

2. WHO WE ARE & HOW WE LIVE

Demographic Trends & Housing Conditions

1. Background

The focus of this chapter is to analyze Sheffield's demographic trends and housing characteristics, and determine their potential impact on existing and future housing demand, natural resources, municipal services, economic development, and land use patterns.

2. Summary of Findings

Current Housing Conditions¹

Sheffield is a moderately small town, with a greater population than most of the neighboring towns in south Berkshire County, but only half the size of Great Barrington, which is the retail/entertainment/population hub of the area. With the largest number of active farms in the County and half the area of the town in large land holdings, Sheffield retains a largely rural character. That character is cherished by the townspeople but unplanned development, principally of housing, could threaten it.

Most of the people who live in Sheffield are full-time residents (only 12% are second-home owners) and most (82%) own their own homes. Housing prices have risen by 10% over the past year, a slower rate than many parts of the Northeast. The belief that second homes are responsible for the rise is belied by various statistics, including the fact that of the 197 new houses built between 1992 and 2001 only 14% were second homes. A 10% rise in property values represents some \$36 million in increased equity for Sheffield residents, based on 2002 assessed valuation.

The supply of housing in Sheffield is fairly small and not that many existing homes go on the market each year. If new homes are built at the same rate as over the past 20 years, some 240 more dwellings will be built in the next 10 years, an increase of 15% over the total. Without development guidelines that encourage clustered growth, such as in village centers, and discourage strip development along roads, Sheffield will gradually become more and more suburban in character. In some parts of town away from the village centers, where the density is increased by subdivisions (the Glenanna Way area of Rt. 41 and the Clayton Rd. area), this is already happening.

Like most places, the price of a house in Sheffield is too high for a portion of the population, though Sheffield has more modestly priced houses than many of its neighbors. With Great Barrington and Lenox, it's one of only three towns in South County that has housing explicitly earmarked for low- to moderate-income residents. With its small number of rental units and preponderance of single-family houses rather than apartments, Sheffield has fewer units within the means of low-income and starter households than nearby, more urbanized towns such as Great Barrington and Canaan, Connecticut.

KEY FACTS ABOUT SHEFFIELD POPULATION AND HOUSING

Total Number of People	3,325
Town Master Plan; Town of Sheffield, MA	41
Section 2. Who We Are and How We Live: Demographics and Housing	
65 Year and Over	527 (16%)
Total Number of Households	3,321
Average Household Size	2.41

- Between 1980 and 2000 Sheffield's population rose by over 21% while the State grew by about 10% and Berkshire County actually lost 7% of its population. Of the 32 towns in Berkshire County, Sheffield ranks 9th in population and 8th in housing units according to the 2000 Census.
- With the second largest land area in the County, Sheffield absorbed the highest rate of population growth and second highest rate of housing unit growth in the **South Route 7 Corridor Area**² between 1990 and 2000. Additionally, Sheffield has attracted more year-round family homebuyers than other towns nearby.
- The highest area of population density is in Sheffield Center on the west side of Route 7 between S. Egremont Road and Root Lane. Also, the Ashley Falls Village area has a higher than average population density.
- Overall, the lowest percentages of younger people in Berkshire County live in South County. Sheffield is an exception to this trend, and has the highest percentage of under-18 population (23.8%) of the South Route 7 Corridor Area towns. This ranks 12th highest of the 32 cities and towns in Berkshire County. It is the only community in South Berkshire County in which the percentage of persons under 18 exceeds the State average of 23.6%.
- The age group between 35 and 54 years increased the most in Sheffield over the last 20 years and composed a third of the total population in 2000.
- In 2000, the percentage of Sheffield residents that had graduated from high school or higher education was just over 88%. This figure is higher than both Berkshire County and the State averages.
- The median household income in Sheffield of \$45,082 in 1999 exceeds the Berkshire County median by 15% but is less than the statewide median by 12%. The highest percent of local households (over 40%) have incomes in the range of \$35,000 to \$74,999.
- The local housing stock has grown steadily over the last 60 years. Approximately 70% of the total housing stock in Sheffield was built after 1940. The 1970s and 1980s were particularly active for housing construction in Sheffield. The number of new dwelling units built in this 20-year period alone represents over 27% of the town's total housing stock.
- Sheffield's total housing stock in 2000 according to the US Census Bureau was 1,634 units. This represents an increase of 132 units (or 8.8%) in housing stock between 1990 and 2000.
- According to the Census, approximately 78% of households own their own home. There is also a very low vacancy rate (about 1%) and a quick turnover when homes become available.
- According to the 2000 Census, there were 212 "seasonal, recreational, or occasional use" housing units. This amounts to about 13% of the total housing stock in Sheffield. Compared to Berkshire County as a whole (about 9% on average), Sheffield has a relatively

² The South Route 7 Corridor Area includes 7 South Berkshire County towns located along or in close proximity of Route 7 south of the Massachusetts Turnpike.

high percentage of homes used for part-time purposes. Newly constructed second homes have shown a trend to be located mostly in the southwest quadrant of town along Route 41.

