

FY13 TOWN OF SHEFFIELD COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (CDS)

I. INTRODUCTION

This Community Development Strategy (CDS) summarizes the goals and strategies of the Town of Sheffield's recent community development planning and prioritizes the actions the Town will work to implement over the next five years. Sheffield is interested in promoting economic vitality, the availability of a full range of housing options, better pedestrian circulation and enhanced opportunity for public transit, as well as in making thoughtful land use choices and preserving the rural character of the community. In addition to striving to serve all Sheffield residents through adherence to the Commonwealth's Sustainable Development Principles, Sheffield is keenly aware that due to the Town's disproportionately aging population, retaining the community's younger generation and attracting others in this age group are also important to sustainability – particularly the 20-34 year old age group. Currently only 8.2% of Sheffield's population are represented in this cohort, and the Town faces long term population sustainability challenges without significant increases in this age group. At the same time, the Town must to plan to meet the needs of its senior population through its Senior Center programs, which are also used by seniors from adjacent towns. The Town must also promote ADA compliance in housing, pedestrian circulation, and in accessibility to public buildings and recreation areas.

Sheffield's CDS results from a collaborative process of a dedicated, civic-minded public, elected Town officials and a Select Board appointed Committee tasked with articulating these goals.

II. LIST OF PLANS AND STRATEGIES, by year of adoption

See APPENDIX ONE for more information on each of these plans and strategies.

- **Ashley Falls Historic District (1988)**
- **Zoning By-laws (1994, last amended 2012)**
- **Sheffield Master Plan (2005)**
- **Economic Development Plan (2008)**
- **Town of Sheffield Annual Report (2012)**
- **Great Barrington-Sheffield Housing Needs Assessment (2013)**

See APPENDIX TWO for specific Town accomplishments that support these plans and strategies.

III. MUNICIPAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GOALS, in alphabetic sequence

With the above plans and strategies in mind and upon receiving input from the community, the Community Development Strategy Committee, appointed by the Sheffield Select Board, and composed of a cross-section of individuals representing key Town departments, boards, commissions and committees as well as community volunteers, established the following Municipal Community Development goals.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Sheffield's economic development goals center on supporting and enhancing existing local trades, agriculture, businesses and home occupations and promoting a broad range of new businesses and occupations, in both cases consistent with a vibrant, equitable rural community. Sheffield's economic development goals and objectives will be best met by incorporating strategies that further the Town's housing, resident workforce, transportation, natural resource and land use goals in a regional and energy smart manner.

1. Focus and facilitate Town center commercial and mixed use development consistent with Sheffield's rural, scenic character.
 - Review and amend as necessary Sheffield's zoning by-laws and land use regulations.
 - Encourage mixed use structures in existing and future building stock in these areas.
 - Explore infrastructure improvements that may be needed to support these efforts.
2. Establish and promote mentoring, apprenticeship, vocational and work-study training programs for resident youth, young adults, and unemployed or under-employed residents.
 - Construct training programs to attract and retain Sheffield residents, building skills consistent with Sheffield's current and targeted business needs and creating quality living-wage jobs.
3. Support the Economic Development Committee, comprised of representatives from local businesses, Town officials and community members, in its proactive work with public and private interests to lead and guide Sheffield's economic development needs.
 - Facilitate ongoing Town-wide discussion on what types of businesses Town residents want.
 - Update and implement Sheffield's Economic Development Plan to promote the Town's economic development goals; enlist the aid of consultants with rural economic development skills if needed to complete such strategy.
 - Seek funding for a part-time employee to focus on economic development and other CDS issues.
 - Support existing businesses, identify opportunities for new businesses, and promote Sheffield to potential new businesses.
 - Create an inventory of current businesses and existing land & structures suitable for commercial development/redevelopment.
 - Lead in the development of a Sheffield entrepreneurial center that brings ideas and capital to bear on developing local and regional business opportunities.
 - Create networking opportunities between local businesses, schools, non-profits and resident workforce.
 - Liaise with the Sheffield Business Association, chambers of commerce and other organizations to promote Sheffield as a desirable business location.
 - Explore options presented by Economic Development Fund (EDF) grants.

HOUSING

Sheffield seeks to promote and encourage a rich mix of housing options such as rental homes and apartments, accessory apartments, private residences, senior, workforce and affordable housing, through re-use, infill and wise land management to retain and attract a vibrant population of all income levels. Sheffield is dedicated to increasing its percentage of housing stock that is affordable.

1. Use public forums and other means, in cooperation with Sheffield's Housing Commission, to inform residents of Sheffield's Housing Needs Assessment study findings and recommendations.
 - Promote awareness of owner and tenant responsibilities and how neglect of either lessens availability of rental units.
 - Facilitate a public forum on Sheffield's housing needs where those seeking housing arrangements may understand current options and opportunities.
2. Assess and seek funding (such as CDBG) both independently and in connection with regional partners to rehabilitate and preserve existing housing stock; evaluate and implement options for private funding to acquire housing stock for workforce and affordable rental/ownership purposes; evaluate programs aimed at providing quality housing for Sheffield's fire/safety personnel and other community members.

- Increase awareness of existing programs and available homeowner/developer incentives and provide guidance for those who may qualify, including examples of how large homes may be reconfigured to support aging in place, accessory apartments, duplex and/or multi-family units, as well as programs that highlight energy savings.
 - Explore partnerships with private or non-profit sources to fund, develop and administer targeted programs that benefit Sheffield residents and their families.
 - Evaluate use of Town-owned and private land for housing use, long term subsidized land lease, or sale, with any generated funds used for targeted new housing stock.
 - Evaluate CPA and other local sources of funding to achieve housing objectives.
3. Review and amend as needed zoning by-laws and general by-laws to support the Town's housing goals through options such as accessory apartments; clustered development; 99-year land leases; smaller lot sizes and smaller/cottage homes; infilling and mixed use in village centers; and other types of smart growth developments.
4. Explore housing opportunities that support economic development such as affordable units for 20-34 year-olds; senior housing close to Town and services; and in-home services.

OPEN SPACE & RECREATION / LAND USE & GROWTH MANAGEMENT

Sheffield seeks to protect, promote and increase its existing open space, agricultural, cultural and recreation resources (collectively hereinafter referred to as "rural resources") as a means of maintaining and improving the Town's rural and scenic character. Sheffield seeks to foster smart growth objectives that efficiently integrate the Town's rural resources strategy with economic development, housing and transportation strategies.

1. Use zoning and land use regulations (amending as needed) to protect and expand rural resources.
 - Evaluate transfer of development rights ("TDR") alternatives, including zoning overlay districts, to encourage open space retention in return for mixed use development in agreed areas.
 - Facilitate home-based businesses to reduce impacts to the Town's rural resources.
 - Explore strategies along Route 7 and Route 7A corridors to minimize curb cuts, improve scenic landscape and reduce vehicular speed to encourage pedestrian and non-vehicular transit.
 - Develop strategies to maintain and improve the rural character of Route 41 and reduce vehicular speed to encourage pedestrian and non-vehicular transit.
 - Seek funding sources and partnerships with local and regional agencies and organizations to assist with land use efforts.
2. Develop an inventory of rural resources to guide maintenance and protection of these resources and to plan for future resource needs.
 - Inventory subjects should include identification of ownership; associated state and/or federal programs, if any; key associated resources (including but not limited to water, flora and fauna); property tax arrearages, if any; and restrictive covenants appurtenant thereto, if any.
 - Explore and implement additional strategies to protect rural resources, particularly to minimize loss of farmland and fragmentation of wildlife habitat.
 - Under the leadership of Sheffield's Board of Selectmen, establish and broaden dialogue among residents to establish a prioritized list of future rural resources opportunities and the public and private funding resources, including Community Preservation Act (CPA) funding, available to implement such projects.
 - Work with local and regional partners (including but not limited to the Sheffield Land Trust, The Nature Conservancy, Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, Berkshire Natural Resources

Council, and The Trustees of Reservations) to share resources, guidance and ideas regarding rural resources.

3. Enhance and improve access to recreational opportunities for Sheffield's residents.

- Maintain existing and create new recreational opportunities, and ensure that wherever possible they are accessible to Sheffield's residents regardless of age or abilities.
- Increase awareness among Sheffield's residents and visitors of the Town's rural resources.
- Work with local and regional partners to support pedestrian and bike paths to and within Sheffield's rural resources consistent with rural resource conservation objectives.

