Town of Williamstown, MA

Existing Conditions Analysis

A document that will inform the Envisioning Williamstown 2035 Comprehensive Plan

September 26, 2022
This report is an overview of current conditions in Williamstown as they pertain to the Comprehensive Plan. The town acknowledges that its current conditions are constantly evolving over time and that the data and information in this report represent a snapshot in time. The purpose of this report is to provide a starting place for discussion as the community comes together to identify a vision and path forward into the future and shapes what Envisioning Williamstown 2035 will look like. Its intended to serve as a resource to stimulation conversation among community members about important issues facing residents and others during this planning process.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT
It is with gratitude and humility that we acknowledge that we are working and gathering on the ancestral homelands of the Mohican people, who are the indigenous peoples of this land. Despite tremendous hardship in being forced from here, today their community resides in Wisconsin, and is known as the Stockbridge-Munsee Community. We pay honor and respect to their ancestors past and present as we commit to building a more inclusive and equitable space for all.

The Town of Williamstown would like to express its gratitude to everyone who contributed to the development of this Existing Conditions Analysis report for Envisioning Williamstown 2035, Williamstown’s new Comprehensive Plan for the future. This includes the Comprehensive Plan Committee, Town Staff, and the consulting team who authored of this document. The team includes Resilience Planning and Design, RKG Associates, FB Environmental, and JM Goldson.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction 4
Williamstown Today 5
Overarching Frameworks 8
Housing 14
Economic Development 33
Transportation 52
Public Facilities and Services 66
Natural Resources 93
Parks, Open Space, and Recreation 121
Historic and Cultural Resources 151
Land Use 163
Appendix A: Other Resources 176
Appendix B: Land Use Table 177
INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this Existing Conditions Report is to provide a baseline understanding of Williamstown as a community in 2022. This information will inform and guide the work of the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee, Town Staff, the Consulting Team, and the broader community over the next year. This report represents the first of three phases of the Comprehensive Plan writing process. It will also serve as a resource for outreach activities and the eventual writing of Envisioning Williamstown 2035, the Town’s new Comprehensive Plan.

Each section of this Existing Conditions Report begins with a short profile that explains the significance of the topic and key findings that should be pursued further to inform this planning process. Following each profiles is a longer inventory that includes more data, details, and analysis related to the topic. In each of these sections, information is presented that explains how Williamstown is changing, and what emerging issues, challenges, and opportunities the town may wish to address in the Comprehensive Plan. These inventories are intended to provide a more detailed explanation of the background sources used, data collected, additional context related to the issues identified, and, in some cases, questions and potential actions that should be explored later on in the planning process.

We would also like to acknowledge that the consulting team who has written this report identify as white and have not been subject to the same biases that have impacted minority populations. We recognize that more outreach and engagement need to be conducted with the community, to identify issues, opportunities, and challenges the town should consider addressing in the Comprehensive Plan as well as equity-related content and recommendations for Envisioning Williamstown 2035. This report represents only the beginning of an understanding of equity issues in Williamstown.

The Existing Conditions Report will be used to guide and inform the planning team, and to engage the public in conversations about planning for the future. It will be the main source of information used to inform discussions and the basis for materials created to engage the public. The intent is for this information to educate community members so that they can help the Town of Williamstown identify a clear vision to work toward, and the many actions that must be taken as a community during the next decade to achieve that vision.
WILLIAMSTOWN TODAY

Located in Northern Berkshire County and bordering both Vermont and New York, Williamstown’s landscape is notable for its steep wooded hillsides, open fields and vistas, and in-town neighborhoods. With Williams College in the core of the community, there is a constant blend of campus and community life that makes Williamstown unique in the region.

The Town Center and surrounding neighborhoods provide the greatest diversity of housing, small businesses, and walkability in the community. With additional investment in sidewalks and pathways needed to safely accommodate these transportation modes, safe, connected, and accessible bicycle and pedestrian connections are possible in these areas. The densely settled neighborhoods already have some access to trail and recreational opportunities. Over time, there is the potential for additional recreation opportunities and trails to be established throughout the community.

Moving out from the Town Center and adjacent neighborhoods, Williamstown quickly becomes much more rural in its character. Large protected open spaces, viewsheds, single-family residences on large lots, and narrow, unpaved back roads all contribute to the distinct feel of these areas. Finding ways to balance the protection of the remaining agricultural lands (which support existing and future farming in these areas of town) while also accommodating Williamstown’s desired development pattern is a need. Additionally, housing affordability, which is a pressing issue in many rural communities like Williamstown, should be addressed, in part, by sound land use planning practices.

Housing affordability, limited rental units, housing construction costs, and environmental constraints that impact new development continue to be pressing issues in town as boards, committees, organizations, and developers work to increase the diversity and
availability of high-quality affordable housing units in Williamstown.

Williamstown has had a heavy reliance on the presence of Williams College, but there are other notable businesses and institutions that also attract visitors and employees to the community. Tourism and visitation is also a major driver of the local economy, as Williamstown boasts a number of destinations including the Clark Art Institute, museums, its proximity to Mt. Greylock, and its local trail network. The recent increase in remote workers living in Williamstown is another emerging trend that has been observed and may provide some new opportunities and some new challenges, especially as they relate to increased housing development and reduced affordability.

As a small town, the municipal facilities and services appear to be serving the population adequately. Aside from the need for a new Town Office Building, Fire Department facility, and improvements to the Library, the other municipal structures have received the necessary levels of investment and the roadway system is well maintained. Older adults make up a significant portion of Williamstown’s population and may need additional services or support in the years ahead. Incorporating sustainability and resilience objectives into the design and operation of municipal sites, structures, and fleets is a new opportunity for the community to explore and commit to going forward. Related to this, the biggest threat to the existing transportation system, water and sewer system, and stormwater system is from climate change as large isolated storm events have started to impact different areas of the community at various times causing flooding and increased river bank erosion.

Through the passing of town resolutions and the establishment of the Diversity, Racial
Equity, and Inclusion Committee, Williamstown is demonstrating its commitment towards creating a vibrant, safe, and accessible community that supports the lives of all who live, work, and play in town and. Looking ahead, there is opportunity to continue supporting initiatives that yield tangible results for creating a more equitable and inclusive community, celebrating the past and present diversity of Williamstown’s residents, and supporting the needs of long-time residents. This must be considered as the Comprehensive Plan identifies needed infrastructure investments and possible land use policies that will guide this changing community over the coming decade.

While the historic structures and sites in the Town Center area contribute to the charm of the community, they alone do not represent an accurate or complete history of Williamstown. Based on the analysis of prior planning efforts and conversations with Town Staff and the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee, it appears there is interest in acknowledging and highlighting life in Williamstown prior to the arrival of European settlers to transparently communicate a more complete historical record.

Going forward, the comprehensive planning process will need to engage the residents in thinking about how to best guide future development activity and infrastructure investment to reinforce the community’s desired land use pattern and transportation network, while reflecting its core values of building equity, inclusion, sustainability, and resilience into community life. These decisions will then require both regulatory and non-regulatory actions and a clear vision of the future to guide future development activity, conservation, and infrastructure investments. Williamstown is a really wonderful community, and is attracting residents and visitors for good reason. Planning for the next decade or two of life in Williamstown is an opportunity to make this exceptional and unique community an even better place to live, work, learn, and play.
OVERARCHING FRAMEWORKS

Sustainability and community resilience and diversity, equity, and inclusion have been identified as overarching frameworks for the Envisioning Williamstown 2035 Comprehensive Plan. Unlike the previous 2002 Master Plan, these topics will be foundational in this new Plan. To effectively plan for the future, the community must be good stewards of its natural and built environment; address global challenges, like climate change, with local actions; and be an inclusive community that provide opportunities for existing and potential residents. Because these topics can be viewed through the lenses of many aspects of community life, from transportation, to economic development, to natural resources, they are discussed in each of the following sections of this report to varying degrees.

SUSTAINABILITY AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Climate change, loss of habitat, and threats to natural resources are impacting communities around the world. Williamstown is aiming to be a more resilient community that is actively addressing these challenges through coordinated, community-based public and private efforts that mitigate the impacts of climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, protect natural resources and ecosystem services, reduce waste, and increase sustainability.

Since sustainability and community resilience are new topic areas being added to the Williamstown comprehensive planning process, it is important to first define these terms and explain their role in planning for the future of the community.

WILLIAMSTOWN AS A “GREEN COMMUNITY”

Williamstown has been a “Green Community” since 2010 and participates in the program which has grown steadily since the first group of 35 municipalities to include more than half of the diverse cities and towns of the Commonwealth.

Massachusetts’s Green Community Designation and Grant Program provides a road map along with financial and technical support to municipalities that:

1) pledge to cut municipal energy use by an ambitious and achievable goal of 20 percent over 5 years and
2) meet four other criteria established in the Green Communities Act.

Nearly 87% of the Commonwealth’s population reside in designated Green Communities. Of those 280 designated communities, 160 are also considered environmental justice communities. The benefits of designation extend beyond the program itself, inspiring cities and towns to undertake additional energy-related initiatives, improve coordination between municipal staff and departments, and increase messaging with the public at large about energy and climate-related issues and actions. Williamstown has received over $200,000 in grants to fund energy efficiency programs.

More information on this program is available at: https://www.mass.gov(guides/becoming-a-designated-green-community}
**Sustainability** means meeting our own needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In addition to natural resources, we also consider the role of social and economic resources.

**Resilience** is the ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change.

Through land use regulations, infrastructure investments, and voluntary actions, the community can work together to generate clean energy, protect and rehabilitate natural habitats, and find solutions to other issues.

Williamstown has already been hard at work on initiatives that are aligned with community sustainability and resilience. Some examples of this include:

- The creation of the Spruces as a recreation and flood mitigation area after Hurricane Irene
- The completion of the Spring Street “Big Dig” which addressed critical flooding issues
- Ongoing farmland preservation efforts and education on the challenges and benefits of the local food system
- Interest in the establishment of pollinator gardens and community garden spaces
- The Net Zero Resolution and energy conservation efforts in municipal, institutional, and privately owned buildings
- The development of large solar energy systems and successful residential solarize campaigns
- The completion of several energy saving projects in municipal buildings
- The awarded “Green Community” designation by the State of Massachusetts since 2010

Together, community sustainability and resilience planning will ensure that Williamstown is a community that is socially connected, addresses residents’ current challenges while planning for the needs of future generations, and has the ability to withstand future hardships or disasters while fostering community recovery. At the municipal scale, this will require actions be identified and implemented at the site level, town-wide, and into the surrounding region. Together, these planning topics encourage a holistic approach to long range planning and a recognition that all of the topics and actions being considered in this comprehensive plan are interconnected.

**DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION**

The Town of Williamstown is preparing to create a Comprehensive Plan with a forward-looking vision for the future of the community that is equitable and inclusive for all. A town that focuses on meeting the needs of all residents, especially those historically underserved by local government and planning processes, can help create an accessible and welcoming community and an environment in which individuals achieve their full potential. Williamstown’s commitment to becoming a more equitable and inclusive community represents an opportunity to make equity a guiding principle in policy development, infrastructure investment, capital improvement planning, and in local governmental processes and initiatives. This will help address issues that underserved and marginalized communities face including lack of transportation, secure and affordable housing options, food access, social and recreation opportunities, and the need for other support services.
This desire to integrate equity into the Comprehensive Plan builds on a formal commitment the town has made through the passing of Articles 36 and 37. This was an important first step the town has made as it works towards becoming a more inclusive community that celebrates diversity and provides equitable opportunities for all. Aspects of diversity, equity, and inclusion that are observed through the analysis of existing conditions in the following sections focus on the following:

- Highlights populations in Williamstown that have historically been marginalized and underserved in land use and community planning.
- Identifies some of the preliminary needs community members of different ages, races, ethnicities, abilities, sexual orientation, genders, income levels, and others may have and that could be addressed through the Comprehensive Plan.
- Summarizes some of the work that the town and other community groups have undertaken to make Williamstown more equitable and inclusive as a community.

For the purposes of this report, the following definitions are being used:

**Diversity** is the presence of differences within a group of people that encompass, but are not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, nationality, immigration status, veteran status, socioeconomic status, educational attainment, language, (dis)ability, age, or political belief (American Planning Association). Acknowledging and embracing the diversity that exists in a community can create opportunities for both finding commonalities between different people, while also respecting the unique differences in perspectives and worldviews that exist in everyone.

**Equity** refers to alleviating barriers so that all community members have access to the same opportunities and can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential (American Planning Association). When striving to become a more equitable community, it is recognized that systemic advantages and barriers exist that disproportionately impact certain community members. Equity in planning is broadly concerned with access to resources and opportunities for those who are disadvantaged, seeks to expand choices, and strives to increase agency.

**Inclusion** is when all residents experience a sense of belonging, feel welcomed, are authentically represented, and are encouraged to fully participate in community life.

**Equitable development** should produce quality of life outcomes, such as affordable housing, quality educational opportunities, living wage employment, healthy environments, and accessible transportation choices. These outcomes should be equitably experienced by the people currently living and working in a neighborhood, as well as for new people moving in. Public and private investments, programs, and policies that are equitable should meet the needs of all residents and should consider historic and current conditions.
Ultimately, planning for equity works to (American Planning Association):

1. Create and extend opportunities to each member of the community
2. Recognize and help to build the capacity of each member of the community
3. Acknowledge and take action when the attributes of inequity are present
4. Adopt new approaches to planning that fully embrace equity.

The passing of Articles 36 and 37; the establishment of the Diversity, Inclusion, and Racial Equity committee; and efforts like the Williamstown CARES project are tangible steps the town has made in accomplishing this work. Williamstown is also carefully looking to reconcile its history and embrace a more holistic and less Euro-centric story of its past to learn and inform the future (see the Cultural and Historic Resources section). Equitably planning for the future of Williamstown will include direct outreach to and participation by the populations in town that are typically underserved and marginalized (such as people of color, youth, older adults, lower income individuals, those with disabilities, those who speak English as a second language, veterans, LGBTQ+ individuals, and others) in local government and planning processes to ensure a bright and vibrant future for all.

A TOWN COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

The national conversations and events that occurred in 2020 around race, social justice, and equity, sparked discussion within Williamstown. This further highlighted the need to build a greater awareness of the impacts and challenges that marginalized communities experience, as well as a stronger commitment to becoming a just and inclusive community. In August 2020, citizens submitted Articles 36 and 37 to Williamstown's Annual Town Meeting which were supported and adopted by near unanimous vote. These are summarized below.

ARTICLE 36: “NOT IN OUR COUNTY PLEDGE”

Article 36, or the “Not in Our County Pledge”, states that the Town of Williamstown is committed to providing equality, access, and opportunity for all its residents, and believes in the vital importance of a diverse community.

Article 36 states:

“The Town of Williamstown and its representatives are fully committed to upholding the following Not in Our County Pledge: As an institution, organization, or local business, we commit to working together with our constituents, employees, employers and stakeholders to create a safer, more integrated Berkshire County. As an organization we respond with best intention and practices to not stay silent in the face of intolerance or hate based on race, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnicity, country of origin, ability or any other factor. We work to acknowledge, address and act in response to all forms of intended or unintended exclusion, hate, bigotry, intolerance and bullying. We pledge to renew our commitment to this work every day and to respond to all incidents in a timely, collaborative manner.”

ARTICLE 37: EQUITY PETITION

Article 37 acknowledges “the need for urgent structural change to create an equitable and
welcoming Williamstown”; and that “the level of accessible housing in Williamstown can determine the socio-economic, and in some cases racial diversity of the town; and education and training can successfully be used to undo remnants of structural oppression”.

The petition recommends that Williamstown boards, committees, and agencies, reexamine and continue to create their policies and practices according to a commitment to accessible living. The town also asks boards and committees to reflect on areas including housing and zoning and make changes that allow for a town more supportive of a wide array of racial and economic backgrounds. Lastly, the town encourages inclusive public participation and diverse representation in government processes, especially from traditionally underserved and marginalized populations, and encourages equity training for municipal staff and local officials.

DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, AND RACIAL EQUITY (DIRE) COMMITTEE

Following the adoption of Articles 36 and 37, the Select Board established an advisory committee to promote inclusiveness, diversity, and equity in Williamstown and to address these topics through “the development of forums for open and safe discussion of these issues, and for the development of actionable recommendations to improve the attainment of these goals in Williamstown for all residents.” This was in response to the George Floyd killing and other related racial equity concerns. Since the committee has been established, they have undertaken several initiatives to improve equity and inclusion in Williamstown. These include providing recommendations related to equitable hiring practices that informed the hiring of a new Police Chief and Town Manager, hosting a community conversation around the topic of strengthening community and police partnerships, and working in conjunction with other boards, committees, and groups in town to respond to issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

The following are goals identified by the DIRE Committee for 2021 and 2022:

- Modeling and increasing open communication with Williamstown’s local government and the broader community, including providing written recommendations related to diversity, equity, and inclusion to the Select board and other local officials
- Self-education and educating the broader community on issues of diversity, inclusion, and

WHAT IS RACIAL EQUITY?

According to the racial equity organization, Race Forward, “racial equity” can be defined as the process of eliminating racial disparities and improving outcomes for everyone. It is the intentional and continual practice of changing policies, practices, systems, and structures by prioritizing measurable change in the lives of people of color. Currently, there are several businesses, institutions, and organizations in the town and region that are committed to addressing white supremacy and systemic racial injustice and inequities internally and externally. Aside from the town’s DIRE Committee, the town’s schools, advocacy groups (like Williamstown Racial Justice and Police Reform, Greylock Together, and Northern Berkshires for Racial Justice), and some local businesses and churches are working towards greater racial equity through education, advocacy, policy, and other community-based initiatives.
racial equity including the exploration of restorative justice processes/models at the municipal level and diversity, equity, and inclusion training opportunities for Town committee members and officials

- Increasing community involvement & collaboration while maintaining space for people to share fears and concerns around issues of exclusion and marginalization through mechanisms like hosting listening sessions in the community and conducting outreach with specific populations (youth, older adults, those with disabilities, etc.)

- Moving town government toward increased diversity, inclusion, and racial equity including reviewing the Town's HR audit with an eye toward DIRE-related recommendations
HOUSING
WILLIAMSTOWN 2022 EXISTING CONDITIONS SUMMARY

Williamstown’s population decreased by 11 percent from 2000 to 2020 but is projected to increase 18 percent between 2020 and 2040. The 2021 Town Census reported a population of 7,560. This was a 4 percent increase from the Town Census 2020 count of 7,271. About one out of three town residents (28-32%) are Williams College students according to the 2021 Census and Williams College enrollment data.

The town is predominantly White (83 percent) but is more diverse than the County as a whole. Much of this diversity is driven by the student population.

The official subsidized housing inventory (as defined by the state of Massachusetts) accounts for 7.59 percent of the Town’s total housing stock. However, using the 2020 housing unit data and including recent construction numbers, the SHI would unofficially increase this to 11 percent, exceeding the 10 percent state requirement.

The median income has increased from $63,045 to $91,258 between 2010 and 2020 (adjusted for inflation). Overall, Williamstown residents are wealthier than residents of Berkshire County as a whole.
28 percent of Williamstown households earn less than 80 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI), potentially making them eligible for subsidized affordable housing.

27 percent of households in the Town are cost burdened, spending more than 30 percent of their income on housing costs. Renters are 2.5 times more likely than owners to face a housing cost burden.

The median home price has risen over 40 percent in the past year to around $492,000 in 2022, making it difficult for many low and middle income households to compete in the tight housing market.

About 73 percent of Williamstown’s housing units are owner-occupied, and 27 percent are renter occupied. Most renters (90 percent) were below the age of 65, with 24 percent under the age of 35. Homeowners tended to be older, with 93 percent being age 45 and over. Additionally, there is a lack of rental units available at all income levels in Williamstown.

A third of Williamstown’s housing stock was built before 1940, presenting potential difficulties with upkeep and maintenance, and a higher risk of unhealthy building materials.

Older residents of Williamstown face issues with older housing, difficulties downsizing, and health conditions associated with aging that can impact their ability to live independently. About 20 percent of Williamstown’s population is over 65 years old. In Williamstown, 59 percent of older residents had some disability or limitation, compared to 19 percent of the overall population.

The Town’s zoning bylaw allows Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) and has provisions for required affordable housing production. Several amendments proposed at Town Meeting 2022 to increase capacity for housing production did not come to a vote and were referred back to the Planning Board.

Economic growth in Berkshire County is inhibited by a lack of housing for workers, particularly in the service industries. Providing diverse and convenient housing choices for workers is important for retaining workers in the region and for economic development.

There is a substantial amount of second homes in Williamstown, and a number of short term rental units. According to Williamstown Assessor data, second homes and short-term rentals may comprise around 10 percent of the Town’s housing stock, decreasing the number of units available to Town residents, and thus potentially driving up prices.
1. HOUSING

INTRODUCTION
Housing is a critical issue in Williamstown. The Town’s population is starting to grow rapidly after several decades of decline, increasing pressures on the housing market. Housing prices are increasingly out of reach for low- and middle-income residents and employees in the Town, and an older housing stock poses problems for accessibility and maintenance. The large number of students and faculty from the College also factor into housing planning in the Town. This section discusses the demographics and incomes of Williamstown’s population, the existing housing stock in the Town, regulatory constraints and opportunities, subsidized housing, and recent housing affordability trends. Please note that pages 29-31 include a list of key housing definitions and acronyms that accompany this section.

ISSUES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND CHALLENGES
Housing prices seem to be rising extremely rapidly in Williamstown, up to 40 percent in the past year, according to the MA Association of Realtors. This could be tied to many factors, including the recent increase in Town population, a post-pandemic phenomenon wherein many residents are moving to their second homes and remote workers are arriving from urban areas, and regional housing underproduction in recent decades due to lower demand regionally. It will be important to continue to monitor housing costs and move quickly to increase potential supply of housing in the Town.

The impact of short-term rentals and second homes is also important to consider. Potentially up to 10 percent of Williamstown’s housing stock is second homes and/or seasonal rentals, which can also drive-up prices. More data and tracking on this issue could also be helpful.

Williamstown’s development capacity is constrained by environmental constraints, regulatory barriers, a lack of suitable property developers (with the exception of Berkshire Housing Development Corporation) and high construction costs. Income levels are lower here than in many other markets, therefore, renters cannot afford to pay as much, however, building costs are equal to or may exceed those in higher-income markets. Historically, the declining population and lower incomes have not produced a housing market which kept up with necessary prices to stimulate development. However, this may be changing, and Town staff also noted that the high sales prices of condos at Cable Mills caught the attention of several developers who may be more interested in working in Williamstown.

The College is highly integrated into the housing landscape of the Town: as a landlord, major employer, and source of the students who make up about a third of the Town’s population. Williams is a residential college and

“Housing is not only the single greatest expense for most families—it is also a key determinant in whether or not household members have the resources to live healthy lives and achieve their full potential. Equitable housing must be more than affordable; it must also connect workers and residents to the jobs, schools, services, and community assets that will enable them to thrive and be healthy. “

- Healthy Communities of Opportunity: An Equity Blueprint to Address America’s Housing Challenges; the Kresge Foundation
therefore requires the students to live on-campus. However, fluctuations in enrollment numbers and on-campus bed availability means the College must also release a certain number of students from the on-campus living requirement for their senior year.

The 2016 Build-Out Analysis (Williams College Student Project) indicated concerns about many properties in the Town being earmarked for college faculty, staff, or students, and thus reducing the available units for voucher holders. The report recommended additional development be concentrated farther from campus in the Route 7 General Residence area, to be less attractive to college students.

The 2002 Master Plan also indicated a preference for the College to meet future faculty-staff housing needs through new construction and adaptive reuse, rather than the acquisition of existing housing. Overall, the College’s role in the real estate market should be better understood.

**POPULATION**

The Town Census reports that the population of Williamstown was 7,271 in 2020, slightly less than the 2020 ACS reported in the same year as shown below. The population of the town has fluctuated since 1960 but in recent decades has mirrored the overall Berkshire County trend of declining population.

**Table 1.1: Williamstown: Population Projection (2020-2040)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Cohort</th>
<th>2020 ACS</th>
<th>2040 Population Projections</th>
<th>Percent of Total Population (2040)</th>
<th>Percent Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-19 years old</td>
<td>2,092</td>
<td>1,666</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>-20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-34 years old</td>
<td>1,983</td>
<td>3,366</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>+70%</td>
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<tr>
<td>35-54 years old</td>
<td>999</td>
<td>1,607</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>+61%</td>
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<tr>
<td>55-64 years old</td>
<td>842</td>
<td>453</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>-46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 65+</td>
<td>1,606</td>
<td>1,761</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>+10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Population</td>
<td>7,522</td>
<td>8,853</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 1.2: Northern Berkshire County: Population Change (1960-2020)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Williamstown</td>
<td>7,322</td>
<td>8,454</td>
<td>8,741</td>
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<td>8,424</td>
<td>7,754</td>
<td>7,513</td>
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<td>Adams</td>
<td>12,391</td>
<td>11,772</td>
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<td>9,445</td>
<td>8,809</td>
<td>8,485</td>
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<td>Cheshire</td>
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<td>Clarksburg</td>
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<td>721</td>
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<td>757</td>
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<td>Lanesborough</td>
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<td>3,038</td>
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<td>New Ashford</td>
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<td>192</td>
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<td>250</td>
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<td>North Adams</td>
<td>19,905</td>
<td>19,195</td>
<td>18,063</td>
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<td>14,681</td>
<td>13,708</td>
<td>12,961</td>
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<td>Berkshire County</td>
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<td>145,110</td>
<td>139,352</td>
<td>134,953</td>
<td>131,219</td>
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</table>
AGE
Since 2000, the median age of Williamstown residents decreased from 36 years old to 29.7 years old. This has been driven primarily by a 47 percent decrease in residents between 35 and 54 years old, potentially resulting from high costs of housing, especially rentals. Despite the expected growth in residents between the ages of 20 and 34 years old, the number of children (0-19) is expected to decrease 20 percent by 2040, reflecting larger trends of decreased family size, as shown in Table 1.2. This will have an impact on the local schools’ enrollment. Surprisingly, the percentage of older adults (65+) (currently 21 percent) is not expected to grow as an overall percentage of the population in the next 20 years (projected at 20 percent in 2040), which is different than regional and national demographic trends.

RACE
Like all Berkshire County municipalities, Williamstown is predominantly white. However, estimates from the Census Bureau show that Williamstown is somewhat more racially diverse than Berkshire County at large, as shown in Table 1.3 below. This is driven by the significant student population. According to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) 2020 Fall Enrollment numbers, 45.9% of the student population at Williams College is White, 14% Asian, 13% Hispanic or Latino, 6.69% Black or African American, and 6.29% two or more races. This includes both part time and full-time students, as well as graduates and undergraduates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black or African American</th>
<th>American Indian and Alaska Native</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander</th>
<th>Some other race</th>
<th>Two or more races</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Williamstown</td>
<td>83.4%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adams</td>
<td>94.8%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheshire</td>
<td>95.4%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarksburg</td>
<td>96.1%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hancock</td>
<td>87.1%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lanesborough</td>
<td>99.3%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N Ashford</td>
<td>91.4%</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N Adams</td>
<td>87.7%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berkshire County</td>
<td>90.0%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

LANGUAGE
According to the 2020 American Community Survey, 13.4% of the population age 5 years and over speak a language other than English at home. Of those who speak a language other than English, 12.9% speak Spanish, 42% speak another Indo-European language, 27% speak a language from Asia or the Pacific Islands, and 17.2% fall into the “other language” category. Its is important for the Town to evaluate and consider how it is communicating to the broader community and in what languages.
VETERANS
There are 363 residents in Williamstown that are veterans. The Williamstown American Legion and the local Office of Veteran Services provides important support services to veterans in town.

INCOME
Overall, Williamstown residents are wealthier than residents of Berkshire County as a whole. About 28 percent of Williamstown households earn less than 80 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI), about half the rate of Berkshire County as a whole (42.7 percent). As of 2020, 281 or 5.7 percent of Williamstown’s residents lived below the poverty level. This was significantly lower than the countywide rate of 9.7 percent. From 2010 to 2020, median income in Williamstown increased 45 percent, from $63,045 to $91,528 (adjusted for inflation), as shown in Figure 1.1.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER
At least seven percent of U.S. adults — or more than 20 million people — identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or transgender, according to a recent 2021 Gallup poll. That proportion is up from 4.5 percent in 2017. Ensuring that Williamstown is a safe and welcoming place for its LGBTQ+ community is critical to the equity efforts underway.

Currently, there are a number of groups within the town and greater region that advocate for LGBTQ+ communities including the Davis Center at Williams College, which provides resources, assistance, and a safe space for LGBTQ+ students to gather and the Mt. Greylock Gender-Sexuality Alliance for middle and high school students, which is a supportive group of Mount Greylock students, of all different orientations, that aims to educate the student body and to foster a feeling of acceptance in the community regarding gender and sexuality. Berkshire Pride organizes an annual pride festival, the Berkshire Stonewall Community Coalition supports LGBTQ+ people of the Berkshires through resources, events, and more, and the Berkshire Trans Group is a peer discussion/empowerment group for people who are trans, non-binary, genderqueer, or gender-questioning. In Williamstown, language in the General and Zoning Bylaw has been amended to replace the terms “Board of Selectmen”, “Selectmen”, “Selectman”, and “Chairman” with gender neutral terms. This represents a step towards being inclusive to all genders in town leadership roles.
Income is not evenly distributed in the Town’s population. Owner-occupied households have a significantly higher median household income when compared to renter-occupied households, as shown in Table 1.4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Housing (2020)</th>
<th>Number of Occupied Housing Units</th>
<th>Percent of Total Occupied Housing Units</th>
<th>Average Household Size</th>
<th>Median Household Income</th>
<th>Percent Housing Cost Burdened</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Owner-occupied</td>
<td>1,683</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>$116,750</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renter-occupied</td>
<td>634</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>$44,167</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Housing (2010)</th>
<th>Number of Occupied Housing Units</th>
<th>Percent of Total Occupied Housing Units</th>
<th>Average Household Size</th>
<th>Median Household Income</th>
<th>Percent Housing Cost Burdened</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Owner-occupied</td>
<td>2,229</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>$71,533</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renter-occupied</td>
<td>513</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>$33,942</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: There is a high margin of error associated with calculating housing cost burden.

### TENURE

About 73 percent of Williamstown’s housing units are owner-occupied, and 27 percent are renter occupied. Rental households tended to have a larger household size (2.27 members) compared to that of renter-occupied units (1.54 members). Most renters (90 percent) were below the age of 65, with 24 percent under the age of 35. Homeowners tended to be older, with 93 percent being age 45 and over.

Rental properties in Williamstown are more likely to be in multi-unit buildings than ownership households. 17 percent of rental units were single-family buildings and 61 percent in buildings of 3 to 9 units, compared to 66 percent of owner-occupied housing in the town comprised of single-family units.

The median household income of an owner-occupied unit was $116,750, or 164 percent higher than that of a renter-occupied unit. The average Williamstown renter household earns about $44,000 per year, and 45 percent of renter households earn less than $35,000 per year. Estimating rent can be difficult due to Census self-reported data and lack of other sources.

The 2020 ACS estimates Williamstown’s Median Gross Rent at $955, but a recent search on Rentometer.com in April 2022 estimates an average rent of around $1,200 based on 16 apartments listed in the past year. Given the current rent estimates in the town, most renter households would not be able to afford rents in the town without being cost burdened. The housing burden disparity between owner-occupiers and renter-occupiers has increased significantly since 2010; Renters are now two and a half times more likely than owners to face a housing burden.
HOUSING COST

Housing prices in Williamstown were relatively constant from 2010-2019 as shown in Figure 1.2 above, but have increased rapidly since then:

Data from the MA Association of Realtors as well as Zillow demonstrate a rapid increase in home prices over the past year, potentially as much as 40 percent. Zillow estimates the current median home price at $452,000 and MA Association of Realtors at $492,000. This may be related to the rapid population increase in the past year discussed previously, as the number of homes for sale has dropped substantially, with few homes priced in the middle range. During COVID-19, homes have been bought unseen and for over asking price. It is unclear if this price increase and buying behavior will continue.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1.5: Northern Berkshire County: Housing Cost Burden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Source: 2020 American Community Survey Tables DP04, S2503</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williamstown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheshire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarksburg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hancock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lanesborough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N Ashford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N Adams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berkshire County</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In Williamstown, there is a negative affordability gap of $81,682 – the difference between the median home price and what the median household could afford in the town. This is more pronounced than nearby municipalities and Berkshire County. With a 10 percent down payment, less than 25 percent of Williamstown renter households could afford the monthly mortgage payment needed to purchase a home worth the median sale price at any reasonable interest rate.

Households are considered cost-burdened when they are paying more than 30 percent of their income in housing costs (rent and utilities, or mortgage payments). An estimated 625 Williamstown households (27 percent) were cost-burdened in 2020. Renters face higher rates of cost burden than homeowners in Williamstown. About half of renter households were cost-burdened in 2020, slightly more than the Countywide average and on par with most neighboring municipalities. There is a lack of rental units available at all income levels in Williamstown. Although the chart on the following page shows the total number of units at many income levels meet or exceed the number of households, most of them are ownership units and therefore more difficult to access for lower-income households, particularly in the very low-income level (30-50 percent AMI).

Figure 1.3: Williamstown: Housing Cost Distribution (2020 American Community Survey Data)
Source: Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

HOUSING STOCK
Like many Berkshire County municipalities, Williamstown’s housing stock is significantly older, with over half built before 1970 and nearly a third built prior to 1940. Just 10.6 percent of the housing stock was built since 2000. This has implications for accessibility for older and disabled residents as well as maintenance and upkeep costs for older buildings. According to the 2020 ACS, 66 percent of housing units were in single-family, detached structures, and another 20 percent in buildings of 3-9 units. Only 5.5 percent of Williamstown’s housing units are in buildings of 10 units or more.
SUBSIDIZED HOUSING

The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) currently uses the 2010 Decennial Census data to tally year-round housing units. Williamstown had 2,805 year-round units that year, 213 of which were listed on the subsidized housing inventory (SHI) from DHCD (or 7.59 percent). This is under the 10 percent threshold mandated by the state. Unofficially using the 2020 count of occupied housing units (2,518) would put the SHI percentage at 8.46 percent, suggesting that the percentage will increase slightly when the official count of occupied housing units is released by DHCD. Additionally, communication with Town staff in May 2022 confirms that 43 multifamily units at 330 Cole Avenue have not been added to the SHI. Additional subsidized units to be creating during Phase 3 of the Cable Mills development, expected

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure Type</th>
<th>2010 ACS</th>
<th>2020 ACS</th>
<th>Percent of Total Housing (2020 ACS)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 unit, detached</td>
<td>2,196</td>
<td>2,007</td>
<td>66.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 unit, attached</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 units</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 or 4 units</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 9 units</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 to 19 units</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 or more units</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile Home</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boat, RV, van, etc.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Units</strong></td>
<td><strong>3211</strong></td>
<td><strong>3024</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
in 2023 (exact number to be determined). Using the unofficial 2020 Census count of occupied units and adding these units, plus two forthcoming Habitat for Humanity units, would result in Williamstown exceeding the 10 percent subsidized housing requirement and reaching around 11 percent. The town is currently working with DHCD to update the SHI to include these recent additions.

The Williamstown Housing Authority manages a Section 8 program with 80 vouchers to cover the difference between 30 percent of the income of eligible renters and the rental cost of a unit. Interviews with the Housing Authority for the 2016 Build-Out Analysis indicate that very few units in Williamstown qualify as fair market rate units due to the high rents in the Town, and therefore many voucher holders end up renting units outside of the town and some vouchers go unused. The Housing Authority also manages three properties, one 30-unit property for disabled residents or residents over 60 years old, one four-unit property for families, and one 8-unit special needs property.

Williamstown has routinely supported deed restricted affordable housing through its Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds, including: the Cable Mills development, Church Corner development, Proprietors Field development, 330 Cole Avenue development, Habitat for Humanity affordable units, and grants to the Williamstown Affordable Housing Trust. Since Williamstown adopted the Community Preservation Act in 2002 it has raised $5.5 million dollars towards projects in all categories (housing, open space, recreation, and historic preservation), of which over 44% ($2.5 million dollars) was spent towards affordable housing. The latest data available on the Community Preservation Coalition database indicates that 45 housing units total were created or supported using CPA funds.

**RECENT DEVELOPMENT**

Between 2010 and 2021, 196 permits were issued for housing construction in Williamstown (see Figure 1.4). The majority of these units (156) were in multifamily construction. Of the multifamily units, most were deed-restricted affordable rental units, including 13 units in Cable Mills, 40 in Highland Woods, and 43 at 330 Cole Street. Of the 35 single-family units, at least four were replacements of existing units which were torn down, according to Town staff. In 2014 a significant number (107 units) of multifamily development were permitted. However, all the accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and the remaining 49 multifamily units were all built since 2018, suggesting a trend towards middle housing and multifamily housing development in the Town.
SHORT-TERM RENTALS AND SECOND HOMES
Conversion of homes to short-term or vacation rentals (Airbnb, Vrbo, etc.) can have a significant effect on housing affordability due to units being removed from the long-term rental stock. Recent estimates (August 2022) from www.airdna.co shows about 109 active short-term rentals in Williamstown, representing almost 5 percent of the Town's overall occupied housing stock (2317 units in 2020), and over 6 percent of the owner-occupied housing stock (1683). Of the available rentals listed through either Airbnb or Vrbo (or both), 89% were rentals for an entire home. The remaining 10% were for private rooms. The number of short-term rentals available at any given time should be expected to fluctuate, but more data is needed to better understand short-term rentals in Williamstown. There is also a substantial amount of second homes in Williamstown. According to Williamstown Assessor data, the number of second homes in the Town was around 9 percent in 2018 and is currently around 7 percent (162). Together, the second homes and short-term rentals may comprise around 10-12 percent of the Town’s housing stock (although some overlap should be expected between second homes and short-term rentals), decreasing the number of units available to Town residents, and thus potentially driving up prices.

SENIORS AND DISABLED RESIDENTS
About 20 percent of Williamstown’s population is over 65 years old. In Williamstown, 59 percent of older residents had some disability or limitation, compared to 19 percent of the overall population. Among Seniors, the most common limitations reported by Census data were hearing difficulties, ambulatory difficulties, and independent living difficulties. Williamstown’s housing stock is older and is primarily single-family homes, typically having two floors with stairs. Such housing is likely
to be unsuitable for residents with mobility difficulties without modifications, such as retrofitting with some adaptive equipment and/or restricting living space to the first floor.

Older residents in Williamstown also face potential financial difficulties. Most residents over 65 years old in Williamstown own their home (77 percent). With increases in home values, it is likely their home is their biggest financial asset. However, capital gains taxes, housing prices, and constrained supply can make it difficult to sell and move into a smaller home.

REGULATORY CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Williamstown’s Zoning Bylaw contains several provisions for multifamily housing and opportunities for middle housing development. Map 1.2 shows the existing zoning districts in Williamstown. Overall, multifamily development is allowed by special permit of the Zoning Board of Appeals within “major residential development” guidelines in all Residential (R) zones and the Southern Gateway (SG) zone. Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) are allowed in the Rural Residential (RR 2 and 3), General Residential (GR), and Southern Gateway (SG) zones by right on lots with a single-family home or duplex, if the duplex is at least five years old. One ADU is allowed per lot with a maximum size of 900 square feet or one-third of the square footage of the principal dwelling with a cap of 1,200 square feet. ADUs require one parking space and should maintain the “essential character” of the neighborhood.

Williamstown’s Zoning Bylaw also contains a number of affordability provisions. For developments of 10 or more units, 10 percent of units must be affordable under 100 percent AMI for 25 years. Alternatively, the Planning Board can propose an “alternative effort” to contribute to “economically balanced development” across units in these projects. In the Cable Mills Redevelopment District, multifamily developments (defined as a structure containing three or more dwelling units), require 10 percent of units to be affordable at 80 percent AMI for 30 years.

Williamstown and North Adams are served by the Hoosic Water Quality District sewage treatment system, and the Williamstown Water Department draws from three groundwater artesian wells as well as maintaining a 10-million-gallon safety net in two reservoirs. Williamstown’s wetlands are protected under the State Wetlands Protection Act standards, but the town does not have a local Wetlands Ordinance. The 2016 Build-Out Analysis calculates up to 65.4% of Williamstown’s total land is constrained to new development. Absolute constrains include roads, culverts and ditches, streams, rivers (100'), 100-year flood zone, ponds and wetlands, steep slopes, developed land, solid waste facilities, permanently protected open spaces, and upland conservation district.

TRENDS ACROSS BERKSHIRE COUNTY

A recent report by the County highlights several trends relevant to housing production both locally and regionally. Regional population decline since the 1970s combined with NIMBYism have contributed to a significant slowdown in housing production across the Berkshires. Economic growth across the Berkshires is inhibited by lack of suitable housing for a wide range of employees, particularly lower-income service industry workers. Financing for middle-income housing development is very difficult to find in the Berkshire market. One factor is that income levels are lower here than in many other markets, therefore, renters cannot afford to pay as much; however, building costs are equal to or may exceed those in higher-income markets.
Map 1.2: Zoning Map of Williamstown, 2022
SUSTAINABILITY AND HOUSING

Finding ways to effectively educate and engage homeowners and renters to make their buildings more energy efficient, produce or purchase renewable energy, and switch heating systems will be an ongoing need and challenge. Different messages and goals may be needed to engage all households to begin where they are, and then take steps toward a more sustainable and resilient future. Homeowners may be one target audience because of the ability to help them identify actions and then access the solutions (technology, expertise, and/or funding) to make changes to their structures and properties. Increasing high density neighborhoods is also an important mechanism to increase environmental sustainability, reduce energy use, and mitigate climate change in communities. Multi-family housing units have the potential to be more energy efficient by providing heating and cooling to multiple families in one structure.

Over time, Williamstown may wish to consider establishing new guidelines or incentives for new residential construction that align with the net zero goals adopted by the community. A new initiative underway with the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission is promoting energy efficiency assessments and improvements for 250 houses and businesses. The focus of this effort is on low to moderate income households, but some level of assistance is available to all households.

The Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities is also rewriting their state plan that provides energy efficiency incentives to consumers. This new Plan will center on curbing climate change by encouraging households to electrify their home’s energy systems from oil and gas (including heating, domestic hot water, cooking, and laundry appliances) to renewable energy sources. It also includes provisions to help make the transition more affordable to people in vulnerable or disadvantaged communities. Outside of the residential homes in Williamstown, there are also opportunities to educate landowners on land management techniques which could relate to reduced frequency of mowing, and other habitat and energy reduction benefits.

Some notable progress in the region related to this topic is the work completed by Age Friendly Berkshires, the Public Health Alliance, and evidence of increased involvement in these efforts by typically under-represented populations. A regional housing rehabilitation program has also been developed since 2014. The areas that lack progress regionally relate to funding for public transportation solutions, and limited progress on creating necessary workforce housing units.

•
KEY HOUSING DEFINITIONS

This list of key definitions is intended to assist the reader and is not intended to replace applicable legal definitions of these terms. The following definitions are for key terms used throughout the document, many of which are based on definitions in statutes and regulations.

Affordable Housing - Affordable housing is generally defined as housing on which the occupant is paying no more than 30 percent of gross income for housing costs, including utilities. This is not income level dependent.

Attainable Housing - Attainable housing is housing that is affordable to people earning around the Area Median Income (AMI). Households living in attainable housing and earning between 80% and 120% of the AMI should not need to spend more than 30% of their income on housing costs.

Areawide Median Income (AMI) – the median gross income for a person or family as calculated by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, based on the median income for the Metropolitan Statistical Area. For FY2022, the HUD area median family income (AMFI) for the Berkshire County, MA (part) HUD Metro Area is $92,100. The AFMI considers households of every size, whereas income thresholds are dependent upon the number of persons in the family household.

Cost-Burdened Household – a household that spends 30 percent or more of its income on housing-related costs (such as rent or mortgage payments). Severely cost-burdened households spend 50 percent or more of their income on housing-related costs. Lower income households are more likely to be cost burdened, but a household may be considered to be cost burdened at any income level.

Household – all the people, related or unrelated, who occupy a housing unit. It can also include a person living alone in a housing unit or a group of unrelated people sharing a housing unit as partners or roommates. Family households consist of two or more individuals who are related by birth, marriage, or adoption, although they also may include other unrelated people. Non-family households consist of people who live alone or who share their residence with unrelated individuals.

Family Household – Family households consist of two or more individuals who are related by birth, marriage, or adoption, although they also may include other unrelated people.

Non-Family Households – Non-family households consist of individuals living alone and individuals living with roommates who are not related by birth, marriage, or adoption.

Income Thresholds – the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) establishes income thresholds that apply to various housing assistance programs. These thresholds are updated annually and are categorized by household size. Williamstown is part of the Berkshire County, MA (part) HUD Metro FMR Area.

Extremely Low-Income (ELI) – the FY 2014 Consolidated Appropriations Act changed the definition of extremely low-income to an individual or family whose annual gross income is
the greater of 30/50ths (60 percent) of the Section 8 very low-income limit or the poverty guideline. The FY2022 ELI income limits for a household of one is $19,800 and for a household of four is $28,250.

**Very Low-Income (VLI)** – an individual or family whose annual gross income is at or below 50 percent AMI. The FY2022 VLI income limits for a household of one is $32,950 and for a household of four is $47,050.

**Low/Moderate income (LMI)** – an individual or family whose annual gross income at or below 80 percent of the area median income (AMI). The FY2022 LMI income limits for a household of one is $52,750 and for a household of four is $75,300.

**Labor Force** – all residents within a community over the age of 16 who are currently employed or actively seeking employment. It does not include students, retirees, discouraged workers (residents who are not actively seeking a job) or those who cannot work due to a disability.

**Market Rate Housing** - The prevailing monthly cost for ownership or rental housing. Mortgage and rental rates are set without restrictions.

**Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing (NOAH)** – NOAH refers to residential rental properties that are affordable but are unsubsidized by any federal, state, or local program. Their rents are relatively low compared to the regional housing market. NOAH properties are typically older buildings or complexes, smaller units, located in less desirable locations, or there may be some deferred maintenance issues. Rents are lower-ranging, generally between $550 and $1,200 per month, affordable to low- and moderate-income households. NOAH units are the most common affordable housing in the United States. In strong housing markets, NOAH units are also frequently at risk for re-development for higher value properties.

**Non-Family Households** – Non-family households consist of individuals living alone and individuals living with roommates who are not related by birth, marriage, or adoption.

**Subsidized Housing** - A generic term covering all federal, state or local government programs that reduce the cost of housing for low- and moderate-income residents. For an individual, housing can be subsidized in numerous ways—for example, giving tenants a rent voucher to bring down the cost of a market rate rental unit of their choosing, helping homebuyers with down payment assistance, or reducing the interest on a mortgage. For developers, subsidizing housing could mean providing deferred loans to help acquire and develop property, giving tax credits to encourage investment in low- and moderate-income housing, or authorizing tax-exempt bond authority to finance the housing. Public housing, project-based Section 8, Housing Authority properties, 40B deed restricted units, and local housing programs (e.g., Habitat for Humanity homes, group homes) are all examples of subsidized housing buildings. Subsidized simply means that costs are reduced because of a particular government program, whether a physical building or a program that travels with the person. It has nothing to do with the quality, location, or type of housing.
**Vacant Housing Units** - A housing unit is vacant if no one is living in it at the time of the interview unless its occupants are only temporarily absent. In addition, a vacant unit may be one which is entirely occupied by persons who have a usual residence elsewhere. New units not yet occupied are classified as vacant housing units if construction has reached a point where all exterior windows and doors are installed, and final usable floors are in place. Vacant units are excluded if they are exposed to the elements, that is, if the roof, walls, windows, or doors no longer protect the interior from the elements, or if there is positive evidence (such as a sign on the house or block) that the unit is to be demolished or is condemned. Also excluded are quarters being used entirely for nonresidential purposes, such as a store or an office, or quarters used for the storage of business supplies or inventory, machinery, or agricultural products. Vacant sleeping rooms in lodging houses, transient accommodations, barracks, and other quarters not defined as housing units are not included.

**ACRONYMS**

ACS  US Census Bureau’s American Community Survey, Five-Year Estimates  
ADA  Americans with Disabilities Act  
AMI/AMFI  Areawide Median Family Income set by HUD (household of four)  
CHAS  Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy  
CPA  State of Massachusetts Community Preservation Act (MGL Chapter 44B)  
CPC  Community Preservation Committee  
DEP  Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection  
DHCD  Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development  
EPA  U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
FEMA  Federal Emergency Management Agency  
FY  Fiscal Year(s) (July 1-June 30)  
HPP  Housing Production Plan  
HUD  United States Department of Housing and Urban Development  
LMI  Low/Moderate- Income (at or below 80 percent AMI)  
MACRIS  Massachusetts Cultural Resources Information System  
MassDOT  Massachusetts Department of Transportation  
MassGIS  Massachusetts Bureau of Geographic Information  
MBTA  Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority  
MGL  Massachusetts General Laws  
MLS  Multiple Listings Service (central real estate database)  
MSA  Metropolitan Statistical Area  
MWRA  Massachusetts Water Resources Authority  
NHESP  Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program  
SHI  Massachusetts Subsidized Housing Inventory  
YTD  Year to Date  
40B  Comprehensive Permit, per MGL Chapter 40B, §20-23
REFERENCES

- Williamstown 2002 Master Plan
- Williamstown, MA Build-Out Analysis, December 2016 (Williams College student project)
- Town of Williamstown Zoning Bylaw
- A Housing Vision for the Berkshires – Berkshire County Regional Housing Strategy (2022)
- Town of Williamstown, Massachusetts Draft Housing Needs Assessment (March 30, 2022)
- Draft Williamstown Town Meeting Zoning Amendments (March 24, 2022)
- Williamstown Town Census
- Community Preservation Coalition Databank (August 4, 2022)
- AirDNA
Williamstown has a fairly stable population that is also very highly-educated and has a large proportion of 18-24 year olds compared to surrounding communities. This is largely due to the presence of Williams College.

Williamstown is part of a 9-ZIP Code “commuter region” that is oriented north-south. Overall, employment in this commuter region – and the key industries within – has shrunk over the last decade. Within the 9-ZIP Code area, Health Care & Social Assistance, with 9,668 jobs, is the industry with the largest employment by a wide margin – approximately 20 percent of all jobs in this commuter region are in this industry, and account for 3,000 more jobs than in any other industry.

Many of the predominant industries in the region are service-related; notably jobs in Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation; Retail Trade; Health Care & Social Assistance; and Educational Services are all unusually common in the commuter region.

Approximately two-thirds of workers that work in Williamstown do not live in Williamstown. Less than a third of Williamstown workers are residents of Williamstown.
Williamstown has a highly-skilled and high-earning resident population, but there is very little flexibility in the labor market due to extremely low unemployment both locally and regionally. As a result, it is more difficult for local companies to hire full-time employees.

Williamstown hosts several commercial districts that have specific roles within the town – serving local populations or visitors, anchor institutions or international customers and clients; contributing to quality of life as amenities unto themselves or as important sources of employment. These include Spring Street, Water Street/Route 47, Cole Avenue, Route 7, Sand Springs/Broad Brook, and Route 2/ Mohawk Trail.

There are unique characteristics of Williamstown that help define its economic development strengths and opportunities. The town/gown relationship with the college, world-renowned cultural attractions such as The Clark and the Williamstown Theatre Festival, a long history of agriculture, and ample outdoor recreation resources all contribute significantly to Williamstown’s economic and cultural identity and can guide priorities for the future.

Despite these opportunities, reliance on anchor institutions like the college, that are not likely to grow significantly, will be a challenge for Williamstown. Increasing economic diversity and opportunities for business development and growth is crucial for Williamstown’s future, and there are several organizations that have formed to address these needs.

Currently, there is relatively little commercial and industrial land in town and opportunities to lease commercial or industrial space in Williamstown is very limited.. The very limited commercial and industrial real estate market in town – in part, due to limited land designated for such uses – and the fact that, on average, spaces are quite old, may make it difficult to attract certain types of new businesses.

Tax revenues are highly dependent on residential uses, though the percentage of the tax levy coming from such uses has decreased over the past decade.

Sustainability and resilience related issues are often also economic and equity related issues as well. The impacts of climate change often disproportionately affect those individuals who have lower incomes. For example, in Williamstown, the many of the homes at the Spruces Mobile Home Park were destroyed by Hurricane Irene. Upfront costs are often required in order to get program or infrastructure changes in place, and this is a barrier to some residents and businesses. For those who are able to participate, these investments yield many additional benefits that will be realized over time and future costs that will be avoided.
2. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION
Economic development planning is a critical tool to help municipalities achieve many goals. Though “economic development” is often taken to mean the physical development of jobs-producing spaces in a community, true economic development supports the growth and financial security of the members of that community, improving quality of life for residents, workers, and visitors. Existing employment and job types, prominent and growing industries, the real estate market, property tax rates, and the needs and abilities of the local population are all factors that individuals and businesses consider as they make decisions about where to locate. A comprehensive understanding of these existing conditions paves the way to a forward-looking set of policies and interventions.

ISSUES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND CHALLENGES

MARKET DYNAMICS
Williamstown has a highly-skilled and high-earning resident population, but there is very little flexibility in the labor market due to extremely low unemployment both locally and regionally. As a result, despite the fact that the local workforce is desirable for employers, they may face significant challenges in hiring, which helps dissuade businesses from moving to Williamstown, hinders new businesses from forming, and limits how much existing businesses in town can expand. Keeping recent graduates in town as residents after graduation, which is a goal for many college towns, may be particularly difficult to accomplish due to limited employment opportunities and rising housing costs. The net daytime population swells by more than 2,600 as people from across the region come to work in Williamstown and relatively few residents leave to head to their jobs. Beyond workers, Williamstown also hosts visitors from the across the region, the country, and the world. While Williams College brings its fair share of visiting families, scholars, and performers, among others, the Clark Art Institute likewise attracts an audience from across the globe with its unique collections and events. Furthermore, the outdoor recreation opportunities in Williamstown, which include state and town lands as well as areas held by Williams College.
and the Clark, as well as in north Berkshire County more generally, are assets that could be harnessed to support local economic development efforts.

INDUSTRY PERFORMANCE
In general, Williamstown’s 9-ZIP Code commute shed closely resembles the employment across Berkshire County. The largest industries in the region are struggling, with overall job loss of 11 percent in the commute shed over the last decade, and several of the largest industries are shrinking by significantly more. It is important to note that the predominant employer in town, Williams College, remains stable. While growth in employment and student admissions is one way to look at the impact of Williams on the town, the college is also a source of spending in the community and region and employment beyond its faculty and staff.

For example, Williams is investing over $200 million in a new 178,000 square foot science building that will bring construction jobs to the area, drive incomes and spending in town and the region. Through these initiatives and investments in physical space, programs, and funding, Williams can help create research, jobs, and potential spin-off activities from its investment in the campus and its programming.

REAL ESTATE & DEVELOPMENT
Currently, there is relatively little commercial and industrial land in town, and those parcels that are in that category have low assessed values on a per-acre basis compared to residential uses. This suggests that existing commercial and industrial properties are either highest and best uses that are using land inefficiently, are low quality enterprises, or that housing is driving demand for land in Williamstown. One contributing factor to this phenomenon may be the college’s ownership of significant portions of the Spring Street commercial district; while there may be profitable businesses on valuable land there, the property tax revenues from those parcels do not reflect the market value of the land, due to their non-profit ownership.

With the college owning several of the parcels and buildings along Spring Street, it can be difficult to gain a true sense of the demand for space and market pricing for leases. A visual inspection of Spring Street in early 2022 showed few vacancies or spaces actively for lease. Businesses in this part of Williamstown certainly cater to the student body, faculty, and visitors to the college but also provide food, beverage, and retail options for town residents. The secondary commercial area along Water Street, a few blocks east of Spring Street, also has several retail and restaurant options but had a few storefronts actively for lease.

LEVERAGING UNIQUE DRIVERS
The economic drivers specific to Williamstown that are identified in this chapter present opportunities for growth. While the arts, agriculture/agritourism, and outdoor recreation are themselves valuable to Williamstown’s economy and identity, they can also help establish stronger industry clusters that diversify the town’s economy. Ensuring that existing anchor institutions continue successful national and global outreach efforts, supporting and protecting agricultural operations, and creating integrated recreation opportunities can serve existing organizations and create chances for new business to flourish.

DEMOGRAPHICS
TOTAL POPULATION & AGE DISTRIBUTION
Williamstown’s population shrank by 11
percent between 2000 and 2020, as described in the Housing chapter of this document. However, in the past decade population appears to have stabilized, according to US Census data, with only minor changes between the 2015 and 2020 5-year American Community Surveys.

As might be expected in a town where a higher education institution has such a significant presence, a large portion of the population falls into the 18-24 age group. In fact, approximately one-third of all Williamstown residents are included in that category, and the absolute number and the proportion have increased since 2015. This sets Williamstown apart from demographic distribution and changes by age when compared to Berkshire County overall, where fewer than 10 percent of the population between the ages of 18 and 24 and the total number of residents in that age group has decreased since 2015. Williamstown has a lower proportion of residents in every other age category, due to the significant number of residents 18-24. As a result, Williamstown likely represents a very different market for goods and services than many of its neighbors.

Furthermore, trends in age demographics indicate that Williamstown’s young and school-aged groups and those who are 85+ years are shrinking dramatically. However, the group growing the fastest is the 65-74-year old category, who are more likely to be retired or very close to retirement.

EDUCATION

The educational attainment of a resident population is something many businesses consider when choosing where to locate. The availability of a suitably skilled workforce is one factor, and for consumer-facing businesses the spending potential of the local population – heavily influenced by income and education – is important, too.

Williamstown is home to a very highly-educated population. Approximately 65 percent of residents aged 25 and older have a bachelor’s degree or higher, compared to 35 percent for Berkshire County. However, the number of residents in Berkshire County with those higher levels of education has grown by 11 percent since 2015; in Williamstown, the percentage has grown by 5 percent.

HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Households in Williamstown are relatively high-earning compared to those across all of Berkshire County, with a median household income of $91,528 compared to the county-wide median of $62,166. Williamstown has significantly higher proportions of households earning $100,000 or more. An estimated 46 percent of households in Williamstown earn at least that much per year, compared to just 28 percent of county households. Williamstown has similar percentages.
of households earning between $50,000 and $99,999 to the county, and both the number and proportion have stayed very consistent over the last several years.

**LABOR FORCE**

While educational attainment is one factor in understanding the availability of specific kinds of workers, the overall level of engagement of workers in the local economy is also very influential. Two measures commonly examined are the labor force participation and unemployment rates. The labor force participation rate measures the percentage of the population aged 16 and over who are either employed or actively looking for employment. If this number is low, then there may be some elasticity in the labor market; if it is already high, then there may not be much flexibility and there are likely few options for employers looking to hire. Likewise, particularly low unemployment would suggest a strong labor market, which is good news for workers but may make hiring a challenge for businesses.

Williamstown’s labor force participation rate is extremely low at 46 percent, and generally has been declining for the past few years. This is well below the rate for Berkshire County, which has only dipped below 55 percent once since 2018 – at the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic – and Massachusetts’ rate, which is generally between 65 and 67 percent. Nationally, the rate is just over 62 percent, which is historically low. The very low labor force participation rate is not unexpected given the high proportion of students within the working age population, since full time college students are typically not also employed, and the comparatively small working-age population. However, Williamstown’s downward trend does reflect the trend across the county, and the town tends to experience similar disruptions as the county.

Unemployment in Williamstown has also tended to be notably lower than in Berkshire County; given the high educational attainment of the local population and the links between local resident workers and Williams College, this is not a surprising finding. By the end of 2021, Williamstown’s unemployment rate was 3.3 percent and Berkshire County’s was 4.4 percent, both of which are

![Figure 2.2: Labor Force Participation Rates](image.png)

*Figure 2.2: Labor Force Participation Rates
Sources: MA EOLWD LMI, 2019 5-year ACS, RKG Associates*
quite low and considered to be within the range of “full employment.” As a result, there is very little slack in the labor market both locally and regionally which may make it more difficult for local companies to hire full-time employees.

COMMUTING PATTERNS
Despite its largely rural composition, Williamstown is a net importer of workers. Nearly 2,600 people travel from other communities to Williamstown for work every day, with another 1,100 Williamstown residents also working in town. Many of the workers traveling from elsewhere come from communities immediately adjacent: North Adams, Adams, and Clarksburg, MA, and Pownal, VT, are the origins for more than 36 percent of commuters to Williamstown. Figure 2.6 shows
that relatively few workers come from west of town, with transportation corridors within Berkshire County North connecting Williamstown to these origin points.

**EMPLOYMENT BASE**

**EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY**
To get an accurate estimate of employment patterns affecting Williamstown, a commute shed was constructed using the nine ZIP codes contributing the largest share of workers to Williamstown’s employment base. These ZIP codes account for 78 percent of all workers in town; no other individual ZIP code of origin for a Williamstown worker contributes more than 0.8 percent of the total. This commute shed includes the ZIP codes shown in Table 2.4, which represent the towns mapped in Map 2.1. Note that ZIP codes do not always align with municipal boundaries, and thus counts by ZIP may differ from county subdivision counts found in the Commuting Patterns section of this chapter.

These geographies closely reflect major local and regional transportation links, including MA Route 2, US Route 7, and MA Route 8, suggesting that the selected commute shed is an accurate representation of those who have easier access to Williamstown’s job market. Employment within these ZIP codes therefore is a good measure of the strengths, opportunities, and challenges that Williamstown faces from an industry and employment standpoint.

Within the 9-ZIP area, Health Care & Social Assistance, with 9,668 jobs, is the industry with the largest employment by a wide margin – approximately 20 percent of all jobs in the commute shed are in this industry, and nearly 3,000 more than in any other industry. Other sectors with significant employment are Government (6,751), Retail Trade (5,523), Educational Services (3,099, which does not include public school employees), and Manufacturing (2,873).
Of the top five largest industries by employed since 2012. This sector in Williamstown – and indeed employment generally – is dominated by Williams College, only one – Educational Services – has not declined, which employed 1,308 people (1,075 full-time) as of 2020. That full-time figure equates to nearly 30 percent of all workers in Williamstown. The college is a source of stability for the town – higher education institutions tend to weather economic disruptions better than other employers – and provides jobs to residents of Williamstown and throughout the region. From an economic standpoint, it may appear that Williams College does not attract the same amount of outside research dollars and grants compared to many other four-year colleges. The size of the college’s endowment and its ability to attract top tier educators and researchers provides students with excellent opportunities to advance their learning and contributions.

Retail Trade, Manufacturing, and Accommodation & Food Services have all seen decreases of over 20 percent, with Accommodation & Food Services shrinking the most (down 36 percent). Given the impacts of COVID-19 across the country, sizable decreases in that industry and Retail Trade are not surprising. However, given the historic prevalence of Manufacturing in the region and 3 percent growth in that industry nationwide, such a large decrease in the commute shed is notable.

Though Mining, Quarrying, & Oil & Gas Extraction saw the largest percentage increase in employment (41 percent), only 27 jobs currently exist. The three industries with growth of more than 100 jobs were Construction (132 jobs, 7 percent increase), Information (112 jobs, 17 percent increase), and Administrative & Support & Waste Management Services (354 jobs, 23 percent increase). Overall, the commute shed lost 5,454 jobs over the 2012-2022 period, an 11 percent decrease.
Table 2.1: Largest Industries by Employment, 9-ZIP Code Commute Shed
Source: EMSI/Burning Glass, 2021.4 datarun

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAICS</th>
<th>Industry Description</th>
<th>2022 Jobs</th>
<th>2012-2022 % Change</th>
<th>Avg. Earnings Per Job</th>
<th>2022 LQ (vs. Berkshire County)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>62</td>
<td>Health Care &amp; Social Assistance</td>
<td>9,668</td>
<td>-5.2%</td>
<td>$71,162</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>6,751</td>
<td>-7.5%</td>
<td>$73,506</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>Retail Trade</td>
<td>5,523</td>
<td>-21.5%</td>
<td>$45,386</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>Educational Svcs</td>
<td>3,099</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>$64,946</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>2,873</td>
<td>-28.4%</td>
<td>$73,344</td>
<td>1.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72</td>
<td>Accommodation &amp; Food Svcs</td>
<td>2,781</td>
<td>-35.8%</td>
<td>$28,435</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>Professional, Scientific, &amp; Technical Svcs</td>
<td>1,988</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>$94,236</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>1,946</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>$70,952</td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81</td>
<td>Other Svcs (except Public Administration)</td>
<td>1,910</td>
<td>-24.8%</td>
<td>$37,696</td>
<td>0.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>Admin. &amp; Support &amp; Waste Mgmt &amp; Remediation Svcs</td>
<td>1,891</td>
<td>23.0%</td>
<td>$52,812</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11, 21, 22, 42, 48, 51, 52, 53, 55, 71, 99</td>
<td>All Others</td>
<td>5,385</td>
<td>-2%</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2.7: Top 5 Increases & Decreases in Employment, by Percentage Change
Sources: EMSI/Burning Glass, 2021.4 datarun
LOCATION QUOTIENTS

Location quotients (LQs) compare employment by industry in two or more geographic areas. The location quotient is a ratio of the percentage of an industry’s employment in one geography to that of a larger comparison geography. If the ratio falls between 0.80 and 1.20, then the proportion of jobs is very similar in both geographies. If the ratio is less than 0.80, then the identified industry sector is thought to be under-represented in the local economy. Conversely, a ratio greater than 1.20 can show a specialty within the local economy as compared to the larger geography. The location quotient can be useful in pointing out opportunities for certain industry sectors to gain a larger share of the employment base or to indicate when a community may be heavily reliant on one or two industry sectors. In some cases, a high location quotient may indicate a specialty area in the local economy. The comparison geographies used for the 9-ZIP code commute shed in this instance were Berkshire County and Massachusetts.

Overall, employment in the commute shed closely reflects the county: no NAICS code has a LQ greater than 1.20, and only four are below 0.80. The industries that are most overrepresented in the commuteshed relative to Berkshire County are Management of Companies & Enterprises, with a LQ of 1.17 and Educational Services (1.14). The most underrepresented industries in the 9-ZIP code area are Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting (0.69); and Mining, Quarrying, & Oil & Gas Extraction (0.45). Generally, other than Manufacturing, the sectors that are most prevalent in the commute shed compared to Berkshire County tend to be sectors requiring higher levels of educational attainment.

Figure 2.8: Location Quotients (2022 Commute Shed vs. Massachusetts) & Jobs Growth (Commute Shed 2012-2022)
Sources: EMSI/Burning Glass, 2021.4 datarun
However, differences emerge when comparing the commute shed to the broader Massachusetts employment picture. The industries with the highest location quotients relative to statewide jobs figures are Mining, Quarrying, & Oil & Gas Extraction (2.36, though there are only 27 total jobs); Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation (1.53, 741 jobs); Retail Trade (1.45, 5,543 jobs); Health Care & Social Assistance (1.24, 9,668 jobs); and Government (1.20, 6,751 jobs). Educational Services, though dominant in Williamstown due to the presence of Williams College, is only slightly more common as an industry in the commute shed than in the state overall, with a location quotient of 1.11, a reflection of Massachusetts’ strength in that sector.

Nearly all of the predominant industries are experiencing declines in employment within the commute shed. Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation; Retail Trade; Health Care & Social Assistance; and Government have all experienced a loss of jobs over the last decade. It must be noted, however, that the Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation and Retail Trade sectors in particular have been adversely impacted across the country by the COVID-19 pandemic, and thus this trend is not specific to the Williamstown commute shed.

PROPERTY TAXES
The fiscal implications of property taxes are an important consideration that businesses, and even individuals, evaluate when making choices about where to locate. While low property taxes can help attract businesses and residents, limited funding can result in insufficient provision of public services and amenities, inhibiting a town’s ability to remain competitive with its neighboring communities. In most communities, property taxes represent a sizable majority of municipal revenues.

Table 2.4 shows property tax rates for residential and commercial, industrial, and personal property for Williamstown and contiguous municipalities in Massachusetts. Williamstown has a unified tax rate, meaning the tax rate is the same for both residential and commercial/industrial uses. Williamstown’s residential tax rates are in the middle of the group at $16.92. However, when the tax rate is applied to Williamstown’s high residential values it creates an average single family property tax bill that is one of the highest in the county and in the top third statewide. While Williamstown’s median household income is higher than many surrounding communities, the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municip.</th>
<th>2012 Property Tax Rates</th>
<th>2022 Property Tax Rates</th>
<th>% Change in Rates FY12-FY22</th>
<th>% Change in Levy, FY12-FY22</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adams</td>
<td>$17.26</td>
<td>$20.47</td>
<td>80.5 / 19.5</td>
<td>$20.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarksburg</td>
<td>$11.53</td>
<td>$11.53</td>
<td>96.1 / 3.9</td>
<td>$16.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hancock</td>
<td>$3.26</td>
<td>$3.26</td>
<td>58.5 / 41.5</td>
<td>$3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Ashford</td>
<td>$8.84</td>
<td>$12.53</td>
<td>75.4 / 24.6</td>
<td>$10.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Adams</td>
<td>$14.82</td>
<td>$32.83</td>
<td>61.7 / 38.3</td>
<td>$18.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williamstown</td>
<td>$13.98</td>
<td>$13.98</td>
<td>89.1 / 10.9</td>
<td>$16.92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
high property tax bills can limit the ability of some households to afford Williamstown particularly workers who may be in lower wage jobs and cannot afford to live in town.

Williamstown is highly reliant on residential tax revenues. As of FY2022, 88.8 percent of tax receipts come from such properties. While this is a slightly lower proportion than in 2012, it still can place a burden on residents, because any improvements to service or capital investment will be funded almost entirely by their taxes.

A further challenge facing Williamstown is the amount of land designated as tax-exempt. Many of the town’s anchor institutions, while employing thousands and attracting visitors, do not pay property taxes on all of their land, despite having significant landholdings. As of 2021, nearly 14,800 acres in Williamstown are categorized as “exempt”; these include publicly-owned lands,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2.3: Municipal Property Tax Rate Comparison</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Source:</strong> MA DOR, Division of Local Services, Property Tax Data &amp; Statistics</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land Use</th>
<th># of Parcels</th>
<th>Acres (% of CI total)</th>
<th>Median Parcel Size</th>
<th>Median Year Built</th>
<th>Built SF (Livable Area)</th>
<th>Total AV (% of CI total)</th>
<th>Total AV/Acre</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>835 91.3%</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>1959</td>
<td>701,315</td>
<td>$70,586,276 92.6%</td>
<td>$84,585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial-Cultural and Entertainment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3 0.0%</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>1916</td>
<td>10,188</td>
<td>$756,700 1.0%</td>
<td>$2,293,030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial-Distribution</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>28.1 3.1%</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>27,193</td>
<td>$2,403,700 3.2%</td>
<td>$85,480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial-Group Quarters</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>33.6 3.7%</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>1963</td>
<td>247,100</td>
<td>$26,416,200 34.6%</td>
<td>$785,495</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial-Office</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>31.3 3.4%</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>1930</td>
<td>139,215</td>
<td>$16,797,500 22.0%</td>
<td>$536,833</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commercial-Recreation</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>602.9 66.0%</td>
<td>81.00</td>
<td>1900</td>
<td>25,622</td>
<td>$1,427,176 1.9%</td>
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<td>45</td>
<td>116.1 12.7%</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>1965</td>
<td>251,997</td>
<td>$21,883,000 28.7%</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>22.1 2.4%</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>$902,000 1.2%</td>
<td>$40,741</td>
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<td>Industrial</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>79 8.7%</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>1968</td>
<td>184,932</td>
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<td>Industrial-Communications Utility</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5 0.1%</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>1958</td>
<td>2,840</td>
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<td>Industrial-Manufacturing and Processing</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>60.3 6.6%</td>
<td>27.00</td>
<td>1978</td>
<td>181,517</td>
<td>$4,904,900 6.4%</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>4.4 0.5%</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>1920</td>
<td>575</td>
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<tr>
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<td>3</td>
<td>14.0 1.5%</td>
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<td>N/A</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>$105,200 0.1%</td>
<td>$7,509</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL, All CI Land</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>914</td>
<td>1950</td>
<td>886,247</td>
<td>76,262,676</td>
<td>$83,460</td>
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conservation lands, properties owned by charities, institutional uses such as museums, and properties owned by non-profit educational organizations that are dedicated to educational uses. This figure translates to 50 percent of all land in the town. Though some exempt owners, such as the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, do make an annual, predetermined contribution to the Town’s general fund, most of them not.

Williams College, though a critical part of the local economy, does not pay direct property taxes on its educational uses in the way a resident or a for-profit entity would. Nor does it have an established “payment in lieu of taxes” program. However, the College does contribute to not only the local economy, but also financially to the town in different ways. Those include, but are not limited to, supporting the school district, financial contributions, allowing for some use of their indoor and outdoor facilities, providing student/intern support to town departments, assisting with programming at the senior center or library for residents, and paying property taxes on non-educational uses, such as retail on Spring Street. In the past, Williams has also stepped forward to assist the Town and other public bodies address specific capital costs.

COMMERCIAL/INDUSTRIAL DISTRICTS
The availability of land designated as commercial or industrial is an indicator of both the prevalence of jobs-producing uses in a community and its ability to rely on non-residential property taxes to fund services. According to the Williamstown Assessor’s database, approximately 3 percent of land, or 914 acres, in town is identified as a commercial or industrial use. The vast majority of that is found on commercial parcels (835 acres). Though representing 10 percent of land designated as commercial, industrial, or residential, commercial and industrial uses make up only 8 percent of total assessed value, indicating that these uses may be under-performing relative to residential uses.

These commercial and industrial uses are concentrated in four districts, each fulfilling a unique role within the town’s economy:

SAND SPRINGS/BROAD BROOK
The Sand Springs/Broad Brook district north of the Hoosic River along and adjacent to Route 7, contains some of the largest industrial uses in Williamstown. These include the North and South American headquarters for Steinerfilm, Sand Springs Springwater, Countryside Landscape, a number of smaller agricultural operations, and some retail. Steinerfilm is the largest for-profit employer in town with 160 workers, and produces high-performance metallized films for a range of medical, energy, and electronics manufacturers, among others. This location is their North American headquarters, and represents a unique, highly-specialized industry within Williamstown.

SPRING STREET
Spring Street is the traditional main street of Williamstown. Many retailers and restaurants are located on the short stretch between Route 2 and Latham Street. This district is in the heart of the Williams College campus, and many of the businesses here cater to students, staff, faculty, and visitors. One notable characteristic about this district is that the vast majority of the properties here are owned by Williams College. On the one hand, this can help ensure lower vacancy rates because it is in the college’s interest to create a lively campus with businesses that students
can frequent, but there are challenges associated with this ownership pattern, as well. First, several storefronts and office spaces are subsidized by the college, who could quickly change this policy making it more difficult for those businesses to maintain financial stability. Second, while subsidized space is good for affordability for tenants who occupy it, it puts downward pressure on rents in non-subsidized properties owned by private landlords. This may compromise their ability to both remain competitive and invest in the maintenance of their spaces.

ROUTE 2/MOHAWK TRAIL
The Route 2/Mohawk Trail corridor is the point of entry into Williamstown for most visitors coming from the east (the Metro Boston Area) and west (New York’s Capital District). To the east of Spring Street, the corridor contains several retail businesses including restaurants, markets, banks, gas stations, and other businesses that tend to need larger parcels and building footprints than what may be available on Spring Street. As a result, the development pattern for this corridor follows a mid-20th century model of automobile-oriented development.

WATER STREET/ROUTE 43
Water Street is a smaller corridor south of the college’s campus, leading past Taconic Golf Club. It is home to small restaurants and some retail, and was historically the home of major industrial uses in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Those mill buildings have been recently converted to residential uses, which has helped support the retail activities.
UNIQUE ECONOMIC DRIVERS

TOWN/GOWN RELATIONSHIP
As noted above, a sizable portion of the jobs in Williamstown are either directly or indirectly connected to Williams College. Furthermore, the college’s ownership of vast amounts of land across the town put it in control of an important and limited resource. Cooperation or at least coordination between the college and the Town will continue to be critical for Williamstown’s economic sustainability. As noted above, a sizable portion of the jobs in Williamstown are either directly or indirectly connected to Williams College. Furthermore, the college’s ownership of vast amounts of land across the town put it in control of an important and limited resource. The college brings in visitation and spending from the outside by providing opportunities to welcome back alumni during reunions or events for alums, student visits to campus, parents visiting students, and events or conferences put on by the college. All these activities bring people to Williamstown and the region who spend money on accommodations, food, and retail goods. As the college continues to grow and evolve, cooperation or at least coordination between the college and the Town will be critical for Williamstown’s economic sustainability.

TOURISM AND VISITATION

CULTURAL ATTRACTIONS
Williamstown is home to an unusual number of world-class cultural institutions for a town of its size. The Clark Art Institute melds traditional galleries with contemporary architecture and a curated, natural landscape, hosting exhibitions and events throughout the year. The Clark’s collections and programming attract a global audience, and its connections to the New York and global art worlds span its entire history.

The Williams College Museum of Art’s (WCMA) mission includes enhancing a liberal arts education via arts experiences, supporting lifelong learning, and engaging the cultural ecosystem. Though it is affiliated with Williams College, the museum welcomes the public to visit its collections, exhibitions, and much of its programming. Williams College has committed to building the new WCMA facility on Field Park. Town staff noted it is likely to be underway by the year 2024. The addition of the facility will add another strong arts anchor in Williamstown and help to bring in additional tourism and visitation activity.

The Williamstown Theatre Festival is a nearly 70-year old annual event that aims to convene the greatest minds in theatre to reimagine classic plays, produce new and bold plays, and provide training for actors and technical professionals alike. This festival is a past Tony Award-winner, and its links to Broadway and international theatre are deep.

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-TOURISM
For hundreds of years, agriculture has been central to Williamstown’s identity and economy. Significant portions of the town’s lands are dedicated to agriculture: nearly 3,300 acres include agricultural uses, either as primary or ancillary uses. The Berkshires overall are known as a major center for farming in New England, and this has led to an enviable farm-to-table movement; restaurants throughout the region attract epicureans with ultra-local dishes. Furthermore, the
physical character that agriculture supports – rolling hills full of tilled fields or pastures full of grazing animals – itself attracts vacationers seeking bucolic landscapes. Many other visitors come specifically to experience farming firsthand – for education, recreation, or both.

OUTDOOR RECREATION
Another facet of Williamstown’s idyllic setting is its range of outdoor recreation offerings. Flat trail systems, scenic bicycle routes, and hiking (including access to the tallest peak in Massachusetts, Mt. Greylock) provide a diverse set of options for visitors and residents alike. Winter activities are likewise in abundant supply, with cross country skiing, snowshoeing, snowmobiling, and downhill skiing available either in the town itself or within a 30 minute drive.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS
In addition to the Town itself, many other local and regional organizations exist that support economic development in and around Williamstown. These groups perform valuable duties, from encouraging tourism to supporting local businesses.

The **Williamstown Chamber of Commerce** is a coalition of business owners in town that works to promote the local business community and engage with residents and visitors. The Chamber provides useful resources for its members, and its outreach efforts enhance the reach of local operators. Its support of the Destination Williamstown effort is a testament to the group’s commitment to fostering inclusive and arts-driven programming in the town.

**1Berkshire** is a countywide group and state supported Regional Tourism Council (RTC) dedicated to enhancing economic development at a regional level. The organization touts its ability to make business-to-business connections, increase access to customers and clients, and develop future business leaders. In addition to these business-focused endeavors, 1Berkshire also markets the Berkshires to visitors and potential new businesses.

The **Berkshire Visitors Bureau** is the body within 1Berkshire responsible for engaging with visitors. Their website provides and overview and specifics about the Berkshires’ many attractions, along with resources for trip planning.

The **Berkshire Regional Planning Commission** is a regional organization that helps direct planning efforts across the county. They have created an Economic Development program in coordination with local, state, and federal leaders, and regularly publish reports on the state of the regional economy.

The **Mohawk Trail Association** is a member based organization promoting the 23 towns that comprise the Mohawk Trail Region accessible by the Route 2 corridor. The Association maintains a website and marketing material showcasing attractions, events, activities, shopping, accommodations, and food and beverage options in all of the different towns. Visitors can also find information about driving tours, weather, history of the area, and more.
SUSTAINABILITY AND THE ECONOMY

The economy is often noted as a pillar of sustainability. One way of understanding its role in local sustainability efforts is to consider the triple bottom line concept which advocates for committing to measuring the social and environmental impacts of economic activities and policies to their financial performance. This is a departure from focusing solely on generating profit, or the standard “bottom line.” It is often communicated using the “three Ps” of profit, people, and the planet. This presents an opportunity to engage with interested businesses and organizations in Williamstown and point them to resources and opportunities that will help them address the three Ps.

The Covid 19 Pandemic also illustrated how fragile our economy is when disrupted, and many local businesses where deeply impacted. Fortunately, this crisis also generated beneficial community resilience examples from across the country that municipal boards and businesses can learn from. This includes increased online services and communication with residents, expedited permitting, increased use of parks and open spaces, outdoor dining and activation of the public realm in creative ways. These should not be forgotten, and may provide creative ways to support the local businesses going forward. It will also be important for Williamstown to engage with the business community and identify ways to support efforts to make operations more energy efficient, facilitate the purchase or generation of renewable energy, and upgrade older, less efficient heating systems or infrastructure.

An ongoing outreach and education campaign may be needed to target business owners and help them to identify actions that are appropriate for them, or gain access to the many solutions or experts available. The outreach phase of this comprehensive planning process will provide an initial opportunity to learn more about what the business community has accomplished, and where they need assistance to support the community sustainability and resilience being developed in Williamstown. As the community’s largest employer Williams College has made progress in addressing sustainability and resilience, and is a generous collaborator on these issues.

One example with great potential that relates to smaller businesses is a new initiative in partnership with the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission which will provide energy efficiency assessments and improvements to local business owners. Across the region, progress is being made on expanding access to broadband, pursuing future rail and freight connections, and expanding other public transportation solutions. However, the 2019 review of the Sustainable Berkshire’s Plan identified a lack of progress on clearly articulating a regional economic development strategy, implementing “real” Broadband in economic centers, or reaching young people to increase career aspirations.

REFERENCES

• Moody’s Analytics REIS. Local Property Inventory. Accessed March 2022.
While there are some identified deficiencies in the existing transportation system, Williamstown has been forward thinking and has actively taken steps toward a more equitable and environmentally friendly transportation network. This is demonstrated by the Town’s steps taken to become a Complete Street community, including the adoption of a Complete Streets Policy in 2016.

Williamstown has 16 miles of sidewalk that are maintained year round. These are mostly within the village center area, along main roads, and in nearby neighborhoods.

Off-road pathways represent unique opportunities for transportation connections. Both the Appalachian Trail and the soon-to-be complete Mohawk Multi-Use Path are unique transportation corridors that have the potential to contribute to the pedestrian and bicycle transportation network.
According to the Berkshire Regional Transit Authority (BRTA), between July 1, 2017 and January 1, 2022 a total of 44,848 passenger boardings were recorded in Williamstown. There are a total of four transit providers that offer service to Williamstown residents.

Access to transit options in Williamstown is limited. Improving this access may require innovative solutions that will provide residents and employees with additional transportation alternatives. Related to this need for improved access is a desire to relocate the existing bus stop closer to the Town Center, and to add weekend bus service in coordination with area transit providers.

Accessibility needs and the economics of transportation should be further investigated through this planning process so that all residents/travelers are accommodated to the best extent feasible as transportation infrastructure and service improvements are made. This is reflected in the Town’s commitment to make Williamstown an equitable place to live for all.

The overall condition of the roadways, bridges, and culverts are excellent, but the changing intensity of storms due to climate change poses new challenges to the maintenance and repair of this infrastructure. Increasing the resiliency of Williamstown’s transportation infrastructure to the impacts of climate change will continue to be a need in the future.

There are currently 14 electric vehicle charging locations in Williamstown. The current shift to electric vehicles needs to be considered in the build out of infrastructure, the siting of future charging locations, and the budgeting of municipal fleet replacements.

In Williamstown 10.3% of households do not own a vehicle. Some of these households have no workers, perhaps lessening the need for a vehicle, but given the geography of the Berkshires this can still make travel a challenge.

As the region works to create new transportation solutions, Williamstown should participate in these efforts towards expanding alternative transportation options including carpool matching, emergency rides home, vanpooling, and other options to the employers in the community as valid ways to address commuter needs.

There is a strong relationship between the need for transportation alternatives, and the local and regional housing affordability and economic development goals. Transportation, housing, and economic development efforts should be integrated to achieve greater coordination.
INTRODUCTION

Williamstown's transportation system provides critical access to residents and businesses within the community, welcomes visitors, and connects all of these travelers to the surrounding region and beyond. This system both impacts and is impacted by the land use and development patterns, and the circulation patterns generated. The resulting transportation network also impacts the accessibility of various areas of Williamstown, and which modes of transportation are available to provide that access. An equitable transportation system creates an accessible and affordable transportation network for everyone in the community resulting in fair distribution of transportation resources, benefits, costs, programs, and services.

As Williamstown move through the comprehensive planning process, the Town should aim to better understand transportation issues through an equity lens to better address the needs of every person potentially served or impacted by transportation planning decisions. Many of today’s transportation systems were built with an emphasis on a single purpose and a limited range of users. Differences in income, ability, and other factors affecting transportation choice should be considered when making decisions about transportation investments, expanding transportation service, and improving public infrastructure.

Beyond these circulation and access related issues there are also energy use, economic, and natural resource impacts that should be considered as this system is evaluated and changes are identified for the future. There are some long standing and newly emerging aspects of Williamstown’s transportation network that make it unique. Located at the intersection of State Routes 2, 7 and 43, the Appalachian Trail, a rail corridor, and pending multi-use paths Williamstown is a destination for many travelers and a home for year-round residents. All of these elements add to the network’s complexity and potential solutions.

ISSUES, BARRIERS, AND CHALLENGES

Each of the entry points to the community has a distinct land use pattern and character, but for all of them vehicular traffic is the dominant transportation mode. Based on the initial inventory and analysis for this topic it is clear that there is strong interest in re-imagining the existing automobile dominated transportation system as a complete and green street network. Such a commitment will increase the number and type of safe mobility options for all while reducing energy use and reinforcing other priorities identified in this plan. Investments made in bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure should include safety enhancements, outreach and education efforts, covered storage, and other amenities that support this shift in transportation choice.

In Williamstown 10.3% of households do not own a vehicle. Some of these households have no workers, perhaps lessening the need for a vehicle, but given the geography of the Berkshires this can still make travel a challenge. Expanded public transportation continues to be a need in the community and surrounding region. With a new location needed for the bus station this may provide an opportunity to work with the existing providers to expand the frequency of service. Other innovative and affordable transportation
solutions are also needed and should include alternatives such as a bike share, car sharing, van pooling, and may eventually include rail service.

Continued monitoring and maintenance of the bridges, culverts and transportation infrastructure is also important to ensure this infrastructure is resilient to a changing climate. In recent years, localized flooding and erosion impacts along the Hoosic River and within upper watersheds elsewhere in town have highlighted the need for culverts to be inventoried and assessed.

**A REGIONAL VISION FOR TRANSPORTATION**

The Berkshire County Regional Transportation Plan (2020) helps to understand Williamstown’s transportation infrastructure and need within a regional system and context. The vision for regional transportation created during this planning process includes the following elements:

- A region thriving in the transportation revolution enabled by vehicle electrification, automation, and sharing, while maintaining our rural and historic context
- A network of safe, accessible, well-maintained, and well-funded roads for cyclists, pedestrians, and vehicles
- A robust and diverse array of accessible and affordable public transportation services and transportation providers
- A countywide off-road, shared-use path and trail network connecting Berkshire communities and spanning from Vermont to Connecticut
- Vibrant villages, city centers, and neighborhoods where biking, walking, and using public transit is easier than driving
- Convenient passenger rail connections to locations in the Berkshires, surrounding states, major cities, and beyond
- A cost-effective, affordable, and resilient system; enabling local ecologies, and future-proofed against the effects of climate change
- A community of stakeholders working in concert to address the transportation system and its nexus to the economy, poverty, environment, health and well-being and responding to the demographic shifts our region is facing by embracing technology, innovation, and cooperation.

This regional vision should inform the land use and infrastructure planning discussions in Williamstown during the comprehensive planning process, and result in clear actions needed at the local and regional levels. The town alone cannot address all of the transportation related needs that have been identified.

**EXISTING TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE**

Williamstown’s existing transportation network is composed of infrastructure, modes of travel, and shaped by policies that reinforce the connection with land use activities throughout the community. Below is an inventory of existing conditions that should inform discussions about infrastructure deficiencies and improvements needed.

**ROADWAYS AND SIDEWALKS**

The Department of Public Works (DPW) in cooperation with the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) maintain 121 miles of roads in Williamstown. This includes the
roadway system, and the bridges and culverts that are essential components of this network. In 2022, Mass DOT will be repairing two bridges in Williamstown. Beyond scheduled replacements the overall condition of infrastructure in Williamstown is very good. The Town has the ability within the DPW to address the majority of maintenance needs and infrastructure upgrades, and does contract out for larger projects as needed.

The Highway Department currently has twelve staff and is responsible for the year-round maintenance of 57 municipal roadways. Forty-one of these are paved and sixteen are gravel. Currently, no pavement management software is used to monitor the condition of these roadways. Instead, the staff identify and prioritize roads in need of maintenance or resurfacing, and have had the benefit of annual support from residents and municipal leaders to stay on top of these maintenance issues. Gravel roads are also handled in a similar fashion.

Williamstown has a sidewalk inventory that informs the year-round maintenance of sixteen miles of sidewalk within the town center area, along main roads and in nearby neighborhoods. It has been noted that these areas of higher pedestrian activity should include street trees, benches, and other streetscape elements to improve the conditions for pedestrian travel. This inventory does not identify all needed expansions of this network in the future. As new pathways are constructed in the community, these amenities should be incorporated for the safety and enjoyment of pedestrians and cyclists. Given the interest in bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure in Williamstown, a comprehensive bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure analysis should be started during this comprehensive planning process. This effort should identify the existing infrastructure, needs, and opportunities through engagement with the community. The resulting Plan can then inform the complete streets prioritization in the community. The 2020 Pittsfield Bicycle Facilities Master Plan could serve as a model for some of this work.
PATHWAYS
In the late 1990’s, planners, community members and state officials began to conceive of a safe, paved, off-road, biking and walking path through the county for people of all ages and abilities to enjoy. The Berkshire Bike Path is envisioned as a centralized shared use path that travels north to south through Berkshire County. This path is now under construction in Williamstown as the 2.3-mile-long Mohawk Bicycle/Pedestrian Path which will travel between Syndicate Road and Route 2 along the Hoosic River.

From the eastern terminus of the trail it will connect to the envisioned Adventure Trail which is a 3.4-mile pedestrian/bicycle trail from the Williamstown line to downtown North Adams, effectively linking MASS MoCA and MCLA to Williams College and The Clark. Once complete the Trail will serve as a critical connection to existing and future community and cultural assets while also providing new access to natural resource areas. It addresses some of the community’s need for safe alternative transportation, public health and wellness, and neighborhood connectivity.

From the northern terminus of the Mohawk Bicycle/Pedestrian Path in Williamstown there is the potential to connect to the Trolley Path which is still in the conceptual phase of development. The desire is for this abandoned electric trolley car bed in Southwestern Vermont to be transformed into a 14-mile shared-use path to enhance safety and accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists traveling between Bennington, VT, Pownal, VT, and Williamstown. This project is envisioned and designed primarily as a transportation and commuter corridor, but it meets additional and complementary needs for economic development, public health, and sustainability in the region.

Other potential trail locations and connections should be inventoried and explored in Williamstown to expand the bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. This should include the creation of bike lanes on existing roadways, a potential trail corridor from the proposed Fire Department site, Linear Park, and the multi-use path located to the north, a multi-use path to connect Spring Street to the Clark Art Museum, connecting existing trails to town center origination and information points, and other corridors that provide both transportation and recreation connections. The Town should also encourage the use of these trail connections by adding benches, shade trees, wayfinding arrows, distance signage, and other amenities.

BRIDGES AND CULVERTS
The monitoring, maintenance and replacement of all bridges is managed by the State of Massachusetts. Two bridge projects are slated to begin in 2022/23 and these projects will be completed by MassDOT. One bridge is on Main Street over Hemlock Brook, and the other is on Route 2 over the Green River.

The monitoring, maintenance and replacement of culverts is handled locally by the Highway Superintendent, but if the culvert is more than 10 feet in length the Department typically hires an outside contractor. As culverts are getting replaced in the community, larger diameter culverts are installed to address the larger storm events being experienced due to climate change.

There is no current inventory of culverts and their condition available in the community. The creation of such an inventory could be used to inform a watershed specific assessment of
vulnerabilities and infrastructure needs. The steep topography and changes in rainfall amounts related to climate change are already creating localized flooding, erosion, and infrastructure issues. The Hopper Brook Drainage on Mt. Greylock is one example, and climate change is expected to bring stronger and more frequent storms and precipitation to the region. This will put greater strain on all of the infrastructure, but particularly on Williamstown’s bridges and culverts. To address this the town must systematically assess all existing culverts and prioritize their replacement to enhance its resilience to future events.

PARKING
Parking solutions for the Town Center and campus have been a topic of discussion since the previous municipal plan. Since the 2002 Master Plan, more parking has been added to Spring Street. As this Comprehensive Plan is developed, it would be beneficial to determine what type of data is needed to guide this discussion, and to determine what level of demand would warrant the construction of additional lots or a parking garage. Such an infrastructure investment should be made in coordination with a future land use plan for the Town Center area, and can identify potential funding mechanisms for parking improvements. Its also important that the Comprehensive Plan consider the changing parking needs that exist in contemporary times compared to twenty years ago. Now, towns and cities are embracing the trend to reduce and/or make parking requirements more flexible to combat issues such as urban heat island effect, sprawl, and limited walkability.

RAIL
There is potential for improving and restoring passenger rail service to the region in the future, and the town should be planning its transportation network with this possibility in mind. Recently, three proposals have been developed to expand passenger rail service in the Berkshires. These include service along the Housatonic Line, the proposed seasonal Berkshire Flyer, and more convenient service between nearby North Adams and Boston (Northern Tier Passenger Rail Study). The existing rail line in Williamstown is currently owned and managed by Pan Am, but an offer to purchase the line has been made by CSX and Norfolk Southern and operated by an independent 3rd party operator to be called Berkshire & Eastern Railroad. This existing rail line is being studied by the State of Massachusetts in the Northern Tier Passenger Rail Study. Investments made in any of these proposed projects would provide greater public transit access for Williamstown residents, and provide visitors with an alternative way to travel to the community. Access to a potential train station in Williamstown or nearby N. Adams should be considered in the planning of Williamstown’s future transportation network.

ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING
A newly emerging aspect of the transportation network is the need for vehicle charging stations. Currently there are 14 charging locations in Williamstown including:

- Waubeeka Golf Links
- Mount Greylock Regional High School
- The Clark Museum
- Williamstown Town Hall
- The Williams Inn
- Spring Street Town Parking Lot
- Cable Mills Apartments
- Fairfield Inn and Suites
- Williams College - Lansing Chapman Rink (Faculty/Staff parking lot)
- Williams College - Meacham Street (Public parking lot)
- Williams College - Spencer House (Faculty/Staff parking lot)
- Williams College - Sawyer Library (Public parking lot)
- Williams College - Hollander Hall (Faculty/Staff parking lot)
- Williams College - Whitman Street Parking Garage (Public parking lot)

As more locations are needed it will be important to consider locations that serve the public best, and how this energy is sourced.

**ENHANCING THE TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE**

While there are some identified deficiencies in the existing transportation system, Williamstown has been forward thinking and has actively taken steps toward a more equitable and environmentally friendly transportation network. This is demonstrated by the steps taken to become a Complete Street community. Adopted as a municipal policy in 2016:

“The purpose of the Town of Williamstown’s Complete Streets Policy is to accommodate a wide range of road users by creating a road network that meets the needs of individuals utilizing a variety of transportation modes. The policy will be applied as a guide in decision-making in related infrastructure planning and construction. The Town recognizes the health, safety, economic viability, and numerous other benefits that can be achieved through application of Complete Streets principles. In order to advance its efforts to provide safety and accessibility for all the users of our public rights of way, including pedestrians, bicyclists, BRTA and Intercity transit riders, motorists, commercial vehicles, and emergency vehicles and for people of all ages and of all abilities the Town shall utilize Complete Streets design principles to the maximum extent practicable in decisions regarding its public rights of way.”

This policy commitment will best be achieved through a combination of off corridor and on street opportunities that accommodate bicycles, pedestrians, and transit stops. The identification and implementation of other safety improvements will also be necessary during the design and implementation of this policy. To achieve this, the planning for Williamstown’s future transportation network should also embody the following policies:

**ACCESSIBILITY FOR ALL**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Self-Assessment that was completed for Williamstown in 2018 should also inform the design and construction of the municipal transportation network. Like all municipalities, the Town has an obligation to ensure that it does not discriminate against individuals with disabilities in the provision of municipal programs and services. This self-assessment, however, was focused mostly on the accessibility of municipal facilities and services, and not on the transportation network connections (sidewalks, crosswalks, etc.) from these facilities and the many private properties in the community. This highlights the need for further study to ensure Williamstown’s transportation network serves all residents and visitors.
COMPLETE STREETS
According to the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT): “A Complete Street is one that provides safe and accessible options for all travel modes - walking, biking, transit and vehicles – for people of all ages and abilities.” MassDOT provides funding to municipalities for technical assistance to analyze their community needs and develop a Complete Streets Prioritization Plan, and funding for construction of Complete Streets infrastructure projects. Also inherent in the development of a Complete Street is meeting the most current accessibility guidelines outlined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Massachusetts Architectural Access Board (AAB), which are upheld by Code of Massachusetts Regulations 521 (521 CMR). Williamstown does have examples of complete streets including Spring Street and Water Street. Williamstown may wish to identify which road segments are the highest priority for complete street conversion to prioritize future investment.

ACCESS MANAGEMENT
The Federal Highway Administration defines access management as “the process that provides access to land development while simultaneously preserving the flow of traffic on the surrounding system in terms of safety, capacity, and speed.” In Williamstown this means managing the number of driveways that a vehicle may encounter along busy roads without hampering reasonable access to a property. It results in moving slower, turning vehicles from the main arterials as efficiently and safely as possible. Often this is accomplished through shared driveway entrances that provide access to multiple properties, and off-corridor connections between adjacent properties. This helps to reduce the number of trips the main arterials must accommodate. Access management is best promoted through the land use regulations, and is needed most along the state routes in Williamstown. A Route 2 Access Management Plan was completed for Williamstown in 2002 and found that there are areas of Route 2 that are problematic. Since its development, it does not appear to have resulted in many changes along this corridor.

TRAFFIC CALMING
The Institute of Transportation Engineers defines traffic calming as, “the combination of mostly physical measures that reduces the negative effects of motor vehicle use, alters driver behavior, and improves conditions for non-motorized users.” The addition of street trees, the narrowing of lanes, the extension of pedestrian crossing areas, and other design strategies could help Williamstown slow traffic in the more densely developed portions of the community, and accommodate pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure safely. This is a design strategy that can be incorporated in the land use regulations, and is a critical component of Complete Street designs.

Image 3.1: Williamstown already has implemented traffic calming techniques in Town, including the above curbside "bump-out" and signalized crossing signs on Park Street that improve pedestrian safety.
COMMUNITY TRANSIT
MassDOT also administers the Community Transit Grant Program which is an annual competitive grant program to distribute Federal Transit Administration Section 5310: Enhanced Mobility of Seniors & Individuals with Disabilities funds, and State Mobility Assistance Program funds. This grant program provides funding to assist with mobility management activities, the purchase of capital equipment, and operational costs to meet the mobility needs of seniors, defined as those 65 and older and individuals with disabilities of any age. State Mobility Assistance Program (MAP) funds are to assist in the provision of transportation services to seniors and persons with disabilities. MAP funding is exclusively used for the purchase of eligible vehicles, and most often as a State financial match to federally funded capital vehicle purchases.

MODES OF TRAVEL
The Williamstown transportation network supports a variety of modes including motor vehicles, pedestrians, bicycles, and public transit. The diversity of travelers using these modes of travel include residents, college students, commuters, older residents, and visitors to the region. Other types of travelers that must be considered in the transportation infrastructure planning process is those that utilize wheelchairs, canes, walkers, and other mobility assistance devices. As was noted in the inventory of the transportation infrastructure, there is a needed to increase modal choice, and to create a more accessible and equitable transportation system. The current network is primarily focused on roadways serving automobiles. Even in the Town Center area where pedestrian and bicycle travel is more common there are needed improvements. Fortunately, there is documented interest in Williamstown in a network that is design to provide both intermodal and multi-modal transportation.

Intermodal – is defined as a transportation system where multiple modes of transportation are used. In Williamstown, this could be envisioned as the ability to walk or bicycle to another transportation option such as bus service, a vanpool, or a car share.

Multi-modal – often refers to a single transportation system that appropriately and adequately accommodates two or more modes of transportation. In Williamstown this could be envisioned as a complete street design that accommodates vehicles, pedestrians, bicycles, and transit stops.

VEHICLE COUNT DATA
Given the interest in managing traffic volumes and providing alternative modes of travel in Williamstown it is important to understand how many vehicles per day are currently being accommodated on the roads in town.

Along Main Street (East of Cole Ave.) in 2021 there was an Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) count of 12,812 vehicles. This averaging accounts for weekday and seasonal variations, and this data is provided by MassDOT. Looking back to 2010 and several years prior the count for this location was 14,000. This seems to be an indication that counts have decreased in this location, and some vehicles may now be using alternative routes.

Other locations in the community are accommodating lower numbers of vehicles daily compared to previous years. This includes:
• Route 7 South of Main Street which had an AADT of **5,813** in 2020
• Water Street, North of Ide Road had an AADT of **2,338** in 2021
• Latham Street West of Route 43 had an AADT of **2,422** in 2019
• US 7 North of North Hoosac Road had an AADT of **4,140** AADT in 2021
• North Hoosac Road at the N. Adams town line had an AADT of **3384** in 2020

Unfortunately, similar count data is not available for pedestrians and bicycles in Williamstown. Moving forward it would be helpful to understand how people are moving around the town without vehicles, and how they would like to in the future. This should include an examination of the Town Center area and specific destination such as the neighborhood adjacent to the elementary school. During the public engagement phase of this project this should be explored so that the schools, the Clark, Williams College, and other destinations can be engaged in identifying issues, barriers, and solutions.

**CRASH DATA**

In order to find ways to make the transportation network safer for the occupants of vehicles, as well as the many pedestrians and bicycles we hope will use this system in the years to come, we need to know where the areas of conflict and safety concern are. Crash data provided by the Police Department accounted for 1793 reported accidents between January of 2012 and January of 2022. This data showed the following routes as having the highest crash and injury counts over the past decade:

• Cold Spring Road (Route 7) had a total of 191 reported crashes which included 66 injuries, and 2 fatalities.
• Main Street (Route 2) had a total of 458 reported crashes which included 72 injuries, and 1 fatality.

Across the community over the past decade ten crashes have resulted in fatalities. There have also been 31 pedestrian related crashes and 21 bicycle related crashes. It is important to note that 13 of the pedestrian related crashes and 12 of the bicycle related crashes were along Main Street. This is a location where the Town has recently made some safety improvements related to the crosswalks, and appears to be the location with the highest volume of vehicles, pedestrians, and bicycles overall.

**PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION**

The most pressing public transportation issue in the near term is the need to relocate the existing bus station which is currently located at 1090 Main Street near the former Williams Inn site. The relocation of this public transportation facility provides several opportunities. Moving the bus station provides an opportunity to locate it closer to or within the Town Center, improve connections by other transportation modes, address parking, and provide bicycle storage and other improvements. Currently, public transportation providers in Williamstown include the Berkshire Regional Transportation Authority, Green Mountain Express, Peter Pan Bus Lines, and the Council on Aging.
The Berkshire Regional Transportation Authority (BRTA) is the principal community transportation provider in Berkshire County. It was created in 1974 as one of the first eight Regional Transit Authorities to administer public transportation services in member communities. Today, BRTA provides fixed route, demand response, and other public transportation services in twenty-six member communities. According to the BRTA, between July 1, 2017 and January 1, 2022 a total of 44,848 passenger boardings were recorded in Williamstown. Unfortunately, there is no reliable number of passengers who got off the bus in Williamstown having boarded elsewhere. This averages 831 passenger boardings per month in Williamstown for the BRTA alone.

This service provided by the BRTA is important because it includes many services besides full fare fixed route service. The other transportation services the BRTA provides include: half fare fixed route service for customers over 60 or possessing a valid Medicare card or TAP card; complementary ADA paratransit transportation; non-ADA paratransit transportation; and discounted taxi tickets for seniors or disabled individuals. In addition to complementary paratransit services for seniors and disabled as required under the Americans with Disabilities Act, the BRTA also provides to the same population non-ADA, door-to-door chair-car service that is not connected with the fixed route bus system corridor. The BRTA also partners with non-profit agencies like the Williamstown’s Council on Aging (COA), Soldier On, and others by providing them with serve seniors and disabled persons within the community.

The Green Mountain Express (GMX) under the auspices of the Green Mountain Community Network, Inc., provides a variety of transportation services to the residents of Bennington County and includes service to Williamstown. GMX is a full-service transit provider, offering deviated fixed bus routes, demand response, Medicaid, Reach-up, elder/disabled transportation and private pay services. The GMX also offers free educational sessions on “How to Use the Transit System” for any size group. There are also a variety of per diem driving services provided, and those drivers are provided with mileage reimbursement in exchange for using their personal vehicle to provide transportation to others.
As was identified in the 2020 Economic Growth Strategies for Williamstown, the Town should coordinate with the BRTA and GMX and encourage them to expand public bus service in Williamstown and surrounding communities. While working toward this goal, Williamstown should continue to participate in BRPC’s regional transportation process and support the increase of state and federal funding for improvements to Berkshire County’s transportation system. Williamstown should also identify opportunities to collaborate with other groups to advocate for passenger rail service to the region.

**OTHER TRANSPORTATION SOLUTIONS**

As the region works to create new transportation solutions, Williamstown should consider participating in the expanding and improve alternative transportation systems including carpool matching, emergency rides home, vanpooling, and other options to the employers in the community. These are cost effective and efficient ways to address the current commuting needs in the community. This could also include working with Williams College and a car share provider like Zipcar to expand the opportunity for residents to access car sharing opportunities. Eventually these solutions could be organized through the establishment of a Transportation Management Association (TMA) with the intent of helping workers reach their places of employment. A TMA is typically a partnership between employers, transportation providers, and government agencies. A TMA in the Williamstown area has been identified as one of the innovative ways to provide dedicated rides to work for commuters and bring stability to employers who rely on these workers.

**SUSTAINABILITY AND TRANSPORTATION**

Transportation infrastructure in Williamstown presents a large focus area for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The transportation sector represents the largest portion of greenhouse gas emissions in Massachusetts. According to the State of Massachusetts’ “Transportation Sector Report: A Technical Report of the Massachusetts 2050 Decarbonization Roadmap Study”, the Transportation Sector produced 42% of statewide GHG emissions in the Commonwealth in 2017, the latest year with official emissions data. To shift towards a transportation system that strongly reduces greenhouse gas emissions, Williamstown may consider establishing additional vehicle charging locations, and possibly requiring electric vehicle chargers in Williamstown’s land use regulations and at all municipal sites. This will be necessary to promote the electrification of transportation across all sectors.

Additionally, there is an identified lack of accountability with anti-idling requirements in town, and this could be addressed through enforcement actions. There may be a need for additional outreach and education to communicate the how idling vehicles contributes to climate change.

Efforts to analyze and invest in pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure have also been identified as a need in Williamstown. In general, there is a lack of bike lanes in town and some busy roads, like Route 43 are used by pedestrians and cyclists without dedicated, separated travel space. While the new multi-use trail to North Adams is currently under construction, more infrastructure will be necessary to shift vehicle trips to a safe network of sidewalks, bike lanes, and shared pathways. Together, these infrastructure investments will allow for better connections between transportation modes, and will build additional ridership for public transportation. This should include analysis of school bus ridership which is being reported as low currently.
REFERENCES

- Williamstown’s Complete Streets Policy, 2016
- Berkshire Bike Path Storymap
- Trolley line path scoping study 2021
- North Adams Adventure Trail
- Berkshire Regional Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan - 2018
- BERKSHIRE TMA FEASIBILITY STUDY, 2020
- Transportation Improvement Program 2019 – 2024
- Berkshire County Transportation Guide 2019
- Berkshire County Regional Transportation Plan 2020
- Town of Williamstown ADA Self-Assessment and Transition Plan - 2018
- Strategies for Economic Growth in Williamstown, Massachusetts - 2020
- Recommendations for Enhancements to Williamstown’s Parks and Recreation Offerings - 2020
Providing high-quality public facilities, services, and infrastructure is an important function of town government. In Williamstown, there are some facilities that are in need of greater attention over the next ten years and some gaps in both infrastructure and services that the town should consider as it plans for its future.

PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES

WILLIAMSTOWN 2022 EXISTING CONDITIONS SUMMARY

Town Hall is in need of a new, more modernized building that adequately supports staff and is more accessible to the public. While the location near the center of Town is ideal, the building is old, antiquated, and lacks the modern layout and accessibility of a newer public building. Since the building is closing in on 100 years old, it lacks modern systems like sprinklers, fire alarms, and a central HVAC system.

The number of older adults continues to comprise an increasing share of the town’s overall population. Yet the Harper Center for the Council on Aging has not been improved or expanded since it’s construction in 1980.

Residents are seeking options for expanding outdoor recreation fields and facilities in Williamstown with several options that could ease pressures on existing fields.

The Williamstown Fire District is in need of a new, modern fire station facility to replace the current one constructed in 1950. To that end, the Fire Department purchased a 3.76-acre parcel of land located at 560 Main Street for the future construction of a roughly 19,000 square foot fire station. The Fire District created a Building Committee and a Community Advisory Committee to guide the process of funding and constructing the new station.
The Town does not currently have in-house IT staff and uses a combination of external consultants and the limited capabilities of Town staff.

Improvements and expansions of the water system need to be considered to ensure Williamstown residents have access to the Town’s public water system. According to the Public Works Department, there is some additional capacity for additional growth and expansion of the water and sewer systems. Aging water service on the north side of town requires significant investment.

With climate change impacting the frequency, strength, and duration of storms, the Town needs to consider investing more in replacing and possibly relocating critical water and wastewater infrastructure away from rivers and streams. The Town’s Department of Public Works also maintains the stormwater system in Town.

Williamstown has been actively working on sustainability and resilience related efforts which include: the Spruces recreation and flood mitigation area, a Net Zero Resolution, energy conservation efforts, the development of large solar energy arrays and successful solarize campaigns, and its status as a pollinator friendly community. Collaborators such as the Cool Committee are essential to these efforts.

An infrastructure limitation exists with the limited capacity of the National Grid system to accommodate future large scale renewable energy projects in Williamstown. This is a significant issue and an opportunity for collaboration with other agencies and organizations on solutions that will support the town’s goals for renewable energy production.

Williamstown passed a net zero greenhouse gas (GHG) resolution in 2021. This involves the creation of a climate action plan by 2023. A municipal GHG emissions inventory would also help provide a baseline understanding that can inform efforts to reach the Town’s Net Zero goal.

There is an opportunity for the Town to set green building standards through the identification and adoption of zoning and building code provisions that either incentivize or require new development to address energy conservation and renewable energy production.

### Town of Williamstown Facilities Overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facility</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Size (Sq. Ft.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Town Hall (1927)</td>
<td>31 North Street</td>
<td>12,180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPW Garage and Yard (1998)</td>
<td>675 Simonds Road</td>
<td>24,555</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police Department (2019)</td>
<td>825 Simonds Road</td>
<td>12,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burbank Memorial Chapel (1920)</td>
<td>605 Main Street</td>
<td>2,086</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milne Public Library (1967)</td>
<td>1095 Main Street</td>
<td>16,950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williamstown Elementary School (2001)</td>
<td>115 Church Street</td>
<td>12,367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harper Center for the Council on Aging (1985) (leased by Town from Berkshire Housing Corp)</td>
<td>118 Church Street</td>
<td>4,520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL BUILT SPACE:</strong></td>
<td><strong>---</strong></td>
<td><strong>80,138</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Public Facilities and Services

INTRODUCTION
The public facilities and services element of the Master Plan serves as an inventory of existing municipal property that has been improved to serve a public purpose or a municipal service such as provision of sewer, water, or other public utilities. This element should help guide future decisions for improvements to or expansions of public facilities and services to meet the needs of the Town’s population today and into the future.

The way services are delivered, and facilities are adapted depend heavily on future changes to population, employment, and the natural and built environment. As residents and the business community change over time so may the expectations for facilities and services. Over time, new facilities and services may be needed to accommodate a changing population which may impact the way services are delivered, the facilities that house them, and the staff that administers them. These changes will require Williamstown to continue its process of forward-thinking capital planning, a commitment to adequately invest in routine maintenance, and proper funding for capital and operation costs.

ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

CONSIDER STRATEGIC INVESTMENTS IN STAFFING
Over time, there have been changes in department structures and staffing patterns that often occur in most communities which shift responsibilities or even result in the elimination of positions. In Williamstown, the loss of internal IT assistance was one of those skillsets lost when former staff members left their positions, and the capacity was not replaced. Demand for fast and efficient online communication is also increasing, While the Town contracts out with a private vendor for IT support, having an in-house person creates the ability to immediately respond to inquiries or emergencies and creates a person in Town Hall who can work across departments and help implement and explain policies and programs. As demands on municipal IT infrastructure continue to grow, the Town may wish to consider if this is a staff position worth creating.

DETERMINE PRIORITIES FOR PUBLIC INVESTMENTS
The Comprehensive Plan offers an excellent opportunity for the Town and its residents to look at future public infrastructure and building needs and begin prioritizing investments. Discussions with Town staff and the Committee indicate there are several projects either needed or desired that could require substantial capital expenditures including replacing/improving the water and wastewater system, identifying locations for additional outdoor recreation fields, siting and building a new modern Town Hall facility, siting and building a new modern Senior Center, and siting and building a new Fire Station (although not directly funded by the Town). For a smaller town like Williamstown, these large capital projects need to be planned for well in advance, particularly if they require debt exclusion or bonding capacity. Given the percentage of the town’s tax base comprised by residential property taxes, any increases in the tax rate will most acutely affect residents’ taxes.

CONTINUE TO INVEST IN FACILITY MAINTENANCE AND CAPITAL PLANNING
The Town does a good job of identifying
maintenance and capital needs and planning for those through their five-year Capital Improvement Plan. However, the Town may wish to consider completing facility assessments of each town-owned building to have an accounting of all internal and external building components, their useful life, and replacement schedules. For buildings which are envisioned for replacement (like Town Hall), this may be less of concern. For buildings like the Elementary School or the Library, these may be worthwhile to ensure building systems and components are being replaced or maintained to extend the life of the building as long as possible. Having a facility plan and schedule can also help prioritize items in the CIP.

INVENTORY OF FACILITIES AND SERVICES
The Town of Williamstown, officially incorporated in 1765, operates under a town form of government providing for an Open Town Meeting which is open to all eligible voters of the town of which there were just over 4,800 in 2020. Williamstown hosts an Annual Town Meeting on the third Tuesday in May for consideration of all warrant articles. A Special Town Meeting may occur outside of Annual Town Meeting for specific topics that need to be considered.

The Town is governed by a five-member Select Board that meets once every two weeks for regular meetings with the Town Manager who oversees day-to-day operations. Under Williamstown's 1956 Charter adoption residents chose a strong Town Manager form of government where the Town Manager has direct authority to implement Town Meeting decisions and supervise all Town staff. The role of the Select Board is to oversee and provide policy-level direction that informs and guides the work of the Town Manager.

The Town itself manages facilities and administers services for its residents through 11 different departments and service providers. These include:

- Accountant
- Assessor
- Community Development
- Council on Aging
- Police Department
- Public Works
- Library
- Town Clerk
- Town Manager
- Treasurer/Collector
- Veteran’s Office

In addition to the town departments and service providers, Williamstown has a variety of boards and committees working on a wide range of efforts in town. While the Town's executive branch is made up of an elected Select Board, there are 7 total elected boards in town which include:

- Greylock Regional School District
- Housing Authority
- Library Board of Trustees
• Northern Berkshire Regional Vocational School District
• Planning Board
• Select Board
• Town Moderator

Williamstown also has a number of appointed boards, committees, and staffing positions within town but the Town Charter specifies different appointing authorities for each of them. The following list is organized by appointing authority with initials after each indicating the appointing authority. These include:

• Affordable Housing Trust (SB)
• Agricultural Commission (SB)
• Animal Control Officers (TM)
• Berkshire Regional Transit Authority (SB)
• Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (TM)
• Board of Assessors (TM)
• Board of Health (TM)
• Community Preservation Committee (SB)
• Constables
• Council on Aging (TM)
• Conservation Commission (TM)
• Diversity, Inclusion, and Racial Equity Committee (SB)
• Emergency Management Director (TM)
• Fence Viewers (SB)
• Finance Committee (M)
• Health Inspector (TM)
• Historical Commission (TM)
• Hoosac Water Quality District (SB)
• Mobile Home Rent Control Board (SB)
• Municipal Scholarship Committee (SB)
• Northern Berkshire Cultural Council (SB)
• Registrars of Voters (SB)
• Sign Commission (SB)
• Zoning Board of Appeals (SB)
• 1753 House Committee (TM)

WILLINET COMMUNITY TELEVISION
WilliNet is a 501 (3)(c) nonprofit community media resource in Williamstown incorporated in 1994 and located in a studio at 34 Spring Street. WilliNet’s mission is providing the residents of the town with “free access to video technology and training, and to show town government proceedings, school committee business, community events and locally created and sponsored programming. WilliNet serves as an avenue of free speech for the people of Williamstown to communicate, educate, and entertain.” WilliNet offers free instruction in all aspects of video production and also provides local residents with the ability to borrow cameras and other equipment for their own personal use. The organization also has experienced staff who are there to help individuals get
started with production of material. WilliNet includes three staff members (executive director, production manager, and technical director) and is guided by an eight-member board. The organization is not a municipal department of Williamstown nor is it part of the town's budget.

**TOWN FACILITIES**

The Town of Williamstown has a total of 80,138 square feet of municipal building space not including the 4,520 square feet at the Harper Center for the Council on Aging which the town leases from Berkshire Housing Corporation. Table 4.1 shows a list of town owned or leased facilities, the year in which it was constructed, and the approximate size of the facility. Year built and building size information was compiled using the Town's property tax records. Map 4.1 on the following page shows the approximate location of the nine town-owned facilities (buildings and properties).

<table>
<thead>
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<td>Harper Center for the Council on Aging (1985)</td>
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<td>TOTAL BUILT SPACE:</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**TOWN HALL**

Williamstown’s Town Hall was constructed in 1927 and was used at one point in its history as a fraternity house for Williams College. Town Hall is in the heart of Williamstown along North Street just north of Route 2 and the Field Park loop, directly adjacent to the western edge of Williams College. Town Hall is currently centrally located to the town, walkable from both the College and the town center area along Spring Street. While the location is ideal, the building is very old and antiquated and lacks the modern layout and accessibility of a newer public building. Since the building is closing in on 100 years old, it lacks modern systems like sprinklers, fire alarms, and a central HVAC system. Staff noted the building does not have enough or adequate meeting space and the layout is not conducive to cross collaboration among staff and departments.

To address the needs of staff and residents working and using Town Hall, there may be an opportunity to sell the Town Hall to Williams College as part of the college’s plans to construct a new facility to house the Williams College of Art. This could provide a unique gateway opportunity at the intersection of North Street and Route 2 if Town Hall and the Northside Motel were combined with the property Williams College already owns at 1090 Main Street.
Map 4.1: Location of Town-Owned Facilities
IT SERVICES
Williamstown does not have a standalone IT department or staff and currently contracts out IT support services to Paragus located in Hadley, Massachusetts. The Town did have a part-time IT staff person many years ago who also doubled as the Assistant Assessor, but when that staff member left the position the internal IT assistance was not backfilled. This internal capacity was also utilized by the Police Department, but the Department is now running their own stand-alone system internally and using a combination of the Town's IT contractor and their own external vendors for troubleshooting issues specific to the Police Department's systems. The Mount Greylock Regional School District has their own IT infrastructure and assistance that is separate from the Town.

The last few years has also brought about an interest in shared municipal broadband infrastructure to support both residents and businesses in Williamstown. In 2022, a study was presented by Design Nine, a consulting firm specializing in broadband planning, design, and installation, that provided justification and cost estimates for building out a broadband network to serve Williamstown. Respondents to a broadband survey in Williamstown suggests 72% want better Internet service and 87% would consider switching to a Town-developed fiber network. Of those who responded to the survey, 43% indicated they have no other options for internet service and 51% noted the availability of broadband is impacting where they choose to live. The municipal broadband concept is continuing to be discussed by the Select Board.

SCHOOL FACILITIES
Williamstown is a member of the Mount Greylock Regional School District. The District consists of three schools which include the Williamstown Elementary School, Lanesboro Elementary School, and Mount Greylock Middle and High School. While the middle and high school facility has served as a regional school since the 1960s, the elementary schools in Williamstown and Lanesboro were brought into the regional district through votes at Town Meeting in 2017. While the Williamstown Elementary School remains a town-owned building where the town is responsible for the capital costs, joining the regional district removed some redundancies in administrative costs, school committees, and some union contracts.

The Williamstown Elementary School (WES) is located at 115 Church Street in a building just over 12,000 square feet in size. WES is housed in a state-of-the-art green building that was constructed with energy efficient technology and the use of recycled and natural products. Funding from the Massachusetts Green School Grant program enabled solar panels to be placed on the roof of three wings of the school. WES was designed and has been equipped for learning in the 21st Century with two computer labs, wireless laptops and pads, and at least one computer in each classroom. The school provides education for students in pre-K through sixth grade and had a total enrollment of 422 in the year 2022, up substantially from 376 in 2021.

Mount Greylock Middle and High School (Mt. Greylock) is located in Williamstown at 1781 Cold Spring Road was constructed in 2018 and replaced a former school that was built in the early 1960s. Mt. Greylock is consistently ranked in the top 10-15% of all high schools across the Commonwealth by US News. This year the school has a total enrollment of 524 across grades seven through twelve. Unlike the elementary school, enrollment is down slightly from the prior year of 528.
ENROLLMENT TRENDS

Enrollment trends at the elementary school and the middle/high school have been impacted differently between 2019 and 2022 academic years. At Mt. Greylock, enrollment in 2019 was 552 students and dropped by 5% to 524 students in 2022. At Williamstown Elementary, enrollment dropped by 3.2% over that same period of time, but the 2021 academic year saw enrollment sharply decline to a low of 376 which was actually a 14% decline since 2019. Discussions with Superintendent McCandless indicate that COVID had a major impact on enrollment trends at the elementary level in Williamstown with some families moving children into private schools in the area or choosing to homeschool. As COVID restrictions in the public schools loosened through 2021 and into 2022, enrollment at the elementary level rebounded to just under 2019 pre-pandemic levels. Internally, the school district felt enrollment increased more than they had thought it might which may also be attributed to the opening of the new housing development located on Cole Avenue as well as students returning to the public schools.

Discussions with the school district indicated that both the elementary and middle/high school are not currently at their design capacity and can accommodate some additional growth in the school age state’s School Choice Program and receives students from other districts. This ranges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facility</th>
<th>Grades</th>
<th>Year Built</th>
<th>Students (2021-22)</th>
<th>Student/Teacher Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Williamstown Elementary School</td>
<td>PreK-6</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>422</td>
<td>9.0 to 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mt. Greylock Middle and High School</td>
<td>7-12</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>524</td>
<td>11.2 to 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.1: School Enrollment Trends (2019-2022)
Source: MA Department of Education (2022)
from about 6% - 6.5% of the student body at the elementary school. While there is capacity at the middle/high school, the Superintendent did note that additional space is used for students who require specialized education or those who have an Individualized Education Program (IEP). If the numbers of students with IEPs grows, that could reduce some of the current capacity of the building.

School enrollment projections are completed for the entire Mount Greylock Regional School District by the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC). Projections completed in December 2020 estimate the district could lose as many as 265 students between the years 2023 and 2030 which would be a 25% decrease in total district-wide enrollment. These projections were completed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic which created a trend of younger residents and families moving out of more urbanized locations and settling in less densely populated places like Berkshire County. At the same time, we know Berkshire County and Williamstown itself has an aging population that is projected to continue to grow over the next ten years. If both Williamstown and Lanesboro continue to have an aging population that outpaces growth in younger households with children, the projections from BRPC could materialize.

**SCHOOL FACILITIES**

Fortunately, the two school facilities Williamstown children attend are not currently facing any substantial capital improvements given the age of the two buildings with the oldest being about twenty years old. While capital expenditures are programmed into the Town’s five-year Capital Improvement Program (CIP), the Town has recently been aided by Williams College who provided a three-million-dollar gift to the elementary school for capital needs. The Superintendent noted some of this money may be used to fund an overhaul of the air exchange equipment/HVAC upgrade. A five-million-dollar gift was provided by Williams College to Mount Greylock High School.
To keep the school facilities clean and operational, the School District has in-house custodial staff and an operations director who takes care of the building and physical plant at the middle/high school. This staff position also serves as the IT Director for the schools too. Previously there were three facilities managers across the schools, but a recent departmental reorganization within the School District eliminated the redundancy in those positions and is now moving toward empowering lead custodians in each building to take on that role. For capital projects and major repairs, particularly those that required licensed and insured professionals, the district uses outside contractors as needed. Maintenance of the grounds and sidewalks at the schools are taken care of by district staff including all snow removal activity at the High School. At the elementary school, DPW removes snow and ice from parking areas while facility staff clear sidewalks.

The School District, nor the Town of Williamstown, currently do not have school facility assessments for any of the school facilities. Staff are working off knowledge of the building and its components to determine if and when items need to be upgraded or replaced. It may be worth considering having a building assessment done for the elementary school as it is twenty years old, and components may need to be replaced more regularly soon.

FAMILIES AND YOUTH
Families with children have diverse home-life situations, financial security, and require access to resources. Historically, these disparities have been narrower in Williamstown. However, according to representatives interviewed from the Mt. Greylock Regional School District, these disparities have been growing in recent years. This trend, along with a desire to create a safe and welcoming space for all at the schools, has resulted in the formation of a school Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) committee that has been charged with exploring issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion with the wider community about how to make the Middle/High School a more welcoming place for all residents. There is also the possibility of hiring a DEI specific staff person to help implement strategies as well. Developing a better understanding of how safe and accessible the Town’s facilities, programs, and services are to families, children, teens, and youth, especially those that are most marginalized, should drive future equity efforts.

PUBLIC SAFETY

POLICE DEPARTMENT
The Williamstown Police Department’s primary function is to enforce the laws and protect the people and property in the Town of Williamstown. The Police Department is “committed to professional excellence in providing public safety services for the town in the form of police patrol, criminal investigations, crime prevention, and community relations. Williamstown Police uses best practices in modern policing and accountability and focuses on reflecting the values of the community it serves.”

The Police Department operates out of their own 12,000 square foot building located at 825 Simonds Road which was constructed in 2019. This is the only police station in town and serves the department’s needs for detention, personnel space, vehicle storage, and property and records storage. Given how new the building is, discussions with the Acting Police Chief indicated the facility should meet the needs of the Police Department for decades to come. The new facility is
state of the art and includes swipe and key card activation, interior and exterior camera systems, and internal computer systems with mobile systems for police vehicles. IT support is handled either internally by officers and staff or through the Town’s IT contractor.

Discussions with the Interim Police Chief indicated the town’s rural and hilly terrain make cell service and radio difficult, but these issues are actively being addressed. Since 2019, the Police Department was forced by FCC regulations to switch to narrow banding which created issues for radio service in the area. In May 2022, a new fiber optic line will be brought online which will help with radio reliability and service and help resolve the issue. The Department also installed a cell phone booster in the building to help with cell phone service for officers at the station itself. To serve the community and respond adequately to calls for service, the Police Department employs nine cruisers where one of the older cruisers is typically slated for replacement every year. The Department also has a tow-behind trailer for special events and one mobile speed sign for roadway safety.

**STAFFING**

The Williamstown Police Department currently employs eleven full-time officers and four full-time dispatchers. Within the next year the Police Department is anticipating two retirements which will need to be filled as well as possibly need to hire one additional full-time dispatcher to replace two part-time dispatchers. The Town is also currently looking to fill the position of Police Chief following the resignation of the former Chief in 2020.

The Police Department is staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week and provides dispatch service for the Police Department, Williamstown Fire, and Northern Berkshire EMS. They also serve as an after-hours call center for the Town’s DPW if emergencies arise and will sometimes handle calls for some of the smaller surrounding communities. Williamstown’s Police Department also engages in some mutual aid with North Adams if additional personnel are needed.

Lastly, the Police Department works with a mental health clinician as a co-responder to certain call types. The clinician is available Monday through Thursday from 8am to 4pm. The program is offered through Berkshire Health and allows the clinician to respond alongside police officers and provide assistance to people who may possibly harm themselves or others. Police officers responding to the call are there to stay with the clinician the entire time in case the situation changes and provide for a safe environment for all involved. Discussions with Acting Chief Ziemba indicated the need for more clinicians to cover more calls, hours, and territory. His understanding is Berkshire Health would be interested in trying to provide more clinicians but is currently unable to find people to fill the job.

**CALLS**

Call data provided in the Williamstown Annual Report for the year 2020 indicates that total call volume decreased dramatically between 2018 and 2020. Reviewing calls by type, the highest volumes in 2020 were for ambulances, building checks, motor vehicle stops, parking, traffic control, and suspicious activity. The pandemic brought about a decrease in call volume in 2020 due to the department having to limit or suspend some services, shifting to handling some calls by email or phone (if appropriate), and trying to limit human contact where possible. The department also had
staffing shortages due to COVID which ended up stretching the department further and creating more overtime. Change in call volume from 2018-2020 is shown in Figure 4.3.

**OTHER PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**

In addition to typical police services, the Williamstown Police Department supports several other programs and services such as:

- K-9 Unit for tracking and search and rescue.
- Providing an officer to serve on the regional drug task force for the state.
- Providing support and education to the schools through lock down drills, career days, and field days. The Police Department offers scholarships for students pursuing degrees in criminal justice.
- Hosting National Night Out and an Open House at the Police Station.
- Supporting the HUB Initiative which tries to identify people who are in crisis or may harm themselves or others and attempt to get them the help they need before a situation escalates. This program is in partnership with Northern Berkshire Community Coalition in North Adams. Police officers will often try to refer people to this program to get help.
- Signing up for and implementing the Strengthening Police and Community Partnerships program with the Department of Justice. This is an advisory group to help implement changes around police reform and transparency the Williamstown community has requested. Currently the Department is in the process of overhauling all processes and procedures to get accredited. This could take up to two years, but they have hired a part-time accreditation person to help them. The staff member works sixteen hours per week to help them revamp their polices. The accreditation has 125 requirements which would allow the department to become certified, and then an additional 25 more to become accredited.
EQUITY AND LAW ENFORCEMENT
Since the passing of Article 37 in 2020, a number of activities have been completed by the Williamstown Police Department to address inequities and build trust with the community. The Police Department has entered into the Strengthening Police and Community Partnerships (SPCP) program developed by the US Department of Justice. This program builds a structured dialogue that brings together people from law enforcement and the community to address distrust issues and other historical barriers that hinder police-community partnerships. The Police Department has also started the process towards achieving certification and accreditation, which involves adhering to programs and practices that meet a body of professional policing standards considered best practices for the profession. In November 2021, the Police Department became a founding member of the Northern Berkshire Hub Initiative that brings together various service providers in many fields (police, EMS, doctors, wellness coordinators, etc.) to help address issues such as homelessness, alcohol or substance abuse, mental health issues, and others. Members of the Police Department have received training related to working with transgendered individuals, harassment prevention, handling biases, implicit bias, cultural competency, and dealing with mental health emergencies.

FIRE DEPARTMENT
Fire protection services for the Town of Williamstown are handled by the Williamstown Fire District, an independent governmental entity created in 1912 and governed by a board of five commissioners elected on a rotating basis. On an annual basis the board meets and sets its budget and tax levy for the following year. The department (in 2019) was staffed with one Fire Chief, four paid on-call Assistant Fire Chiefs, and seventeen on-call Firefighters for a total of twenty-two members. The Fire Chief was the only full-time employee. Further analysis may be helpful to better understand issues whether the ratio of volunteer to professional firefighters is adequate and how staffing may be impacted in the future given population changes. Additionally, a comparative

WILLIAMSTOWN CARES INITIATIVE
The Town of Williamstown is engaged in a community-based participatory research project to learn more about public safety in town. The process for this project is community driven and was motivated by conversations within the community about how safe (or unsafe) and welcome (or unwelcome) people feel in town. These conversations are similar to others happening around the country as people consider what public safety means and how our society ensures it.

In collaboration with a group of local social workers, the Town decided to learn more by hiring a Research Director for Community Assessment and Engagement who, along with an outreach specialist and advisory group, launched an assessment of safety and wellbeing in town. The project, which is underway, includes interviews with community members about their perceptions of safety and wellbeing in Williamstown and their experiences with the Police Department, interviews with members of the Police Department and their roles on providing public safety, an assessment of current workload, practices, and culture in the Police Department, and a review of how other communities are thinking about safety and wellbeing.
analysis of how Williamstown’s fire department compares to other communities in staffing, finance, resources, and other attributes could be helpful in determining future priorities.

According to call volume data from the 2019 Organizational Assessment and the 2020 Annual Town Report, call volumes between 2016 and 2018 average 209 calls for service per year and remained largely the same in 2020 with a total of 208 service calls. Calls in 2021 rose to 241 according to call volume data on the Department’s website.

The service area is supported by three fire engines ranging in age from 16 years to 34 years, one tower engine that is 24 years old, and a car for the Fire Chief that is 10 years old. The 2019 Organizational Assessment noted the average age of the fleet was 17.4 years and although the fleet was deemed to be in good condition, a fleet replacement plan and capital expenditures are needed. To that end, the Town’s 2020 Annual Report noted funding was approved by voters in the district to purchase a new Firovac Tanker capable of carrying 2,600 gallons of water and would be delivered in the Spring of 2021.

FIRE STATION

The Williamstown Fire District station, located at 34 Water Street in Williamstown, was built in 1950 making it 72 years old. The building is a single-story structure with three bays for apparatus totaling 4,325 square feet. There is a partial basement in the building with an additional 736 square feet. Since 1950, the building had an apparatus bay expansion and some minor improvements and modifications but largely has remained unaltered. The 2019 Organizational Assessment notes that the current Fire Headquarters is no longer efficient or effective for the personnel, apparatus, and equipment of a modern fire department. Vehicles are much larger today than they were 70 years ago and this station was not designed to accommodate them. The current station also does not have modern facilities for decontamination, EMS equipment storage, and also does not meet some National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards nor standards under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

To that end, the Fire Department purchased a 3.76-acre parcel of land located at 560 Main Street for the future construction of a roughly 27-28,000 square foot fire station. The Fire District created a Building Committee and a Community Advisory Committee to guide the process of funding and constructing the new station. The District continues to work on the design of the station and a plan for funding it.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

DAVID AND JOYCE MILNE PUBLIC LIBRARY

The Milne Public Library was established in 1874 as an agricultural library with a collection of about 100 volumes. Early in the library’s history, there were actually three branches due to the size of Williamstown and the need to provide the service to residents in different parts of the town. Over time, one branch became the North Adams Public Library through annexation of land into the City of North Adams, and the other two branches closed in 1965 and 1979, respectively. The main library moved to the Botsford House in 1940, but due to space constraints and a growing collection a plan was created to move the library to the Pine Cobble School located at 1095 Main Street. The
Pine Cobble School building was constructed in the 1971 but required extension renovation to transform it from a former school to a modern library. A capital campaign raised $250,000 and construction was completed on the 16,950 square foot David & Joyce Milne Public Library in 1999. The building is located across from Town Hall on a large campus with expansive grounds. While the Town retains ownership of the building itself, the Trustees of the Library are responsible for the operations of the library and have invested in many improvements to the interior of the building through donations. A discussion with the Library Director indicated there are desired and needed improvements to the exterior façade of the building that would include windows, doors, brick repair along with some sidewalk repairs. It was noted that money has been programmed in the CIP for some exterior windows and sidewalk fixes. There is a desire on the part of the library to have a full architectural building assessment completed so an inventory of repairs, replacements, and maintenance can be developed and implemented over time. It is worth noting the Town is funding new interior lighting to replace fixtures with LED lights which is slated to begin in July 2022.

**STAFFING, VISITATION, AND CIRCULATION**

The Milne Public Library is staffed by thirteen staff members including six full-time and seven part-time staff. Full-time staff include the director, assistant director, three full-time librarians, and a buildings and grounds person. Part-time staff include circulation staff and an assistant for the children and young adult sections. Staff and volunteers helped serve 37,649 visits at the library in 2020 which was down from 91,396 in 2018. Library visitation was severely impacted by the pandemic in 2020 essentially closing the library off to in-person visitation for much of the year. With in-person programming now back in 2022, visitation to the library is up again. Discussions with the Library Director indicated the library is most heavily used by older adults in Williamstown, families with young children, and college students who use the library for research or a quiet space to work and study. Interestingly, the library’s busiest months are usually June to September when visitation figures can sometimes double. Tourists often stop by the library looking for information, museum passes, asking for directions, or just to visit the library out of interest.

Libraries around the Commonwealth are shifting their focus from institutions that primarily lend books and periodicals to community facilities that not only circulate materials but serve as locations for gathering, learning, training, and programs. Libraries have greatly expanded their offerings for general circulation. Residents can find books and periodicals, but also many non-print resources such as DVDs, music CDs, audiobooks, eBooks, software, and more at local libraries. This concept, often called “The Library of Things”, is transforming the way libraries offer services and has changed the interior layouts of many libraries and the security and tracking systems used with more expensive equipment for in-house use and those that leave in circulation. The Milne Library has seen a trend away from physical content to more downloadable and streaming titles of eBooks,
e-audiobooks, and movies/tv shows. This has had an impact on shelving space and purchasing of media for the library.

Statistics pulled from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC) shows this trend in circulation more clearly for the Milne Library. Total circulation of both physical and electronic media has been declining yet circulation for digital/electronic media on its own has risen sharply. Data provided by the Milne Public Library shows that in 2021, there were just over 120,000 downloadable items available to 6,850 active card holders for the library. Digital circulation through databases such as Libby and Hoopla showed 39,352 titles checked out in 2021 compared to 14,793 in 2020. A more than doubling of digital media checked out in one year as the pandemic continues to accelerate trends in how residents consume public services. As libraries continue to offer more 21st Century material with increases in technology, demand for digital media will rise.

**PROGRAMMING**

The total number of programs offered by the Milne Public Library and supported by the Friends of the Milne Public Library increased between 2016 and 2020, even as in-person programming halted and there was a shift to digital or online programs. In 2022, the library is back to offering in-person and digital programs for its patrons assisted by a new audio/visual system and large screen television for program viewings. The library also partners with WilliNet to record some programs and rebroadcast them for those who may have missed the live event.

A review of the library’s online calendar and past newsletters (sent to over 3,000 subscribers) shows the wide array of programming for children and adults which includes the following examples:

- Tap Dancing
- Glass Art Workshops
- Magic Show
- Storytime and Crafts
- Bike Repair Class
- Music Lessons
- Painting
- Animal Show
- Several educational seminars and programs on nature, animals, and history

The library has three meeting rooms available for hosting programs, events, and meetings. There is a board room that holds about 25 people, a meeting room that holds 50 people, and a community room that could seat 60-75 people comfortably. There are no regularly scheduled and held community meetings or town functions at the library, but the spaces are used by book discussion groups, writing groups, and most of the programs put on by the library itself.

The largest sources of financial support for the library comes from the following sources and are listed in 2021 dollars:

- Board of Trustees - $25,361
• Friends of the Library - $17,139
• Gifts - $14,952
• State Aid - $11,807

The Friends organization was established in 1989 and is comprised of a 14-member board which supports the library in collaboration with staff and the elected Board of Trustees. The Friends help raise money through annual membership campaigns, book sales, programming, and more. The money raised goes to support library collections, programs, technology upgrades, staff training, and building and grounds projects.

**COUNCIL ON AGING**

The Council on Aging (COA) was established in 1966 has been providing quality service to the community for over 50 years. The mission of the COA is to “provide advocacy, outreach, and responsive programming to maintain and improve the well-being of Williamstown’s senior population. We offer diverse, inclusive programs that promote dignity, encourage activity, and community involvement.”

The Council on Aging facility is referred to as the Harper Center for the Council on Aging and is located at 118 Church Street within the Proprietors Field affordable housing complex. The single-story building was constructed in 1980 and is roughly 4,500 square feet in size. The building has not increased in size since its date of construction and improvements to the space have been minimal over that time. The building is not owned by the Town, instead it is leased from Berkshire Housing to house the Council on Aging programs, services and staff. Discussions with the COA Director indicated the facility is past its useful life as a place for older adults in Williamstown to meet, socialize, exercise, share a meal, and enjoy. With an ever-increasing share of Williamstown’s year-round population over the age of 65 (nearly 1/3 of residents) the need for quality senior services in a modern building is critical. Parking at the facility is limited and has to be shared with tenants living in the residential units at Proprietors Field.

The Council on Aging is staffed by a full-time director, outreach worker, and van driver. The COA staff also includes a clerk who works 20 hours a week and a maintenance person who works 10

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**ACCESSIBILITY OF PUBLIC FACILITIES**

In 2018, the Town completed a study that assessed how accessible municipal facilities and infrastructure are to those community members with disabilities and how compliant the Town is with the American Disabilities Act (ADA). The report identified physical obstacles in facilities that limit accessibility and identified where improvements could be made to address facilities that were not fully accessible. These include infrastructure upgrades, such as ramps, at facilities that do not have handicapped accessible entries into buildings and improvements to public spaces, parks, and recreational, entertainment, and other social spaces that may lack the ability for those with disabilities to fully participate in the use of the space. There is an opportunity to build off this report and conduct a more complete audit of Town public spaces and infrastructure in Williamstown that expands beyond guidelines outlined by the American Disabilities Act (which often times, merely state the minimum expectations for accessible places). An action plan should also be integrated to ensure the findings and recommendations are implemented by the Town in the future.
hours a week. To assist with the transportation services, the COA also has two part-time on-call drivers. To host exercise programs, the COA has an exercise instructor, a yoga instructor, and a tai chi instructor some of whom are paid for through a grant. The rest of the programs and services offered at the COA are assisted by volunteers.

**EQUITY AND OLDER ADULTS**

Currently, older adults (age 65 years and over) make up 20% of the population in Williamstown (2020 American Community Survey). To age in place, older residents have a variety of needs including programming, socializing, healthcare, recreation opportunities, transportation, and diverse housing options, including housing units to downsize into, assisted living facilities, and nursing homes. The Williamstown Council on Aging and the Harper Senior Center are incredible resources for older residents offering social and recreation events, meals, service information, exercise classes, blood pressure clinics, health screening, social work, benefit programs application assistance, home and community visits, transportation, and seasonal tax preparation. Williamstown’s Diversity, Inclusion, and Racial Equity Committee (DIRE) has been working to address some concerns of the elderly, including sidewalk accessibility in several areas of town.

**COUNCIL ON AGING AND SENIOR CENTER PROGRAMS**

The Harper Center offers many programs and services for Williamstown’s older adults and serves as a meeting place, wellness check, and opportunity for socialization particularly for those who may live alone or have mobility challenges. In general, the Harper Center offers programs across several broad areas which include:

**Health & Exercise** – this category includes programs such as wellness checks, AARP seminars on aging, COVID vaccine clinics, and support to find and book vaccinations. Exercise is a big draw to the Harper Center and includes active fitness for both younger and older seniors. Activities like yoga/chair yoga, weight training, balance classes, and tai chi are very popular. Prior to COVID, older adults swam at the Williams College pool. There is also a walking group.

**Events** – In addition to fitness classes, the COA also offers educational classes and programs such as cards and bridge, coloring, oil painting, a Saturday art group, coffee Fridays, Tuesday programs such as personal finance, and assistance from Williams College students around using technology. The proximity to the Clarke Museum also provides opportunities to visit the museum and walk the grounds, as well as bringing in visiting artists to the Harper Center. The Mount Greylock School District also works with the COA on programming such as chorus events by high school and elementary students and a reading buddy group with kindergartners who would come to the Harper Center (pre-COVID) and read with older adults.

**Meals** – The Harper Center offers a grab and go lunch which averages about 25 people a week, and on Tuesdays when programs are happening, they may order pizza or have a barbecue outdoors for those who come.

**Transportation** – The Council on Aging plays a huge role in senior transportation and mobility. Many seniors who can’t drive or no longer have access to a vehicle are often isolated and rely on friends, family, or volunteers for rides. The COA offers rides to seniors on their eight-seat van
Monday through Friday between 8am and 4pm. Rides are free and subsidized through the COA’s annual budget. The van is owed by the regional transit authority and every four to five years the COA receives a new replacement van. The COA is responsible for insuring the vehicle and paying for gas and maintenance. Rides are available to seniors to go to the grocery store, medical appointments, physical therapy, shopping, and lunch trips a few times a month. The COA also has a volunteer driver program that can cover longer trips such as medical appointments at larger facilities in Pittsfield or Albany.

As Williamstown’s older adult population continues to grow from both aging in place and new residents moving to town, additional pressure will be placed on both the Harper Center and the programs offered. This is particularly true for things like exercise and program space, dining or food preparation space, and multi-purpose spaces where seniors of various ages and abilities can take part in a variety of activities. In a rural location like Williamstown with limited transportation options, a growing number of older adults could become isolated in their homes without additional access to transportation services. This, coupled with the lack of affordable senior housing in the area, could limit the ability of older adults to remain in the community without the help of family, friends, or town programs like the COA.

**PARKS AND RECREATION**

Williamstown does not have a dedicated department for Parks and Recreation, instead the duties for programming sports and maintaining fields is shared between the school district, the Williamstown Youth Center, and DPW. The Youth Center staff is responsible for coordinating town sports programs as well as before and after school care. They receive some funding from the Town each year, but largely rely on fees for the sports and childcare programs to support their work. The fields and town facilities that support park use and recreation are maintained by different groups. The Youth Center maintains the fields at the Williamstown Elementary School which are heavily used. The fields at the high school are maintained by the regional school district where the town is able to use the fields if middle or high school sports are not using them. There have been recent discussions at the Select Board about finding additional locations for more playing fields, including the possibility of expanding fields at the high school. Others have discussed fields at The Spruces, but there are notable constraints including FEMA flood plain restrictions and active farms.

Discussions with Town staff indicated there are several groups asking for additional recreation spaces and facilities, but not clear direction yet on priorities and locations. Without the specific department to oversee all parks and recreation activities and facilities, the duties are split across several entities and there may not be as clear of a direction around the true needs and wants of the community and program participants. Williamstown is also surrounded by a wealth of outdoor recreation opportunities such as Mount Greylock, interconnected walking and hiking trails, swimming at Margaret Lindley Park and Sand Springs, skiing at the Mount Greylock Ski Club, and cross country skiing. There may also be opportunities to leverage existing facilities to meet local needs like approaching North Adams about a regional solution using Albcombright Athletic Complex.
TOWN INFRASTRUCTURE AND UTILITIES

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

The Department of Public Works is responsible to the residents and businesses of Williamstown for the maintenance and management of a public infrastructure that has been constructed over the course of the Town's history. According to DPW staff, the Department is responsible for maintaining 16 miles of sidewalks, 16 miles of unpaved roadways, and 41 miles of paved roads along with public parks and cemeteries, public buildings and grounds, and the public water system. To manage the infrastructure and buildings in town, DPW is divided up into the following sub-programs:

**Facilities** – charged with maintaining all town owned buildings, snow removal at town and school facilities, and assistance with school buildings on an on-call basis.

**Parks** – charged with maintaining and improving public parks in Williamstown, the grounds of the Williamstown Elementary School, and the cemeteries.

**Highway** – responsible for the operation and maintenance of all public ways. Maintenance of this transportation network includes all portions of Town right-of-way including roadways, sidewalks, stormwater drainage systems, street lighting, signage, and traffic control devices. This division is also responsible for the management of winter storm operations on roads and sidewalks.

**Water & Sewer** – charged with the operation and maintenance of the Town's water and wastewater supply and distribution network within Williamstown.

**Forestry Department** – responsible for maintaining or removing trees and forested areas in the public domain.

The DPW has a staff of 27 which includes 7 employees in the water and sewer division, 12 in highway, 3 in parks and cemetery, 1 for the transfer station, and 2 in facilities. The DPW also maintains the entire fleet of vehicles for their department, the Police Department, the Council on Aging, and some smaller town vehicles. The vast majority of the work is done in-house. The DPW has a capital plan to replace their own vehicles every ten years with heavy earth moving equipment replaced every fifteen years. The Town is also exploring ways to electrify the fleet. Recently National Grid was brought in to complete a study of electrifying the fleet and money has been requested in FY 23 to purchase an electric pick up truck to begin testing the concept.

**FACILITIES**

This division within DPW is responsible for maintaining all of the town owned buildings. There are two full-time facilities staff members responsible for maintaining and repairing buildings in Williamstown. The majority of smaller scale repairs are done in house, but anything requiring licensing or major improvements will be subcontracted. Prior to the schools regionalizing, the facilities staff did assist with some duties but the school district hired a facilities manager and is in the process of creating facilities oversight at each school through custodial staff. The facilities
division is also responsible for snow removal around each of the town buildings and the parking areas at the elementary school.

**PARKS & CEMETERIES**

This division is responsible for the maintenance and upkeeps at public town owned parks as well as the cemeteries in Williamstown. The Parks division has three staff members who are responsible for mowing, fertilization, mulching, and general upkeep at facilities. Grounds maintenance at facilities includes the three town cemeteries, the Elementary School, Town Hall, Field Park, Blodell Park, Margaret Lindley Park, and Broadbrook Park. This division also assists with field mowing, roadside mowing, snowplowing, and tree removal as needed. The division is also responsible for the maintenance and operations at the town cemeteries. During discussions with DPW staff, a concern was raised about the shortage of cemetery space for traditional burials. Given the age of the town and the age of the cemeteries, capacity is tightening. DPW staff estimate there may be about twenty years of space capacity for burials left in the cemeteries.

**WATER AND SEWER**

In Williamstown, the Water Department falls within the purview of the DPW but sewer services are handled by the Hoosick Water Quality District, a separate multi-town entity serving Williamstown, the City of North Adams, and a portion of the Town of Clarksburg. The wastewater treatment plant is located in Williamstown at 667 Simonds Road and handles collection, treatment and disposal of all wastewater for the communities it serves. The District has nine staff members and a four-member Board of Commissioners. In addition to maintaining the treatment plant, the district also owns and operates a 19,000-foot-long interceptor sewer that originates in North Adams and brings wastewater from North Adams and Williamstown to the treatment plant.

The treatment plant was originally constructed in the 1960s when it was owned by Williamstown, but the District acquired the plant in the mid-1970s when the two communities joined into the common District. The plant was upgraded at that time for a design flow of 5.37 million gallons per day, and in 2008 was upgraded again to its current design flow of 6.5 million gallons per day. Discussions with DPW staff indicated that one of the biggest challenges with the wastewater infrastructure is that many sewer pipes run in the Hoosick River banks and/or cross under the river which makes it costly and challenging to check, maintain, and replace those pipes over time. DPW staff also noted there will be a need in the future to replace some of the sewer lines that cross under the river in the future. The DPW continues to work on Inflow and Infiltration (InI) assessments. Phase 1 began in 2020 to install flow meters and perform inspections with the collection system. Phase 2 of the study began later in 2020 and was set to wrap in 2021 with
smoke tests and sonar testing of the system. This process will help the Town identify any locations where sewer pipes may be allowing for inflow or infiltration into or out of what should be a closed system. This can have impacts of sewer capacity and certainly environmental impacts if not identified and mitigated over time.

The Town also maintains the potable public water system as well as stormwater infrastructure in Williamstown. Discussions with DPW staff indicated two potential areas of concern for public water supply. The first is a waterline that runs from Blackington Village in North Adams into Williamstown and includes a cast iron ductile pipe that was installed in the 1880s. This water main crosses Broad Brook in several locations to bring water to about 50 or 60 homes in Williamstown. The age of the pipe and the crossings at Broad Brook pose a risk if the pipe fails and those houses are left without potable water for a long period of time. While the Town recognizes the need to fix this issue, it will likely be a large expense and since the system is run through an enterprise fund, users of the system would have to fund the improvement. The Town is also exploring other options such as infrastructure grants to pay for the investment.

The second area of concern is the Five Corners in Williamstown where some residents receive water through a small private spring-fed well. These homes are currently on a very small system that has never been mapped and if their system failed it could be challenging to remediate the issue. There is a desire on the part of DPW to extend the water system down to this area and move these residences over to the Town’s water system.

**SOLID WASTE AND RECYCLING**

Solid waste disposal in Williamstown is handled one of two ways: residents can purchase a sticker on an annual basis and bring trash and recycling to the Transfer Station or residents can opt for private trash hauling through their own contract with a service provider. The Transfer Station is open Tuesday through Friday from 7:30am to 3:30pm, and on Saturdays from 7am to 3pm. Stickers are available for purchase at a cost of $120 per year, or $20 per month. Stickers for additional vehicles in the same household can be purchased for $15 a year. Residents who wish to use the Transfer Station must also purchase refuse bags at a cost of $1.25 for a thirteen-gallon bag, or $2.50 for a thirty-three-gallon bag. The Transfer Station does serve as the drop off point for recycled paper, plastics, and other commonly accepted recyclables. Residents can also dispose of other items including, but not limited to, yard waste, electronics, and construction debris. Each item is charged separately using a fee established by the Town.

The Town also has four closed landfill locations, and all are being inspected and monitored. One is capped and being used for a solar array while two others are not yet capped and forested. These cannot be used yet for any other purpose.

**SOCIAL SERVICES**

The Northern Berkshire Community Coalition has established a Community Resource Guide for northern Berkshire County. This resource includes a full directory of social services in the county including disability services, food access sites, services for older adults, employment and training facilities and programs, family services, healthcare services, substance misuse, heating and energy programs, housing and homelessness services, immigrant and cultural support services, and more.
Moving forward, there may be opportunities for Williamstown, in partnership with neighboring communities, to better understand and address the availability of social services for various populations in the community.

**SUSTAINABILITY AND ENERGY**

Many individuals and organizations in Williamstown have been focused on education and actions related to the interconnected issues of climate and energy. Most of the work completed to date has been focused on establishing renewable energy systems, but many efforts also have an energy conservation component as well. Two successful solarize campaigns have resulted in over 100 solar electric installations totaling more than 1 megawatt of capacity. More needs to be done to provide solar/renewable energy to individual homes, businesses, and institutions and to incorporate energy storage systems. More also needs to be done to further expand solar and other renewable energy sources, such as wind and anaerobic digestors (on farms) and electrification of homes.

The Town has also constructed a solar array that is approximately 5 megawatts and is located on the closed landfill, another solar panel array has been constructed near the cemetery, and one has been installed on the elementary school and at the library. In the process of establishing these arrays and the Williams College solar array, it has been discovered that the opportunity to develop future large scale solar installations is limited. This limitation is due to the fact that Williamstown is at the end of the National Grid transmission line. If this limitation can be addressed and resolved in the future there is also interest in establishing a “community solar array” for households that can’t install a solar electric system due to site constraints, not owning property, cost, or other barriers. Its important to note that there are other complexities related to distribution of electricity aside from being at the end of the network. Substations need to be upgraded and other components of the electrical distribution network will require upgrades to handle extra capacity required for increased electrical demand. A net zero Williamstown will require all buildings (residential, commercial, institutional, and public) to switch from heating sources that rely on fossil fuels to ones that are powered by the electrical system. This change in infrastructure will require installing heat exchangers, geothermal systems, or other systems supported by renewable energy sources. The capacity for local installers to manage this type of work, to build community awareness of options, and the increased demands on the electric grid represent challenges that will need to be resolved. Some communities have adopted bylaws that require all new municipal buildings to be net zero carbon or at least net zero ready.

With an eye to the future of energy production in the region, wind speeds have been measured and studied by Williams College (Hopkins Forest) and its been documented that wind is a viable
source of power in town under certain conditions. According to Williams College's Center for the Environment, data from both the Williams College Environmental Analysis Lab and college student projects have shown that large, efficient turbines (>1.5 MW) placed at higher elevations (>1500 ft) will produce abundant power due to the available wind resource. This amounts to 40 years of data and many would like to find a way to make wind power a reality. The Town has not fully explored opportunities to develop wind energy.

Less visible are the many municipal facilities, college buildings, and residential homes that have benefited from energy audits and energy conservation improvements that now reduce the amount of energy being consumed locally. More work is needed in this area to inform and guide the remaining home and business owners. The COOL Committee has begun preliminary steps towards developing a plan to achieve net zero in collaboration with the Town and Berkshire Regional Planning Commission. However, much work remains to achieve this including developing a greenhouse gas emissions inventory and net zero action plan and securing funding and technical support. Achieving net zero will require converting gas-powered vehicles to electric, converting heating systems in buildings, developing renewable energy systems, and implementing energy efficiency programs.

Currently, the Town completed a streetlight conversion project. This included a conversion to LED street lighting and the addition of control systems that will further reduce energy use associated with street lights.

Other municipal boards and departments are also concerned with the 13 miles of roadway and more than 580 structures in Williamstown within floodplains and at risk during future weather events. Additional areas of the community are also increasingly at risk during localized storm events resulting from climate change. The town is also experiencing a shortage of cemetery space that may provide an opportunity to create a green burial alternative that is a lower energy and environmentally friendly solution for residents.

Looking across the region at the progress made in the last ten years, there is evidence of local “Green Communities” adoption and implementation efforts, emergency planning for vulnerable populations as the climate changes, and increased awareness of the vulnerability of culverts and bridges due to climate change. However, more needs to be done to establish renewable energy systems, improve transportation options and reduce automobile use, and find ways to quickly identify and reach vulnerable populations during emergencies. Looking forward, there is a need to address energy conservation and production in the land use regulations to require or incentivize the construction of energy conscious structures that will be positive additions to the community.

**SUSTAINABILITY, INFRASTRUCTURE, AND COMMUNITY SERVICES**

Finding ways to make Williamstown’s shared infrastructure and community services more sustainable and resilient is underway already, but will require a constant commitment as climate change advances and the community needs continue to evolve and adapt. In short, this work is never done. The Hazard Mitigation report and related Community Resilience Building Workshop are efforts that have started to:
• Understand the connections between ongoing issues, hazard, and local planning and actions in the community; define top local natural and climate-related hazards of concern.
• Identify and map vulnerabilities and strengths to develop infrastructure, societal, and environmental risk profiles for the community.
• Develop and prioritize actions that reduce vulnerabilities and reinforce strengths for your community – local organizations, academic institutions, businesses, private citizens, neighborhoods, and community groups.
• Identify opportunities to advance actions that further reduce the impact of hazards and increase resilience in the community.

The resulting actions identified to address these goals revolve around three main themes:

• Protect and Improve Infrastructure – including the development of a prioritized list of critical infrastructure, including bridges, culverts, pipelines, etc. that need evaluation/improvement/replacement. As well as seeking grant funding to replace or expand this infrastructure.
• Enhance Public Outreach and Communications – which should include establishing public information/outreach/education programs on sheltering, preparedness, evacuation procedures.
• Undertake Shelter Planning – this should include developing an overall Shelter Strategy that considers school buildings as potential sites.

These identified actions should be carried forward to also inform the drafting of the Comprehensive Plan, and the development of related implementation actions supporting this work.

As a Massachusetts “Green Community”, existing municipal facilities have benefited from some energy efficiency projects and upgrades that have been completed. However, none of these structures have achieved net zero or carbon neutral status. Additional infrastructure investments will be needed to meet the Net Zero Resolution. The Town has also adopted a Stretch Code, completed a municipal fleet electrification study, adopted a pollinator friendly resolutions (2017), and is transitioning lawn and maintenance equipment to electric power as more options become available. There is still a need to complete an emissions inventory of all buildings, infrastructure, and fleet vehicles to provide baseline data that can inform the net zero resolution and resulting actions. The Town should also identify and adopt guidelines, or identify program certifications, to guide the design and construction of future municipal buildings and site improvements. Such a standard could be used to inform investments in the Public Library and other municipal projects, and even non-municipal projects such as the Fire Station. A native and climate adaptive species planting requirement could also be established for all municipal lands, and could also become a requirement in the land use regulations. Dedicated staff, such as a municipal Sustainability Coordinator, has the potential to support and inform volunteer, resident, and municipal efforts.

The Town is also fortunate to have a forward thinking and engaged partner in Williams College. The Spring Street flood management project would not have been possible without the College’s involvement. The College is now completing an Energy and Carbon Master Plan (ECMP) that aims to dramatically decarbonize fossil fuel combustion on campus. Further electrification of the Town and Campus will require addressing the limited capacity of transmission, and this cost will need to be
covered somehow. Williams College is also interested in future renewable energy installations and energy storage options, and will be piloting electric lawn and maintenance equipment.

A great deal has changed at the municipal level across the region since the 2014 Berkshire Plan was created. The topic of climate change is now addressed broadly, and not a concept that must be avoided during public discourse and decision making. The 2019 assessment found this evidenced by the number of communities planning their responses to Climate Change. Greater emphasis on needed public transportation improvements, broadband, and education were also identified. However, the funding for some of these identified needs was still lacking as of 2019.

REFERENCES

- Broadband Study Summary Presentation, 2022.
- Fire District Organizational Assessment, August 2019.
- Community One Stop for Growth Application, Fire Station, 2021.
Williamstown’s natural resources provide important ecosystem services to all community members including clean air, clean water, healthy soil, wildlife habitat, climate change mitigation, a sense of place, and outdoor recreation opportunities.

NATURAL RESOURCES

WILLIAMSTOWN 2022 EXISTING CONDITIONS SUMMARY

The Hoosic River and the Green River drain the two main watersheds in the town, part of a 41.2-mile network of streams and rivers in Williamstown.

The waterways of Williamstown are a key natural resource element of the community, supporting wildlife and recreation while also threatening the town with flooding, sedimentation, and ice jams historically and with predicted greater occurrence in the future. 29 miles of the Hoosic River have been state-designated as a Natural Scenic River. Hopper and Money Brooks, two tributaries on the west side of Mount Greylock, are also state-designated Natural Scenic Rivers.

The Hoosic River is listed as impaired for aquatic life, fish consumption, and primary contact recreation. As a municipality, Williamstown can and should play a role in watershed protection and restoration efforts for impaired waterways such as the Hoosic River.

The steep valleys and deep ravines of Williamstown are a key defining feature, with the Taconic Mountain Range, the Mount Greylock complex, and the foothills of the Green Mountains bordering the town. These steep slopes with thin, erodible soils have historically confined development and agriculture to the narrow river valleys of Williamstown.

Prime farmland soils compose 17% of the Town of Williamstown and farmland soils of local importance compose 22% of the town, with these soils mainly located in the fertile river valleys. There has been a dramatic decline of working agricultural lands over the last 50-75 years as 90% of the town's farms have been lost, mostly
to low-density residential sprawl, a trend seen across all of Berkshire County.

Forest lands cover 76% of the town, and the Upland Conservation District protects forests in high elevation. Forest cover on the mountainsides and slopes helps mitigate flash flooding and erosion. Forests also provide valuable carbon sequestration, especially mature trees such as those found in Hopkins Forest.

Climate change will impact New England forests such as those found in Williamstown. Effects include more variable soil moisture as precipitation patterns change, increased risk of drought, stress from forest pests and diseases, competition from invasive species, and changes in the distribution of trees and forest competition.

Twenty-two (22) square miles of Williamstown are identified as core habitat by the Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program, composed of the town’s forests, wetlands, meadows, and streamside ecosystems mainly on the mountainous edges of the town where large blocks of land remain undeveloped.

Flooding is the main natural hazard concern for Williamstown and is common during spring melt and thaw cycles. The Northeast Climate Science (NECS) center predicts both precipitation and temperatures will increase due to climate change, exacerbating melt/thaw cycles and making flooding worse. Within Berkshire County, NECS predicts precipitation increases of 3.55 inches of annual precipitation by the 2050s, and temperature annual increases of 3.3-7.0 degrees Fahrenheit by the mid-century.

Thirty six percent (36%) of Williamstown is conserved land. Future conservation priorities may include wetlands, streamside areas, and agricultural land. The Hoosic Valley Confined Aquifer from which Williamstown draws its public water is a very valuable resource and is highly vulnerable to contamination because the clay layer that protects the aquifer does not extend throughout the entire recharge area, leaving the recharge vulnerable to pollution from development.

Given the importance of water resources in the town – including the aquifer and waterways – preventing non-point source pollution is important for the town especially in light of the development pressures. It is more cost effective to incorporate low impact development (LID) and green infrastructure ahead of development verses through stormwater control retrofits. The Town should consider incorporating LID and green infrastructure requirements into new development standards.

The steep topography and changes in rainfall amounts related to climate change are creating localized flooding, erosion, and infrastructure issues. Future weather events will continue to impact properties within the identified floodplain areas, but others that are outside of the mapped floodplains will be impacted as well.
5. Natural Resources

INTRODUCTION
The character of Williamstown and the current challenges the community faces are shaped by the natural resources of the Town. The natural resources of Williamstown supported the indigenous peoples of the Mohican Nation who were displaced from their homelands by colonists in the 1780s. The Mohican Nation is today known as the Stockbridge-Munsee community and resides in Wisconsin as a sovereign Tribal Nation. Williamstown’s natural resources include forests, fields, water resources, soils, biodiversity, and farmland, all of which provide for human and non-human species that reside in the community.

ISSUES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND CHALLENGES
Williamstown is characterized by the deep ravines and steep slopes of the mountainsides that lead to the Green River and Hoosic River Valley. The slopes of the Taconic Mountain Range to the west, the Mount Greylock complex to the south and east, and the shadows of the Green Mountains to the north provide ample forest, critical wildlife habitat, natural ecological communities, and viewscapes for the town.

However, the steep slopes are characterized by thin, erodible soil, and as a result, development has historically been confined mainly to the narrow river valleys within Williamstown. Additional development constraints beyond steep slopes, including waterbodies, wetlands, streams, protected lands, etc., restrict future development, accounting for approximately 64% of the Town. The most recent Williamstown build-out analysis from 2016 found similar results, identifying that absolute constraints, including the natural restrictions identified in this chapter as well as developed lands and permanently protected lands, compose approximately 65% of the total land area of Williamstown, leaving approximately 35% developable land remaining (10,366 acres).

The river valleys of Williamstown include two main rivers – the Hoosic River and the Green River – and a network of tributaries that feed into them. Historical water quality data and oral stories indicate that the Hoosic River has historically suffered from pollution. Historical pollution came from sewage and industrial discharge into the river, and the rectification of these point sources following the Federal Clean Water Act played a large role in the improvement of the Hoosic River water quality. Although water quality trends in the Hoosic have been improving, the Hoosic River is still identified as impaired by the State of Massachusetts for aquatic life, fish consumption, and primary recreation. While the aquatic impairments mainly stem from the concrete flow modifications found upstream in North Adams, the elevated levels of bacteria in the Hoosic River causing the primary recreation impairment should encourage the Town to work with the state and neighboring communities to progress towards watershed restoration. As a municipality, Williamstown can and should play a role in watershed protection and restoration efforts for impaired waterways such as the Hoosic River.

Though Williamstown is historically a town with numerous farms and working landscapes, agriculture has declined for the last 50-75 years. The confinement of the good agricultural land to the river valleys mirrors the confinement of development to the river valleys which creates competition
from these forces on the same land. This creates a substantial challenge for the Town which has resulted in a dramatic decline of working agricultural lands over the since the middle of the twentieth century, as 90% of the town’s farms have been lost. The most notable problem is the loss of farming lands to low density residential development steadily over the past several decades. Development pressures threaten the protection of many natural resources. Typically, development pressures threatening natural resources evoke thoughts of threats against wildlife and biodiversity. However, farming is a key component of a community’s natural resources base as well, providing food, natural resource management, and a sustainable future for the Town. The competition for land in Williamstown due to natural resource constraints against development and farming (steep slopes, poor soils, etc.), as well as the attractive style of living found in the town to many, have all played a role in creating high land prices that outstrip a farmer’s ability to afford to purchase or lease them.

The main natural hazard the Town of Williamstown faces is from flooding. Flooding, common during spring melt (especially as winter cycles of snow are followed by rain) has consistently threatened municipal infrastructure in the Town, as detailed in the Williamstown Hazard Mitigation Plan. One of the main physical features of Williamstown is the number of steep slopes that contribute high volumes of runoff into the river systems of the area during storm events. These steep slopes, along with man-made infrastructure that often blocks the free flow of water and access to floodplains, can exacerbate flooding downstream. This threat is expected to increase as climate change increases precipitation amounts and temperature increases cause more winter freeze and thaw weather patterns.

The Town of Williamstown has been working to update its municipal infrastructure as funds allow to avoid flooding, sedimentation, and erosion damage. A recent example of this work is the stormwater drainage system redesign at the bottom of Spring Street in 2018-2019 in collaboration with Williams College, which reduced flooding from Christmas Brook due to undersized culverts.
unable to handle elevated flows. This initiative was funded and led by Williams College.

The following sections provide detailed content in Williamstown's current natural resource existing conditions.

**WATER RESOURCES**
The town of Williamstown has abundant water resources, including rivers, tributaries, ponds, reservoirs, wetlands, and aquifers.

**WATERSHEDS/DRAINAGES**
There are two main watersheds in the Town of Williamstown – the Hoosic River Watershed (which includes the Hemlock Brook drainage) and the Green River Watershed (which includes the West Branch and East Branch of the Green River) which together drain approximately 41.2 miles of streams and rivers within the Town (Figure 5.1). The Hoosic River-Hemlock Brook watershed encompasses approximately 47% of the town, from where the Hoosic River crosses into Williamstown from North Adams and flows northwest for 4.6 miles to the state line with Vermont. The 29 miles of the Hoosic River in Massachusetts are a state-designated Local Scenic River, according to the Hoosic River Watershed Association. In addition, Hopper Brook and Money Brook are state-designated Natural Scenic Rivers. The Green River, Broad Brook, Hemlock Brook, and a few unnamed tributaries drain directly into the Hoosic River within Williamstown. Hemlock Brook drains numerous tributaries as well, including Buxton Brook, Birch Hill Brook, Sweet Brook, the North and South Branches of Hemlock Brook, Ford Glen Brook, and Flora Glen Brook. The Hoosic River continues into Vermont and New York to its outlet in the Hudson River. The Hoosic River-Hemlock Brook watershed is approximately 23% conserved.

The Green River Watershed encompasses approximately 50% of Williamstown, located mostly in the southern half of Williamstown, draining the Green River East and West Branches, Phoebes Brook, Goodell Brook, Roaring Brook, and several unnamed tributaries. The Green River Watershed is approximately 46% conserved.

There are two other watersheds that encompass small portions of Williamstown, the Headwaters of the Little Hoosic River watershed on the western edge of Williamstown, and the Phillips Creek-Hoosic River Watershed on the southeast corner of Williamstown, composing 2% and <1% of the town, respectively.
Map 5.1: Water Resource Map
Impervious cover is hard surfaces such as roads and buildings that do not allow infiltration of stormwater runoff. Based on a study from the Center for Watershed Protection, when impervious cover within a watershed exceeds a threshold of 10%, the watershed cannot support a high-quality stream system. This threshold indicates the relationship between stream quality and land use and is a valuable tool in land use planning. The United States EPA classifies subwatershed with less than 10% impervious cover as sensitive. Across the entirety of Williamstown, approximately 3% of the Town is impervious cover. However, the majority of the impervious cover is located adjacent to the confluence of the Green River and the Hoosic River, including the village center, Williams College campus, Cole Street, and Water Street heading south past the Taconic Golf Club. This indicates these areas of the watershed are more vulnerable to nonpoint source pollution from stormwater runoff. Refer to the adjacent map displaying land cover in Williamstown, which includes impervious cover and developed open space mapped as developed land.

SURFACE WATERS, WATER QUALITY, AND IMPAIRMENTS

RIVERS
The Hoosic River is a notable waterway in Williamstown and the surrounding region, beginning its headwaters at the Cheshire Reservoir flowing through the towns of Cheshire, Adams, and North Adams before crossing into Williamstown near Route 2. The Hoosic River has historically been polluted, documented both anecdotally and with water quality monitoring. Historical pollution came from sewage and industrial discharge into the river, and the rectification of these point sources following the Federal Clean Water Act played a large role in the improvement of the Hoosic River water quality. The Massachusetts Rivers Protection Act of 1996 also protects water resources through a protected riverfront area intended to help keep water clean, preserve wildlife habitat, and control flooding. The Hoosic River is classified as Class B waters, meaning it is identified by the State as waters that should be suitable for fish and wildlife and primary and secondary recreation.

The Hoosic River Watershed Association (HooRWA) is a citizens group that is dedicated to conservation, habitat restoration, and recreation on the river throughout Massachusetts, Vermont, and New York. HooRWA is also working to maintain cold water fisheries in the region. HooRWA found that between 1984 and 2014, river monitoring indicated improvements in water quality at most of the monitoring stations, though with little change over the last several years. This trend is based on biomonitoring sites for benthic macroinvertebrates, which can serve as a good indicators of overall water quality. Although water quality trends in the Hoosic have improved since the 1980s, the Hoosic River is still identified as impaired for multiple reasons by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection under the Clean Water Act. To continue protecting the Town’s waters, we recommend the Town of Williamstown should put effort into both restoring impaired waters (the Hoosic River) and protecting the other waters in the Town (the Green River, etc.).

The Hoosic River is listed as impaired on the Massachusetts Integrated List of Waters for the Clean Water Act 303(d) list. The 303(d) list, most recently published in November 2021 in Massachusetts, identifies waters evaluated with respect to their attainment of designated uses such as habitat for fish, other aquatic life and wildlife, fish and shellfish consumption, and primary (e.g., swimming) and secondary (e.g., boating) contact-recreation (Table 5.1 on the following page). There are two
Map 5.2: Land Cover in Williamstown
The river network within Williamstown and the surrounding region also has several dams and

waterways identified as impaired within the town of Williamstown, the Hoosic River, and Paull Brook (also called Mount Williams Brook, of which only a small portion enters Williamstown). The next section provides additional details on the Hoosic River impairment.

Green River’s east and west branches converge near the intersection of Route 7 and Route 43 (the Five Corners) and flow north just west of the village center and Williams College campus to enter the Hoosic River. Several efforts over the past 20 years have improved water quality in the Green River, including the reconstruction of Spring Street in 2001 to improve separation of the sewer and stormwater system, and extending sewer to Gale Road. Most recently, the bottom of Spring Street was redesigned during 2018-2019 with a stormwater drainage system that is able to handle severe 100-year level floods. The area had routinely flooded during rainstorms because of the high elevations surrounding it, and the previous culvert system from the end of Christmas Brook on Latham Street was unable to handle those flood levels. In addition to stormwater control improvements, a loss of agriculture across the Berkshire County has likely decreased non-point source pollution to surface waters. (Agriculture is an important natural resource as well, and is discussed further below in the Agriculture Section).

The East Branch Green River, West Branch Green River, Hopper Brook, Buxton Brook, and Broad Brook are all listed on the Massachusetts 303(d) list under “category 2”, indicating they are unimpaired for some uses but not fully assessed. Hemlock Brook is listed as “category 3” indicating there is insufficient data to make an assessment for its uses.

*Paull Brook is also called Mount Williams Brook and is almost entirely located in North Adams.
physical barriers of note. The upstream Hoosic River has numerous concrete impoundments (discussed below in the Hoosic River Impairments section), and there are an additional 10 dams present in Williamstown mapped by the Massachusetts Office of Dam Safety. These physical barriers include private dams (such as the Harmon Pond Dam) and municipal owned dams (such as the Taconic Park Dam). The North Atlantic Aquatic Connectivity Collaborative also maintains a database of stream crossing assessment data used to help communities identify high priority crossings for assessment, upgrade, or replacement. Within Williamstown, between 2015 and 2021, 25 assessments were completed, of which the majority (68%) had no barrier. 16% had severe barriers, 12% had minor barriers, and 4% had moderate barriers. Hydrologic physical barriers in streams can affect aquatic habitat and alter flow regimes, negatively impacting the water systems.

WATERBODIES
While river systems are the most defining water feature of Williamstown, there are also several small waterbodies, including Bridges Pond, Eph Pond, Williamstown Reservoir, and Harmon Pond (refer to the Table below). The largest, Bridges Pond, is owned by the Town and maintained by the Conservation Commission as part of the North Street Conservation Area, though there is poor access. Eph Pond is located on the Williams College campus, and Harmon Pond is located on the Harmon Pond Preserve owned by the Williamstown Rural Lands Foundation. The Williamstown Reservoir (also called the Sherman Springs Reservoir) serves as a backup water supply for the town drinking water.

WATER QUALITY IMPAIRMENTS
The segment of Hoosic River that starts at the river’s confluence with the North Branch of the Hoosic River in North Adams and flows through Williamstown to the Vermont state line, is listed as impaired for 1) aquatic life, due to alteration in stream side or littoral vegetative covers and flow regime modifications, 2) fish and shellfish consumption, due to PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls) in fish tissue, and 3) primary contact recreation (swimming), due to Escherichia Coli (E. coli) and fecal coliform bacteria. This segment of the Hoosic River is not impaired for aesthetic use or for secondary contact recreation (boating, etc.)

The first impairment listed for the Hoosic River – impaired for aquatic life due to hydrologic alterations – is due to the large concrete flood chutes and earthen levees built in neighboring town North Adams to control flood waters and is well known to many community members. Hydrologic alterations can hurt aquatic life by lowering oxygen levels, raising water temperatures, causing a building of sediment and pollutants, and destroying aquatic life habitat. Although not directly within Williamstown, this altered flow regime affects the downstream waters. The State Division of Ecological Resources has been collaborating with the City of North Adams since 2010 to reconnect the city to its river, improve riverine habitat and function, and spur economic growth all while maintaining the existing level of flood protection. Upstream, the river is clear, cold, and home to many native aquatic life species such as native brook trout. Ultimately, the restoration of this impairment will benefit the Town of Williamstown’s aquatic habitat.

The second impairment listed for the Hoosic River – impaired for fish consumption – is due to PCBs in fish tissue, which are a man-made organic chemical that are long-lasting in fish tissue and in bottom-sediments of rivers and lakes. Fish with PCBs eaten by humans can lead to cumulative PCB
build-up overtime and can have health effects, including cancer. State data on the Hoosic River indicates that a brownfield site is a confirmed source contributing to this impairment. Brownfield sites are potentially contaminated properties, in this case, a former industrial site located at site of the current day Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, has identified PCBs as a contaminant of concern. Restoration opportunities for PCBs are limited, but may include dredging if contaminants are concentrated in an upstream area.

The third impairment listed for the Hoosic River – impaired for primary contact recreation – is due to the presence of bacteria and pathogens (E. coli and fecal coliform). Pathogens are potentially disease-causing organisms from human or animal waste. This contamination can occur from faulty septic systems, sewage discharges, agricultural runoff, pet waste, and boat discharges. Often non-point source pollution from these sources is a major contributor to elevated bacteria levels in surface waters. The most recent state-wide identified municipal point source discharges, stormwater runoff, and/or agriculture as probable sources contributing to impairment. Restoration for bacterial impairments is challenging for communities, often taking years of investigative monitoring, education and outreach campaigns, and implementation of best management practices to limit polluted stormwater runoff from entering waterways.

Paull Brook is located almost entirely in North Adams but enters an unnamed tributary to the Hoosic River shortly after crossing into Williamstown. Paull Brook is identified as impaired for aquatic life due to dewatering (lack of flow), due to a dam or impoundment, likely the dam at the outlet of the Mt. Williams Reservoir.

ADDRESSING IMPAIRMENTS AND WILLIAMSTOWN’S ROLE
The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) works with the Environmental Protection Agency to fulfill the Clean Water Act requirements for evaluating and reporting waterbodies in relation to water quality standards. As a municipality, Williamstown can and should play a role in watershed protection and restoration efforts for impaired waterways such as the Hoosic River. Massachusetts DEP is scheduled to complete a bacteria Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for the Hoosic River watershed in 2022. A TMDL establishes the maximum amount of a pollutant that may be introduced into a waterbody and still ensure the attainment and maintenance of state water quality standards. The bacteria TMDL will provide specific information for the bacteria impaired river segment (Hoosic River) such as land cover and possible sources. While the TMDL will assist with determining pollutant reduction targets and allocating load reductions necessary to the source of the pollutant, the next steps of tracking impairments and restoring impaired waters requires municipal involvement.

Community driven watershed restoration and protection efforts are the most successful. In addition, regional partnerships with neighboring towns, especially North Adams, and citizen watershed protection groups, such as the Hoosic River Watershed Association are important.

WETLANDS
Wetlands within the Town of Williamstown are scattered and limited, composing only approximately 2% of the town. Wetlands provide numerous ecological services, including flood storage, pollutant filtering, important wildlife habitat and natural communities, and recreational opportunities such as bird and wildlife watching. Wetland habitat and aquatic ecosystems
Table 5.2: Wetlands in Williamstown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Acres</th>
<th>Percent of town</th>
<th>Acres conserved</th>
<th>Percent conserved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deep marsh</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shallow marsh meadow or fen</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shrub swamp</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wooded swamp coniferous</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wooded swamp deciduous</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>57.2</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wooded swamp mixed trees</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open water</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>33.5</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Wetland types within Williamstown include deep marsh, shallow marsh meadow or fen, shrub swamp, wooded forested swamps, and open water. Approximately 21 percent of the Town’s wetlands are conserved (Table 5.2). The Town may wish to prioritize conserving wetlands in future land protection efforts, given that wetland resources within the Town are already limited and wetlands provide incredible valuable ecosystem services.

A Source Water Assessment and Protection report by DEP for the Williamstown Water Department identified the Hoosic Valley Aquifer as highly vulnerable to contamination because the clay layer that protects the aquifer does not extend throughout the entire recharge area, leaving the recharge vulnerable to pollution from development. Potential contaminants coming from development include fertilizers, pesticides, manure (microbial contaminants), septic system leaks (microbial contaminants), hazardous chemical spills from commercial or industrial facilities, etc.

TOWN AQUIFER PROTECTIONS
The Town of Williamstown has established several protective overlay zones. The Confined Aquifer District overlay, intended to protect the integrity of the impervious cover above the aquifers, is located in the northeast corner of the Town and covers approximately 5% of the Town.
Confined Aquifer District covers 100% of the high-yield area of the aquifer, and approximately 89% of the medium yield portion of the aquifer. The Water Resource Districts are intended to protect areas that provide recharge for the aquifer and cover 17% of the town. In addition, the Wellhead Protection District was established to protect the quality and quantity of drinking water for the Town. Within Williamstown, this district covers approximately 4% of the town, and extends into North Adams. These protections are invaluable for the future of Williamstown’s water and to protect vulnerabilities in the Hoosic Valley Confined Aquifer.

GEOLOGY
Williamstown, located in the hilly and mountainous northwestern corner of Massachusetts, was formed as part of a mountain formation event occurring 500 million years ago by the Taconic orogeny as continental plates collided. The current day local mountains are composed of layers of quartzite, schists, and limestone (marble) rock formed under the ocean. Weathering and erosion of the rock layers at varying rates created the valleys and mountains of current day Williamstown. The Hoosic and Green River valleys of Williamstown are composed of metamorphosed limestone, which is comparatively softer than other rock types, and have been slowly and continually cut down by streams over millions of years.

The mountains and ridges, including Pine Cobble and Stone Hill, are composed of relatively stronger rock, quartzite, which is resistant to weathering and erosion. The Taconic and Greylock Ranges are also very resistant to weathering, composed of metamorphosed shales such as slate, phyllite, and schist. In addition, the recent ice age peaking approximately 18,000 years ago, widened stream valleys and smoothed bedrock ridges as it retreated. During the retreat of the most recent ice age, Lake Bascom was formed in the Williamstown Valley, leaving behind coarse sediment along the shoreline and finer silts and clay in the deepest parts of the lake. This glacial lake left behind the productive Hoosic Valley Confined Aquifer that provides valuable water for the town of Williamstown and the surrounding region. Geology and topography have informed some of the key features of Williamstown and Town character. Williamstown has some of the steepest slopes in the state, much of which is largely undevelopable. The Town code also restricts development on slopes greater than 24% grade.

TOPOGRAPHY
Williamstown is located in the fertile valley of the Hoosic River, surrounded by the Taconic Mountain range on the western border, the Mount Greylock complex on the eastern border, and the southern reaches of the Green Mountains on the northern border. The lowest elevation point of elevation is at 740 feet where the Hoosic River flows into Vermont, and the highest elevation point is approximately 2,700 feet on Mount Prospect of the Mount Greylock Complex. Williamstown is characterized by deep ravines and steep slopes of mountainsides.

STEEP SLOPES
Steep slopes in Williamstown are present along the border of most of the town where mountains and hills descend into the Hoosic River Valley from the Taconic Mountain range, the Mount Greylock complex, and the Green Mountains. Steep slopes that are greater than 25% slope compose approximately 23% of the town, as shown in dark brown on the adjacent map. Light brown shows slopes between 15-25% of the Town. (Of note, slope data varies between reports
Map 5.3: Steep Slopes in Williamstown
completed for the Town of Williamstown. The most recent Williamstown build-out identified steep
slopes >24% as 12.5% of the town area. The discrepancy between prior numbers and the numbers
calculated for this existing conditions analysis are likely due to how the Digital Elevation Model and
ArcGIS slope tool classify steep slopes and plateaus within the hilly regions of the Town.)

The large percentage of steep slopes in the Town of Williams has confined development mainly
to the narrow river valleys of Williamstown, in combination with the loose soils that are often
found on steeply sloped lands. Furthermore, the Williamstown Upland Conservation zone restricts
development over 1,300 feet. This overlay is intended to protect against suitable development on
steep slopes and protect the balance of nature and open spaces for education, and recreation. The
most recent build-out completed for the Town of Williams in 2016 reinforces this finding – when
taking development constraints into account, including steep slopes, the Upland Conservation
zone, wetlands, current development, and other development constraints, approximately 35%
of Williamstown is developable in the future (also referred to as the Net Usable Land Area, as
analyzed in the most recent Williamstown Build-out Analysis in 2016). Net Usable Land Area could
theoretically be developed or used for working lands, such as agriculture. Spatially, the Net Usable
Land Area is located along the flat river valleys of Williamstown and gentle sloped lands.

SOILS

SOIL TYPES
The soils found within Williamstown are an outcome of the prior glacial activity and geology of the
Town. As a result, they are largely rocky glacial outwash or clay and silt soils that drain poorly.
Poorly drained and very poorly drained soils, typically referred to as hydric soils, compose 65%
of the Town area. Wet and heavy hydric soils can pose challenges for suitable septic disposal. As
noted in the 2016 Open Space Plan, hydric soils typically require adapted systems such as oversize
leach fields.

SOILS EROSION HAZARD AND LANDSLIDES
The thin and erodible soils found in Williamstown also represent soil erosion hazards. Soils with
high silt contents can be the most susceptible to runoff as they are easily detached and produce
high rates of runoff. Within Williamstown, the areas that have the highest soil erodibility factor –
which a soils susceptibility to erosion and runoff – include the silt-loam soils found along the river
and stream valleys. This indicates that these soils are vulnerable to detachment during high flows
and flooding and likely to cause sedimentation and siltation downstream. The best management
practices to help control erosion include leaving well forested and vegetated stream buffers and
protecting stream side areas against development, impervious cover, and being left as bare soil.
Williamstown is included in one of the areas of Massachusetts that has high susceptibility/
moderate incidence occurrences to landslides as a part of the Taconic and Hoosac Mountain
Ranges of northern Berkshire County. As identified in the Williamstown Hazard Mitigation Plan,
unstable lands in Williamstown are found on the steep slopes of the Mount Greylock complex
(specifically Mount Greylock and Mount Prospect) in the eastern side of Town and on the steep
slopes of the Taconic Range along the western side of Town. In addition, the steep stream and
riverbanks found along the upper slopes of Hopper Brook (down from The Hopper), Money Brook,
Hemlock Brook and its tributaries, and Sweet Brook have unstable lands that make the areas susceptible to erosion and possible landslides. Recent regional landslides include the closure of Route 2 between Florida and West Claremont from Hurricane Irene in 2011, and a landslide in 1990 on the eastern slope of Mt. Greylock.

**SOILS & DEVELOPMENT**

The soils restrictions and hazards discussed above restrict and contain development in Williamstown, which has been noted in historic reports as well. A notable report from 1984 identified that 61% of the soils in Williamstown are unsuitable for development. The natural environmental constraints on new development from steep slopes, erodible soils and hydric soils limit the Net Usable Land for development and suitable farmland in Williamstown.

**AGRICULTURE**

**FARMLAND SOILS**

Within Williamstown, approximately 17% of the Town is rated as prime farmland (see adjacent map). Prime farmland soils in Massachusetts are defined as those with the best physical and chemical characteristics for growing crops, including state specific specifications on available water capacity, water table, infrequent flooding, permeability, and limited bedrock exposure.

An additional 22% of the Town is rated as farmland of local importance, defined as soils that do not meet the requirements of prime farmland but are important for the production of food, feed, fiber, or forage crops. This cumulative 40% of the Town is located primarily in the fertile river valleys of the town along the Green River, Hoosic River, and their tributaries. The confinement of the good agricultural land to the river valleys mirrors the confinement of development to the river valleys, creating a large challenge for the Town which has resulted in a dramatic decline of working agricultural lands over the last 50-75 years as 90% of the Town’s farms have been lost.

**NATURAL RESOURCE CHALLENGES FOR FARMING**

Farming in Williamstown faces numerous challenges related to natural resources. The most notable problem is the loss of farming lands to low density residential development steadily over the past several decades. Development pressures threaten the protection of many natural resources. Typically, development pressures threatening natural resources evokes thoughts of threats against wildlife and biodiversity. However, farming is a key component of a community’s natural resources base as well, providing food, natural resource management, and a sustainable future for the Town.

The competition for land in Williamstown due to natural resource constraints against development and farming (steep slopes, poor soils, etc.), as well as the attractive style of living found in the Town to many, have both played a role in creating high land prices that outstrip a farmer’s ability to afford or lease them. Farmers are a valuable resource, as farmers hold knowledge of how to make and grow food, but as noted by the agricultural commission, farming is not economically viable in Williamstown for the vast majority of farmers.

The management of wild spaces in Williamstown also creates challenges for choosing between management of conservation for wildlife or public recreation verses for farms and working lands. For example, conserved lands managed for bobolinks, a bird whose habitat includes meadows
Map 5.4: Farmland Soils in Williamstown
such as viable hay fields, creates a management choice between protecting bobolink habitat and protecting crop fields to feed livestock. By the time bobolinks have migrated elsewhere, the field no longer holds enough nutritional value to make it worth haying for livestock feed. The Rural Lands Foundation in Williamstown and the Williamstown Community Preservation Act are two organizations/mechanisms that can provide funding and support for farming preservation and protection; however both support a diversity of goals including access to open space, outdoor recreation, and affordable housing on top of preserving working lands.

Flooding can also threaten farmland. With floodplains being restricted from development in Williamstown, floodplain lands can be a natural fit for farmland. However, flooding can erode soils and impact crops. The Williamstown Farmland Project, completed in fall 2020 by Williams College students, identified one farmer in close proximity to the Hoosic River who had portions of their property and livestock fences eroded and lost during Hurricane Irene in 2011. In addition, another farmer noted that beavers have caused loss of nearly 12 acres of pasture fields over the past 10 years.

Non-point source pollution is another natural resource concern of agriculture. Agriculture can impact water quality in adjacent surface waters if waste from fertilizers, manure, waste, and pesticides washes into the water via stormwater runoff. In a high-level assessment, the State of Massachusetts Integrated List of Waters has identified agriculture as a potential non-point source of pollution to the Hoosic River. Future watershed protection and watershed restoration efforts can and should work collaboratively with farmers and working lands landowners to address any non-point source pollution concerns. The Natural Resource Conservation Service, part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, can work with farmers to identify and fund the implementation of Best Management Practices on agricultural land. Best management practices on agricultural lands, such as vegetative buffers and erosion control measures play a valuable role in protecting water quality of nearby water resources. The Town of Williamstown has been encouraging farmers in Williamstown to work with NRCS which has gone well to date.

In addition to buffers to protect surface waters, buffers between farmland and new residential neighbors can also be beneficial. New development can discourage farming if neighboring residents find noise, smell, or aesthetic concerns, but new development should not place a burden on existing farms to give up actively working on boundary land. New residential development can be encouraged to provide its own buffer zone, such as landscape plantings, to screen neighboring farms. This can be encouraged through Town ordinances. Lastly, inclusion of farming in natural resource planning through land purchase can help protect and encourage farming. Easements and purchases of farmland ensure natural resource availability for future generations to farm.

**FORESTED LANDS**

Forested land within Williamstown covers the majority of the town at approximately 76% of the land cover area. Forests have been identified by the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee as an important critical resource within the town that is key to the town’s character and natural resource base. Forested lands on the hillsides and mountains, many of which are steeply sloped, protect against landslides, and help absorb stormwater runoff to reduce and prevent flooding and erosion. The reforestation of slopes and mountainsides that experienced deforestation in the late 19th
century, such as the top of Mt. Greylock before it was protected as a State Reservation, has helped reduce the risk of landslides and erosion. The Upland Conservation zone, in addition to protecting against unsafe development, also protects the forested resources of the Town by protecting against development in the higher elevation areas of the Town. In addition, lands that have been historically cleared for agriculture or logged for timber have grown back to successional forests.

Almost half of the forested lands within the Town, or approximately 41%, is permanently conserved. There are some sections of large intact forest stands within the Town that do not have permanent protection – most notably, the Hopkins Memorial Forest managed by Williams College. Hopkins Memorial Forest is used for research and education and numerous studies provide information on the natural history of Hopkins Forest and the forests of Williamstown as a whole. The forests of Williamstown are vulnerable to effects of climate change – refer to the climate change section below for additional details.

**FOREST COMPOSITION**

Northern hardwood forest composes most of the forest lands in Williamstown but vary by sub-composition throughout the elevation of Williamstown’s mountains, including the rich alluvial bottom land forest that is found in the Hoosic River Valley and the mixed deciduous forest stands (including sugar maples) found further up the hillside under approximately 1,300 feet. Steeper slopes are mostly composed of sugar maple, red maple, and American Birch, and yellow birch. The shoulders of the mountains, which tend to be drier, include red, white, and chestnut oak stands and blueberry and huckleberry thickets. At the higher mountain elevations with Williamstown, some stands are composed of red spruce and Eastern Hemlock, and occasional northern species such as bunchberry and three-toothed cinquefoil.

**FORESTLAND HABITAT AND CARBON SEQUESTRATION**

Forests within Williamstown are also home to numerous wildlife species. The Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program identifies core forest habitat that are large, intact forests that are least impacted by roads and development and provide critical habitat for numerous woodland species. The identified forest core habitat within Williamstown is around the town borders of the Town on the edges of the Taconic Mountain range, Mount Greylock complex, and southern reaches of the Green Mountains. In addition, the forests of Williamstown provide the ecological service of carbon sequestration. Large tracts of forests (and wetlands) are critical for carbon storage and sequestration, especially mature forests such as those found in Hopkins Forest. The continued protection of Williamstown's forests is a very important component of natural resource protection in town planning.

**HABITATS/VEGETATION/WILDLIFE**

Williamstown is home to many habitat types and ecosystems, including forests, wetlands, riparian, and aquatic habitat, and is home to several rare species and Species of Conservation Concern. The Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program and Nature Conservancy identifies core habitat and critical habitat to help guide strategic biodiversity conservation in Massachusetts, which is summarized below and displayed in Map 5.5. Williamstown has identified protecting biodiversity as important to the town.
Map 5.5: Core Habitat and Critical Natural Areas in Williamstown
CORE HABITAT

Core habitat are specific areas important to long-term protection of Species of Conservation Concern, exemplary natural communities, and intact ecosystems. Approximately 22 square miles of Williamstown is categorized as Core Habitat, located mainly along the mountainous regions of the town's borders as well as along the riparian stream corridors of the Green River, Hemlock Brook, and Hoosic River.

In addition to the forest core habitat discussed above, important wetland habitat is identified in Williamstown where wetlands are least disturbed within undeveloped landscapes with little fragmentation and other stressors identified due to development. These wetlands are the most likely to support important wetland functions such as supporting high biodiversity for many unique plant and animal species life cycles. Wetland core habitat identified within Williamstown is located along the upper reaches of the West Branch Green River and within the Hopkins Memorial Forest in the northwest of the Town. Aquatic core habitat within the Town includes intact river corridors important for the ecology of the river and is found along the tributary and river network of the town, especially along the Green River, Hoosic River, and Hemlock Brook.

Species of Conservation Concern includes species that are listed under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act or are of conservation concern within Massachusetts. Often, these species face direct habitat loss, loss due to climate change, or other threats to their population. Though the state does not publicly disclose the species, their habitat can be mapped. Within Williamstown, locations of species of special concern are located mostly in the Mount Greylock Reservation area, along the Green River, and along the Hoosic River and Hemlock Brook.

Priority natural communities, which are various natural communities of biodiversity conservation interest – are limited within Williamstown and are located in the Mount Greylock State Reservation and within the southern Green Mountains that extend into the northeast of the Town. These communities include 1) a Spruce-Fir-Northern Hardwoods Forest, 2) an Acidic Rocky Summit community, and 3) a High Elevation Spruce-Fir Forest. As NHESP identifies, the High Elevation Spruce-Fir Forest is the largest in the state. It is unfragmented and it is extremely well buffered within a naturally vegetated landscape.

While not mapped under the NHESP, there are also great coldwater fisheries found within the tributaries and rivers of Williamstown. Coldwater fish resources, home to reproducing coldwater fish such as rainbow trout, brown trout, brook trout, longnose suckers, and more, are particularly sensitive habitats. All of the tributaries in Williamstown are identified as coldwater fisheries by the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, which is true for the majority of the Towns found in the northwest region of Massachusetts.

CRITICAL NATURAL LANDSCAPES

Critical Natural Landscapes identified areas to protect intact landscapes that are better able to support ecological processes and a wide array of species and habitats over long time frames. There are approximately 31 square miles of critical natural landscapes identified in Williamstown, located mainly along the same areas as Core Habitat. The large blocks of undeveloped land located on the borders of the town are also identified as landscape blocks. Landscape blocks are large intact
landscapes that provide diverse habitats at a scale large enough to sustain healthy populations of species that travel great distances in their home range, such as Moose, Black Bear, and Bobcat.

These blocks are not fragmented by roads and development and are very valuable habitats. As the Natural Heritage Endangered Species Program puts it, these landscapes support many habitats and ecosystem services, making the whole greater than the sum of the parts. Large, forested blocks found in Williamstown capture and filter, and supply clean and cool water to river networks, in turn supporting fish, mammals, insets, amphibians, and more.

**DARK SKIES**

Williamstown community members have identified dark skies and silence as natural resources for Williamstown and Town character. According to a recent article published in The Berkshire Eagle in August, 2021, Massachusetts in the Northeast without regulations that restrict outdoor lighting. The Legislature Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities, and Energy is currently working on a bill “to promote energy efficient lighting, conserve energy, regulate outdoor night lighting, and reduce light pollution.” In addition to the potential implementation of statewide standards, the Town of Williamstown could consider exploring enacting regulations or guidelines within the Town to protect against light pollution and provide education and outreach on the subject.

**THREATS TO NATURAL RESOURCES/NATURAL HAZARDS**

**FLOODS**

Flooding is the main natural hazard concern for the Town of Williamstown. Landslides and erosion have been discussed above in the soils/topography section. The Town of Williamstown has a current Hazard Mitigation Plan from 2019 that outlines key natural hazards in full detail and should be referenced for future natural hazard planning. A summary and key details of this plan are available below.

Flooding in Williamstown is common during spring melt, especially as winter cycles of snow followed by rain are becoming more common. Williamstown is also particularly vulnerable to flash flood regimes due to the hilly terrain and thin soil. In addition, impervious cover in the town (mainly in developed portions in the valleys), accelerates runoff. Where undersized or improperly sited infrastructure cannot handle large volumes of water, such as in culverts or drainage channels, flood waters can get backed up and flood properties upstream. It is not uncommon for municipal infrastructure to be 50-100 years old, and as such, infrastructure is not often built to withstand future impacts of increased flooding. The hazard mitigation plan recommends engineering and design for municipal infrastructure that can accommodate predicted flooding events.

The Town Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee has noted that flooding is prevalent throughout Williamstown, not necessarily in repeat locations, which can make planning challenging. Flooding has been associated with Christmas Brook and the Green River, where flood levels have exceeded what can be accommodated by the storm drain system.

With six to eight flood events that approached or exceeded a 50-100- year interval in the Berkshire region in the last 100 years, we can assume that a flood event will impact the region every 12-15 years, if not more frequently, and receive minor flooding at least once a year.
Over the last 100 years in the Berkshire region, there have been six to eight flood events that have been close or exceeded a 50–100-year storm. This indicates that the Town can expect a significant (50-100 year level) flood event every 12-15 years, and potentially more due to increasing precipitation events. Efforts to flood proof and relocate high-risk properties within the floodplain, control sources of stormwater runoff, and upgrade stormwater drainage systems are all steps that can be taken to decrease the potential for damage and losses.

A secondary hazard to flooding that is experienced in Williamstown are ice jams during winter months which have historically damaged infrastructure. Additional secondary hazards include the flooding of the Hoosic Water Quality District treatment facility which could cause discharge of untreated/improperly treated wastewater.

**FLOOD HAZARD AREAS**

Floodplains in Williamstown cover only 3% of the town and are associated with the Hoosic River and the Green River. The floodplain widens in the vicinity of the confluence with the Green and Hoosic River, and flooding is often experienced in this area. The Williamstown Hazard Mitigation Plan identifies Broad Brook as an area of concern with steep slopes and historical transport of sediment and large boulders. Sediment, cobbles, and boulders that are transported during storm events can hit footings of bridge infrastructure and fill the stream channel which cause flooding of the bridge. The Route 7 bridge over Broad Brook was installed in the early 2000s with the goal of meet these stressors, however it is still an area of concern. Another area of concern for flooding is the Pan Am rail corridor. The railroad tracks could become inundated or undermined due to flooding.

The 100-year floodplain (1% chance annual flood) covers approximately 1,021 acres (3%) of the town. The 500-year floodplain (0.2% change annual flood) covers approximately 500 acres (2%) of the town. While development in the floodplain is no longer allowed, there are homes and businesses located within the floodplain build before the restriction. In 2017, the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission identified 139 primary buildings located within the 100-year floodplain (Table 1). The Spruces Mobile Home Park was previously located within the 100-year floodplain, but after repeat flooding, 225 homes were displaced. The Spruces Park is currently being redesigned to create a town park with enhanced floodplain function, ecological resiliency and community uses that are allowable within FEMA restrictions.

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CLIMATE CHANGE

PRECIPITATION
Climate change has increased precipitation amounts across New England which exacerbates flooding experienced in Williamstown. The Northeast Climate Science Center, based out of University of Massachusetts Amherst, states the yearly precipitation total for Berkshire County has been experiencing a gradual rise over the last 70 years, from 40.1 inches annually in the 1960s to 48.6 inches annually in the 2000s. Projections for future precipitation increase expect the region to experience and additional 3.55 inches annually by the 2050s and 4.72 inches annually by the 2090s.

TEMPERATURE
Temperature increases will also affect Williamstown. The Northeast Climate Science Center predicts an annual increase of 3.3 to 7.0 degrees Fahrenheit in the Hoosic River Watershed by the mid-century, with the greatest increase in the winter season. Flooding in Williamstown is often caused by mid-winter cold and thaw weather patterns that cause ice jams and high flows (often when the ground is still frozen and floodwater cannot infiltrate). These projections are further supported by USGS streamflow gages which have found clear increases in flows since the 1940s, with sharper increases in the 1970s. There are two flood gages relevant to Williamstown – on the Hoosic River in North Adams 0.8 miles upstream, and one on the Green River in the town Center, 0.7 miles upstream of the river’s confluence with the Hoosic.

FOREST STRESSORS
Climate change is also expected to cause substantial changes in the forests of New England. Effects include more variable soil moisture as precipitation patterns change, increased risk of drought, stress from forest pests and diseases, competition from invasive species, and changes in the distribution of trees and forest competition. With forests being the predominant land cover in Williamstown, the Town can expect shifts in species ranges and forest composition.