- Residential development in Sheffield between 1992 and 2001 added 197 residential buildings on over 1,327 acres of land. The vast majority of this development were for conventional single-family homes on large lots.
- A total of 27 new second homes were built in Sheffield between 1992 and 2001 averaging over \$351,000 in assessed value, significantly higher year-round housing values. New second homes tended to be larger in size, use more land (12 acres on average), and have fewer bedrooms than year-round homes. In all, nearly 350 acres of land were incorporated into new second home lots between 1992 and 2001.
- The median price for residential property has increased significantly over the past 10 years. While there have been a few peaks and valleys over the last decade, single family homes on average have increased in sales price by \$93,994 (or 80%) since 1993. In particular, median sales prices have been climbing very fast over the past 5 years with single-family prices rising by over 70%.
- Sheffield's median sale price is quite modest compared with the state and below the South County average (\$166K vs. \$190K). While Sheffield's median household income is lower than the state's, the state's median house price was recently reported as being more than \$400,000.
- The homeowner cost burden declined slightly in 1999 as the number paying more than 30% of monthly income fell to 27%. For renters in Sheffield, the rate of cost-burdened occupants fell to 32%.
- Comparing Sheffield's median household income to the median home sales price and applying the State's threshold of affordable housing costs (no more than 30% of household income spent on home expenses), there appears to be a small "affordability gap" (estimated to be \$37,632 in 2000). By comparison, this represented the second lowest affordability gap in the County (of the 9 towns that have a gap). However, Sheffield actually has two median home sale prices – one for year-round homes and another for second homes – when considered separately provide more affordable options for year-round residents.
- The median cost of a single-family home in Sheffield in 2002 was \$212,000 while the median household income was approximately \$45,000. At 80% of the medium income (or \$36,000) the annual amount that a moderate-income household could affordably spend on housing costs would be about \$10,800 or \$900 per month.
- According to the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, there are a total of 30 conventional public housing units and rental assistance units meeting the State's affordability requirement in Sheffield. This represents 2.11% of the Town's total housing stock – well below the State's 10% requirement. In Sheffield alone, an additional 112 affordable units would be necessary to reach this threshold.

- The statistical data collected and trends analyzed in this chapter indicate a need to improve housing opportunities for a variety of age and income levels including both ownership and rentals. The goal is to increase the affordable housing stock toward meeting local residents' needs and complying with the State's requirement, while preserving Sheffield's control in managing residential growth and other land use objectives.

3. Local and Regional Population Trends³

While Berkshire County as a whole has been losing year-round residents over the past 40 years, South County⁴ communities such as Sheffield remained stable or have increased. By comparison, Sheffield's population increased at a significantly higher rate than both Berkshire County and the State between 1980 and 2000. Over this 20-year period, Sheffield's population rose by over 21% while the State grew by about 10% and Berkshire County actually lost 7% of its population. Of the 32 towns in Berkshire County, Sheffield ranks 9th in population and 8th in housing units according to the 2000 Census.

Overall, Sheffield's population has risen slowly but steadily over the past 70 years. From a population of 1,650 in 1930 the community grew to 3,335 in 2000 according to the last Census. This slow growth trend is indicative of Sheffield's agricultural heritage, which remains relatively strong when compared to other rural communities that are in closer proximity to larger urban area or employment centers.

Town, County & State Population Trends			
Year	Sheffield	Berkshire County	State
1980	2,743	145,110	5,737,037
1990	2,910	139,344	6,016,425
2000	3,335	134,953	6,349,097
% Growth, 1980-00	21.6%	-7.0%	10.7%
% Growth, 1990-00	14.6%	-3.2%	5.5%

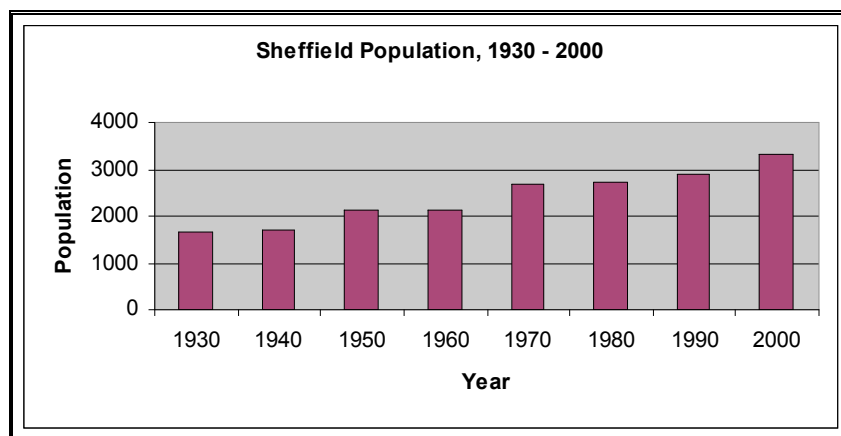
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

In population, Sheffield (3,335) lies between Great Barrington (7,527) and smaller towns like New Marlboro (1,494) and Egremont (1,345). It has more of a town center than those smaller towns, but much the same rural character.

Between 1980 and 2000, Sheffield received 592 new residents. Sheffield is the largest town in Berkshire County showing double-digit growth since 1980, but Becket, Otis, and New Marlboro, have shown faster growth. In fact, all other cities and towns in the County with a base population in 1980 of 2,500 or more had a growth rate of less than 10%, and most had a reduction in population. While the addition of 600 residents over the last 20 years may seem small, the potential impact on natural resources and municipal services can be significant for a small rural community.

³ Unless otherwise noted, 1980-2000 population data cited in this report were obtained from the U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census of Population and Housing, Summary File 1 and 3, for Massachusetts counties and subdivisions (cities and towns): ONLINE, American Factfinder server at www.census.gov/. Population data prior to 1980 were obtained from the Massachusetts Institute for Social and Economic Research (MISER), reporting selected data, Census of Population and Housing, 1930-present: ONLINE: www.umass.edu/miser/.

⁴ South County includes the 12 towns crossed by or located south of the Massachusetts Turnpike, with Great Barrington as their economic center.



Neighboring towns to Sheffield have had varying growth rates since 1980. For example the smaller communities of Mount Washington and New Marlboro have had significant growth (40% and 29%, respectively) while Egremont had only a slight increase in population of 2.6%. Great Barrington, with a base population of over 7,400 people in 1980 had only a 1.6% population increase (122 new residents) in the last 20 years.

During the 1990s Sheffield grew by 14.6% and the State by 5.5% while Berkshire County continued to lose population (over 4,300 residents or 3.2%). Sheffield's growth rate during this 10-year period is comparable to that of many communities in Eastern Massachusetts. With the second largest land area in the County, Sheffield absorbed the highest rate of population growth and second highest rate of housing unit growth in the **South Route 7 Corridor Area**⁵ between 1990 and 2000. Additionally, Sheffield has attracted more year-round family homebuyers than other towns nearby.

Population Change in Regions of Berkshire County, 1960-2000					
Town/County	Land Area (Sq. Miles)	1960	1980	2000	% Change 1960-2000
North County	203.7	44,842	43,713	38,629	-13.9%
Central County	359.7	81,172	81,838	74,929	-7.7%
South County	368	16,121	19,559	21,395	32.7%
South Rt. 7 Corridor Area					
Egremont	18.8	895	1,311	1,345	50.3%
Great Barrington	45.2	6624	7,405	7,527	13.6%
Lee	26.4	5271	6,247	5,985	13.5%
Lenox	21.2	4253	6,523	5,077	19.4%
Sheffield	48.1	2138	2,743	3,335	56.0%
Stockbridge	22.9	2161	2,328	2,276	5.3%
W. Stockbridge	18.5	1244	1,280	1,416	13.8%
Total	201.1	22,586	27,837	26,961	19.4%

⁵ The South Route 7 Corridor Area includes 7 South Berkshire County towns located along or in close proximity of Route 7 south of the Massachusetts Turnpike.

The migration of people and housing from North and Central Berkshire County to South County is directing growth away from established urban centers with extensive infrastructure and diversity of housing stock to areas without the infrastructure to support efficient use of land for housing and business development. This requires lower density development resulting in the use of more land, increases construction costs, and the loss of open space. In most cases, towns in South County like Sheffield, with very limited public water, no sewer service, and local roads that are not built to service higher traffic volumes are gaining population at a faster pace than other communities with established infrastructure and service delivery systems.

Berkshire County Population Trends & Projections									
	Census					MISER Projection			State Rank 20 year Projection
	1980	1990	2000	Pop. Change 1980- 2000	% Change 1980- 2000	2005	2010	% Change for 20 Yrs.	
Berkshire County	145,110	139,352	134,953	-10,157	-7.0%	142,873	142,968	2.59%	13
Adams	10,381	9,445	8,809	-1,572	-15.1%	8,565	8,230	-12.86%	340
Alford	394	418	399	5	1.3%	447	462	10.53%	239
Becket	1,339	1,481	1,755	416	31.1%	1,700	1,763	19.04%	167
Cheshire	3,124	3,479	3,401	277	8.9%	4,019	4,197	20.64%	155
Clarksburg	1,871	1,745	1,686	-185	-9.9%	1,667	1,587	-9.05%	335
Dalton	6,797	7,155	6,892	95	1.4%	7,900	8,114	13.40%	214
Egremont	1,311	1,229	1,345	34	2.6%	1,182	1,156	-5.94%	320
Florida	730	742	676	-54	-7.4%	851	869	17.12%	178
Great Barrington	7,405	7,725	7,527	122	1.6%	8,882	9,306	20.47%	156
Hancock	643	628	721	78	12.1%	881	1,050	67.20%	30
Hinsdale	1,707	1,959	1,872	165	9.7%	2,412	2,580	31.70%	89
Lanesborough	3,131	3,032	2,990	-141	-4.5%	3,060	3,004	-0.92%	305
Lee	6,247	5,849	5,985	-262	-4.2%	5,039	4,767	-18.50%	348
Lenox	6,523	5,069	5,077	-1,446	-22.2%	4,563	4,260	-15.96%	343
Monterey	818	805	934	116	14.2%	904	934	16.02%	184
Mt Washington	93	135	130	37	39.8%	186	216	60.00%	37
New Ashford	159	192	247	88	55.3%	303	370	92.71%	13
New Marlboro	1,160	1,240	1,494	334	28.8%	1,882	2,082	67.90%	29

North Adams	18,063	16,797	14,681	-3,382	-18.7%	18,825	19,324	15.04%	192
Otis	963	1,073	1,365	402	41.7%	1,393	1,520	41.66%	65
Peru	633	779	821	188	29.7%	881	941	20.80%	153
Pittsfield	51,974	48,622	45,793	-6,181	-11.9%	45,478	43,838	-9.84%	337
Richmond	1,659	1,677	1,604	-55	-3.3%	2,003	2,024	20.69%	154
Sandisfield	720	667	824	104	14.4%	677	689	3.30%	284
Savoy	644	634	705	61	9.5%	732	725	14.35%	203
Sheffield	2,743	2,910	3,335	592	21.6%	3,511	3,646	25.29%	118
Stockbridge	2,328	2,408	2,276	-52	-2.2%	3,057	3,232	34.22%	81
Tyringham	344	369	350	6	1.7%	712	809	119.24%	5
Washington	587	615	544	-43	-7.3%	880	1,097	78.37%	22
West Stockbridge	1,280	1,483	1,416	136	10.6%	1,317	1,270	-14.36%	341
Williamstown	8,741	8,220	8,424	-317	-3.6%	7,949	7,825	-4.81%	318
Windsor	598	770	875	277	46.3%	1,015	1,081	40.39%	67

Source: U.S. Census

Geographic Population Distribution

Sheffield is a rural community and residents are generally well spread throughout town. The overall density in Town is about 69 persons per square mile in 2000 (or .107 persons per acre), which is slightly higher than in 1990 when it was about 60 persons per square mile.

Ratio of Local to County Population Density, 1970-2000			
	1970	2000	% Change
South County			
Alford	0.163	0.238	46.0%
Egremont	0.377	0.493	30.8%
Great Barrington	1.040	1.150	10.6%
Monterey	0.141	0.243	72.3%
Mt. Washington	0.015	0.040	166.7%
New Marlboro	0.136	0.218	60.3%
Otis	0.143	0.263	83.9%
Sandisfield	0.065	0.109	67.7%
Sheffield	0.307	0.478	55.7%
Stockbridge	0.628	0.685	9.1%
Tyringham	0.078	0.129	65.4%
West Stockbridge	0.457	0.529	15.8%

Source: U.S. Census

The Town of Sheffield is located entirely in Census Tract 9261. Within this tract there are subunits referred to as Census Blocks. Map 1 illustrates Sheffield's population density in each of these blocks as measured by the number of people per square mile. Generally, population density is quite low. As shown on the map, the highest pockets of density in town are located in the Village Center on the west side of Route 7 between S. Egremont Road and Root Lane. Also, the Ashley Falls Village area has a higher than average population density. Census Tract 9261

Because of Sheffield's relatively large land mass

(about 48 square miles and second largest in Berkshire County), the density ratings for population (16th) and housing (17th) are lower than the County average. In 2000, Sheffield's population was about half of the county-wide density. In fact, the only town in South County that exceeds county population density is Great Barrington. However, the ratio of Sheffield's population density to the County has increased by almost 56% since 1970.

□ ***Please see Map #1:
'Town of Sheffield
Population Density'
behind the MAPS tab.***

Age Distribution

The impacts of demographic trends in South Berkshire County communities vary greatly. While some towns are attracting school-age children others are attracting part-time residents and retirees seeking a permanent home in the Berkshires. Sheffield is attracting both demographic groups.

Sheffield's population has been steadily aging over the past 20 years. The median age since 1980 has risen from 34 to 41 years of age, which is slightly higher than the median age for Berkshire County and the State. The percentage of people over the age of 18 increased slightly from 73% in 1980 to over 76% in 2000. The age group between 35 and 54 years increased the most in Sheffield over the last 20 years and composed a third of the total population in 2000.