4. Review Sheffield's business park and other designated industrial districts to market these to potential businesses for uses consistent with Sheffield's residential uses and rural resources.

TRANSPORTATION

Sheffield's transportation goal is to provide a wide range of vehicular and non-vehicular transportation options for residents. Using public and private investment, this goal will be met through continued maintenance and upgrade of current roads, expansion of ADA compliant sidewalks and trail systems where feasible, and provision of additional public and non-vehicular transportation opportunities.

1. Aggressively work to expand public transportation through Berkshire Regional Transit Authority (BRTA) and additional rider options through state sanctioned Good Samaritan driver program and promote better awareness of existing transportation options, such as BRTA and the Southern Berkshire Elderly Transportation Corporation (SBETC).

- Pursue public transportation opportunities, such as a pilot bus service with BRTA, to transport general population, including seniors and youth, to and from shopping, appointments, recreation and social events.
- Promote better awareness of existing transportation options, such as BRTA and SBETC.
- Provide shared-vehicle/shared-ride services with Town sponsorship.
- Develop community bulletin board to enable general population, including those with physical or medical challenges to avail themselves of "errand runners" in the region.
- Explore the viability and impacts of a passenger rail station stop in Sheffield.

2. Expand non-car transportation, such as walking and biking, through reclamation, expansion and integration of sidewalks and trail systems; work with state and local officials to reduce vehicular speed and to address signage issues along Routes 7, 7A and 41.

- Develop public and private partnerships to create and maintain non-automobile pathways through land acquisition, easements, long-term leases, and possibly tax incentives.
- Address paths/routes requiring immediate attention, such as the connections between Town Hall and Town park; between Ashley Falls, Sheffield Town Center and Canaan; between Sheffield Plain, Sheffield Town Center, and Great Barrington; between Undermountain Road and Sheffield Town Center via Berkshire School Road, Salisbury Road and/or Bow Wow Road.

3. Establish a road/pavement management system for paved and unpaved roads and take advantage of available funding and grants for bridge and road repair.

- Pursue all potential revenue sources, including Chapter 90, STRAP and road/byway designations, for upgrades and maintenance of roadways, bridges, culverts and sidewalks, such as between Sheffield Town Center and the Senior Center.

IV. MUNICIPAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES & STRATEGIES

The Town of Sheffield's highest community development priorities are set forth below. Accompanying each priority is at least one strategy to achieve the priority within the next five years.

Priority 1: Support the Town's Economic Development Committee; update the Economic Development Plan, as needed; and establish a 3-5 year marketing strategy for implementing the Plan.

Strategies

- 1) Seek to fund a position through budget funding or other sources to implement CDS.
- 2) Evaluate impacts of Town's demographics and seek funding to develop plans to address the implications of these demographics, with an emphasis on 20-34 age bracket and seniors.
- 3) Establish a vocational apprenticeship program.
- 4) Explore funding opportunities through the Economic Development Fund.

Priority 2: Develop and increase housing options and opportunities available to all Sheffield residents of all ages.

Strategies

- 1) Work locally and/or with neighboring communities to establish a Housing Rehabilitation program using CDBG and other funding to benefit low and moderate income (LMI) residents.
- 2) Evaluate development of a Housing Production Plan.
- 3) Establish and find funding to increase accessory apartments.

Priority 3: Improve transportation and infrastructure to support motorized and pedestrian-friendly means of transportation.

Strategies

- 1) Pursue all available funding streams, such as STRAP, Chapter 90 and CDBG, to upgrade, maintain and support pedestrian-friendly means of transportation; enhance ADA compliance.
- 2) Apply for DLTA funding with regional partners to evaluate and implement an express bus route between Sheffield and Great Barrington and from there to Pittsfield.
- 3) Pursue public bus route and ride-share options as transportation for seniors, youth and others. With potential support from DLTA funding, identify conditions under which volunteer citizen drivers may transport residents without personal liability.
- 4) Map existing and proposed non-vehicular paths, bike routes and trail systems, showing connections to key resources and housing areas.

Priority 4: Explore mechanisms that support open space preservation and agriculture, including TDRs, cluster development, purchase of development rights, etc.

Strategies

- 1) Work with citizens, farmers and land organizations to hold public information sessions on such mechanisms.
- 2) Create an inventory of land currently under and potentially benefiting from such mechanisms.

Priority 5: Conduct a comprehensive review of zoning by-laws, general by-laws and subdivision regulations.

Strategies

- 1) Seek funding through DLTA (for Economic Development and Housing priorities), CDBG and other sources to identify weaknesses and opportunities in zoning and other regulations.
- 2) Appoint a By-Law Review Committee to review and recommend amendments to zoning by-laws.

Priority 6: Consider the adoption of the Community Preservation Act to fund housing rehabilitation and open space preservation and to take advantage of matching funds.

Strategies

- 1) Request the Board of Selectmen to present the CPA at one or more public information sessions.
- 2) Solicit the interest of citizens and organizations in Town.

V. CONSISTENCY WITH MA SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

The Town of Sheffield's Community Development Strategy is consistent with the Commonwealth's ten Sustainable Development Principles, as summarized below:

- 1. Concentrate Development and Mixed Use:** Current zoning by-laws (ZBLs) support mixed use development in all four zoning districts. CDS goals and priorities seek to strength such mixed use by making sure ZBLs reflect business opportunities, consistent with residents' desires, and the Town's Districts. The Town's Economic Development Plan and a dedicated staff person should yield positive results consistent with this principle.
- 2. Advance Equity:** The goals and priorities in this CDS will benefit all ages and segments of Sheffield's population. Housing, economic development and transportation goals and priorities in particular are designed to improve economic opportunities and provide a more affordable and sustainable housing market not dependent on access to a car. Equity also includes ADA compliance.
- 3. Make Efficient Decisions:** This CDS is a continuation of all the planning, community development and ZBLs that preceded this effort. It takes into account the limitation of funds, the rise in demand and the need to pull together both within the Town and within the Region to do more with less.
- 4. Protect Land and Eco-Systems:** Sheffield recognizes its land and eco-systems are two of its greatest resources and so states in its CDS. Through the use of APRs, Chapter 60 programs and the work of the many conservation groups, significant acreage and eco-systems have been protected to date.
- 5. Use Natural Resources Wisely:** Expanded mixed use development, infill and home occupations will relieve pressure on open spaces. Housing rehab, shared housing and land-sensitive clustered housing will support more housing and the need for wiser land and resource usage.
- 6. Expand Housing Opportunities:** Significant portions of this CDS reflect the 2013 Housing Assessment Needs study's key findings. Priorities and goals of this CDS seek to rectify each of these items. The CDS positions expanding housing opportunities as an economic development opportunity.
- 7. Provide Transportation Choice:** The CDS goals and priorities call out the lack of non-vehicular transport options; the need for public transportation; more sidewalks/trails; greater biking opportunities; and supporting ride sharing for those who cannot drive. We believe we have covered these needs in calling for additional, across-the-board transportation options.
- 8. Increase Job and Business Opportunities:** This CDS envisions housing and transportation as equal partners with economic development. The goals and priorities of each section support the others. The Open Spaces and Land Use goals and priorities recognize opportunities in agriculture, specialty foods and beverages, eco-tourism and the business opportunities supporting residents, second homeowners, and a senior population. Some goals may only be achieved with state and federal support.
- 9. Promote Clean Energy:** The Town works with state and federal programs to promote conservation and clean energy, such as its regional participation in an Aggregation of Electric Load Agreement. It further promotes clean energy through its CDS goals and priorities, which focus on existing housing stock rehab; promotion of walking, biking and ride sharing; and public transportation. Goals and priorities also include promoting an awareness of job opportunities closer to home and smarter use of

energy resources.

10. Plan Regionally: Sheffield has a long history of working regionally, including cooperative municipal agreements and strong participation in BRPC initiatives and DLTAs. Plan Regionally is highlighted in the Economic Development and the goal of public transportation will allow Sheffield to participate in BRTA, the county’s transportation system. Sheffield has participated in the drafting of the HUD-funded Berkshire County Sustainability Plan and will also participate in reviewing the final draft.

This CDS was posted and made available for public review on December ____, 2013 and was discussed and approved at a public meeting of the Board of Selectmen on _____.

Certified By: _____
Julie M. Hannum, Chairman

APPENDIX ONE
SUMMARY OF PLANS AND STRATEGIES, *by year of adoption*

Ashley Falls Historic District (1988)*: The Ashley Falls Historic District promotes the educational, cultural, economical and general welfare of the public through the preservation and protection of the distinctive characteristics of the buildings and places significant in the history of Ashley Falls.

Zoning By-laws (1994, last amended 2012)*: The Town's zoning by-laws were created to promote the general welfare of the Town of Sheffield, to protect the health and safety of its inhabitants, to encourage the most appropriate use of land throughout the town, to preserve the cultural, historical and agricultural heritage of the community, to increase the amenities of the town and to reduce the hazard from fire by regulating the location and use of buildings and the area of open space around them. The zoning by-laws divide the Town into four districts (Rural, Village Center, Commercial, and General Business) and specify appropriate uses for each of the districts. Please see APPENDIX 1 for additional details.

Sheffield Master Plan (2005)*: Sheffield's Master Plan identified past trends, assessed current conditions, and described a unified vision for the future of the Town. The plan is a blueprint to assist the Town in ensuring balanced growth and change over a 10 year period of 2005 – 2015 and to guide the protection of Sheffield's small-town, rural character and unique natural resources, while maintaining or improving the overall quality of life for all residents. The Master Plan recognizes the impacts of unplanned development and sprawl on the character and unique qualities of the Town that make it a place people want to live, while at the same time recognizing that coordinated, sustainable growth can enhance these aspects and help ensure a vital future for Sheffield.

Economic Development Plan (2008)*: The Economic Development Plan is strategic guide for the Board of Selectmen, Town boards and the community to use in considering and developing policies, actions and initiatives for economic development in the Town. It complements the Master Plan and provides an action-oriented guide for furthering economic stability while fostering Smart Growth principles. The Plan's four key strategies are supplemented with associated action steps. The Board of Selected appointed an Economic Development Committee to implement the EDP.

Town of Sheffield Annual Report (2012)*: Each year the Town produces an Annual Report providing detailed information about Town processes, with general highlights and reports from the majority of Town departments, boards and committees.

Great Barrington-Sheffield Housing Needs Assessment (2013)*: The Housing Needs Assessment provides detailed information on existing housing stock for the Town and quantifies the urgent need for more market rate and affordable units. The report also identifies a need for housing stock rehabilitation as one strategy for affordable housing. The study focuses on specific findings, conclusions and provides a list of recommendations for the Town's consideration by the study's author, Berkshire Regional Planning Commission. The study was done under a District Local Technical Assistance Grant.

Those with a * may be accessed at: http://www.sheffieldma.gov/Pages/SheffieldMA_WebDocs/forms

**APPENDIX TWO
ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

Date Completed	Description
May 2005	Right to Farm By-Law adopted at Town Meeting
June 2005	Sheffield's Planning Board adopted the Master Plan, which addressed the following areas, each with extensive documentation and specific goals: Housing; Economic Development; Natural Resources, Open Space, Recreation, and Agricultural Resources (NORA); Cultural and Historic Resources; Transportation and Circulation; Community Facilities and Services; and Land Use.
May 2006	Establishment of Agricultural Commission approved at Town Meeting.
December 2006	Boarding House use, by Special Permit, in Village Center District approved at Town Meeting.
May 2008	Establishment of Housing Commission approved at Town Meeting.
May 2009	Establishment of Commission on Disabilities approved at Town Meeting.
May 2010	At Town Meeting, voters approved creation of an Economic Opportunity Area, Tax Increment Financing Agreement and Tax Increment Financing Plan for Bayer Material Science, LLC.
Spring 2011	New Senior Center completed under CDBG awarded under Federal Stimulus program.
May 2011	Accessory Apartment Use in Rural and Village Center Districts Zoning By-law, by Special Permit, adopted at Town Meeting.
December 2011	Significant extensions of Time Warner Cable system to underserved areas in Town are completed.
May 2012	At Town Meeting, voters approve and authorize Board of Selectmen to initiate and enter into an Aggregation of Electric Load Agreement.
August 2013	Town web site redesigned to promote better access to Town information.
November 2013	At Special Town Meeting, voters approved creation of an Economic Opportunity Area, Tax Increment Financing Agreement and Tax Increment Financing Plan for Berkshire Mountain Distillers.