Variable soil moisture is caused by changes in temperature and precipitation patterns, and as noted in the preceding sections, these trends will cause heavier rain in Williamstown and warmer annual temperatures. Prolonged periods of drought may also affect forest composition. Despite increasing annual rain totals, rain delivery via high intensity events restricts water absorption by the soil and causes rapid surface runoff. This results in flash flooding events (as discussed above) as well as drought stressed forests. This can cause forests to be more vulnerable to insect outbreaks and fires.

INVASIVES & PESTS
Forest pests and diseases may become more damaging as the climate changes as well, given that pests and diseases often adapt to weather pattern changes more quickly than the native host species. Milder winters also allow some pests, such as the wooly adelgid and southern pine beetle, to expand northward. For example, the emerald ash borer is a well-known invasive in New England that has been expanding northward. It is a small invasive beetle that is devastating to ash trees, and was first detected in Williamstown in 2020 according to the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation.
Invasive infestations are expected to worsen due to climate change because invasive species typically can exploit changed environments and colonize disturbed areas. The New England region is typically offered some protection by the colder climate and short growing season, however rising annual temperatures will reduce that protection.

**NATURAL RESOURCE PROTECTIONS**

**CONSERVED LANDS**

Conserved lands within Williamstown compose 36% percent of the Town area, which is in line with the average of neighboring towns in Massachusetts, Vermont, and New York. Five neighboring Towns have larger percentages of conserved lands- Adams (49%), Clarksburg (47%), New Ashford (44%), Hancock (43%), and North Adams (37%). In total, almost 17 square miles of Williamstown are conserved, including parcels held by the State, Land Trusts, Municipal Lands, Federal Lands, and Private organizations. See Figure 5.5.

Based on the existing conditions of natural resources within Williamstown, future land conservation opportunities include wetlands, riparian buffers, and agricultural land (intended to be used as working lands). The Town of Williamstown already has very limited wetland resources (due to the topography of the Town). However, given the Town’s challenges with flooding, the Hoosic River’s water quality impairments, and then importance of the stream and river network within the Town, the ecosystem services that wetlands provide are very valuable. The Town Conservation Commission does oversee the protection of wetlands, and additional protection by conserving wetland areas and ample buffers around them will help protect these areas in the future.

A notable takeaway from the core habitat identified in Williamstown is that the rivers, streams, and adjacent stream side areas (riparian areas) are valuable core habitat for aquatic species and species of conservation concern. Identifying future conservation lands with these habitats in mind will help ensure wildlife can continue to thrive in Williamstown’s freshwater resources.

Lastly, as noted by the Williamstown Agricultural Commission, farmers in Williamstown would benefit from additional conservation easements in the Town that are created with the intention of leasing good quality, affordable land to farmers. Land that is already cleared (not forested) and has a well for water were noted as the most valuable opportunities.

The Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee also noted Hopkins Forest is not permanently conserved, which may be a priority for the future given its wealth of core habitat and mature forest stands.
Figure 5.6: Conserved Lands Map
GROUNDWATER PROTECTION
Zoning overlays in the Town of Williamstown intended to protect the town’s aquifer and drinking water include the Confined Aquifer District overlay, Water Resource Overlay 1, Water Resource Overlay 2, and the Wellhead Protection Overlay, discussed in the aquifer section of the existing conditions report. The water resource and wellhead protection overlays primarily overlap with residential zones, and restrict uses such as landfills, hazardous material storage, ice control chemicals and snow storage, intensive impervious surfaces, storage of septage sludge, earth removal, and junkyards.

UPLAND CONSERVATION DISTRICT
The Upland Conservation District protects against development on steep slopes of the. This overlay is intended to protect against suitable development on steep slopes and protect the balance of nature and open spaces for education, and recreation, and restricts development over 1,300 feet.

FLOODPLAIN DISTRICT
The Williamstown Floodplain District includes land within the 100-year flood level. This overlay is intended to ensure public safety, eliminate hazards to emergency response, avoid the loss of utility services, prevent public emergencies from pollution and contamination of water quality due to flooding, and reduce damage and costs to property from floodwaters.

RIVER AND WETLAND PROTECTIONS
The Massachusetts Rivers Protection Act protects a buffered 200-foot riverfront area on both sides of rivers and streams. As explained in the most recent 2016 Williamstown Build-out, completed in 2016, this establishes an absolute development restriction within 100 feet of a waterway and a partial development restriction (some development allowed) within 100-200 feet of the waterway. The Williamstown Conservation Commission also manages a wetland buffer regulation which restricts development within 100 feet of a wetland.

REFERENCES

STUDIES, PLANS, REPORTS, ARTICLES
• Williamstown Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan Update, 2019
• Williamstown Open Space and Recreation Plan, 2016
• Williamstown Water Department, 2021 Update
• Hoosic River Restoration, Massachusetts Division of Ecological Resources
• Hoosic River Revival, 2016
• Waterbody Report: Hoosic River 2020, Environmental Protection Agency
• Williamstown Farmland Project, Assessing Contemporary Threats to Farmland in Williamstown
• Source Water Assessment and Protection Report for Williamstown Water Department, 2003
• Williamstown Town Code
• “Williams College’s ‘great gift’ to Williamstown: $21M stormwater drainage system”, Scott Stafford, The Berkshire Eagle. 2018
• “Enjoy stargazing in the Berkshires? Then you should be worried about light pollution, astronomers say Massachusetts only state in Northeast without outdoor lighting restrictions.” Felix Carroll, The Berkshire Eagle, 2021.
• Spruces Park Project Site, Regenerative Design Group, 2022.

DATA SOURCES
• Massachusetts 303(d) List of Integrated Waters
• Massachusetts National Heritage Endangered Species Program Dataset (NHESP)
• National Hydrography Dataset
• North Atlantic Aquatic Connectivity Collaborative Data Center
• “How’s My Waterway”, Environmental Protection Agency
• Massachusetts Brownfield Sites Data
• Massachusetts Energy & Environmental Affairs, Waste Site & Reportable Releases Information.
• Hopkins Memorial Forest Landscape, Williams College
• 2020 Prime Farmland Classes for Massachusetts, NRCS-USDA
• Williamstown Rural Lands Foundation
• K-Factor, Soil Erosion Assessment Tool, NRCS-USDA
• Massachusetts Office of Dam Safety Database
• Coldwater Fish Resources Mapped Data, MA Division of Fisheries and Wildlife
Williamstown’s open spaces include parks, conserved land, undeveloped land, agricultural properties, forested land, and recreation facilities. These sites play an important role in contributing to the quality of life of Williamstown residents and can reinforce the ecological integrity of the landscape.

36%, or 11,389 acres of land in Williamstown are conserved. While many neighboring towns have higher percentages of conserved lands, many of those communities' benefit from significant state land holdings. Additional lands exist in Williamstown that are publicly accessible that are not officially conserved.

While municipal lands only account for 6% of Williamstown’s open spaces, the municipal properties that exist provide opportunities for recreation relatively close to the town center and play critical roles in connecting other publicly accessible lands.

The State of Massachusetts has many significant land holdings in Williamstown and accounts for 62% of open space lands. Additionally, substantial open space lands are owned by land trusts and other private entities, which account for a combined 31% of open spaces.

For the purposes of this section, "open space" is being defined in accordance with the State of Massachusetts’s definition as “undeveloped land with particular conservation or recreation interest”. This includes conservation land, forested land, recreation land, active and fallow agricultural land and views, or any open area that is owned by an agency or organization dedicated to conservation.”

Several private institutions play critical roles in Williamstown’s open space and recreation networks. Of these institutions, Williams College is the largest land holder with publicly accessible properties in the village center and owns other properties that abut important forested lands and state properties.
Williamstown has done a great job developing open space opportunities with the Spruces and Linear Park along the Hoosic and Green Rivers. These areas are proximate to the center of town and provide important recreational options for residents and visitors.

The Town does not have a Parks & Recreation Department. Recreational programming is provided by schools and non-profit organizations such as the Williamstown Youth Center, Sand Springs Pool, and others, which offers programming and general support for children in grades K-8. However, there are limited programs available for older children beyond what is offered at the regional high school.

The Williamstown Council on Aging provides recreational programming for the older residents and the senior population in town. Barriers still exist in the form of communication and transportation (although transportation options are offered through Berkshire Regional Transit Authority).

Athletic field space is in high demand from the various activities requiring that resource. As a result, scheduling conflicts exist as do field maintenance and safety concerns from overuse. The Town needs to address the limited field space, while balancing other needs in the community.

The identified recreation facility access issues are not easily addressed without dedicated staff, which is another major hurdle for Williamstown. The lack of a formal Parks & Recreation Department means there is limited capacity for the Town to address these complex needs.

The existing trail network in town is extensive and includes over 108 miles of trails including the Appalachian Trail. 70% of trails are on permanently protected lands. These trails exist on municipal, state, and privately-owned lands. The Town has done a good job codifying the relationships with private entities to ensure the trails exist for public use for years to come.

The Mohawk Bike/Ped Path that was started in 2021 with federal funding will be a tremendous resource for residents and visitors and continues the recreational and open space development along the Hoosic River.

There are 16 active farms in Williamstown and 4,184 acres of land in agricultural production. According to the GIS data available by the Town and MassGIS, the average farm size in Williamstown is 262 acres. Significant pressures exist on agricultural operations and farmlands in Williamstown. While there are programs in place to conserve agricultural lands, there continues to be a slow loss across Berkshire County including Williamstown. Ultimately, creative and collaborative solutions must be identified to reduce the burden on farmers for maintaining open spaces that are greatly valued by the public.

Williamstown’s remaining farmland resources are deserving of permanent protection from development so they can be part of a future food system in the region. Connections to these larger landscapes from the village center and neighborhoods should include smaller scale habitat regeneration in town including “No mow” areas, pollinator gardens, and other site improvements.
6. Parks, Open Space, and Recreation

INTRODUCTION
Located in the northwest corner of Massachusetts, Williamstown is a crucial connection between five abutting towns in the same state while bordering two other states – Vermont and New York. There is a long history of publicly accessible lands throughout Berkshire County, Massachusetts. It’s role as a regional open space and recreational connector is important for the town and the region and is evidenced in the several shared multi-use paths in the Berkshires, including the Mohawk Bike Path, that are in different stages of planning and completion. Additionally, the open space and recreational connections with other states through the Taconic Trail State Park, the Mount Greylock State Reservation that is home to two different sections of the Appalachian Trail, and many other regional efforts.

The open space and recreational potential in Williamstown are varied and extensive, which is both a result of the physical landscape and a testament to the people that care deeply about maintaining the healthy community and lifestyle that exists. Williamstown’s physical landscape ranges from densely forested mountains and rivers with cold water tributaries to spectacular agricultural lands in the valleys. This diverse landscape of mountains, forests, valleys, rivers, and streams, paired with elements of an agricultural economy and a close-knit and vibrant village center offer an array of open space and recreation opportunities for locals and visitors.

Because of some of the characteristics that are present in Williamstown, the open space and recreation resources must fit the needs of a diverse population ranging in age, income, and other demographic factors that pose challenges and opportunities.

For the purposes of this section, "open space" is being defined in accordance with the State of Massachusetts's definition as “undeveloped land with particular conservation or recreation interest”. This includes conservation land, forested land, recreation land, active and fallow agricultural land and views, or any open area that is owned by an agency or organization dedicated to conservation.”

ISSUES, CHALLENGES, AND OPPORTUNITIES
Extensive forested and agricultural lands, large swings in resident numbers from students at Williams College, heavy seasonal influx from visitors primarily in the summer months, and demographic disparities in race and income in certain neighborhoods are substantial challenges facing Williamstown. Each of these place certain pressures on the open space and recreational offerings in different ways, including the undue burden placed on agricultural producers to maintain their open spaces for the broader public benefit often stated as “maintaining the rural character and views in town”. Addressing complex challenges like this are not easily resolved, but through critical and strategic planning and an engaged citizenry, which Williamstown is known for, solutions are achievable.

Compounding these forces and underlying all municipal open space and recreation resources and decisions in Williamstown, is the lack of a municipal Parks & Recreation Department. Without formal budgets and capacity dedicated to these efforts, the management
and maintenance of existing resources places additional strain on other departments including the Department of Public Works. Having said that, Williamstown has taken concrete steps to address the limited municipal capacity by professionalizing trail maintenance that has helped stem many of the management and maintenance pressures. (The development of the Joint Trails Coordinator is discussed later in this section.) Additionally, many recreation and open space resources in town are owned and managed by private organizations and, while they are open to the public, they are not “public” by municipal standards. In some cases, there is a perceived lack of affordability and perhaps unwelcomingness.

With that said, Williamstown has done a good job providing open space and recreational offerings to residents and visitors through the efforts of town staff and volunteers including the 2018 ad hoc Williamstown Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee. Their efforts, together with a host of private organizations dedicated to maintaining the special characteristics of Williamstown, have resulted in the existing open space and recreation network. The collaborative resource management and maintenance in Williamstown between municipal, state, non-profit and private entities should be commended. One tangible example of the dedication to town-wide collaboration is the development of a Joint Trails Coordinator. The position was identified as a need and codified in an agreement between the Town of Williamstown and Williamstown Rural Lands (WRL). The position is housed at WRL but is jointly funded by the Town, WRL, and Williams College. The Joint Trails Coordinator position is resides as a member of the WRL staff and is funded by the Williamstown Conservation Commission, WRL, and Williams College. The position plans trail projects and is responsible for maintaining the trail network in town that is not on Mt. Greylock. Additionally, the position has also taken over the responsibility of running the summer trail crew, which is staffed and funded by Williams College. With that said, Williamstown residents are encouraged to volunteer through the many volunteer days offered by WRL.

Members of the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee have expressed the high value residents and the public place on farmland for the open space views and sense of rural character; however, the financial and physical strain of maintaining the agricultural landscape and productivity is placed on the farmers. These strains include but are not limited to the difficult financial sustainability of farming, lack of succession plans, residential development, and lack of affordable housing for farm workers. One of the largest threats to farmland preservation is its monetary value for low-density residential development. Another concern related to maintaining agricultural lands in Williamstown is the imbalance between the public value and the private burden. While the public places a high value on farmland for the open space views and sense of rural character, the financial and physical strain of maintaining the agricultural landscape and productivity is placed on the farmers. This inequity exists as much in Williamstown as it does in other rural communities with strong agrarian roots. With that said, Williamstown has a track record of creative and collaborative solutions to challenging issues, and if the Town, its’ residents, and broader community want to actualize their ideals, they need to come together to address this challenge.

While these collaborative efforts are not without their limitations, they are vital. The parties in town appear to recognize, appreciate, and agree on the need to work together for the common goal of providing open space and recreational opportunities for residents and visitors.
MUNICIPAL OPEN SPACES

Williamstown is known for extensive open space resources. However, many of the open space properties in town are owned and managed by other public or private entities. Of the nearly 11,400 acres of open space in town, only 6% is owned by the Town of Williamstown (this figure does not include Mt Greylock Regional High School). Table 6.1, which was derived from MassGIS and data made available by Williamstown, shows the breakdown of ownership of the existing open space resources in town. Map 6.1 shows the distribution of open space in Williamstown by ownership type.

The Town of Williamstown owns and maintains many parks and open spaces totaling approximately 686 acres (this figure does not include Mt Greylock Regional School), which are listed in Table 6.2 on the following page. These areas are located relatively close to the center of town and provide opportunities for residents and visitors with limited transportation options from village center. Many of the properties owned by the Town offer some of the closest recreational trails to the village center, which are strengths of these assets. Additionally, these will also connect to the Mohawk Bike Path once construction is complete.

However, despite the proximity and diversity of municipally owned open spaces to the village center, there are major limitations to the existing suite of town-owned open space and recreational resources. While the town has responded well to resident input on certain aspects including the Mohawk Bike Path and additional trails along the Hoosic and Green Rivers, there are more

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Owner Type</th>
<th>Acres</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Municipal</td>
<td>686</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Trust</td>
<td>1,407</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>2,171</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>7,010</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>11,388</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Map 6.1: Distribution of open spaces in Williamstown
For a larger version of this map, please see page 117
Table 6.2: Municipal Parks and Open Space in Williamstown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Acres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bloedel Park</td>
<td>Park with green space and limited seating.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridges Pond/North Street Conservation Area</td>
<td>Small pond. Public access is discouraged at the behest of the railroad.</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burbank Farm</td>
<td>Currently used for agriculture, but includes a walking trail between Luce and Stratton Roads</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deans Farm</td>
<td>Fragile ecological area. Public use is not recommended outside trails that extend in from neighboring Trustees of Reservations property.</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Lawn Cemetery</td>
<td>Historic cemetery that includes the Sherman Burbank Memorial Chapel. The property allows walking.</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary School/Youth Center</td>
<td>Various athletic fields, basketball court, and playground exist on the property. These two entities operate closely on many recreation programming capacities.</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green River Linear Park</td>
<td>Picnic tables, grills, playground, and access to the Green River.</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunter Conservation Area</td>
<td>Forested area for available passive recreation has trails connecting to neighboring parcels.</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowry Farm/Clover Hill Farm Conservation Area</td>
<td>Currently used for agriculture and off-season passive recreation.</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret Lindley Park</td>
<td>Park with picnic and swimming areas</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spruces Park</td>
<td>Former mobile home community turned public park following tropical storm Irene includes more than 2 miles of trails for summer and winter use.</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stone Hill/Crockett Land</td>
<td>Forested area with trails used for hiking and running.</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

traditional recreation resources that are still unavailable or inaccessible to many residents. These recreational elements will be discussed in more detail later in this section. It’s worth noting that all the municipal parks and open spaces are managed and maintained by the Williamstown Public Works Department and, in some cases, in coordination with the Williamstown Conservation Commission.

**OTHER OPEN SPACE PROPERTIES**

In addition to the available municipal parks and open spaces, Williamstown benefits from many other permanently protected public open spaces from an array of landowners and managers including several departments with the State of Massachusetts, private land trusts, and other regional and national organizations. The list of other permanently protected open space landowners and managers are found in Table 6.3 on the following page and account for 93% of all permanently protected open space in Williamstown. The State of Massachusetts is the largest owner/manager of permanently protected land in Williamstown accounting for nearly three quarters (71%) of all open space; specifically, the Department of Conservation and Recreation is, by far, the largest single owner/manager in town.
Table 6.3: Other Permanently Protected Open Space Landowners/Managers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Owner/Manager</th>
<th>Acres</th>
<th>Percent of Other Permanently Protected Open Space in Williamstown</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation</td>
<td>6,315</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williamstown Rural Lands Foundation</td>
<td>1,144</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game</td>
<td>1,131</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources</td>
<td>666</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>570</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Trustees of Reservation</td>
<td>470</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berkshire Natural Resources Council</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williams College</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boy Scouts of America</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girl Scouts of America</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>10,741</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

WILLIAMSTOWN RURAL LANDS FOUNDATION
The Williamstown Rural Lands Foundation, better known as Williamstown Rural Lands (WRL), is a private, non-profit land conservation organization that “conserves and promotes the forests, fields, farms and natural habitats of our region for the benefit of our communities and future generations.” Owning and managing 10% of the open spaces in Williamstown, the role WRL plays in town cannot be overstated – they are extremely important. While visitation information is not available, anecdotally these lands are of high importance for residents and visitors of Williamstown.

THE TRUSTEES OF RESERVATIONS
Known for being the largest land trust in Massachusetts, The Trustees of Reservations owns/manages a relatively small number of open spaces in Williamstown. However, their properties are well-known and well-used including the Field Farm Reservation and the Mountain Meadow Preserve.

STATE AGENCIES
Several state agencies own land in Williamstown including the Department of Agricultural Resources, Department of Conservation and Recreation, and the Department of Fish and Game. While each of these agencies has specific goals for their open spaces, residents and visitors have tremendous access to them. These aggregated state-owned lands offer some of the largest forested areas in Williamstown and include the iconic Mount Greylock State Reservation that also covers parts of New Ashford, Adams, and North Adams. Additionally, the far-reaching Taconic Trail State Park is known regionally and acts as a significant wildlife corridor to other existing high elevation forested open spaces including the Misery Mountain Wildlife Management Area in Williamstown and the Taconic Ridge and Berlin State Forests in New York. These state-owned lands are critical in Williamstown for (1) offering
recreational resources for residents and visitors, (2) economic drivers bringing visitors into town, (3) providing large, forested blocks of wildlife habitat, and (4) helping maintain the rural, undeveloped landscape.

**OTHERS**

There are several other large landholders in town that, while the properties are not formally protected open space, are widely known to allow public access on a well-established trail network. Specifically, properties owned by the Clark Art Institute, Buxton School, and Williams College all offer public access to a network of trails. Not only are these trails accessed relatively close to the village center, but they also provide connections between these educational institutions and to other municipally owned open space. Additionally, Williams College, one of the largest landholders in town, owns property that is not permanently protected in the northwest corner of town abutting the Taconic Trail State Park with an extensive trail system connecting them and the Taconic Ridge State Forest in New York. The roles these three institutions play in the local and regional open space network should not be overlooked.

Each of these institutions play unique roles in Williamstown and beyond. The Clark Art Institute “is one of only a handful of institutions globally with a dual mission as an art museum and a distinguished center for research and higher education, dedicated to advancing and extending the public understanding of art.” Buxton School is a well-respected independent, progressive boarding and day school for grades 9-12 and, according to US News, Williams College is the number one liberal arts college in the country.

**MUNICIPAL OPEN SPACE & RECREATION FACILITIES**

Beyond the municipal open spaces mentioned earlier, the Town of Williamstown owns and manages other critical facilities with connections to the public school system. At the Williamstown Elementary School, located at 115 Church Street, there is a playground, basketball court, and several athletic fields. The Town also owns and manages the Broad Brook School Park, which contains a softball field and a small playground. However, in addition to scheduling conflicts, certain challenging cultural limitations exist for residents. While these facilities are public, they are not available during standard weekday hours when school is in session. Equally, some residents may not be comfortable using the facilities if they do not have children in the school system. So, although the facilities are open to the public, practically they are limited in their reach leaving many residents without access. A more detailed discussion of these recreational elements is found later in this section.

**RECREATIONAL RESOURCES**

**MUNICIPAL RECREATIONAL RESOURCES**

The Berkshire Regional Planning Commission developed an Outdoor Recreation Plan in 2020 for Berkshire County. Summarized well, the Plan states:

*Outdoor recreation opportunities are abundant in Berkshire County and...activities are available in all seasons and many are suitable for a range of ability levels. Though the Berkshires are primarily known for arts and cultural offerings, our outdoor recreation assets have long been enjoyed by*
residents and visitors alike, without having the reputation of being crowded or over-utilized as is the case with many destinations.

In 2020 Berkshire County contained more than 221,205 acres of protected lands with over 80% allowing public access. There is “an additional 15,335 acres [that] are utilized for recreation but are not in protected status.” Considering the Plan is two years old, these numbers have surely increased.

Other critical points made early in the Plan are references to leveraging the regional strengths that exist in the Berkshires to maintain and expand existing resources and “develop new assets which will further position [the] region as a true outdoor recreation destination.” To that point, Berkshire County understands the role outdoor recreation can play on strengthening the local economy and being a driver of quality economic development opportunities.

Williamstown is a critical piece nested within Berkshire County and a large player in the outdoor recreation identity of the Berkshires. With 11,388 acres of open space and 108 miles of trails, Williamstown has tremendous outdoor recreation assets that benefit local and county residents and visitors from farther away. Table 6.4 is an inventory of all recreational resources in Williamstown.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site Name</th>
<th>Owner</th>
<th>Acres</th>
<th>Property Type</th>
<th>Recreational Uses Allowed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Athletic Fields</td>
<td>Williams College</td>
<td></td>
<td>School</td>
<td>Walking, Baseball/Softball, Soccer, Lacrosse/Field hockey, Football, Track, Tennis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athletic Fields - Williams</td>
<td>Williams College</td>
<td></td>
<td>Property</td>
<td>Handicap access, Baseball/Softball, Soccer, Lacrosse/Field hockey, Football, Track, Tennis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berlin Road</td>
<td>Berkshire Natural Resources Council</td>
<td>518</td>
<td>Conservation Area</td>
<td>Hiking, Cross country skiing, Hunting, Snowshoeing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broad Brook Playground</td>
<td>Town of Williamstown</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Park</td>
<td>Basketball, Open sports field, Picnicking, Playground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burbank Trail</td>
<td>Town of Williamstown</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>Conservation Area</td>
<td>Hiking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buxton School</td>
<td>Buxton School, Inc</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>Hiking, Walking, Soccer, Lacrosse/Field hockey, Basketball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullock Ledge Nha</td>
<td>Department of Fish and Game</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Wildlife Sanctuary</td>
<td>Open access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caplan Trust</td>
<td>Berkshire Natural Resources Council</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Conservation Area</td>
<td>Open access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Owner</td>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clover Hill Farm Conservation Area</td>
<td>Town of Williamstown</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Conservation Area</td>
<td>Open access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Clark</td>
<td>Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>Museum/Institute</td>
<td>Handicap access, Hiking, Walking, Picnicing, Unique manmade features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Mountain Sportsmans Club</td>
<td>East Mountain Sportsmans Club Inc</td>
<td></td>
<td>Club</td>
<td>Hunting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field Farm</td>
<td>The Trustees of Reservations</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>Conservation Area</td>
<td>Hiking, Walking, Cross country skiing, Fishing, Birding, Snowshoeing, Picnicing, Unique manmade features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitch Memorial Woods</td>
<td>Williamstown Rural Lands Foundation</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>Conservation Area</td>
<td>Hiking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green River WMA</td>
<td>Department of Fish and Game</td>
<td>485</td>
<td>Wildlife Sanctuary</td>
<td>Hunting, Fishing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green River Park</td>
<td>Town of Williamstown</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Park</td>
<td>Walking, Swimming, Tennis, Picnicing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green River/ Mount Hope Park</td>
<td>Town of Williamstown</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Park</td>
<td>Swimming, Fishing, Picnicing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hemlock Brook Conservation Area</td>
<td>Williamstown Rural Lands Foundation</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Conservation Area</td>
<td>Hiking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoosic River Floodplain</td>
<td>Town of Williamstown</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>Conservation Area</td>
<td>Open access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hopkins Memorial Forest</td>
<td>Williams College</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Conservation Area</td>
<td>Hiking, Birding, Snowshoeing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunter Property</td>
<td>Town of Williamstown</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>Conservation Area</td>
<td>Open access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear Park</td>
<td>Town of Williamstown</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Park</td>
<td>Picnicing, Playground, Fishing, Tennis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret Lindley Park</td>
<td>Town of Williamstown</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Park</td>
<td>Developed beach, Picnicing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misery Mountain WMA</td>
<td>Department of Fish and Game</td>
<td>372</td>
<td>Wildlife Sanctuary</td>
<td>Hunting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mount Greylock High School</td>
<td>Mount Greylock Regional School District</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>Handicap access, Walking, Cross country skiing, Baseball/Softball, Soccer, Lacrosse/field hockey, Football</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mount Greylock Ski Club</td>
<td>Mount Greylock Ski Club</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>Club</td>
<td>Downhill and cross country skiing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site Name</td>
<td>Owner/Manager</td>
<td>Contact Information</td>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mount Greylock State Reservation</td>
<td>Department of Conservation and Recreation</td>
<td>3633</td>
<td>State Park</td>
<td>Hiking, Walking, Camping, Mountain and Road biking, Downhill and Cross country skiing, Hunting, Birding, Snowmobiling, Snowshoeing, Picnicing, Hang gliding/parasailing, Unique manmade features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountain Meadow Preserve</td>
<td>The Trustees of Reservations</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>Conservation Area</td>
<td>Hiking, Cross country skiing, Birding, Snowshoeing, Picnicing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountain Meadow Preserve</td>
<td>Town of Williamstown</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Conservation Area</td>
<td>Hiking, Cross country skiing, Birding, Snowshoeing, Picnicing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pine Cobble Preserve</td>
<td>Williamstown Rural Lands Foundation</td>
<td>388</td>
<td>Conservation Area</td>
<td>Hiking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pine Cobble Preserve</td>
<td>Town of Williamstown</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Conservation Area</td>
<td>Hiking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pine Cobble School</td>
<td>Pine Cobble School, Inc</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>Soccer, Lacrosse/Field hockey, Summer camp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rothschild</td>
<td>Williamstown Rural Lands Foundation</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>Conservation Area</td>
<td>Open access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sand Springs Inc.</td>
<td>Sand Springs Recreational Center</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Pool</td>
<td>Pool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheep Hill</td>
<td>Williamstown Rural Lands Foundation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Conservation Area</td>
<td>Hiking, Walking, Birding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Spruces Community Park</td>
<td>Town of Williamstown</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>Park</td>
<td>Walking, Cross country skiing, Snowshoeing, Fishing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stone Hill</td>
<td>Town of Williamstown</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>Conservation Area</td>
<td>Hiking, Walking, Mountain Biking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taconic Trail State Forest</td>
<td>Department of Conservation and Recreation</td>
<td>2250</td>
<td>State Park</td>
<td>Hiking, Hunting, Birding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taconic Golf Club</td>
<td>Williams College</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>Golf Course</td>
<td>Golf (18-hole, 9-hole)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williamstown Elementary School</td>
<td>Town of Williamstown</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>Soccer, Basketball, Playground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waubeeka Golf Links</td>
<td>Waubeeka Land, LLC</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>Golf Course</td>
<td>Golf (18-hole, 9-hole, driving range)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williamstown Reservoir</td>
<td>Town of Williamstown</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>Watershed</td>
<td>Restricted access</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While these recreational resources are extensive, there are limitations that have been mentioned in previous documents and voiced anecdotally by residents. Williamstown’s passive recreational resources are extensive offering diverse trails and experiences through flat, open, hilly, mountainous, and wooded terrain. Passive recreation refers to activities that do not require prepared facilities like athletic fields, but rather place minimal stress on the land allowing it to continue providing ecosystem benefits. While other active recreational resources are available in town, some limitations have already been mentioned in previous documents and voiced anecdotally by residents. For example, although swimming options exist in Williamstown at Margaret Lindley Park, which is town-owned, its more of a wading pool rather than a lap pool. Additionally, not all residents have the transportation to access that this park. Other swimming options in Williamstown including at Sand Springs, which is owned and managed by a non-profit, and is at times perceived to be too expensive or not welcoming to all residents. On the other hand, the pool’s has seen significant change in the demographics and racial diversity since it was purchased by a non-profit organization.

Equally challenging, the topic of basketball and tennis courts brings up different issues that have been expressed by the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee and Executive Director of the Williamstown Youth Center. While there is a basketball court at the elementary school, it has limited availability due to scheduling and school conflicts. Williams College has basketball and tennis courts, but they are private and not easily or comfortably accessible by town residents. Linear Park also has a public tennis court. It has been a frustration of residents for many years that there are few tennis or basketball courts in town.

ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION
Williamstown residents, regardless of age, ability, or other characteristics, deserve opportunities to participate fully in recreation opportunities and to access nature in a way that feels safe and welcoming. Better understanding the existing limitations related to public access including the distribution and quality of public access points to Williamstown’s various open space and recreation facilities; how accessible Williamstown’s recreation facilities and open spaces are by transportation for different populations and neighborhoods; how accessible these spaces are by level of comfort and safety; the informational barriers that exist; and the perceptions of how welcome community members feel on recreation land that is publicly/privately owned is crucial to improving equitable access of these spaces for all.

Although Williamstown adopted a Complete Streets Policy in 2016, safety challenges still exist for walkers, runners, cyclists, and those with mobility challenges throughout town, but especially the village center. With limited bike lanes and sidewalks, pedestrians and cyclists are often required to exist on roadways that are predominately designed for vehicles, which can create an unsafe environment for all roadway users. These types of safe bikeways were listed as an identified goal of the 2016 Williamstown Open Space & Recreation Plan. It’s important to remember that the need for sufficient transportation access is not unique to Williamstown. According to a survey as part of the 2017 Massachusetts Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, 8% of 780 respondents identified recreational facilities are “too far away”. Encouraging multi-modal transportation routes to the diversity of recreational assets in Williamstown would enhance access to these recreational resources.
The Hoosic and Green Rivers flowing through Williamstown offer recreational opportunities for swimming, boating, fishing and more. However, there are limited public access points. In fact, according to the Hoosic River Recreation Assessment there is only one identified boat launch in Williamstown at Lauren's Launch that “serves as a take-out point for the HooRWA [Hoosic River Watershed Association] rafts and other boaters and serves as a put in place for those wishing to continue downstream towards Pownal [Vermont].” Although the 2005 Hoosic River Recreational Assessment study completed by several Williams College students identified Lauren’s Launch as a location for expanding water access, it is unsure if the property is town-owned.

Many of these challenges are taken on different forms of accessibility – access by transportation, access by level of comfort, access to safe recreation options, and access that is publicly/privately owned. While these access issues have been long-term challenges facing Williamstown and been documented in plans including the 2002 Master Plan and the 2018 Recommendations for Enhancements to Williamstown's Parks and Recreation Offerings, the challenges persist; and this persistence brings up another substantial and potentially more difficult hurdle for Williamstown – capacity.

While Williamstown does not have a Parks & Recreation Department, in 2018 an ad hoc Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee (PARAC) was tasked with identifying “recommendations for enhancements to Williamstown's parks and recreation offerings and activities,” which was its sole purpose. The 7-member ad hoc committee disbanded after presenting its final recommendations, which were delivered in the Recommendations for Enhancements to Williamstown's Parks and Recreation Offerings. The PARAC list of actionable recommendations is broken down into 12 themes including multi-use field space options, cycling opportunities, dog park, and eco-friendly community gardens. However, two themes are of particular importance relative to the complex challenges mentioned above – those themes are (1) accessibility, inclusion, and safety, and (2) staffing, communication, and partnerships.

In the accessibility, inclusion, and safety section, although there are several valuable action items, the item that speaks most broadly to this discussion is “connect with communities of color, lower-
income, and senior communities to better understand and remove barriers to participation and share ways individuals can access town recreational information.” Mirroring the thoughts above, Williamstown needs to actively engage its full citizenry to accommodate the various needs to create a safe, inclusive, and accessible town for all its residents. More importantly, the town needs to act on the topics that have been discussed in this document, the recommendations outlined in the PARAC findings, and other reasonable items that come out of the communication with its citizens.

Again, this leads to the topic of staff and capacity. Staffing, communication, and partnerships was the highest ranked theme in the PARAC recommendations. Moreover, the number one recommendation in that theme is to “designate appropriate staff coordinator for parks and recreation, in order to curate, prioritize, and advance this work.” While there are many quality recommendations outlined in the PARAC findings, many of them are large, challenging, and complex items that require a level of dedication to pursue over the course of 1, 5, or 10 years. Additionally, municipal recreation options are not done in a vacuum and, instead, require many partners to accomplish. These relationships and projects demand a level of commitment that often only comes from staff.

Williamstown is at a turning point – maintain the current system of non-municipal reliance for many recreational resources that has worked for certain populations in town or, over time, invest in formalizing and strengthening the municipal parks and recreation offerings to provide a more comprehensive and inclusive suite. There is tremendous support in Williamstown for strengthening the recreational resources, making them more inclusive, and ensuring they are safe for all. If those strengths are harnessed effectively, they could make dramatic improvements for all residents. This moment can make real and put into practice the great work staff and volunteer committees are doing and prove to its residents that actions are stronger than words. Ultimately, policies and plans are only as effective as the people implementing them and dedicated town staff should be the primary actors.

EXISTING TRAIL NETWORK
One of Williamstown’s most reputable and noteworthy outdoor recreational assets is the more than 108 miles of trail for hiking, mountain biking, equestrian, and cross-country skiing. Much of the trail network exists in the dense forests and often at higher elevations in town, with 70% of the trails on permanently protected land. In that regard, the existing Williamstown trail network is well protected. However, the remaining 30% of trails are on private lands operating at the landowner’s permission. As discussed earlier in this section, several institutions allow public access to trails on their property and these institutions recognize the role they play in town. It is in everyone’s best interest – the public and the private entities – to continue providing public access. Map 6.2 shows the existing trail network relative to open space lands in Williamstown.

Of note relative to the existing trail network is the Joint Trails Coordinator, which is co-funded by the Town, Williamstown Rural Lands (WRL), and Williams College. This single position has added a great deal of capacity and efficiency to the management and maintenance of the trail network across major landowners in Williamstown. A significant portion of the existing trails are maintained by the Williams College Outing Club’s Summer Trail Crew with occasional new trail construction.
Map 6.2: Trails in Williamstown
focused on connections and improvements. This collaborative position has also improved many of the systems ensuring the network is well cared for into the future. Currently, the position is working on additional maintenance agreements for the former Williams College Ski Area with local backcountry ski groups. In lieu of a municipal Parks & Recreation Department, the Joint Trails Coordinator can be pointed to as a great success in collaborative trail management in Williamstown and a creative solution to challenging issues. With that in mind, however, certain municipal issues may be too large, complex, or inappropriate for a collaborative position to address.

Many of the trailheads in town require automobiles to access easily, which is a barrier for many residents in Williamstown. As a result, relative to the existing trail network, certain populations are being both overlooked and excluded. While public transportation and certain forms of bicycle infrastructure exist in town, there are significant limitations including no bike lane on Main and Spring Streets, narrow shoulders on Route 43, and high vehicle speeds on other popular roads including Route 7. Investments in public transportation and bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure could prove beneficial for certain taxpaying demographics that are unable to access the existing resources and demonstrate to its municipal neighbors how inclusive leadership looks and acts. Given the interest in bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure in Williamstown, a comprehensive bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure analysis should be considered.

HooRWA maintains trails on the Green and the Hoosic in town. HooRWA also leads a large group of stakeholders, including the Deerfield River Watershed Association, FRCOG and DCR, in the Mohican-Mohawk Trail initiative. The trail, intended ultimately to connect the Connecticut and Hudson rivers on ancient Indian paths, begins officially at Historic Deerfield and, with a few breaks, currently extends west, including BNRC's Hoosac Range Trail, to a trailhead across from Rock Manor Mobile Home Park on Route 2 in North Adams. We hope the bike path will continue the trail.

**MULTI-USE PATHS**

The Ashuwillticook Rail Trail spanning the communities of Adams, Cheshire, and Lanesborough was completed in three phases over 16 years and now represents over 12 miles of public, multi-use trail. It was with the Ashuwillticook Trail in mind that the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission began spearheading an initiative to develop the Berkshire Bike Path through Berkshire County that “is envisioned as a centralized shared use path ‘spine’ that travels north to south through Berkshire County...[ensuring] people of all ages and abilities can use it.” This type of shared-use path would be open to pedestrians, cyclists, and individuals requiring motorized wheelchairs (it is intended to be closed to motorized vehicles like cars and trucks).

Following years of feasibility and environmental studies, the Mohawk Bike/Ped Path, which began construction in 2021, will add another 2.3-mile multi-use path in Williamstown. With substantial federal funding, the Mohawk Trail will be a significant asset in Williamstown and beyond.

According to the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, others are working hard to make the regional shared path vision a reality including the Bennington County Regional Commission in Vermont, and several communities in Massachusetts including North Adams, Pittsfield, Lenox, Lee, and Great Barrington. Williamstown continues to be a leader in this regional venture and could act not only as a supporter of other efforts, but an effective teacher through regular meetings and
communications with partners involved. However, these types of regional efforts come at a cost that Williamstown needs to determine if they can accommodate – those costs are staff capacity. The bike/ped path will not be plowed during the winter months allowing for recreational use including cross-country skiing. While the sentiment has been the path will be closed to motorized vehicles, a management decision will need to be made regarding EBikes.

**RECREATIONAL PROGRAMS IN WILLIAMSTOWN**

There are clear distinctions in available recreational programs in Williamstown based on the age of participants. Extensive programming exists for children under the age ~14 (8th grade) with less availability for older children. For adults, there are lots of associations and clubs available offering an array of activities and programs. Additionally, there is strong programming available in town for the senior population in Williamstown.

**CHILDREN UNDER 15 YEARS OF AGE**

Considering Williamstown does not have a Parks & Recreation Department, there is a heavy reliance on the Williamstown Youth Center (WYC) for many aspects of recreational programming in town for children in grades K-8. The role WYC plays in town, in particular its relationship with the Williamstown Elementary School (WES), is extensive and intimate and cannot be overstated. In addition to the Executive Director, Business and Operations Manager, and ten part-time staff, the WYC is led by a 12-member board of directors assisting with strategic recreational planning that ultimately acts as the de facto recreation department in Williamstown. The WYC board of directors include individuals from many aspects of the community including representatives from the school district, Williams College, and a mixture of youth center parents. Additionally, the relationship between WYC and the Town of Williamstown has been appropriately formalized given the current association, which includes substantial funding provided by the Town to the amount of ~$77,000 annually. This amount, plus additional funding from the Williamstown Community Chest, a non-profit that “strengthens community by mobilizing resources for organizations that assist our neighbors in need”, account for ~20-25% of the Youth Center’s annual budget.

The relationship between the Youth Center and the Elementary School is extremely close in several characteristics. Physically, both entities operate on the same grounds with the WYC leasing land from the School Committee. As a result, there is significant overlap between children enrolled at both the school and the youth center – between 35% and 45% of students enrolled at the Williamstown Elementary School are also enrolled at the Youth Center in some form throughout the year. Additionally, between 25% and 33% of students at the elementary school use the Youth Center every day. Despite some public funding, the WYC is not a public entity, which can put an additional financial burden on parents. However, Michael Williams, Executive Director of the Williamstown Youth Center makes an important point: “cost is never a barrier to participation in WYC programs and financial aid is always available.” This type of financial assistance is critical for parents that could otherwise not afford programs for their children.

Additionally, the relationship between WYC and WES goes beyond simply offering recreational programs for children and, in many instances, acts as an extension of the elementary school. In many instances when the school has an unanticipated closing, the Youth Center often opens
its doors for children whose parents would otherwise need to take off work, which would likely cause additional financial hardships. During the initial wave of the Covid-19 pandemic when schools across the country were closed to in-person learning, the Youth Center opened for full day activities including space for students to take remote classes; again, this was great assistance to the parents and families that could not afford to miss work because of their children being at home. For a full list of programs offered by WYC, visit williamstownyouthcenter.org/. WYC also partners with other youth sports in town.

Other recreational programming in town includes Williamstown Cal Ripken Baseball (WCRB), which has softball and baseball options for children from preschool through 7th grade. WCRB is a non-profit educational organization led by 13-member board of directors. Facilities used by WCRB include Bud Anderson Field located at 300 Stetson Road on property owned by Williams College, Broad Brook Softball Field located on Harrison Avenue on property owned by the Town of Williamstown, and the two fields at the Williamstown Elementary School.

The Berkshire County Youth Soccer League (BCYSL) provides the structure for recreational soccer throughout Berkshire County. BCYSL is led by an 8-person executive board with an additional 6-person advisory council. The Williamstown Soccer Club (WSC) is the local participating organization offering under 10, under 12, and under 14-year-old divisions. Facilities used by WSC include fields at Williams College, Mt. Greylock Regional High School, Pine Cobble, and the Williamstown Elementary School. However, according to the WSC website, “practices and home games will be at Williamstown Elementary School.”

One area of concern relative to these recreational offerings is the limited field space in town. While there is a lot of demand for athletic field space, the resources available are finite. Through conversations with the Executive Director of the Williamstown Youth Center and members of the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee, one of the resulting challenges is scheduling. Although the Youth Center assists with field scheduling, with so many local and regional activities requiring limited available fields, scheduling is often a headache for participating organizations. The Youth Center assists with scheduling difficulties. Another outcome of the limited field space is the available fields are often over-taxed because of such high usage. This results in fields that could be insufficient for the activity and pose safety risks for children. Limited athletic field space has been an issue in town for some time and the Town should consider being proactive in addressing the need. The 2017 Massachusetts Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan identified the highest funding priorities that include ballfields (soccer, lacrosse, baseball/softball, etc), so this need is not unique to Williamstown. With that said, the need for additional athletic fields is not limited to children under 15, but rather all ages in town including children older than 15 and adults. An inventory of facilities/fields would help identify resources that are needed.

**CHILDREN 15 YEARS OF AGE AND OLDER**

While there are recreation options for older children in Williamstown, all programming and direction from the WYC are designed for children up to and including 8th grade. As a result, there few programs available for older children outside of the suite offered through the regional high school. In the survey associated with the 2017 Massachusetts Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, when respondents were asked if more outdoor recreation programs should be
developed for teenagers, “91% requested additional programming for this group.” This need is not unique to Williamstown, but significant strides can be taken locally.

**ADULTS**

Although there are no municipal recreational programs for adults in Williamstown, a long list of associations and clubs exist offering a tremendous diversity of available options. Many of these organizations operate throughout the Berkshires including, but not limited to: Berkshire Adult Baseball League, Berkshire Community Rowing, Berkshire Cycling Association, Eagle Mountain Sportsman Club, Berkshire Trail Riders, Berkshire United Rugby Club, Mount Greylock Ski Club, and the Western Massachusetts Climbing Coalition.

**SENIORS AND AGING POPULATIONS**

In 1966 the Town of Williamstown developed the Council on Aging that “has been providing quality service to the community for over 50 years...[whose] mission is to provide advocacy, outreach, and responsive programming to maintain and improve the well-being of Williamstown’s senior population...[offering] diverse, inclusive programs that promote dignity, encourage activity, and community involvement.” Programs available include, but are not limited to oil painting classes, tai chi and exercise classes, yoga and balance classes, and intergenerational activities.

Understanding a major barrier to senior participation is communication, the Council on Aging has developed an active Facebook page with regular postings on upcoming events and activities. An additional barrier to senior participation is transportation. The Berkshire Regional Transit Authority offers transportation options for those that are in need.

With that said, the 2016 Open Space & Recreation Plan, which will be updated in 2022, identified needs based on feedback from seniors. Additional benches along various walking paths and a larger town park with a green, paths, playgrounds, and swimming pool were mentioned. Several of these senior requests tie into other needs identified in the same 2016 Plan and this document – the need for centrally located municipal recreational infrastructure that is more inclusive for all, whether that be park benches for seniors, public basketball courts for adults or playgrounds for children.

**RECREATIONAL USES**

There are innovative ways to assess the popularity or use of existing recreational assets in Williamstown for various forms of recreation. Strava, self-described as a “social network for athletes”, tracks and analyzes the activity and movements of its users by connecting to the individual’s device (phone, watch, GPS, etc). Strava collects the locational information of its users, which is public, and provides usage maps (also known as heatmaps) wherever their users recreate. It should be noted that the data provided by Strava represents a slice of recreation users in town and should not be used to represent all recreational users in Williamstown.
Image 1 shows the Strava heatmap of walkers, runners, and hikers in Williamstown. It’s clear to see certain streets act as primary locations for these activities with the core village center being the most used. Streets including Route 2, Water Street and Cole Avenue are highly used in this capacity, likely because of the presence of sidewalks. Other areas worth noting for these activities are Bulkley Street, North Hoosac Road, Gale Road, and several surrounding Mt Greylock Regional High School including Oblong and Woodcock Roads. With regards to trails, several high usage areas are noticeable including those proximate to the center of town, specifically those on the private land owned by the Clark Institute, Buxton School, and Williams College. Included in that area is the critical municipally owned Stone Hill area.

When looking at usage on trails outside the village center, it appears there is higher usage on the trails found on land owned by Williams College that abuts and connects to Taconic Trail State Park rather than the state-owned land itself. With that said, there is still significant usage of trails in the Taconic Trail State Park and Mount Greylock State Reservation. There is also substantial usage of trails on land owned by land trusts, specifically the Pine Cobble and Field Farm Reservation areas owned by the Williamstown Rural Lands Foundation and the Trustees of Reservations, respectively.

Image 2 shows the Strava heatmap of cycling in Williamstown. From this, the road network is highly used for bicycling primarily Routes 2, 7, & 43. While it’s natural to see the existing road network being used for road cycling, this image clearly shows other popular areas for trail/mountain biking. Official and unofficial trails in the middle and southern Taconic Trail State Park and abutting private land are popular including the Mills Hollow Trail. Additionally, trails along Stone Hill Road appear to be popular trail biking areas, most of which is on private land owned by the Clark Institute, Buxton School, and Williams College.
Image 3 shows the Strava heatmap for winter usage in Williamstown, which could be cross-country skiing, downhill skiing, snowshoeing, or other winter activities on frozen lakes/ponds. Three distinct areas appear on this map, starting with the high usage on trails between the regional high school and conserved land with various ownerships. The Field Farm Reservation owned by the Trustees of Reservations, the southern section of the Taconic Trail State Park, and other privately owned land abutting the State Park offer tremendous winter trail access, which receives high usage. The second area of high winter activity is the Williams College Golf Course and, although surrounding trails receive lesser usage, the area represents winter opportunities near the center of town. The third area receiving high winter usage is the Mount Greylock Ski Club in the south of Williamstown. While the ski club is private and requires an annual membership, it “offers a very affordable way for families to enjoy uncrowded downhill skiing and telemark skiing on weekends and holidays.” Trails surrounding the ski club also receives some winter activity, although it is significantly less than the ski club itself.

What each of these images reinforce is Williamstown’s reliance on non-municipal open space and outdoor recreation. While the town-owned properties do play crucial roles in certain areas, most of the seasonal outdoor recreation exists on land owned by private organizations or state agencies. This balance seems to work for many of Williamstown’s residents, but it may not work for all of them. Ensuring all residents have access to safe, quality, and accessible outdoor recreational options is vital for the Town and should not be overlooked.

THE ROLE OF AGRICULTURE
Although agricultural production peaked in New England in the late-19th century, Williamstown has strong agrarian roots and continues to maintain an active agricultural community. In addition to supporting a robust local food network and bolstering the local economy, one benefit of agricultural lands relative to open space in Williamstown is often referred to as helping “maintain the rural character of the town”. This sentiment is well documented in earlier resources, including the previous 2002 Master Plan, but is also mentioned in conversations with residents and visitors. While defining “rural character” can be difficult, other communities have identified it as areas of open space with trees, fields, and views, low-density housing, and limited commercial/industrial areas. Based on these criteria, Williamstown very much identifies as having a rural character considering the extensive forested and agricultural open spaces throughout the majority of town.
Chapter 46 of the Williamstown Zoning Bylaws references the Right to Farm, which “encourages the pursuit of agriculture, promotes agricultural-based economic opportunities, and protects farmlands within the Town of Williamstown by allowing agricultural uses and related activities to function with minimal conflict with abutters and Town agencies.” As a result, agriculture is both strongly encouraged from a municipal standpoint, but also from a residential perspective for the benefits it provides to populations that are drawn to low-density, rural communities. The municipal support that is codified in the bylaws, including Chapter 46, are strong messages intended to maintain, protect, and encourage agricultural lands and producers. For a larger discussion of land use patterns relative to agriculture, see the Land Use Section of this document.

It is also important to understand the underlying difference between public open space and farmland. Active agricultural producers, and their land, are commercial operations and businesses, not explicitly public open space. This fundamental distinction is vital for recognizing some of the challenges facing agricultural operations on farmland in Williamstown because, although the land is not always publicly accessible, it is enjoyed and valued by the public. However, because of this public value, agricultural lands are often included in open space conversations. In Williamstown, agricultural lands play a role in almost every aspect of the town – open space, economy, diversity/equity/inclusion, land use, housing, natural resources.

There are currently 16 active farms in Williamstown with varying agricultural uses and use agreements. Of the 4,184 acres of agricultural land (according to the Williamstown GIS data), 48% is on land owned by the producer, while the remaining 52% is leased from a different landowner. The average lot size of farm-owned land is 34 acres compared to a 23-acre average lot size for leased land; however, the overall size of farms in Williamstown ranges from over 1,000 acres to less than 1 acre with the average being 262 acres.

Table 6.5 on the following page shows the list of active farms in Williamstown with several important attributes including size. The collective voice for these farms is the Williamstown Agricultural Commission, which is comprised of representatives from the agricultural community and other interested residents. The purpose of the Commission, which was established in 2006, is to advocate for farmers, farm businesses, and farm interests, while helping protect agricultural lands.

While agricultural lands exist throughout town, the majority are in lower elevations in the southern half of town with a higher general concentration in and around Sloan, Oblong and Woodcock Roads and the intersection of Routes 7 and 43. However, agricultural lands exist along or adjacent to many of the major roads in town including Routes 2, 7, and 43, and Stratton and Blair Roads.

Because of the proximity many farms in Williamstown have to these commonly trafficked routes, they receive a high degree of visibility from residents and visitors. Adding to the visibility of agricultural lands is the extensive trail network that Williamstown is known for. Many of the lower elevation trails in town access properties that support agriculture and while the areas in direct agricultural production may not be accessed, they are often visible from the trails.
## Table 6.5: Active Farms in Williamstown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Acres</th>
<th>Farmland Owned/Leased</th>
<th>Agricultural Use</th>
<th>Succession Plan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bigfoot Farm</td>
<td>70 Maple Street</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Leased</td>
<td>crops</td>
<td>Leased: No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caretaker Farm</td>
<td>1210 Hancock Road</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Leased</td>
<td>Meadow/pasture, crops, timber/wood</td>
<td>Leased: Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chenail Brothers Farms</td>
<td>481 Luce Road</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>Owned/Leased</td>
<td>Crops, special, cows</td>
<td>Owned: Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clover Hill Farm</td>
<td>249 Adams Road</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Owned</td>
<td>Hay and special</td>
<td>Owned: No Leased: Yes/Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cricket Creek Farm</td>
<td>1255 Oblong Road</td>
<td>464</td>
<td>Owned/Leased</td>
<td>Hay and cows</td>
<td>Owned: Yes/Unknown Leased: No/Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DeMayo Bonnie Lea Farm</td>
<td>511 North Street</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>Owned/Leased</td>
<td>Hay and horses</td>
<td>Owned: Yes/Unknown Leased: Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Mountain Farm</td>
<td>582 Henderson Road</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>Owned/Leased</td>
<td>Timber/woods and crops</td>
<td>Owned: No Leased: Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eline Neely</td>
<td></td>
<td>49</td>
<td>Owned/Leased</td>
<td>Special, tim-ber/wood</td>
<td>Owned: Unknown Leased: Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairfield Farm</td>
<td>954 Green River Road</td>
<td>948</td>
<td>Owned/Leased</td>
<td>Hay, cows, timber/wood</td>
<td>Owned: Yes Leased: Yes/Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green River Farm</td>
<td>2480 Green River Road</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>Owned</td>
<td>Timber/wood, meadow/pasture, special, crops</td>
<td>Owned: Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Haley Farm</td>
<td>1033 Hopper Road</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>Owned/Leased</td>
<td>cows</td>
<td>Owned: No Leased: Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hemlock Farm</td>
<td>1000 Hancock Road</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>Owned/Leased</td>
<td>cows</td>
<td>Owned: Unknown Leased: Yes/Unknown</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Moreover, many of the higher elevation trails in town including those on Mount Greylock, the Taconic Range and other popular outdoor recreation areas offer views of the valley and agricultural lowlands. Map 6.3 on the following page shows the agricultural and farmland in Williamstown and the existing trail network. Considering the public visibility and interaction with local producers, the agricultural landscape is well-known, enjoyed, and appreciated for providing views and a sense of bucolic New England. Of course, the public – residents and visitors – interact with agricultural producers and their lands in different ways including through the Williamstown Farmers Market and other direct-to-customer operations that add to the visibility of farming in town.

For these reasons, maintaining the existing farmlands and encouraging new agricultural pursuits is vital for ensuring these open spaces are retained and continue to add to the identity of Williamstown. Although Williamstown has limited prime agricultural soils (according to the Keep Berkshires Farming: North Berkshire Region Action Plan) relative to its neighboring towns, Williamstown has the most acreage of prime soils that are not in agricultural use that could be converted.

Several programs exist to promote the protection of farmland including:

- Conservation Restrictions (CR) – allow landowners to sell the development rights to their land in return for tax credits
- Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) – state-managed preservation agreement for active farmland if the land meets certain criteria in return for one-time cash payment
- Agricultural Lands Easement (ALE) - program managed by USDA/NRCS to protect crop and grasslands on working farms by limiting non-agricultural uses
- Chapter 61 and 61A of Massachusetts Tax Code – state-managed preferential tax program for active agricultural, forestry, or recreational land use
- Gift or purchase of land by 501(c)(3) organization – maintains land use at time of transfer in perpetuity in return for tax credit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Farm Name</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Acres</th>
<th>Land Use</th>
<th>Ownership Status</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peace Valley Farm</td>
<td>85 Treadwell Hollow</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>Owned/Leased</td>
<td>Crops, timber/wood</td>
<td>Owned: No Leased: Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ridgeview Farm</td>
<td>271 Sloan Road</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>Owned/Leased</td>
<td>Hay</td>
<td>Owned: Unknown Leased: Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweet brook Farm</td>
<td>207 Woodcock Road</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>Owned/Leased</td>
<td>Special, cows, hay</td>
<td>Owned: Unknown Leased: Yes/Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wendling Farm</td>
<td>753 Oblong Road</td>
<td>1,039</td>
<td>Owned/Leased</td>
<td>Timber/woods and crops</td>
<td>Owned: Unknown Leased/Yes/Unknown</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Map 6.3: Trail Network and Farmland in Williamstown
The premise of these agricultural and farmland conservation strategies is intended to provide financial benefit to the landowner in return for keeping the land from being developed. All these tools are used in Williamstown to conserve and preserve farmland and open spaces.

However, despite the financially valuable programs that exist to preserve farmland, these open spaces are being lost. Unfortunately, the loss of farmland is real and exists throughout the country – New England and Williamstown are not immune to the concerns. In fact, between the years 2012-2017, “Berkshire County lost 52 of its 527 farms and over 3,000 acres of farmland to [low-density residential land use] development and other pressures.”

While Williamstown, its residents, and visitors enjoy and benefit from the open space values agricultural lands provide, the challenges facing farmland and agricultural production are more complex than the four tools mentioned above can solve. Other major pressures increasing farmland loss are:

- Lack of farmer financial stability
- Residential development
- Lack of attainable farmland conservation prerequisites (i.e., absence of prime agricultural soils to qualify for certain farmland conservation programs)
- Aging population without succession plan
- Lack of accessible land
- Tightening environmental regulations
- Lack of affordable housing for farm workers

Many of the challenges listed above are covered in detail in the 2020 Williamstown Farmland Project developed by Williams College students and represent significant concerns to highly valuable open spaces in Williamstown. The term “valuable” brings up another substantial and complex issue relative to the role agricultural lands play in Williamstown’s open spaces.

Relative to Williamstown’s open space and recreational needs discussed earlier in this section, it’s important to recognize the underlying value of agricultural lands and to ensure they are maintained as such. For instance, although the need for athletic fields is significant, converting agricultural lands to fit that need may not be in the best interest of the community in the long run. Equally, while other municipal recreational needs exist in the form of basketball courts, tennis courts, or a community swimming pool, locations that are not either in agricultural production or display prime agricultural soils should be identified. These examples reinforce a basic principle for Williamstown to keep in mind – prioritize active agricultural lands and lands containing prime agricultural soils from being developed.

It’s important for the people and organizations in Williamstown to continue working with the current best management practices relative to agricultural and farmland preservation. The tools in place are effective and will continue to be. However, more needs to be done to resolve the challenging matter of agricultural land conservation.
SUSTAINABILITY AND OPEN SPACE PROTECTION

CONSERVATION AND RECREATION

The many conservation properties in Williamstown form a network of lands that provide recreational, social, and ecological benefits. These lands provide habitat, store and infiltrate stormwater, sequester carbon, and contribute to the health and wellness of residents and visitors. While other sections of this Existing Conditions analysis will address these topics in greater detail, it is important to recognize that Williamstown’s conservation and recreation lands are a critical component of a sustainable and resilient community. These land uses foster collaboration and partnership across parcel and municipal boundaries, and also build social connections between users while protecting critical natural resources. The social fabric of the community is one of its best assurances of being resilient to future events.

Williamstown has also started an initiative related to the management of town forests for carbon sequestration and approximately 1,000 acres of land have been identified. The Town is now waiting on a state model for carbon offsets and collaboration opportunities with other large landowners. This could be further informed by a canopy analysis town-wide and identification of forest management practices that increase carbon capture.
A municipal composting pilot project will soon be launched with curbside pickup, drop off at transfer station, and backyard composter options for residents.

A 2019 assessment of the Sustainable Berkshire’s Plan identified notable progress has been made across the region in establishing partnerships for land conservation, regional multi-use paths, and complete street initiatives. The assessment also noted that there has been a lack of progress made regionally on the adoption of the Community Preservation Act or increasing funding for State open space management. Williamstown did adopt the Community Preservation Act (CPA) in 2002. This local CPA account is funded by a 2 percent locally adopted surcharge on property taxes (with the first $100,000 in valuation exempted) plus state matching funds. CPA funds can be used to fund projects that achieve the aims of historic preservation, open space and recreation, or affordable housing.

**FOOD AND AGRICULTURE**

Williamstown’s agricultural lands, residential garden spaces, and resident behaviors related to food systems and habitat present a wide variety of opportunities. This is an area of discussion and action that has received a lot of attention in the community, and many of the opportunities and challenges are well documented. The community is fortunate to have a food cooperative, Wild Oats, which has been serving the region since 1982. However, this facility alone cannot address all of the food and agriculture related issues in the community.

**FOOD INSECURITY**

Food insecurity occurs when access to food is limited or uncertain. Like housing, access to affordable healthy food options is critical to the overall wellbeing of community members. According to the 2020 American Community Survey, 7.2% of households in Williamstown received food stamps/SNAP benefits in the last twelve months. 68% of these recipients were over 60 years old. In November 2021, the Select Board voted to be a partner in the Northern Berkshire Community Coalition’s (NBCC) application for Mass in Motion funding through the Department of Public Health. Mass in Motion is funding that comes to a community based organization or a municipality to look at environment and policy level changes that positively impact healthy eating and active living of residents. Additionally, the newest iteration of funding will have a significant focus on addressing inequities due to systematic racism and economic disparities.

Williamstown has a number of programs that provide food assistance. The First Church of Williamstown provides a “take and eat” program for seniors who can pick up meals once a month. Food pantries are located at St. Patrick and St. Raphael Parish and the Community Bible Church. The Council on Aging provides community meals to seniors. And, the Williamstown Farmer’s Market accepts WIC and senior farmers market coupons. The Berkshire Food Project, which is based in North Adams, was formed to alleviate hunger, food insecurity, and social isolation by serving healthy, no cost meals and connecting people to other resources. Additionally, farms in Williamstown have received funding through the state’s Food Insecurity Infrastructure grant program to invest in farm infrastructure to help mitigate food supply and distribution issues. There is great opportunity to focus farm and food system related efforts in a way that provides healthy food to those who need it most, or experience the most barriers to food access.
Currently, there is a pilot composting program underway to help the town divert organics from the waste stream. Continuing and expanding this program to include businesses would help retain soil nutrients within the community, and reduce emissions. Across the municipal green spaces there is interest in transitioning some of these properties to “no mow” alternatives which would reduce energy use and emissions while increasing ecosystem services. Such an initiative could be expanded further to include private land owners through a voluntary or incentive-based initiative. While there are still active local farms in Williamstown and Community Supported Agriculture operations there is no municipal or non-profit community garden available to residents. Recently, Williams College established a 30-bed garden and these garden beds are available for rent to college staff, students, and to the community (in . The 2020 Park and Recreation Report identified eco-friendly community gardens as a need within the community so there may still be demand for additional growing spaces.

Locally, many needs have been identified to further support the agriculture community including farmland preservation, and the development of renewable energy systems that could reduce farmer’s high electric bills. The 2020 Williamstown Farmland Project highlighted the resiliency of farms as a topic of immediate concern as seven out of the sixteen farms reported facing high levels of threat to their farmland. As part of this it is important to recognize that 52% of all farmed land in Williamstown is taking place on leased land, and the status of lands owned by non-farm entities was also identified as being of significant importance. The 2016 Open Space Plan also identified the support of agricultural land preservation as a major goal. With more than 5,500 acres of land designated as agricultural, including forest lands, most of these lands are not conserved.

The 2020 Farmland study completed for Williamstown by Williams College students also identified the following reasons to preserve farmland:

- Declining number of farms and shrinking farm sizes,
- Retiring generation of farmers,
- Aesthetic and historical values,
- Regional food networks, and
- Conversion to single-family residential housing.

To address these challenges clear actions need to be identified. Some initial actions for large agricultural operations identified in earlier efforts include:

- Farm succession planning to promote the future of farming,
- Promotion of innovative and value-added products, and
- Peer-to-peer assistance with grant acquisitions.

On smaller residential lots many opportunities also exist. Williamstown is a “right to farm” community which means that raised beds, food forests, and other residential scale food systems can be established even within front lawns. In 2017 the Town also passed a pollinator friendly resolution, and a Bee Friendly Group has been established to advocate for the creation of pollinator gardens. Partnering with existing gardening groups in the community may be the best way to support and grow their programming in order to educate and inspire actions on residential parcels.
According to the 2019 review of the regional sustainability plan, notable efforts being made related to food and agriculture include the Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership, right to farm bylaws being adopted by towns like Williamstown, and the creation of local Agriculture Commissions which Williamstown has also initiated. The Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership is focused on conserving forests and the essential ecosystem services they provide, and growing local forest product and natural resource-based recreation businesses. Even with these regional efforts there is still a documented lack of local agriculture infrastructure across the region including meat processing facilities, a county-wide food hub, or commercial kitchens. This infrastructure needs investment to better support agriculture and ensure access to local food.

REFERENCES

- Build-Out Analysis 1999
- Williamstown Build-Out Analysis 2016
- Strategies for Economic Growth in Williamstown Report
- Master Plan Action Plan 2004
- North Adams Adventure Trail Final
- Recommendations for Enhancements to Williamstown's Parks and Recreation Offerings
- Berkshire County Outdoor Recreation Plan 2020
- Williamstown Open Space & Recreation Plan 2016
- Massachusetts Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2017
- Massachusetts Environmental Justice Populations
- Williamstown Youth Center
- Williamstown Community Chest
- Williamstown Council on Aging
- Williamstown Council on Aging Facebook page
- National Recreation and Park Association
- Williamstown’s Complete Streets Policy
- Hoosic River Recreational Assessment 2005
- MA Outdoor Recreation Map
- Building the Berkshire Bike Path
- Mount Greylock Ski Club
- Town of Williamstown GIS Data
- Town of Williamstown Assessing Data
- The Williamstown Farmland Project
- Williamstown Farmland Project Presentation
- Williamstown Zoning Bylaw Chapter 46: Right to Farm
- Keep Berkshires Farming: North Berkshire Region Action Plan
- Agricultural Commission: General Information
- Massachusetts Association of Agricultural Commissions
- Community Preservation Act
Arts, culture, and history are represented throughout Williamstown in the historic sites, landscapes, and buildings; economic development and tourism efforts; world-class museums, exhibits, and installations; and in the stories about who historically and currently lives in this community and on its land.

CULTURAL AND HISTORIC RESOURCES
WILLIAMSTOWN 2022 EXISTING CONDITIONS SUMMARY

Arts and culture are significant drivers of the tourism economy in Williamstown. Ten percent of jobs in Williamstown are in Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodation and Food Service according to the 2020 American Community Survey. This is similar to the share in Berkshire County and more than the 8.6 percent of jobs statewide.

Tourism was increasing significantly pre-Covid and is likely to continue to increase barring future pandemic-related issues. There is opportunity to continue building historic and cultural preservation work with tourism efforts, as appropriate.

The Williamstown Theatre Festival is a major event on the national theater scene for emerging and established playwrights, directors, and actors, and a major driver of tourism to the town.

The Clark Institute and Williams College Museum of Art are part of a larger network of major art museums in the Berkshires. These museums are the anchors of the town’s cultural landscape and attract many visitors as well as catering to residents. Williams College has recently engaged an architect to begin preliminary design work for a new art museum on the site of the former Williams Inn.
Williamstown contains four National Register Historic Districts and two Individual Properties on the National Register, including the Mill Village and Five Corners Historic Districts with a variety of historic buildings and the Mount Greylock Summit Historic District with a combination of natural scenery and mid-century monumental architecture.

The recent establishment of the Stockbridge-Munsee Tribal Historic Preservation Office in Williamstown restores a local presence of original inhabitants of the land now called Williamstown, whom were displaced to Wisconsin due to colonization.

The Stockbridge-Munsee Tribal Historic Preservation Office would like to see better archaeological research and protections, potential inclusion of Native American sites on the National Register, and the opening of a public-facing museum in the Town. A partnership with the Town could help achieve these critical projects that protect important cultural indigenous sites and elevate the history of the Stockbridge-Munsee tribe of the Mohicans.

Williamstown was an early adopter of the Community Preservation Act (CPA), with $5.5 million in total CPA funds raised to date. CPA has funded many historic preservation initiatives and represents an ongoing stable funding source.
7. Cultural and Historic Resources

INTRODUCTION
Cultural and Historic Resources are an important facet of the comprehensive planning process, particularly in Williamstown which is a well-known cultural hub in the Berkshires. Cultural resources refer to a wide variety of organizations and places that provide access to art, performance, history, community gathering spaces, learning, and more. Historic resources refer to both specific historic buildings and districts as well as organizations that preserve historic objects or buildings and provide educational resources about history. The history and culture of a town are often elements that make it unique and desirable. A town with robust cultural programming and a devotion to understanding and promoting historic resources can experience deeper cultural and economic vibrancy that will foster community among residents and contribute to a better quality of life.

Williamstown contains a wealth of cultural and historic resources, most notably its art and theatre scenes. The Clark Institute and Williamstown Theatre Festival draw regional and national visitors and contribute to the Town’s significant tourist economy. Also, a number of smaller arts and culture events occur throughout the year. Williams College contributes to the town’s cultural landscape through its educational programs and art museum, and many of the college’s historic buildings contribute to the charm of the Main Street area. Additionally, the town has many historic buildings and areas, including two National Register properties and four National Register districts. The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the Nation’s historic places worthy of preservation and is authorized by the National Historic Preservation Act. The National Register is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect America’s historic and archaeological resources.

The Stockbridge-Munsee Community of the Mohicans, the original inhabitants of the area prior to the arrival of European colonizers, has recently established a tribal historic preservation office in the town. This re-establishes their presence in the area for the first time since their displacement to New York in 1785, and later to Wisconsin in the 1820s.

Finally, the farming heritage of Williamstown is an important historic resource and is preserved as part of the “working landscapes” which have been supported through previous planning processes in the Town.

ISSUES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND CHALLENGES
Impacts of tourism and cultural events, the balance between historic preservation and forecast population growth, coordination between the College and the Town, and a need for more inclusivity in the town’s historic narrative and future growth are all important issues to consider.

There is interest in moving away from a Euro-centric emphasis on arts and colonial history, and towards a more inclusive telling of historical events. Unlike the 2002 Master Plan, the current comprehensive planning initiative should seek to reconcile the town’s elevation of Euro-centric cultural resources with the historical realities of settler colonialism and erasure of existing native and other traditions, in order to move forward with an honest assessment of colonial history.
The integral relationship of the College and the Town also requires coordination across many facets of planning, including around the College’s historic buildings and art museum. The current Williams College Strategic Plan contains goals to re-envision the museum, and to coordinate arts and cultural facilities regionally to support a diverse, inclusive arts ecosystem in the Berkshires. These goals fall under the broader umbrella of making the arts a more central part of the Williams College curriculum that speaks to all members of the community. The College’s commitment to a larger arts ecosystem can help the town continue to attract high quality arts programming and encourage diverse arts programming through potential partnerships between the Town and College.

**THE HISTORY OF WILLIAMSTOWN**

The area which is now Williamstown was part of the ancestral lands of the Mohicans (Muh-he-con-ne-ok, or the “People of the Waters that Are Never Still”, a reference to the tidal waters of the Hudson River where they lived). They lived near rivers in circular wigwams in villages of several families. The Mohicans lived seasonally with times of the year defined by hunting, gathering berries and nuts, tapping maple trees, and working indoors and storytelling.

In the early 1600s, the Dutch established trading posts in the Hudson River valley, spurring conflict between the Mohicans and the Mohawks. During conflicts between Dutch, French, and English colonies, the Massachusetts Bay Colony encouraged settlement of the Williamstown area to prevent Dutch settlement from the east and raids arriving along the two Native American trails that converged in the area. After the French and Indian war in 1760, much of the land in the area was divided and cleared and farming became the main way of life. By this time, most of the Native Americans had been forced out or their populations decimated by disease, eventually being forced westward to New York and later Wisconsin.

The town itself was established in 1765 by Ephraim Williams, Jr., who established a free school which became Williams College in 1793. Williams’ father had been one of the main dispossessionists of Native land in the region. As the college grew, the culture of the town changed with more faculty and employees adding to the existing farming population. When the railroad arrived during the industrial revolution, a variety of mills and factories arrived, increasing the diversity of the town’s population further. In the 19th century, the Town became a resort destination with the Greylock Hotel and Sand Springs attracting urban residents in the summertime. Farming began to decline in the early 20th century, with only 12 farms remaining in 1970 of the 138 which operated in the town a century earlier. After World War II, the town grew and other employers arrived, but the College remains the Town’s largest employer and shapes its identity to the present, with its involvement in the Town’s rich cultural landscape and over 2,000 students.
STOCKBRIDGE-MUNSEE MOHICANS
The Mohican Nation, the original inhabitants of a large region across Massachusetts and New York including Williamstown, was displaced from the Town primarily through land acquisition, theft, and law manipulations by Ephraim Williams, Sr. (father of Williams College founder Ephraim Williams, Jr.) and others. The tribe was originally displaced to the Hudson River valley and subsequently to reservations in Wisconsin, where they currently reside. A Tribal Historic Preservation Extension Office was recently opened in Williamstown to restore a tribal presence on native lands. They are working to recover historic and culturally significant items from other museums and collections as well as repatriation of remains for burial. The Extension Office in Williamstown serves as the consulting entity for federal actions on ancestral Mohican lands.

Currently, most of the historic and cultural resources in Williamstown are focused on colonial history since the founding of the town. There are small interpretive signs describing tribal members' involvement in the historic fort, but more signage and information about the Mohicans could be provided around the Town, including some signage in the Mohican language, following the example of existing historical signage about colonial sites. The Tribal Historic Preservation Office reported that there has been very little archaeological work done in Williamstown and most Historical Commission review is focused on buildings rather than ground-disturbing impacts that could affect Native American sites.

One important site in the Town is the Sand Springs, which was an important healing site of the Mohicans, and is now owned by the Cold Springs Bottling Company. The Tribe would like this to be a National Register listed site following the National Historic Preservation Act Section 101(d)(6)(A) and 101 (d)(6)(B), which clarifies that historic, religious, and cultural properties to Indian tribes are eligible for listing in the National Register and that tribes must be consulted before any federal undertaking on historic properties that have historic, religious, or cultural significance to tribes.

The National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 requires that the federal government “consider the effects of their actions on historic properties” when taking federal actions. The Tribal Historic Preservation Office suggested that this type of review could be expanded by the Town to require archaeological review early in the land use process to facilitate more archaeological preservation and research. The Tribe also has an interest in establishing a museum in Williamstown, or partnering with the College to create an exhibit at their new art museum location to create a more public-facing presence in the Town.

PERFORMING ARTS
The Williamstown Theatre Festival is an important summer festival for emerging and established playwrights and actors, and major driver of tourism to the town, drawing regional and national audiences. The Northern Berkshire Cultural Council funded $11,000 in grants to Williamstown institutions and events in FY 21 including: Images Cinema, St. John's Episcopal Church Concert Series, Riverworks 2021 - The Mohicans and the Hoosic, and the Williamstown Theatre Festival.

EVENTS
Williamstown numerous community events throughout the year add to its small-town charm. The town sponsors seasonal parades (Reindog parade, Independence Day, Memorial Day), fireworks on
Independence Day, and farmer’s markets on Saturday morning. Images Cinema is a small historic venue featuring classic, independent, and foreign films.

**MUSEUMS**

The **Clark Institute** is a leading collection of European art and a research and educational institution. It has become a destination for art lovers from all over the world, as part of a trio of museums in the Berkshires including the Williams College Art Museum and the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Arts (MassMoCA) in North Adams.

The **Williams College Museum of Art** is a free museum with 15,000 works. It has an emphasis on contemporary art, photography, and Indian painting. A new building is being planned for, which will be located on the former site of the Williams Inn.

The **Williamstown Historical Museum** was established in 1941 and contains a collection of photographs, documents, and artifacts from the 1700s to the present in a permanent display and rotating exhibits about the Town’s history. The Museum also offers public programs on history, assistance to researchers and other historical societies, and programs for school classes.

**HISTORIC RESOURCES**

Williamstown contains four National Register Historic Districts and two Individual Properties. National Register listed properties can present opportunities for restoration and reuse not found in other buildings, and their listed status can provide additional opportunities for grant and project funding for future projects.

The **Mill Village Historic District** contains 43 buildings including mill structures, workers’ houses, a school, stores, and a machinist’s house from 1865-67. It was the most successful textile mill in Williamstown and reflects the social and commercial interests of its owners and immigrant worker population.

The **Mount Greylock Summit Historic District** protects the panoramic summit of Mount Greylock, the highest mountain in Massachusetts. In addition to the natural features of the wilderness area, the District also contains 15 buildings constructed in the 1920s and 30s by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the Craftsman style of federal park architecture of the time, as well as the Mount Greylock War Memorial, a granite tower which crowns the summit of the mountain and was constructed in 1930-33.
The **Five Corners Historic District** consists of 30 buildings at a small crossroads in South Williamstown, most of which are used as residential buildings today. They were built in the late 18th and early to mid-19th century in Federal and National Folk architectural styles and are located in a more rural and agricultural area which demonstrates the development of this area as a separate village.

The **Williamstown Rail Yard and Station Historic District** is located on the north bank of the Hoosic River and contains a railroad passenger station and a freight station from the railroad era. These are significant as the only rail-related structures in the Town and testify to the role of Williamstown as a major railroad activity center in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The National Register Individual Properties in Williamstown are the **Boston Finishing Works**, a cluster of eight multistory brick structures representative of Classical Revival-style industrial architecture, and the **East Lawn Cemetery**, containing numerous historic graves and the **Sherman Burbank Memorial Chapel**.

Other properties of note on National Register include the Colonel Benjamin Simond House and the U.S. Post Office Main Branch. The Colonel Benjamin Simond House is an antique house that dates to 1770 and the U.S. Post Office is an example of classical revival architecture from 1932.

The MACRIS database contains 424 listings for Williamstown, most of which are residential houses. One private residential home of note is the Preston Robinson House, designed by famed architect Marcel Breuer. The Town does not have any Local Historic Districts, though Main Street in the center of town is an important historic area as the heart of the cultural district and Williams College. The Town has a Demolition Delay Ordinance in its zoning code which has a period of 12 months from the date of public hearing to determine alternatives to demolishing historic buildings. Aside from the National Register Districts and Properties and this Ordinance, there are not other...
There is little archaeological research or evidence in the town. The MACRIS database lists several cemeteries, but no Native American burial grounds. It is reasonable to assume that those do exist however, given the history of the town. The Stockbridge-Munsee Tribe has recently been engaging in archaeology projects at the Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area in Stockbridge with funding from the National Park Service, seeking objects related to an important historic feast in 1783. Similar projects could be undertaken in Williamstown as well, particularly in coordination with new development or on sites considered for National Register review, as discussed above.

Another important historic location in Williamstown is Field Park, which was built in the 19th century by the Village Improvement Society and includes the 1753 House, a 1950s replica of the first type of “regulation house” required by the colonial government which is pictured on the Town flag. It was recently the subject of an anonymous art exhibition surrounding the house with the clan animals of the Stockbridge-Munsee to draw attention to the history of stolen land in Williamstown. However, recent signage was added to the house in the Mohican language in recognition of the Williamstown land that was taken from the Mohicans for European colonist settlement.

**COMMUNITY PRESERVATION ACT**

Williamstown was an early adopter of the Community Preservation Act (CPA) in 2003 at a 2 percent surcharge, with an exemption for first $100,000 residential value. Total local surcharge to date has been $3.8 million, and including the state matching funds, the total funding has been $5.5 million. Historic resources funded include:

- Little Red Schoolhouse – Restoration of 134-year old schoolhouse
• Southlawn Cemetery – Repair of historic gravestones
• Williamstown Rural Lands Foundation’s Sheep Hill Farm – Restoration of two barns and a silo
• Cable Mills – Preservation of Historic Buildings
• 1753 House – Preservation of the 1753 House at Field Park
• Benjamin Simonds House – Repair chimney in historic house
• Williamstown Historical Museum – Preservation of selected historical works, objects, documents, etc.
• Gale Hose Company – Preservation of Gale Hose Fire Co. Horse Car
• Stone Hill Bench – Restoration of Stone Bench on Stone Hill Road Trail
• Williamstown Theater Festival – Preservation of Festival Archives 1955-2009
• Williamstown First Congregational Church – Repair of stucco and foundation
• Mount Hope Farms Stone Walls – Restoration of stone wall at entry of park
• Town Hall Architectural Restoration – Restoration of rendering of Memorial Community Building
• Dolan-Jenks Barn – Preservation of barn and relocation for use as part of Historical Museum

WORKING LANDSCAPES
Williamstown still has active agricultural lands, despite the accelerating loss of farmland across the region. Large lot, low density rural developments are a leading cause of farmland loss in Massachusetts. A study by Williams College students in 2020, “The Williamstown Farmland Project,” found sixteen active farms remaining in Williamstown with five of them at imminent risk of loss by 2025 and only three farms with concrete plans for long-term operations. The Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) program allows the Commonwealth to buy development rights on the land, re-valuing it at the agricultural value. This allows farmers to farm the land, retire without selling for development, and pass the land on to the next generation of farmers. There is a 10% local match (often provided using CPA funds). There is little property tax impact since most farms are already in the Chapter 61 current use program.

PUBLIC SPACE
Social connections can be fostered by good planning around public spaces. These might be community organizations, spaces for meeting and gathering, or programming. Existing community organizations in Williamstown include the Council on Aging which provides classes, health screenings, and more and the Milne Library, which also offers a variety of community events. The Chamber of Commerce also organizes an annual Holiday Walk in December and 4th of July celebration as well. Other spaces such as community gardens, playgrounds, coffee shops, and gyms can also provide opportunities for community gathering. The 2002 Master Plan called for
celebrating more community events and creating additional public gathering spaces. This was also brought up during recent discussions around Cultural Resources and Housing, and when discussing the community benefits of a central square or gathering area which some feel is missing in the community.