Sheffield Age Distribution Trends, 1980 - 2000								
	1980		1990		2000			
Category	Town Pop.	%	Town Pop.	%	Town Pop.	%	County %	State %
Total Population	2,743	N/A	2,910	N/A	3,335	N/A	N/A	N/A
Male	1,324	48.3%	1,442	49.6%	1,623	48.7%	47.8%	48.2%
Female	1,419	51.7%	1,468	50.4%	1,712	51.3%	52.2%	51.8%
Age Category								
Under 5 years	167	6.1%	175	6.0%	178	5.3%	5.2%	6.3%
5 to 9 years	175	6.4%	197	6.8%	237	7.1%	6.2%	6.8%
10 to 14 years	206	7.5%	216	7.4%	238	7.1%	6.8%	6.8%

15 to 19 years	259	9.4%	180	6.2%	201	6.0%	7.2%	6.5%
20 to 24 years	200	7.3%	149	5.1%	125	3.7%	5.5%	6.4%
25 to 34 years	400	14.6%	455	15.6%	324	9.7%	10.9%	14.6%
35 to 44 years	324	11.8%	469	16.1%	595	17.8%	15.4%	16.7%
45 to 54 years	310	11.3%	342	11.8%	516	15.5%	14.9%	13.8%
55 to 59 years	169	6.2%	145	5.0%	221	6.6%	5.6%	4.9%
60 to 64 years	157	5.7%	162	5.6%	173	5.2%	4.5%	3.7%
65 to 74 years	244	8.9%	248	8.5%	299	9.0%	8.6%	6.7%
75 and over	132	4.8%	172	5.9%	228	5.5%	9.3%	6.8%
Median age (years)	34	N/A	N/A	N/A	41.0	N/A	40.5	36.5
18 years and over	1,115	40.6%	2,210	75.9%	2,541	76.2%	77.6%	76.4
65 years and over	376	13.7%	420	14.4%	527	15.8%	17.9%	13.5

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Overall, the lowest percentages of younger people in Berkshire County live in South County. Sheffield is an exception to this trend, and has the highest under-18 population (23.8%) of the South Route 7 Corridor Area towns. This ranks 12th highest of the 32 cities and towns in Berkshire County. It is the only community in South Berkshire County in which the percentage of persons under 18 exceeds the State average of 23.6%. This trend may be significant in terms of municipal service and tax revenue. New development that does not bring additional year-round residents generally brings in new tax revenue that exceeds municipal costs of services, but development that includes new residents including school-aged children often costs more to serve than the revenues it generates.

Racial and Ethnic Composition

Like many small rural communities in the Northeast, Sheffield's minority population is a small percentage of the Town's total population. Between 1980 and 2000, Sheffield's population diversity (in terms of ethnic and racial composition) changed very little. The percentage of non-white ethnic groups in the community has consistently been under 3% over the past 20 years. Compared to Berkshire County (5%) and the State (14.5%), Sheffield's minority population (2.2%) was relatively low in 2000.

Sheffield Ethnic & Racial Composition, 1980-2000								
	1980		1990		2000			
Group	Town	%	Town	%	Town	%	County %	State %
Total Population	2,743	N/A	2,910	N/A	3,335	N/A	N/A	N/A
White	2,660	97.0%	2,842	97.7%	3,262	97.8%	95.0%	84.5%
Black and African American	68	2.5%	53	1.8%	46	1.4%	2.0%	5.4%
American Indian, Eskimo or Aleut	-	0.0%	2	0.1%	16	.5%	.1%	0.2%
Asian or Pacific Islander	4	0.1%	12	0.4%	9	0.3%	1.0%	3.8%
Hispanic and Latino	25	0.9%	13	0.4%	44	1.3%	1.7%	6.8%

Some Other Race	11	0.4%	1	0.0%	21	0.6%	0.2%	NA
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Source: U.S. Census

Native Place of Birth

A slight majority of Sheffield residents (55%) are natives of Massachusetts. This figure is somewhat lower than the native population rates of Berkshire County and the State, which may be attributable to Sheffield's close proximity to New York and Connecticut. Two-thirds of Sheffield residents lived in the same house 5 years prior to the 2000 Census, which is slightly higher than the County and State averages.

Past Place of Residence and Native Place of Birth for Sheffield Residents					
	Sheffield		County	State	
RESIDENCE IN PREVIOUS 5 YEARS	1990	2000	% in 2000		
Persons 5 years and over	2,738	3157	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Lived in same house 5 years ago	1,726	2093	66.3%	61.5%	58.5%
Lived in different house in U.S.	981	1034	32.8%	37.3%	38.1%
Same state	631	24	17.0%	25.4%	22.8%
Same county	588	536	15.8%	12.0%	15.3%
Different county	43	498	0.8%	2.7%	7.8%
Different state	350	474	15.0%	9.2%	7.5%
Lived abroad or Elsewhere	31	30	1.0%	1.1%	3.5%
NATIVITY AND PLACE OF BIRTH					
Total population	2,939	3335	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Native population	2,871	3248	97.4%	96.3%	87.8%
Born in state of residence	1556	1845	55.3%	69.2%	66.1%
Foreign-born population	68	87	2.6%	3.7%	12.2%
Entered the U.S. in last 10 years	10	22	0.7%	1.2%	4.9%

Source: U.S. Census

Educational Attainment

In 2000, the percentage of Sheffield residents that had graduated from high school or higher education was just over 88%. This figure is higher than both Berkshire County and the State averages. However, those residents that have a bachelor's degree or higher in Sheffield is higher than the County average but about 5% less than the statewide average.

