

APPROVED MINUTES
Town of Sheffield
Community Development Strategy

COMMITTEE MEETING

October 8, 2013
Sheffield Town Hall
6:30 pm

Attendance

Committee members: Rene Wood, Martin Mitsoff, Ed Lord, Alicia Dulin, Phyllis Webb, Kathy Orlando

Members of the public: Trudy Miller

BRPC staff: Patricia Mullins, Jaclyn Pacejo

Review of the CDS: The Community Development Strategy (CDS) is a 7 page document. The first section of the CDS serves as an introduction, and often includes a brief statement on what makes the community a unique place and general town statistics (e.g. population, square miles). The second section summarizes the town's planning efforts. The third and fourth sections detail and prioritize the municipality's community development goals. The fifth section includes strategies to address the priorities. The final section ensures consistency between the CDS and the Massachusetts Sustainable Development Principles.

Purpose of the CDS: The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) is the main grant that utilizes the CDS, but other grants use it as a backup planning document that succinctly summarizes the town's goals and priorities. For grants, the CDS is good for 3 years without being updated. After the third year, the town can update the original CDS or start from scratch and create a new one. Aside from grants, the CDS is useful internally to the town and its boards and departments.

Committee status: The Sheffield Community Development Strategy Committee will be sworn in tomorrow evening.

Open Meeting Law requirements: Committee decisions and deliberations need to be made at public committee meetings, pursuant to Open Meeting Law. While this committee is subject to the requirements of the Open Meeting Law, it is important to note that committee members can talk to BRPC staff and can also get opinions from their neighbors and other residents.

Public participation: The committee is open to accepting comments and questions from the public during meetings, so long as it does not take up an unreasonable amount of time and is not distracting to the meeting goals.

Timeline and scheduling: The goal is to finish the Community Development Strategy in 3 sessions and present the document to the Select Board by the end of November.

Meeting minutes: BRPC staff will record the minutes. The minutes will be edited as appropriate and approved by the committee members at the following committee meeting. The committee is okay with sending out a draft of the minutes prior to the next meeting (particularly for the absent committee members), so long as the minutes are clearly labeled as being in draft form.

Committee decision making: The committee has chosen to wait until the next meeting to decide whether they want a committee chair. The committee has also decided that they wish, as a group, to discuss, draft, and approve each development topic in turn.

Homework for committee members: 1) Individually write a draft of the transportation section of the CDS and bring it to the next meeting. 2) Think about ways to attract and retain the 18-34 year old population in Sheffield and be ready to discuss at next meeting.

Next meeting: The next meeting is scheduled for **Wednesday, October 30th from 4-7 pm** at the town hall. We can order pizza for dinner.

Discussion on Overall Municipal Development Goals to be included in the CDS:

Additional goals

-Suggestion to add “attraction and retention of 18-34 year old population” to list of goals. The 18-34 year old population is much lower in Sheffield than the rest of the county and is essential to the town’s growth.

Top goals by committee member

- Rene’s top goals: Economic Development, Affordable Housing, Transportation, and Attraction/Retention of 18-34 year old population. (Rest of topics fall into these main headings)
- Ed’s top goals: Economic Development (which includes the attraction/retention of 18-34 year olds), Transportation, Land Use and Growth Management, Affordable Housing (preference toward scattered-site and not large scale development)
- Alicia’s top goals: Economic Development (which includes the attraction/retention of 18-34 year olds), Affordable Housing, Transportation, and Land Use and Growth Management
- Phyllis’s top goals: Economic Development (which includes the attraction/retention of 18-34 year olds as well as Smart Growth), Affordable Housing, Open Space and Recreation / Land Use and Growth Management, Transportation (Energy and Sustainability falls into most of the topics)
- Martin’s top goals: Attraction/Retention of 18-34 year old population (most other topics fall into this), Open Space and Recreation / Land Use and Growth Management
- Kathy’s top goals: Open Space and Recreation / Land, Use and Growth Management, Agriculture, Economic Development, Affordable Housing, Transportation

General goal discussion (excluding transportation)

-Need to look at full impact on all items and consider: What are the pros and cons? What are the conditions and how will this impact our community?