There is a variety of public art in Williamstown. MACRIS lists a number of public sculptures including the Solar Quadrant Sculpture on Cold Spring Road, Rainspout Sculptures, Field Is the World Sculpture, and Civil War Soldiers’ Monument all on Main Street. In addition, there are sculptures across the Williams College campus and wall murals around the town. Field Farm in South Williamstown offers four miles of trails and a variety of sculptures throughout, including 19 from the Williams College Museum collection. The College published a Public Art map of the area in 2020, and the Clark Institute offered outdoor sculpture exhibitions during the COVID-19 pandemic. A new indigenous art installation by Rose B. Simpson will be at Field Farm this summer as well. These public art installations and sculptures represent a positive extension of the town's museums outside of their buildings to interact with town residents and visitors in public spaces. Further placemaking opportunities could enhance collaboration between Williamstown’ arts institutions and residents, and create more gathering spaces, educational or storytelling opportunities, and other events in the town to build community through public space.

Many of the Town’s world-renowned visual and performing arts, academic, and cultural attractions are highlighted throughout the Williamstown Cultural District, which spreads out from the center of town. This cultural district was designated in 2014 and includes attractions such as the Clark Art Institute and Williams College (home of the Williams College Museum of Art and the Williamstown Theatre Festival).

**SUSTAINABILITY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION**

Bringing a sustainability and resilience perspective to historic preservation and adaptive reuse efforts in Williamstown provides many new opportunities and challenges. Adaptive reuse refers to the repurposing of historic structures to new, contemporary uses. This type of redevelopment aims to preserve the historic integrity of the structure while also prioritizing high-performance sustainability upgrades and serving a function needed in the community. With a significant number of structures that are historic to varying degrees and contribute to the overall character of the community these efforts need to be carefully considered as property owners show interest. Fortunately, there are some excellent case study examples in Williamstown that may inspire action. The Cable Mills project is another interesting project example of balancing historic preservation and sustainability efforts, producing affordable housing and incorporating sustainable retrofits while also preserving the historic character and integrity of the mill buildings.

Other communities have addressed this topic with outreach and education materials that inform property owners of the possibilities, and direct them to resources that can inform their design and implementation efforts. Some examples include:

**Concord, MA** – developed a set of guidelines for historic homeowners interested in retrofitting their homes to become more sustainable.
**Nantucket, MA** - provided assistance to Nantucket’s building owners and construction professionals who wish to incorporate the concepts and practices of sustainability into their structures, while maintaining the historic integrity of the individual buildings, and through them, the overall character of the island.

**Newtown, MA** – where guidelines were prepared to inform property owners on how sustainability relates to the repair, alteration, or rehabilitation of an existing building.

The 2019 assessment of the regional sustainability framework found that a Western Massachusetts Historic Commission Collaborative has been formed to serve as a resource, and that Williamstown and at least five other communities have adopted the Community Preservation Act. Given the embodied energy and carbon already accounted for in the building materials of these historic structures, it is imperative that the community supports actions that building owners can take to make their structures and landscapes more sustainable and resilient well into the future. Not all will be suitable for renewable energy systems, but many of these structures across the community would benefit from energy conservation measures and other improvements.

Historic properties in Williamstown could also adopt edible landscaping as the 1966 Environmental Center successfully did. A perennial and edible landscape is one way of integrating historic agricultural practices with present needs for food, medicine, and habitat. The addition of crops such as rhubarb, asparagus, strawberries, horseradish, walking onions, and Jerusalem artichokes can be seen on the grounds of the Environmental Center just beyond the outdoor classroom/patio and teaching kitchen, and many other planting possibilities and resources exist.

**UNDERSTANDING THE PAST**

To establish a vision for greater equity and inclusion in the future, recognizing Williamstown’s history as it pertains to colonization, slavery, discrimination, and racism, and the discriminatory history of land use planning as a whole, is a crucial first step. This will foster an understanding of how this history has impacted communities of color, as well as other marginalized communities, and shaped the community we experience today.

**COLONIZATION AND DISPLACING INDIGENOUS PEOPLES**

Williamstown is located on the ancestral homelands of the Stockbridge-Munsee Mohicans, who are the indigenous peoples of the region. Historically, Mohican Nation territory extended into New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Vermont, Connecticut, and Massachusetts. The colonial settlement that is now called Williamstown resulted in the forced evacuation of the Stockbridge Munsee peoples from their homelands in the 1780s. They now operate as a sovereign tribal nation in Wisconsin today. In 2020, the Stockbridge-Munsee Community’s Historic Preservation Extension Office opened in Williamstown, in partnership with Williams College, to protect the Mohican’s past, present, and future through the safeguarding of cultural heritage sites, conducting archaeological research, and repatriating ancestors and culturally significant items.
RECOGNIZING ITS HISTORY
Williamstown, like many communities, has a history of slavery and white supremacy. The Northern Berkshire cotton mills operated and prospered from slavery in the south. Historically, Williams College has been tied to both the abolition and colonization movements. Exclusive and discriminatory deed restrictions prohibited people of color to live in neighborhoods like Colonial Village. The building of the White Oaks Chapel (designed to bring more residents into Christianity) in the more racially diverse, lower-income White Oaks neighborhood became a place of interest for the Ku Klux Klan in the Berkshires in the early 1900s, which drove gentrification of this neighborhood. There is a history of often well-meaning community members who are predominantly white and relatively privileged to desire “beautification” of areas in Town, and in some cases this can also be linked to gentrification, even if it was not the intention. Other historical examples of prejudice, injustice, and exclusion in the built environment can be found in Katie Orringer and Morgan Dauk’s report “Racial and Socioeconomic Exclusion in the Built Environment in Williamstown”. Some of the findings the report included were that the availability and quality of infrastructure influenced inclusion, that segregation occurred according to socioeconomic status, and that intentions were influenced by biased decision making.

REFERENCES
• Williamstown 2002 Master Plan
• Town of Williamstown 2020 Annual Report
• Williamstown Zoning Code
• Williamstown Open Space and Recreation Plan (2016 Revision)
• Williamstown Agricultural Commission – A Profile of Farming and Farmland in Williamstown (April 2021)
• Community Preservation Coalition Website
• Mass Cultural Council Website (Williamstown Cultural District)
• Williams College Strategic Plan
• Stockbridge-Munsee Community. “Historic Preservation.”
• Orringer, Katie and Morgan Dauk. “Racial and Socioeconomic Exclusion in the Built Environment in Williamstown.” Williams College Environmental Planning Workshop Project
• Marx, Ella. “‘This is our homeland’: Stockbridge-Munsee Historic Preservation Office establishes itself in Williamstown” The Williams Record, Feb. 5, 2021.
• Williamstown Historical Museum. “How Did We Become Williamstown?”
• Davids, Dorothy. “A Brief History of the Mohican Nation, Stockbridge-Munsee Band.”
• National Park Service. “Innovative Archaeology Project Focuses on Mohican Tribal Heritage.”
LAND USE

WILLIAMSTOWN 2022 EXISTING CONDITIONS SUMMARY

Residential uses account for more than ¼ of land in town (27%). Density of residential uses vary from the higher density neighborhoods near the village center to the lower-density residential development in the more rural areas of town.

The Rural Residence 1 Zone accounts for nearly 50% of Williamstown and only 10% of that zone is currently accommodating residential uses. This upland district has many environmental constraints that does not support residential development.

The General Residence Zone only accounts for 11% of the town’s area and nearly two-thirds of that zone is currently accommodating residential uses.

Although the business and industrial zones represent a small percentage of the town’s area, they provide important economic development for the Town and region. Commercial areas are located in parts of the village center including along Route 2 east of village center, Route 43 in the immediate village center area, along Route 7 near the Vermont border, and smaller areas near the Cole Avenue and North Hoosic Road intersection. Industrial areas include west of Route 7 near the Vermont border, between the Hoosic River and North Hoosic Road, and a smaller area near the intersection of Route 2 and 43.

40% of Williamstown’s land area is currently occupied by tax-exempt uses. Tax-exempt land includes land owned by the
Chapter land accounts for nearly 1/3rd (29%) of Williamstown’s existing land use. Chapter land is designated through the agricultural and horticultural land classification program under Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 61. It is designed to encourage the preservation of the Commonwealth’s valuable farmland and promote active agricultural and horticultural land use. Chapter lands include forested lands, agricultural lands, and recreational lands.

There are seven overlay districts in Williamstown. These include the Floodplain District, Upland Conservation District, Mobile Home Park District, Water Resource 1 and 2 and Confined Aquifer District, Wellhead Protection District, Waubeeka Overlay District, and the Cable Mills Redevelopment District.
8. Land Use

INTRODUCTION
The extensive forest and agricultural lands in Williamstown and the region are intermingled with rural residential development and small villages – these are the defining characteristics of the Berkshires.

There were six broad land use goals identified in the 2014 Sustainable Berkshire Long Range Plan for Berkshire County. These goals included, but are not limited to, increasing communication and planning, encouraging development that complements natural lands, reducing fragmentation of undeveloped land, re-developing existing developed areas to fit within the region’s character. While it does not single out Williamstown, the 2019 Sustainable Berkshire Status Report mentions there has been notable progress across the region while recognizing continued room for improvement.

Williamstown has done a good job recognizing the role the town plays in the Berkshires and working diligently to fit within the broader landscape in many capacities. The town is an effective partner in open space and recreation issues, a vital player in the region’s agricultural community, and is represented by an active and engaged citizenry. As a result, the town has defined their zoning districts clearly and has made significant efforts to ensure the land uses are in line with the intended purposes of each zone. Overall, the long-term planning in Williamstown has maintained the rural, small-town feel while balancing the need for growth and economic viability with environmental protections.

ISSUES, CHALLENGES, AND OPPORTUNITIES
When existing land use is explored without the context of zoning, a few major patterns appear. Commercial and industrial uses are extremely limited throughout town; however, the majority of those that do exist seem appropriately sited relative to transportation and available municipal services including water and sewer. While Williamstown may want to maintain a rural appearance, limiting commercial uses too much can cause more challenging problems in the future. Despite the appearance of limited commercial uses, it

LAND USE POLICY AND EQUITY
Nationally, land use planning has a history of creating and perpetuating discriminatory practices against communities of color, LGBTQ+ communities, women, and persons with disabilities. There are many cases where these marginalized groups have been systematically excluded from planning processes and are disproportionately and negatively impacted by land use policies and regulations. Additionally, health, income, mobility, and other inequities can be institutionalized in policies and practices that limit opportunity and assign burden to groups based on race, age, gender, sexual orientation, immigration status, religion, or disability. Inequity is evident in communities when residents are displaced or when communities are excluded from participating in the planning process due to language or other barriers. Further evaluation of Williamstown’s land use policies from an equity perspective could provide further insight to policy amendments or recommendations that increase equity related to transportation, housing, and other land use types.
is important to remember that many of the farms in Williamstown are also businesses and operate as commercial enterprises. With that in mind, there is some overlap between chapter land, which includes active agricultural and farmland, and commercial uses – this overlap in uses may not be clearly accounted for in the existing land use map.

There is also significant connection between chapter land and residential uses throughout town, which may be one reason Williamstown is well known for its' rural and agrarian landscape. Residential development is one of the primary pressures causing loss of farmland throughout Berkshire County and New England and residents do want to maintain Williamstown's agricultural landscape. There has been much discussion at the town-level around how best to maintain this landscape while also meeting other land use related priorities.

A low-density residential pattern is easy to see throughout the majority of town in the existing land use. While that creates a certain “rural character”, simultaneously it places strain in other areas including farmland preservation and access to affordable and equitable housing. Continuing the thread of single-family large lot residential development pressure on agricultural lands, if Williamstown wants to maintain and encourage the agrarian landscape that may mean increasing density in the village center or at key locations along transportation corridors. Additionally, continuing the development pattern of rural sprawl may put pressure on the Town to extend municipal services.

Significant tax-exempt uses exist throughout town including the village center. This is the result of substantial state, municipal, and private non-profit landholdings in town including educational institutions like Williams College. While there are neighborhoods within walkable distance to many shops and services in the center of town, the location of Williams College in the center limits the opportunities for higher density residential development.

**EXISTING LAND USE**

The three major land uses that currently exist in Williamstown include tax exempt properties, chapter land, and residential uses. Forty percent of the town’s land area is in a tax-exempt use, and nearly 1/3rd (29%) is in chapter land, and an additional 27% accommodate residential uses. Less than 3% of the town’s area is in a commercial or industrial use, and unknown areas represent an equally small percentage at 2%. Table 8.1 summarizes Williamstown’s existing land use, and this pattern is illustrated in the corresponding Existing Land Use map on the following page (Map 8.1). The usage classes used in this section and identified in Table 8.1 were created to simplify the approximately 220 available unique land use codes. While there may have been discrepancies, gaps, or duplications in the aggregation process, they are minor and likely account for a small percentage of inconsistencies. For the full list of unique land use codes and their aggregated land use class, see the full land use table at the end of the section.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Usage Classes</th>
<th>Acres</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>573</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>553</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>8,019</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Land</td>
<td>8,792</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tax Exempt</td>
<td>11,965</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>29,988</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Map 8.1 on the following page clearly illustrates the dominance of tax-exempt land uses. Along with chapter land and residential uses, there are limited commercial or industrial uses in Williamstown currently. It should be noted that while most land cited as “unknown” appears to be transportation-related, that has not been confirmed in this analysis. For this analysis, land uses have been intersected with the town parcel data wherein certain parcels may have been split between different land uses. However, when exploring the resulting intersected data, the number of split parcels appears to be relatively low. While tax-exempt properties are found throughout town, many of the largest lots are on the western, southern, and southeastern boundaries; however, there are many smaller tax-exempt properties in the center of town.

Chapter land, which makes up a significant amount of land in Williamstown, is mostly found in the southern half of town, although large parcels do exist in the north and northeastern areas. Residential land uses are found throughout town and are broadly found in lower elevations. The distribution and density of residential lots is fairly consistent with what is expected in rural communities wherein density increases in the village center area with lots averaging just over 1-acre. Residential lots beyond the village center, which are significantly less dense, average nearly 7.5-acres. Commercial and industrial uses are almost exclusively found along Routes 2 and 7 and the north side of the Hoosic River with an average lot size of 3.5 acres.

Tax-exempt properties account for 40% of Williamstown’s area and an average size of each lot being nearly 31 acres and many of the largest parcels being in the upper elevations in town and owned by several state agencies including the Department of Natural Resources, Department of Environmental Management, Department of Conservation & Recreation, and the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife. Lands owned by the State of Massachusetts accounts for over 50%, (6,395 acres) of tax-exempt land. It should be noted that land owned by the Town of Williamstown is also tax-exempt and accounts for nearly 15% (1,643 acres) of all tax-exempt lands. Other large tax-exempt properties are owned by several institutions in town including Williams College, the Clark Institute, and Buxton School. Williams College accounts for nearly 20% (2,182 acres) of tax-exempt lands much of which is located in the center of town. Considering the amount of tax-exempt land in Williamstown, most of it allows public access despite the public or private ownership.

Williamstown is known for its agrarian landscape, which has implications in many facets of the town and its existing land use. Residents of Williamstown appreciate and value both the agricultural landscape and the farmers/producers managing the land. However, significant pressure from residential development exists and is one of the leading causes for farmland loss.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zoning District</th>
<th>Acres</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Limited Business</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planned Business</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Residence 3</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Gateway</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited Industrial</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Residence</td>
<td>3,377</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Residence 2</td>
<td>11,359</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Residence 1</td>
<td>14,388</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>29,988</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This conflict is evident throughout town and is noticeable given the intertwined residential and chapter land uses.

**EXISTING ZONING**

The Town of Williamstown has nine primary zoning districts and 7 overlay districts. Table 2 provides details on the area covered by each zoning district. Conducting a zoning and land use analysis provided helpful insight into understanding how each zoning district is actively being used. The following subsections discuss specific zoning districts in detail and provide their subsequent land use breakdown with remaining zoning district breakdowns in tabular form. The figures in Table 8.2 are illustrated in the corresponding Zoning Districts map on the following page (Map 8.2).

**RURAL RESIDENCE 1**

Nearly 50% of Williamstown is zoned Rural Residence 1 and is "intended to provide for residential standards compatible with the rural and upland character of sensitive environmental areas at the higher elevations of the Town." (RSA 70-2.2) The Rural Residence 1 Zone includes sections of town along the entire western boundary and large parts of the southern, and southeastern areas, as well as a smaller section along the northeastern corner. Most of these areas of town are the higher elevations in town, which is consistent with the district purpose. Considering the designated purpose for residences to be compatible with the sensitive higher elevation environments in town, it’s reasonable that the largest percentage of land uses found in this zone are tax-exempt at nearly 2/3rds (59%), many of which are public, state-owned lands. Equally, fitting the zone’s purpose of compatibility with the rural character, a large percentage is chapter land. To that end, and worth noting, only 10% of the zone is actively used for residential uses. Table 8.3 shows the breakdown of land uses for the Rural Residence 1 Zone.

**RURAL RESIDENCE 2**

Thirty-eight percent of Williamstown is zoned “for typical rural uses with which single-family homes are compatible.” This zone covers much of the lower elevation lands outside of the village center and is the only zone that abuts the Rural Residence 1. Considering the intention of the Rural

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### Table 8.3: Rural Residence 1 Zone Land Use Breakdown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zoning District</th>
<th>Usage Class</th>
<th>Acres</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural Residential 1</td>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>1,449</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter Land</td>
<td>4,170</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tax Exempt</td>
<td>8,487</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>14,388</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 8.4: Rural Residence 2 Zone Land Use Breakdown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zoning District</th>
<th>Usage Class</th>
<th>Acres</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural Residence 2</td>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tax Exempt</td>
<td>2,431</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter Land</td>
<td>4,215</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>4,411</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>14,388</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Residence 2 zone, it’s appropriate for the largest use to be residential, which it is at 39%. Chapter land is close behind accounting for 37% of the zone. Table 8.4 on the following page shows the breakdown of land uses for the Rural Residence 2 Zone.

Considering the Rural Residence 2 Zone is 76% chapter land and residential development, this one zone is critical for the future well-being of Williamstown’s agricultural future. As mentioned earlier in this section, these two land uses are at odds. However, with appropriate planning and forethought, these two uses may be able to exist sustainably. It’s also important to note that water and sewer are not available in this zone. Codifying the importance of the agricultural lands in the zone language can place a higher municipal value on those lands – valuing agricultural and farmlands is a sentiment that is supported by Williamstown’s residents. Additionally, limiting residential development on prime agricultural soils or any lot that contains prime agricultural soils in this zone could be the strongest way of ensuring these critical soil types are not lost.

GENERAL RESIDENCE
Accounting for 11% of Williamstown, the General Residence Zone “is intended to provide an area in the Town where people can live who prefer not to live in a rural or semirural atmosphere, or who prefer not to live in a sparsely populated area, and to provide this area in such a manner and location that the character of the Town will not be destroyed, and that the soil conditions can accommodate the permitted density.” The General Residence Zone includes the village center and adjacent areas but does not include Route 2 south of the village center.

Considering the mention of density and the references to people not wanting to live in rural or semi-rural areas, it is reasonable to expect a significant percentage of this zone being used for residential purposes, which it is. Fifty-seven percent of this zone is used for residential purposes. The tax-exempt use accounts for one-quarter (24%) of the zone, much of which is owned by the Town of Williamstown and Williams College. Table 8.5 shows the breakdown of land uses for the General Residence Zone. Approximately 85% of the General Residence Zone is served by municipal water and approximately 79% is served by municipal sewer.

BUSINESS ZONES – PLANNED BUSINESS, LIMITED BUSINESS, VILLAGE BUSINESS
These three zones have nicely compatible purposes offering different options for commercial enterprises. While these three zones only account for 1% of the entire town, they play critical roles in the town’s economy. These zones are found in parts of the village center area including along Route 2 east of the Town Center/Colonial Plaza and Water Street, Route 43 in the immediate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zoning District</th>
<th>Usage Class</th>
<th>Acres</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Residence</td>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter Land</td>
<td>355</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tax Exempt</td>
<td>821</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>1,937</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3,377</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8.5: General Residence Zone Land Use Breakdown
village center area, along Route 7 near the Vermont border, and smaller areas near the Cole Avenue and North Hoosic Road intersection.

**Planned Business:** intended to accommodate a broad range of uses in an environment allowing integrated planning of relatively large parcels.

**Limited Business:** intended to provide goods and services at retail, in contradiction to goods and services for businesses or commercial enterprises.

**Village Business:** intended to accommodate a broad mixture of uses in a compact pedestrian-oriented environment.

Given the purpose of the Planned Business Zone, it should be expected to find a “broad range of uses”, which is true. Of the business zones, the Planned Business Zone has the largest percentage of commercial uses at 64%. While the percentage of commercial use in the Limited Business Zone is comparatively less, it is still the largest use in the zone at 48%. And while the Village Business Zone has 17% commercial uses, this zone also has a substantial industrial use (13%), some residential (8%), and significant tax-exempt use (48%). Approximately 80% of these three business zones is served by municipal sewer and approximately 83% is served by municipal water. Overall, the active uses within these three business zones appear to align well with the intended purpose, which incorporates commercial intentions with other uses including residential, all while balancing the overall small-town feel. Table 6 shows the breakdown of land uses for these three business zones.

### Table 8.6: Business Zone Land Use Breakdown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zoning District</th>
<th>Usage Class</th>
<th>Acres</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planned Business</td>
<td>Chapter Land</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tax Exempt</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 8.7: Limited Industrial Zone Land Use Breakdown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zoning District</th>
<th>Usage Class</th>
<th>Acres</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Limited Industrial</td>
<td>Chapter Land</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tax Exempt</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 shows the breakdown of land uses for these three business zones.
LIMITED INDUSTRIAL
The purpose of the Limited Industrial Zone is “for use by research laboratories, office buildings and selected light industries which are compatible with a low-density, rural residential community.” This is a small zone in Williamstown accounting for only 1% of town and is generally found west of Route 7 near the Vermont border, between the Hoosic River and North Hoosic Road, and a smaller area near the intersection of Route 2 and 43. With the purpose in mind, it’s reasonable to expect commercial and industrial uses to be high, which combined they are accounting for nearly 40% of the zone. Equally high at 42% of the zone is tax-exempt usage, much of which are lands owned by the Town of Williamstown. Table 7 on the following page shows the breakdown of land uses for the Limited Industrial Zone.

SOUTHERN GATEWAY
The Southern Gateway District is a mixed-use area intended to protect the scenic southern entrance to Williamstown from overdevelopment while also ensuring the viability of existing businesses and residences. This linear district is situated along Cold Spring Road as depicted on Map 8.2. In this District there is a minimum lot size of 2 acres, and a required minimum of 50% open space on each lot. Current uses in this district include residential, lodging, restaurants, and a few commercial establishments. This is a low density pattern of development mixed in with fields and forested lands.

OVERLAY DISTRICTS
The Town of Williamstown has 7 overlay districts. A short overview of each is described here with additional information found in the “Overlay District requirements” found in RSA 70-7.4.

FLOODPLAIN DISTRICT
The purpose of this district is to:
- Ensure public safety through reducing the threats to life and personal injury.
- Eliminate new hazards to emergency response officials.
- Prevent the occurrence of public emergencies resulting from water quality, contamination, and pollution due to flooding.
- Avoid the loss of utility services which, if damaged by flooding, would disrupt or shut down the utility network and impact regions of the community beyond the site of flooding.
- Eliminate costs associated with the response and cleanup of flooding conditions.
- Reduce damage to public and private property resulting from flooding waters.

UPLAND CONSERVATION DISTRICT
The intent of this district is to protect the public health and safety; to protect persons and property against the hazards of floodwater inundation and unsuitable and unhealthy development of steep slopes, unsuitable soils, swamp land, marsh land and watercourses; to protect the balance of nature, including the habitat for birds, wildlife, insects and plants essential to the survival of humans; to conserve and increase the amenities of the Town, natural conditions and open spaces for education, recreation and the general welfare.
MOBILE HOME PARK DISTRICT
The intent of this district is to provide locations suitable for the development of mobile home parks, compatible with existing development and environmental constraints. According to the existing zoning mobile homes must be located within a mobile home park. The one exception being the use of a mobile home for up to 12 months while a residence is being reconstructed.

WATER RESOURCE 1 AND 2 AND CONFINED AQUIFER DISTRICTS
The intent of these districts is to preserve and protect the water resources of the Town of Williamstown and related areas against degradation through either excessive planned disposal of wastes or unplanned contingency resulting in contamination. The intent of the Water Resource 1 District is to provide such protection for those areas most clearly providing recharge to aquifers drawn upon for public water supply, which Water Resource District 2 is intended to provide such protection to other important recharge areas. The Confined Aquifer District is intended to protect the integrity of the impervious cover above aquifers drawn upon for public water supply.

WELLHEAD PROTECTION DISTRICT
The intent of this district is to promote the health, safety and general welfare of the community by ensuring an adequate quality and quantity of drinking water for the residents, institutions and business of the Town; to preserve and protect existing and potential sources of drinking water supplies; to conserve the natural resources of the Town of Williamstown; and to prevent temporary and permanent contamination of the environment.

WAUBEEKA OVERLAY DISTRICT
The intent of this district is to permit and encourage redevelopment of the Waubeeka property in a manner that:
- Preserves the majority of the area within the district, including the golf course, as an important community recreational and open space asset.
- Is consistent and in keeping with the historical context of the adjacent South Williamstown Historic District and the greater community.
- Promotes the public welfare by encouraging the reuse and enhancement of an existing economic asset.

CABLE MILLS REDEVELOPMENT DISTRICT
The intent of this district is to encourage the redevelopment of the historic Cable Mills site in a manner that:
- Preserves and complements adjacent historic properties.
- Preserves the historic character and viability of the Cable Mills District and maintains its place in Williamstown's history.
- Promotes diverse housing opportunities and uses including residential, commercial, retail, office, or a combination thereof.

SUSTAINABILITY AND LAND USE
Williamstown is fortunate to have a dense and walkable pattern of development within the village center area, campus, and surrounding neighborhoods. This provides greater opportunities for
lower energy transportation alternatives, and is often identified as an important component of a Smart Growth land use pattern. This element will be explored deeper during this comprehensive planning process, and a future land use plan will be clearly articulated. As this work is completed it will be important to identify aspects of the existing land use pattern that support the sustainability and resilience efforts of the community, and changes that should be made over time.

All eight of the Sustainable Berkshires Elements contribute to the land use layer as it will be presented in the final Comprehensive Plan. From there the Plan will guide implementation efforts that result in changes or additions to the land use regulations, infrastructure investments, and comprehensive outreach and education efforts that will involve all of Williamstown’s residents in this journey will empowering them to also take action.

The assessment of the Sustainable Berkshires Plan in 2019 found that many communities have adopted new comprehensive plans, open space and recreation plans, and other documents that address more sustainable directions related to land use planning. Planning education across the region has also increased and resulted in local regulatory updates, but much more work needs to be done.

REFERENCES

- RSA 70-2.2 District Purpose
- RSA 70-7.4 Overlay District requirements
- Sustainable Berkshire: Land Use 2014
- Sustainable Berkshire: Status Report 2019
- Berkshire Regional Planning Commission
- Williamstown Build-Out Analysis 1999
- Williamstown Build-Out Analysis 2016
- Williamstown Open Space & Recreation Plan 2016
- Farms Under Threat: A New England Perspective
- Master Plan Final Report 2002
- Town of Williamstown GIS Data
- Town of Williamstown Assessing Data
- The Williamstown Farmland Project
- Williamstown Farmland Project Presentation
- Williamstown Zoning Bylaw Chapter 46: Right to Farm
- Keep Berkshires Farming: North Berkshire Region Action Plan
- Agricultural Commission: General Information
- Massachusetts Association of Agricultural Commissions
- Community Preservation Act
APPENDIX A: OTHER REFERENCES

Other references that were utilized for the Existing Conditions Report include the following:

- Williams College Energy & Carbon Plan – pending
- Williamstown Cool Committee
- Town Hall Building Assessment
- Net Zero Resolution
- Community Resilience Workshop 2018
- Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan Update -2019
- The Williamstown Farmland Project 2020
- Open Space Plan 2016
- Rapid Recovery Plan 2021
- 2002 Master Plan
- Recommendations for Enhancements to Williamstown’s Parks and Recreation Offerings 2020
- Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership 2019
- Sustainable Berkshire's 2019 Plan
- Keep Berkshires Farming Sub-regional Action Plan North Berkshire Region 2015
- Interviews with DPW staff
- Agriculture Committee and Video
- Mass Saves Three-year Plan
- Diversity, Equity, and Racial Equity Committee Webpage - Town of Williamstown
- Racial and Socioeconomic Exclusion in the Built Environment in Williamstown by Katie Orringer and Morgan Dauk
- The Racial History of Williamstown by Katie Orringer and Morgan Dauk
- Town of Williamstown Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan
- The Importance of the Equity Lens in Transportation Planning and Design - Kittleson and Associates
- How to Uncover and Honor LGBTQ+ History in the Built Environment by Planning Magazine
- Berkshire Benchmarks - Berkshire Regional Planning Commission
- What is Racial Equity? - Race Forward
- Healthy Communities of Opportunity: An Equity Blueprint to Address America’s Housing Challenges - the Kresge Foundation
- 2022 Williamstown Housing Needs Assessment - Berkshire Regional Planning Commission
- 2020 Northern Berkshire Community Resource Guide
- Interview - Jason McCandless, Superintendent of Mt. Greylock Regional School District, and Joseph Bergeron, Business Administrator of Mt. Greylock Regional School District
- Interview - Wendy Penner, Williamstown Resident and Drug Addiction and Recovery Team Coordinator for Northampton, Massachusetts
- Equitable Development as a Tool to Advance Racial Equity - Local and Regional Government Alliance on Race and Equity
- 2018 Recommendations for Enhancements to Williamstown’s Parks and Recreation Offerings
- “Williamstown DIRE Committee looks to address elder concerns” - iBerkshires
- Williamstown CARES project
- Planning for Equity Police Guide - American Planning Association
- The Davis Center at Williams College
- Berkshire Trans Group
- Berkshire Stonewall Community Coalition
- Mt. Greylock Gender Sexuality Alliance
- Berkshire Food Project
# Table 8: Land Use Classes & Unique Land Use Codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land Use Class</th>
<th>Land Use Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>Single Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>102</td>
<td>Condominium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>103</td>
<td>Mobile Home/Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>104</td>
<td>Two- Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>105</td>
<td>Three - Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>106</td>
<td>Accessory Land with Improvements - Garage, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>109</td>
<td>Multiple Houses on One Parcel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apartments</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>Four to Eight Units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>112</td>
<td>More Than Eight units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>114</td>
<td>Affordable Housing Units (Greater than 50 % of the Units Qualify)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Transient Group Quarters</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>Rooming and Boarding Houses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>122</td>
<td>Fraternity &amp; Sorority Houses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>123</td>
<td>Residence Halls &amp; Dormitories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>124</td>
<td>Rectories, Convents &amp; Monasteries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant Land in a Residential Zone</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>Developable Land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>131</td>
<td>Potentially Developable Land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>132</td>
<td>Undevelopable Land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed Use</td>
<td>013</td>
<td>Multiple - Use, Primarily Residential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>031</td>
<td>Multiple - Use, Primarily Commercial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transient Group Quarters</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>Hotels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>301</td>
<td>Motels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>302</td>
<td>Inns, Resorts &amp; Tourists Homes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>304</td>
<td>Nursing Homes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>305</td>
<td>Private Hospitals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>306</td>
<td>Care &amp; Treatment Facilities - Designed and Used on a Transient Basis, Including Half-way Houses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storage Warehouse and Distribution Facilities</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>Tanks Holding Fuel &amp; Oil Products for Retail Distribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>311</td>
<td>Bottled Gas &amp; Propane Gas Tanks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>312</td>
<td>Grain &amp; Feed Elevators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>313</td>
<td>Lumber Yards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>314</td>
<td>Trucking Terminals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>315</td>
<td>Piers, Wharves, Docks &amp; Related Facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>316</td>
<td>Other Storage, Warehouse &amp; Distribution Facilities (See also Industrial Code 401)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>Farm Buildings - Barns, Silos, Utility Shed, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail Trade</td>
<td>318</td>
<td>Commercial Greenhouses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>321</td>
<td>Facilities Providing Building Materials, Hardware &amp; Farm Equipment, Heating, Hardware, Plumbing, Lumber Supplies &amp; Equipment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>322</td>
<td>Discount Stores, Junior Department Stores &amp; Department Stores</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>323</td>
<td>Shopping Centers/Malls</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>324</td>
<td>Supermarkets in Excess of 10,000 sf</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>325</td>
<td>Small Retail &amp; Services Under 10,000 sf</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>326</td>
<td>Eating Establishment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Retail Trade - Automotive, Marine Craft & Other Engine Propelled Vehicles, Sales & Service**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>330</td>
<td>Automotive Vehicles Sales &amp; Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>331</td>
<td>Automotive Supplies Sales &amp; Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>332</td>
<td>Auto Repair Facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>333</td>
<td>Fuel Service Areas - Providing Only Fuel Products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>334</td>
<td>Gasoline Service Stations - Providing Engine Repair or Maintenance Services &amp; Fuel Products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>335</td>
<td>Car Wash Facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>336</td>
<td>Parking Garages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>337</td>
<td>Parking Lots - Commercial Open Lot for Motor Vehicles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>338</td>
<td>Other Motor Vehicle Sales &amp; Service</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Office Building**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>340</td>
<td>General Office Buildings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>341</td>
<td>Bank Buildings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>342</td>
<td>Medical Office Buildings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Public Service Properties (See Code 900's for Exempt Public Service Properties)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>350</td>
<td>Property Used for Postal Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>351</td>
<td>Education Properties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>352</td>
<td>Day Care Centers, Adult (See Code 140)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>353</td>
<td>Fraternal Organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>354</td>
<td>Bus Transportation Facilities &amp; Other Related Properties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>355</td>
<td>funeral Homes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>356</td>
<td>Miscellaneous Public Services - Professional Membership Organizations, Business Associations, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Cultural & Entertainment Properties**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>360</td>
<td>Museums</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>361</td>
<td>Art Galleries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>362</td>
<td>Motion Picture Theaters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>363</td>
<td>Drive-In Movies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>364</td>
<td>Legitimate Theaters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>365</td>
<td>Stadiums</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>366</td>
<td>Arenas &amp; Field Houses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>367</td>
<td>Race Tracks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>368</td>
<td>Fairgrounds &amp; Amusement Parks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>369</td>
<td>Other Cultural &amp; Entertainment Properties</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Indoor Recreational Facilities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>370</td>
<td>Bowling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>371</td>
<td>Ice Skating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>372</td>
<td>Roller Skating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>373</td>
<td>Swimming Pools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>374</td>
<td>Health Spas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>375</td>
<td>Tennis and/or Racquetball Clubs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>376</td>
<td>Gymnasiums &amp; Other Athletic Clubs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>377</td>
<td>Archery, Billiards, &amp; Other Indoor Facilities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Outdoor Recreational Properties**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>380</td>
<td>Golf Courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>381</td>
<td>Tennis Courts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>382</td>
<td>Riding Stable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>383</td>
<td>Beaches &amp; Swimming Pools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>384</td>
<td>Marinas - Including Marine Terminals, &amp; Associated Areas primarily for Recreational Marine Craft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>385</td>
<td>Fish &amp; Game Clubs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>386</td>
<td>Camping Facilities - Accommodations for Tents, Campers &amp; Travel Trailers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>387</td>
<td>Summer Camps - Children's Camps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>388</td>
<td>Other Outdoor Facilities - e.g. Driving Ranges, Miniature Golf, Baseball Batting Ranges, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>389</td>
<td>Structures on Land Classified as Ch. 61B Recreational Land</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Vacant Land - Accessory to Commercial Parcels**
- 390 Developable Land
- 391 Potentially Developable Land
- 392 Undevelopable Land
- 393 Agricultural/Horticultural Land Not Included in Chapter 61A

**Manufacturing & Processing**
- 400 Buildings for Manufacturing Operations
- 401 Warehouse for Storage of Manufactured Products
- 402 Warehouses for Storage of Manufactured Products
- 403 Land - Integral Part of Manufacturing Operation
- 404 Research & Development Facilities

**Mining & Quarrying**
- 410 Sand & Gravel
- 411 Gypsum
- 412 Rock
- 413 Other

**Utility Properties**
- 420 Tanks
- 421 Liquid Natural gas Tanks
- 422 Electric Transmission Right-of-Way
- 423 Electricity Regulating Substations
- 424 Gas Production Plants
- 425 Gas Pipeline Right-of-Way
- 426 Natural Gas Storage
- 427 Gas Pressure Control Stations

**Utility Properties - Communications**
- 430 Telephone Exchange Stations
- 431 Telephone Relay Towers; Cell Towers
- 432 Cable TV Transmitting Facilities
- 433 Radio, Television Transmission Facilities
- 434 Telecommunications Data Centers

**Vacant Land**
- 440 Developable Land
- 441 Potentially Developable Land
- 442 Undevelopable Land

**Electric Generation Plants**
- 450 Electric Generation Plants
- 451 Electric Generation Plants, Renewable Energy
- 452 Electric Generation Plants, Agreement Value

**Forest Lands (Ch.61)**
- 601 All Land Designated Under Ch. 61
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter Land</th>
<th>Recreational Land</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Agricultural/Horticultural (Ch. 61A)</strong></td>
<td><strong>United States Government</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>602 Christmas Trees</td>
<td>900 United States Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>710 Cranberry Bog</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>711 Tobacco, Sod</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>712 Truck Crops - Vegetables</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>713 Field Crops - Hay, Wheat, Tillable Forage Cropland, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>714 Orchards - Pears, Apples, Grape Vineyards, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>715 Christmas Trees</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>716 Necessary Related Land - Farm Roads, Ponds, Land under Farm Buildings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>717 Productive Woodlands 61A with a Forest Management Plan; Woodlots</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>718 Pasture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>719 Nurseries</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>720 Wetland, Scrub Land, Rock Land</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>801 Hiking - Trails or Paths</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>802 Camping - Areas with Sites for Overnight Camping</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>803 Nature Study - Areas Specifically for Nature Study or Observation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>804 Boating - Areas for Recreational Boating and Supporting Land Facilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>805 Golfing - Areas of Land Arranged as a Golf Course</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>806 Horseback Riding - Trails or Areas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>807 Hunting - Areas for the Hunting of Wildlife</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>808 Fishing Areas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>809 Alpine Skiing - Areas for Downhill Skiing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>810 Nordic Skiing - Areas for Cross Country Skiing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>811 Swimming Areas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>812 Picnicking Areas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>813 Public Non-Commercial Flying - Areas for Gliding or Hang Gliding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>814 Target Shooting Areas - Archery, Skeet or Approved Fire-arms</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>815 Productive Woodlands - Woodlots</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Commonwealth of MA - Reimbursable Land</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>910 Department of Conservation &amp; Recreation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>911 Division of Fish &amp; Game Wildlife, Environmental Law Enforcement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>912 Department of Correction, Youth Services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>913 Department of Public Health - Soldiers' Homes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>914 Department of Mental Health - Department of Mental Retardation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>915 Department of Conservation &amp; Recreation, Division of Water Supply Protection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>916 Military Division - Campgrounds</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>917 Education - University of MA, State Colleges &amp; Community Colleges</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>918 Dept of Environmental Protection, Low-Level Radioactive Waste Management Board</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>919 Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Commonwealth of MA - Non-Reimbursable Land</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>920 Department of Conservation &amp; Recreation, division of Urban Parks &amp; Recreation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>921 Division of Fish &amp; Game, Environmental Law Enforcement, Department of Environmental Protection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>922 Department of Corrections, Division of Youth Services, Mass Military, State Police, Sheriff's Departments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>923 Department of Public Health, Soldiers' Homes, Department of Mental Retardation</td>
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<td>924 Mass Highway Department</td>
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<td>Code</td>
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<tr>
<td>925</td>
<td>Department of Conservation &amp; Recreation Division of Water Supply Protection, Urban Park</td>
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<tr>
<td>926</td>
<td>Judiciary</td>
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<tr>
<td>927</td>
<td>Education - University of MA, State Colleges &amp; Community Colleges</td>
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<tr>
<td>928</td>
<td>Division of Capital asset Management, Bureau of State Office Buildings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>929</td>
<td>Other</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Municipal or County</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>930</td>
<td>Vacant Selectmen or City Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>931</td>
<td>Improved Selectmen or City Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>932</td>
<td>Vacant Conservation</td>
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<td>933</td>
<td>Vacant Education</td>
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<td>934</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>935</td>
<td>Improved Municipal Public Safety</td>
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<tr>
<td>936</td>
<td>Vacant, Tax Title/Treasurer</td>
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<td><strong>Education Private</strong></td>
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<td>952</td>
<td>Auxiliary Use (Storage, Barns, etc.)</td>
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<td>Cemeteries</td>
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<td>Function Halls, Community Centers, Fraternal Organizations</td>
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<td>955</td>
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<td><strong>Religious Groups</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>960</td>
<td>Church, Mosque, Synagogue, Temple, etc.</td>
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<td>961</td>
<td>Rectory or Parsonage, etc.</td>
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<td>970</td>
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<td>Utility Authority, Electric, Light Sewer, Water</td>
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