Educational Attainment in Sheffield, 1980 - 2000						
	Sheffield			County	State	
Educational Attainment	1980	1990	2000	% in 2000		
Persons 25 years and over	1736	1,951	2347	100%	100%	100%

Less than 9th grade	N/A	145	110	4.7%	4.6%	5.8%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	459	177	169	7.2%	10.3%	9.4%
High school graduate	895	713	908	38.7%	34.1%	27.3%
Some college, no degree	283	294	396	16.9%	17.9%	17.1%
Associate degree	N/A	137	100	4.3%	7.1%	7.2%
Bachelor's degree	205	298	429	18.3%	15.0%	19.5%
Graduate or professional degree	163	187	235	10.0%	11.0%	13.7%
Percent high school graduate or higher	89.1%	83.5%	88.1%	88.1%	85.1%	84.8%
Percent bachelor's degree or higher	21.2%	24.9%	28.3%	28.3%	26.0%	33.2%

Source: U.S. Census

Household Income

The median household income in Sheffield of \$45,082 in 1999 exceeds the Berkshire County median by 15% but is less than the statewide median by 12%. The highest percent of local households (over 40%) have incomes in the range of \$35,000 to \$74,999. It is interesting to note that Sheffield has a significantly lower percentage of very low-income residents (those under \$10,000) than the County and State, and a slightly higher percentage of very high income. (About 3.7% of Sheffield households have incomes of \$200,000 or more).

Sheffield Household Income, 1999				
	Town		County	State
Income Range	1999	% in 1999		
Total Households	1,358	100	100	100
Less than \$10,000	62	4.6	9.9	8.8
\$10,000 to \$14,999	92	6.8	7.5	5.6
\$15,000 to \$24,999	216	15.9	14.3	10.2
\$25,000 to \$34,999	152	20.6	13.6	10.4
\$35,000 to \$49,999	263	19.4	16.4	14.5
\$50,000 to \$74,999	282	20.8	19.6	20.1
\$75,000 to \$99,999	103	7.6	9	12.8
\$100,000 to \$149,999	97	7.1	6.3	10.9
\$150,000 to \$199,999	41	3	1.6	3.3
\$200,000 or more	50	3.7	1.9	3.5
Median household income (dollars)	\$45,082		\$39,047	\$50,502

Source: U.S. Census

According to the 2000 Census, there were 35 families in Sheffield (including 24 with related children under 18 years of age) that were living below the poverty level established for the region. This represents 3.9% of all families in town. While this figure is below the countywide average of 6.5% of families below the poverty level, it is still a concern of the community.

Demographic and housing trends show that new growth in the Berkshires has migrated southward but not because of employment opportunities. A disproportionate share of job growth in South County has been in the retail and service sectors, particularly in the

South Route 7 Corridor Area. These business sectors tend to pay a lower wage than others, which is a concern in Sheffield.

Retail and service sector jobs constitute a greater share of total employment in Berkshire County than in the State as a whole, and a significantly greater share for most towns in the South Route 7 Corridor Area. While this is probably a minor factor in population and housing growth in this sub-region, other factors, such as the second home market, have contributed significantly.

Seasonal Population

The “seasonal” or “second home” population of Sheffield is a significant demographic in the community. The town defines “second home owners” as “property owners not domiciled in Sheffield, and that file taxes and register to vote in other states”. According to the 2000 Census, there were 212 “seasonal, recreational, or occasional use” housing units. This amounts to about 13% of the total housing stock in Sheffield. Compared to Berkshire County as a whole (about 9% on average), Sheffield has a relatively high percentage of homes used for part-time purposes.

It is difficult to estimate the number of part-time residents in Sheffield. Applying the average household size from the 2000 Census (2.43), the estimated second home population would be roughly 515. However, this figure appears low to local officials.

4. Sheffield’s Housing Stock

Sheffield’s total housing stock in 2000 according to the US Census Bureau was 1,634 units. This includes an additional 132 housing units (or 8.8% increase) added to the housing stock between 1990 and 2000.

Type of Homes in Sheffield, 2000						
Type of Housing Units	Sheffield				County	State
	1990		2000			
	No.	%	No.			
Total Housing Units	1395		1634			
1-unit detached	1,132	81.1%	1334	81.6%	62.3%	52.4%
1-unit attached	15	1.1%	30	1.8%	2.0%	4.0%
2 to 4 units	146	10.5%	129	7.9%	--	--
2-Units	N/A		94	5.8%	12.4%	11.6%
3 and 4-Units	N/A		35	2.1%	9.5%	11.4%
5 to 9 units	31	2.2%	98	6.0%	4.8%	6.0%
10 or more units	5	0.4%	0	0.0%	6.4%	13.6%
Mobile home, trailer, or other	131	9.4%	43	2.6%	2.6%	0.9%

Source: U.S. Census

This is consistent with residential development trends, which have been predominately new single-family homes for a number of years. In fact, according to the last two Censuses the number of multi-family homes (2 to 4 units) has actually declined. Compared to both Berkshire County and the State, Sheffield has a significantly higher percentage of detached single-family units and less multi-family housing in the 2 to 4 unit category.