Affordable Housing

- Explore the definition of affordable housing and workforce housing; this could open to more possibilities.
- There is a feeling in town that when the Dewey Way housing development was built, the residents came from other towns to live there and that the affordable housing did not ultimately help the town of Sheffield. Future affordable housing should serve Sheffield and Ashley Falls first and target firefighters, teachers, police officers, etc.
- Consider what it takes to buy a home in Sheffield and the implications of it.

Attraction/Retention of 18-34 year olds

- Apprenticeships and vocational education could be important. Consider feeding into Sheffield Plastics and the business park.
- Approaches to economic development and youth could be similar to those with agriculture and youth. Example of “greenagers,” the youth environmental organization.

Economic Development and Agriculture

- How can we get trade back into town? Community supported industry, local currency, microloans.

Health and Human Services / Community Facilities and Services

- While these topics are embedded in the other goals, we need to make sure they are still supported and maintained.

Discussion on Transportation

-The issue of transportation is a regional issue. Make it a priority to work with South County.

Bus service

-Mention of a pilot bus service with BRTA. It is a large distance (~5 miles) between Great Barrington and Sheffield senior centers. Maybe people don't think of the bus because the town doesn't have one. Emphasis on asking for what we want.
-Huge need for bus service. Community members transport friends. Need Good Samaritan policy to avoid liability.

Train

-Many towns along the railroad are lobbying for stations. Stations are anticipated to be ~10 miles apart. There is talk of one station going in Great Barrington and one in Canaan. Mr. Hanlon owns the airport hangar, and there may be some discussion on a rail station in Ashley Falls. There is a parking lot downtown – a fancy station is not necessary.
-Concern that if a train goes to Canaan and hurdles through town 8 times a day (instead of two as it does currently) – it is going to impact the town.
-Whether or not a rail station is good for the community depends on the planning that goes into it. Without proper planning, there could be uncontrolled growth (which could drive housing prices up), new businesses that take money from the community, etc.

Bike/walk

-Tie in with larger bike system.
-Adding a bike lane to a road can be a major undertaking. Sometimes a “share the road” sign is suitable.
-Reclaim and improve sidewalks.
-There is a very direct route from Sheffield Plain to downtown to Ashley Falls. Train tracks will need to be rebuilt if passenger rail starts up. There is a large right of way and it may be difficult to work with the railroad company. Consider using the land abutting railroad property.
-Get support from Berkshire Wellness Fitness Program & Berkshire Bike Council.
-Make Sheffield more biker and walker friendly – ask state for assistance.
-Traffic calming downtown using bike lanes – currently in conversation with DOT.
-Consider having a public input session on this topic.
-There is an access path behind town hall that goes to the town park. However it is overgrown and largely unknown.

Roads and bridges

-There are areas in town besides Rt 7 that need assistance. There are some washed out roads, some roads in poor condition, and some bridges that need repair.
-Need money for infrastructure projects.

Speed limit

-Ask state to reduce speed limit of 45 near downtown. Support from business association might help.
-Add speed limit signs throughout downtown area.

Summary of transportation discussion

-Explore the viability and impacts of a passenger rail station stop in Sheffield
-Begin BRTA pilot program – focus on the elderly, kids who don't drive, and those without cars
-Finalize Good Samaritan protection for Neighbor-to-neighbor transportation (Smitty)
-Reclaim and declare /re-establish sidewalks
-Integrate bike/walk approaches (and trail system linkages) where possible
-Slow traffic down as it comes through Sheffield Town (Rt 7) – signage, lower speed limit
-Rt 7 resurface and opportunities for safety it presents (MA DOT)
-Continue to seek funding for bridge and road repair (Chapter 90, STRAP grants)
-Implement road/pavement management system
-Evaluate scenic byways/roads designations and potential grants

Meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm.