under 1000 population) is increasing, despite the fact that the population in Berkshire County is declining overall.

- Small towns (those under 1000 population) have seen an increase in housing units since 2000. Collectively over 600 housing units were built in these towns since 2000. This is 12% of the total number of units in these towns. Although these communities contain only about 6% of the county population total, nearly 17% of the housing units built since 2000 were built in these communities. Almost all of these have been built along existing road frontage.

- Almost 50% of the land area zoned for residential use in Berkshire County is zoned for less than 2 acre zoning per lot size. Many small towns are one zone towns with typical minimum lot sizes being 1 to 1.5 acres. Prior to 1950, most residential units in the Berkshires were built in lots less than 0.25 acres. Between 1950 and 1974 most residential units were built on lots .25-.50 acre. Since 1975 this trend changed significantly with many homes built on lots greater than 5 acres. Since 2000 33% of the residential units built in Berkshire County have been built on lots greater than 5 acres.

- The number of homes built for seasonal residence has increased since 1975 to over 1/3 of all new homes being built. This compares to only 10-15% of homes built prior to 1975. Seasonal homes consume larger lots than non seasonal homes. Lots for non seasonal homes average about 2.5 acre, while seasonal homes, since 1975, mostly consume 5 acre+ lots.
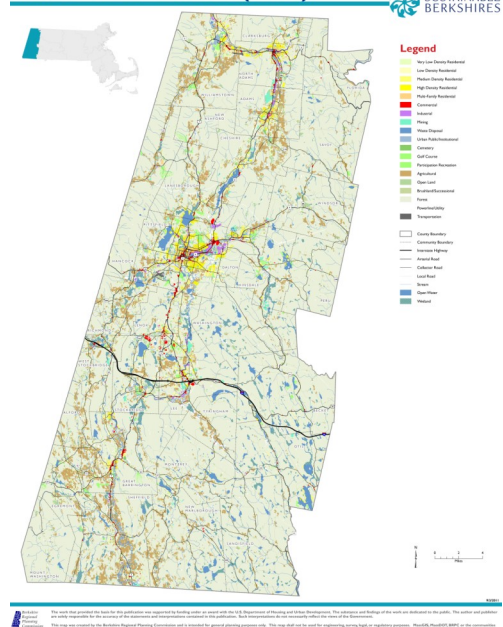
Challenges

- Except for some of the larger communities, most of the communities in Berkshire County have relatively simple zoning, characterized by the segregation of land uses into specified geographic districts and dimensional standards stipulating limitations on development activity within each type of district.
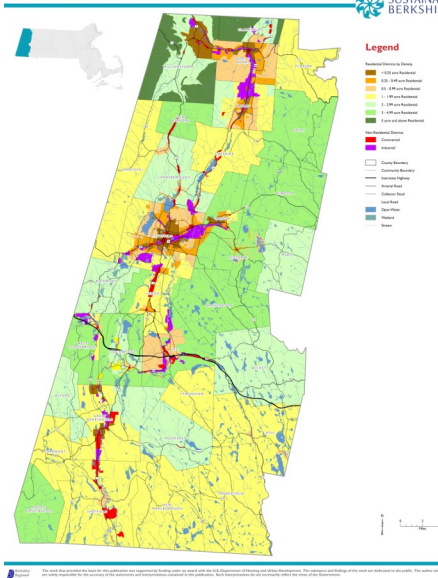
Current Land Use

- The Berkshire region is still a relatively undeveloped area with 93% (approximately 564,741 acres) of all land either not developed or used for recreational/open space and agricultural purposes.

- Developed land accounts for approximately 40,655 acres of the region, or approximately 7% of the region total. Approximately 50% of the developed lands are used for residential purposes.

- Although much of the land in Berkshire County is currently undeveloped much of it is subject to some type of development constraint. About 467,976 acres, 77% of the total acreage has some type of development constraint including steep slopes, protected lands, wetlands, River Protected Act or floodplain. There are approximately 137,682 (including currently developed land) acres in Berkshire County free from development constraints. Even, factoring in the 40,655 acres currently developed indicates there is significant capacity for future development in the county.

LAND USE - STATE (2005)

ZONING

Zoning

Zoning is the primary tool municipalities have to regulate land use. Berkshire County is zoned as follows:

Residential (<.25 ac.) - 9,207 ac
Residential (.25-.49ac.) - 10,960 ac
Residential (.50-.99 ac.) - 29,324 ac
Residential (1-1.99 ac.) - 238,770 ac
Residential (2-2.99 ac.) - 133,357 ac
Residential (3-4.99 ac.) - 149,496 ac
Residential (5 plus) - 19,145 ac

Commercial - 6,648 ac
Industrial—8 , 752 ac

Tools, Techniques & Capacity

Master Plans

Municipal Master Plans guide a community to a desired future. Berkshire County is fortunate in that the 3 largest municipalities have or in the process of developing current plans (within the last 5 years.) One other town has a current plan, 6 have plans prepared within the last 15 years, 5 communities have outdated plans, but half the communities of Berkshire County have never had a Master Plan.

ANR Development

Approval-Not-Required (or "ANR") development refers to the subdivision of single lots with frontage on a public way. Under state law, lots on a public way that meet zoning dimensional

requirements for lot area and frontage may be subdivided without substantive Planning Board review. Over time, ANR development can irreparably change the rural character of the Berkshires by compromising the scenic quality of roads by lining houses every 100-250 feet, eliminating scenic vistas and wooded corridors, altering stone walls and large shade. ANR development impacts traffic safety because development is allowed on all public ways, even very narrow roadways with blind curves and hills. ANR development fragments woodlands, wetlands and fields into remnant parcels too small or too isolated to support wildlife or be used for farming or forestry purposes. Most of the residential development in the Berkshires is ANR development.

Tools

Community planners can make a difference. Here is a list of some of the planning and zoning tools communities can use to implement the Future Land Use Plan:

- Adaptive Reuse Zoning (Mill Reuse)
- Chapter 43D – Expedited Permitting District
- Form Based Zoning
- Village Center Zoning
- Transfer of Development Rights
- Home Occupation Ordinance/Bylaw
- Low Impact Development (LID) Bylaw
- Natural Resource Protection Zoning (NRPZ)/Open Space Residential Design (OSRD)

Maximize Investment & Resources

Land use policies and practices can serve to stimulate new growth and development. With limited private investment in new development and dwindling state investment in public infrastructure, Berkshire communities must work to fully utilize available state programs, existing infrastructure and existing buildings to maximize the prior investments that have been made in the region as well as to increase public and private investment in Berkshire County. This Plan provides a framework for maximizing the investment previously made in the region by reinvesting in previously developed areas and sites and prioritizing the best locations for new economic and housing development and lands for preservation.

Planning Ahead for Growth

Since 2007, the Administration has employed the Planning Ahead for Growth Strategy. This strategy identifies areas communities want new growth, creates prompt and predictable permitting in those areas, invests in public infrastructure needed to support that growth and markets those places to businesses and developers interested in locating and growing in the Commonwealth. This process can attract new public investment and development to a region.

Three areas in Massachusetts have embarked on comprehensive planning processes to implement this Planning for Growth Strategy, thirty-one communities along the south east coast, through the South Coast Rail Corridor Plan, thirty seven communities along Route 495, 495/MetroWest Development Compact Planning Study and fifteen communities in the northeast coast area. Those efforts have identified priority development and preservation areas and needed transportation and infrastructure investments for the region. These comprehensive planning efforts have led to the state prioritizing public investments in designated areas. Such as process employed in Berkshire County could lead to additional public investment for infrastructure coming into the region. These investments could serve to attract new development and economic growth.

Future Land Use Plan

The *Future Land Use Map* identifies areas where specified development patterns and associated land uses are desired. The type and distribution of uses on the *Future Land Use Map* are reflective of the region's desire to promote a more predictable, sustainable, and connected pattern of development for the future. Future zone changes should generally adhere to the land use categories depicted on the *Future Land Use Map.* Municipal policies should serve to advance these patterns.