The average housing unit in Sheffield is around 40 years old, which is somewhat newer than countywide housing stock. (The median year that a home in Sheffield was constructed is 1961 while throughout Berkshire County it was 1950).

The median age of owner-occupied homes in Town is 35 years while renter occupied units are 42 years.

Age of Housing Stock in Sheffield, 2000		
Year Structure Built	Number	% of Total Stock
1999 to March 2000	46	2.8%
1995 to 1998	54	3.3%
1990 to 1994	139	8.5%
1980 to 1989	241	14.7%
1970 to 1979	203	12.4%
1960 to 1969	145	8.9%
1940 to 1959	306	18.7%
1939 or earlier	500	30.6%
Total housing units	1634	N/A

Source: U.S. Census

The local housing stock has grown steadily over the last 60 years. Approximately 70% of the total housing stock in Sheffield was built after 1940. The 1970s and 1980s were particularly active for housing construction in Sheffield. The number of new dwelling units built in this 20-year period alone represents over 27% of the town's total housing stock.

□ *Please see Map # 2:
'Town of Sheffield
Housing Suitability'
behind the MAPS tab.*

The majority of homeowners in Sheffield have been living in the same home for at least 10 years and the average length of tenure according to the 2000 Census was 14 years. As expected, tenure for owner-occupied homes on average are higher than the tenure for renter-occupied housing units, which, on average show residences of 4 years.

Tenure by Year Householder Moved into Home in Sheffield		
Owner-occupied housing units	1,082	100%
Moved in 1999 to March 2000	88	8.1%
Moved in 1995 to 1998	167	15.4%
Moved in 1990 to 1994	179	16.5%
Moved in 1980 to 1989	290	26.8%
Moved in 1970 to 1979	177	16.4%
Moved in 1969 or earlier	181	16.7%
Median	1986	
Renter-occupied housing units	287	100%
Moved in 1999 to March 2000	46	16%
Moved in 1995 to 1998	120	41.8%
Moved in 1990 to 1994	88	30.7%
Moved in 1980 to 1989	24	8.4%
Moved in 1970 to 1979	0	0%
Moved in 1969 or earlier	9	3.1%
Median	1996	

Source: U.S. Census

The average persons per household in Sheffield has declined as a whole over the past 20 years. In 1980, there were 3.37 persons per household and by 1990 it had declined to 2.87. According to the most recent 2000 Census figures and local building records, the average household size declined slightly during the 1990s to 2.81. A declining number of residents per household is not unusual. In fact, household size is declining nation-wide as the population grows older.

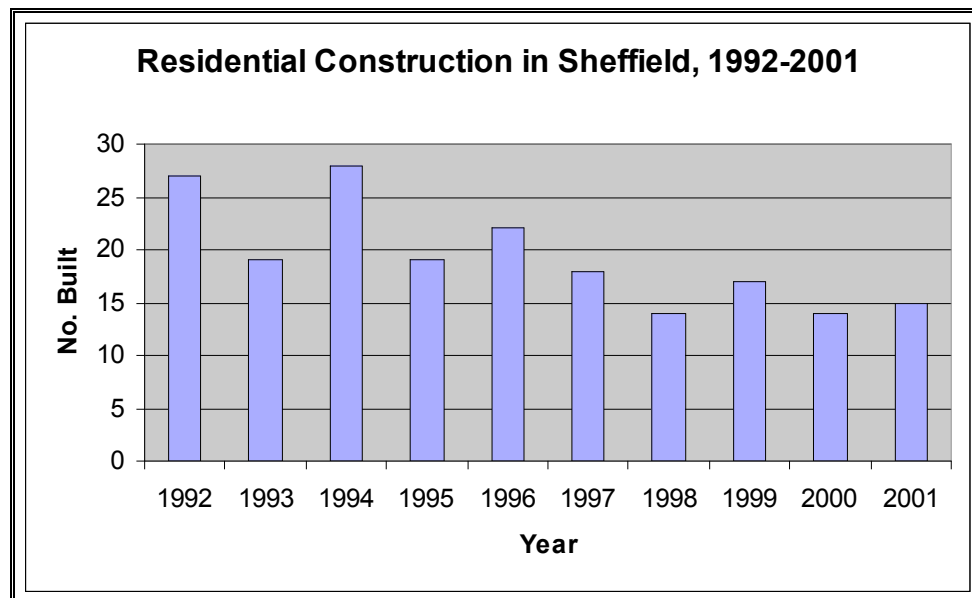
The majority of homes in Sheffield are heated with oil, which has increased slightly since 1990. While the use of propane has also increased, the use of electricity and wood have declined as a primary source of heating fuel. Comparatively, Berkshire County residents use less oil (approximately 50%) as the primary source of home heating fuel and more utility gas (over 32%).