Industrial *Low to high density*
These areas serve as employment centers and house a number of the region's significant employers. They have major infrastructure needs. Arterial highway access typically is very important. Transit service should be available. There may be a variety of development types – larger single-user sites and campuses; multiple users on planned or individual sites; wide variety of non-retail uses; retail should not be major component. They generally are provided with the full range of public utilities and other infrastructure (rail, gas, arterial highway access, water & sewer). There are a wide variety of sites and buildings ready to be used.
Primary Use: Manufacturing, industrial, energy & infrastructure, freight/goods movement, transportation
Secondary Use: Supporting commercial, storage/warehousing

Highway Commercial *Medium to high density*
These areas provide retail, commercial, and professional services to Berkshire County residents. Close proximity to and along major highways allows easy access to these sites. Most are served by infrastructure. Public transit generally serves these sites. Some of the largest shopping areas are located in these sites. While serving an important function, consideration will need to be given to the design so as not to impede the flow of traffic. Appropriate reuse of the buildings in these areas can reduce development on green fields.
Primary Use: Retail, professional office, hotel/motel
Secondary Use: Storage/warehousing

Downtown Commercial *Very high density*
These areas are high energy urban centers. They contain high density mixed use multi-story buildings in close proximity to each other. A wide mix of land uses is contained within these areas offering basic as well as specialized services along with municipal services and cultural opportunities. Residential opportunities, especially on upper floors, are provided. There is a space for residents and visitors of all ages and backgrounds to enjoy social engagement, recreational activities and cultural events. Pedestrian accessibility is a strength in these areas.
Primary Use: Retail, medical services, professional services, cultural amenities, senior housing, apartments, restaurants, residential
Secondary Use: Urban recreation, light manufacturing

Urban Neighborhood *High to very high density*
This land use category contains predominantly high density residential development in an urban environment. Only found in Pittsfield, North Adams and Adams these areas contain single and multi-family residences in close proximity to each other. A diverse mix of residents populates these areas. Residents feel closely linked to the activities happening downtown and to the associated neighborhood style retail, service and employment opportunities. Services such as corner stores provide the opportunity for social engagement. High quality public services are generally provided. Pedestrian and cycling infrastructure help connect residents to opportunities and assets in their neighborhood as well destinations around the city. Served by municipal infrastructure, these areas can accommodate a large number of residents.
Primary Use: Single family residences, duplexes, apartments, condos, multi-family residences, neighborhood commercial and retail
Secondary Use: Community services

Special Use Area *Medium to high density*
These areas contain educational institutions, hospitals, airports and cultural institutions with relatively large land holdings (frequently prior "Great Estates".) They are areas that are relatively self-contained but exert a strong influence on the surrounding areas. They can serve as activity centers used by relatively large numbers of people on a periodic or regular basis. In many instances they have their own facilities plan.
Primary Use: Educational institutions, hospitals, airports, cultural institutions
Secondary Use: Supporting commercial

Resource Conservation *Very low density*
This land use category denotes lands currently protected from development. It contains state owned land as well as lands protected by conservation restrictions, held by towns and non-profit organizations such as land trusts. These lands contain critical habitat, provide biodiversity and offer recreation resources. They provide connectivity of other resource areas and provide corridors for wildlife. Typically they have many constraints to development including habitat and slope constraints. The scenic nature of many of these areas, including view sheds and landscapes, is a contributing factor to the Berkshires being a tourism attraction.
Primary Use: Open space, recreation. habitat preservation
Secondary Use: Forestry, watershed protection

FUTURE LAND USE

SUSTAINABLE BERKSHIRES

Legend
- Resource Conservation
- Rural Residential
- Outdoor Recreation Neighborhood
- Residential Neighborhood
- Urban Neighborhood
- Villages
- Highway Commercial
- Downtown Commercial
- Industrial
- Special Use Area
- County Boundary
- Community Boundary
- Interstate Highway
- Arterial Road
- Collector Road
- Local Road
- Open Water
- Wetland
- Stream

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

The work that provided the basis for this publication was supported by funding under an award with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The substance and findings of the work are dedicated to the public. The author and publisher are solely responsible for the accuracy of the statements and interpretations contained in this publication. Such interpretations do not necessarily reflect the views of the Government.

This map was created by the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission and is intended for general planning purposes only. This map shall not be used for engineering, survey, legal, or regulatory purposes. MassGIS, MassDOT, BRPC or the communities may have supplied portions of this data.

Residential Neighborhood *Medium to high density*
This land use category represents areas of medium to high density residential development. This is the Berkshires version of the suburbs. These areas often surround Downtown and Urban Areas. They are primarily single family homes with some duplexes and apartments. They are largely auto-dependent and do not contain a broad mix of services or retail opportunities for residents.
Primary Use: Single family residences, duplexes, apartments
Secondary Use: Small scale gardening, home-based businesses

Outdoor Recreation Neighborhood *Medium to high density*
These areas are medium to high density neighborhoods around lakes, ski or other resort areas. They are located there because of the lake or resort. Much of the time they serve as second homes. They are important assets to the recreational economy of the Berkshires. Care needs to be given not to degrade the recreational asset or impair associated environmental qualities, which could then degrade the economic value as a recreational resource.
Primary Use: Single family residences, condos, recreation
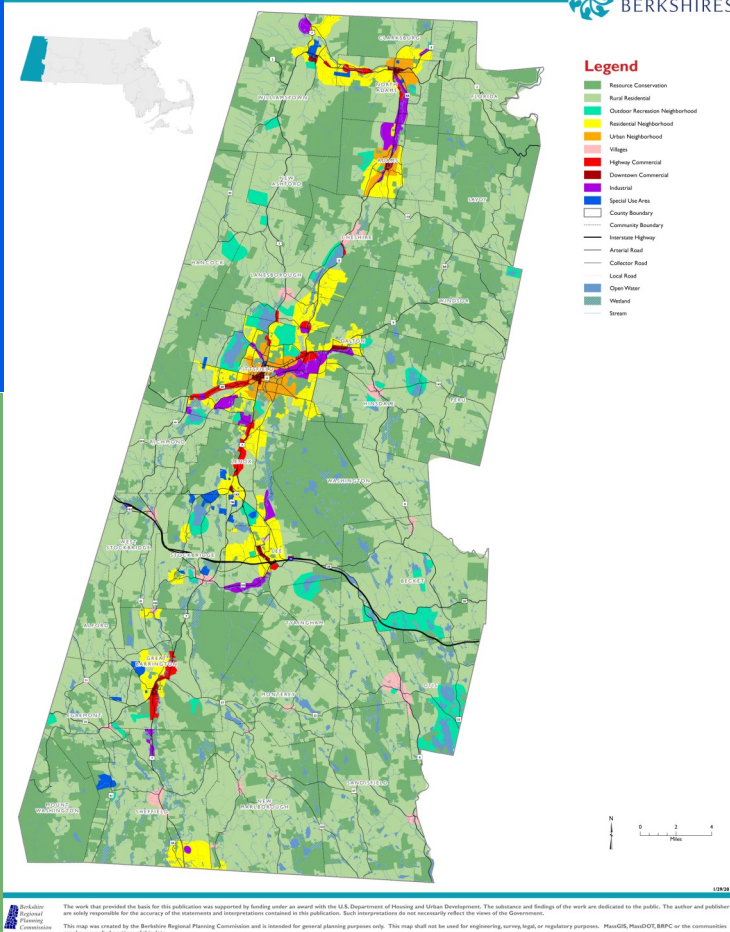**Secondary Use:** Supporting retail/commercial, home based businesses

Rural Residential *Low density*
This land use category represents areas where low-density residential development either exists or in many instances could occur, although in many instances there are severe constraints to development that would preclude any development. These areas are largely outside of the downtowns and more developed areas and help connect more developed areas with the surrounding conservation areas. They serve as important agricultural areas. They generally lack public utilities and residents should not expect a high level of public services. These areas also dominate most of the smaller towns outside of the valley communities and contribute to the rural character of the region. These areas are also where additional conservation protection is targeted but also may serve as areas for wind energy development. The emphasis here is to maintain a distinct rural identify and landscape and ensure that low density development in these areas employs best practices for wildlife-friendly landscaping, stormwater management, and resource protection.
Primary Use: Single family residences, agriculture
Secondary Use: Duplexes, home based businesses, rural small businesses, resource based economic development

Villages *Medium density*
Mixed use neighborhoods are what are commonly referred to a village centers in rural areas. Though primarily residential in nature, these areas contain an eclectic mix of uses that can provide for many of the needs of the residents without the use of cars. Generally pedestrian friendly, these areas can foster a strong sense of community connectedness.
Primary Use: Residential
Secondary Use: Community retail, community services, home-based businesses

Regional Goals and Policies

GOAL LU1.1: Work together as a region to implement the Future Land Use Plan.

Policy LU 1.1.1: Update plans and regulations to be consistent with the Future Land Use Plan.

GOAL LU1.2: Develop in a way that complements environmental and natural assets of the region.

Policy LU 1.2.1: Adopt land use regulations that encourage redevelopment, allow complementary new development and protect environmental and natural resources.

Policy LU 1.2.2: Encourage development projects to utilize sustainable development practices through a mix of incentives and requirements.

GOAL LU1.3: Limit fragmentation of remaining undeveloped land.

Policy LU 1.3.1: Adopt land use regulations that encourage redevelopment and allow new development that minimizes the development footprint and its ecological impact.

Goal LU1.4: Develop and re-develop in a manner that reinforces and complements the unique urban character of the region.

Policy LU1.4.1: Use land use regulations and design standards to unify and enhance elements of the existing urban areas.

GOAL LU1.5: Develop and re-develop settled places that encourage and expand connections between people and allows them to readily conduct normal daily activities with minimal automobile use.

Policy LU1.5.1: Use land use regulations and design standards to enable village areas to thrive and grow.

GOAL LU1.6: Maintain the aesthetic character of the region.

Policy LU 1.6.1: Use land use regulations and policies to maintain the unique aesthetic characteristics of the region.

Policy LU1.6.2: Use land use regulations to maintain the flow of traffic along highway commercial areas, promote walkability and maintain safety for all users.

GOAL LU 2.1: Use long range comprehensive planning to achieve a desired future.

Policy LU2.1.1: Provide municipal officials with appropriate long range planning tools.

Policy LU2.1.2: Build, expand and support capacity at the municipal level to conduct comprehensive planning and community development activities.

GOAL LU 2.2: Enable municipalities to guide development according to their desires.

Policy LU2.2.1: Advocate for stronger policies at the state level to support sustainable development patterns.

GOAL LU 2.3: Adopt a clear, straightforward development review and approval process.

Policy LU2.3.1: Encourage municipalities to adopt a clear, straightforward development review and approval processes.

Goal LU 3.1: Maintain and revitalize existing urban and industrial areas.

Policy LU3.1.1: Direct new growth in the form of jobs, housing, commerce, utilities, industry, community facilities, recreational facilities and cultural facilities to the urban areas.

Policy LU3.1.2: Promote reuse and revitalization of areas (including residential areas, under-utilized commercial and industrial areas, including mill buildings) in need of revitalization.

Goal LU 3.2: Direct development and public utility investments to areas identified as desiring such development.

Policy LU 3.2.1: Identify areas where future development is desired and plan and prioritize infrastructure improvement, expansion and major rehabilitation projects to those areas.

GOAL LU 3.3: Identify and prioritize areas targeted for redevelopment and new development as a way to attract new economic growth.

Policy LU 3.3.1: Designate Local and Regional Priority Development Areas.

Goal LU 3.4: Coordinate land use development activities between municipalities as a way to attract new development and growth.

Policy LU 3.4.1: Improve coordination across municipal boundaries to promote consistent development standards and approval processes to facilitate site reuse or development.