Types of Home Heating Fuel Used in Sheffield				
	1990		2000	
Primary Fuel	No.	%	No.	%
Utility gas	0	0.0%	24	1.8%
Bottled, tank, or LP gas	68	5.8%	211	15.4%
Electricity	213	18.1%	139	10.2%
Fuel oil, kerosene, etc.	731	61.9%	898	65.6%
Coal or coke	8	0.7%	9	0.7%
Wood	149	12.6%	74	5.4%
Solar energy	6	0.5%	6	0.4%
Other fuel	5	0.4%	8	0.6%
No fuel used	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
TOTAL	1180		1369	

Source: U.S. Census

5. Recent Housing Development

The market for housing in South County is closely tied to the demand for seasonal or second homes for older couples, retirees, and housing for upper-income professionals with limited or no reliance on the region for employment. While Sheffield has the highest percentage of population 18-years or younger, the majority of new residential development over the past 10 years has been for part-time or seasonal residents.



The table below identifies residential development activity in Sheffield between 1992 and 2001. In this 10-year period, 197 residential buildings were constructed on over 1,327 acres of land. The vast majority of this development was for conventional single-family homes on large lots.

Residential Development Characteristics in Sheffield, 1992-2001						
Development Characteristics	Approval Not Required		Subdivisions		Second Homes	
	Total	Average	Total	Average	Total	Average
Number of Units	143	14 per year	27	2.7 per year	27	2.7 per year
FY2002 Building Value	\$ 29,637,700	\$ 207,257	\$ 4,555,600	\$ 168,726	\$ 7,366,500	\$ 272,833
Land Value	\$ 6,732,400	\$ 47,080	\$ 1,131,900	\$ 41,922	\$ 2,120,200	\$ 78,526
Final Value	\$ 36,370,100	\$ 254,376	\$ 5,687,500	\$ 210,648	\$ 9,486,700	\$ 351,359
Type of Dwelling	130 SF Dwellings, 13 other res. types		All SF residences		23 SF Dwellings, 4 other res.	
Sale Price		\$ 58,229		\$ 91,537		\$ 198,271
Rooms		5.9		5.9		5.6
Bedrooms	429	3	79	2.9	76	2.8
Stories		1.5		1.6		1.6
Land Area (acres)	939.5	6.6	38.6	1.43	348.8	12.9
Finished Area	187,531	1,311	29,699	1,100	39,774	1,473

Source: Sheffield Assessors Office

Subdivisions – Between 1992 and 2001, 4 new subdivisions are approved in Sheffield on the following roads: Bunce Road, Richard Drive, Nancy Lane, Glennana Way, Parsley Lane and Thyme Lane.

Among these new subdivisions a total of 27 new single-family homes were built on an average lot size of 1.43 acres. The vast majority of homes constructed were for full-time residences (only 3 are recorded as seasonal dwellings). On average, new subdivision homes had 2.9 bedrooms and 1,100 square feet of finished floor area. According to the 1990 and 2000 Census, the average number of bedrooms per housing unit in Sheffield was 2.7. Compared to new second home and existing lot (or approval not required) residential construction, homes located in subdivisions had a smaller less parcel size, finished floor area, and total property value.

In terms of impacts on municipal services, subdivision homes appear to be about the same as other year-round homes in terms of bedrooms and potential school-aged children. However, the new public roads created by these developments may have a slight impact on the Highway Department's responsibilities for maintenance and repair in the years to come.

Approval Not Required Lots (ANRs) – These new residences were built on existing lots, most of which front on public roads. According to state law if these lots meet the local zoning requirements (or a variance is granted) subdivision approval is not required by the planning board.

ANR residential development was the most prevalent in Sheffield between 1992 and 2001. In all 143 residential buildings were constructed on existing lots. These new year-round dwellings tended to be larger and have more bedrooms than subdivision homes. Also, they average a significantly higher lot size, 6.6 acres compared to 1.43. In all, nearly 940 acres of land were incorporated into new house lots.

In terms of impacts on municipal services, the potential for more school children was greater because of the higher number of bedrooms than subdivision homes and second homes. However, because these homes access private roads or existing public roads, their impact on highway maintenance services would be less with the exception of additional wear and tear on public roads caused by added vehicle trips. Additionally, there is a potential visual impact from ANR development on the scenic quality of rural roads. Where frontage land is developed for homes and yards, street trees, stonewalls and other attractive attributes may be lost. Sheffield must carefully consider this potential impact from residential development.

Second Home Development - According to the Town Assessors records, there were a total of 199 second homes in Sheffield in 2001, slightly less than the Census figure in 2000 of 212. This could be the result of different methods of counting and the conversion of some second homes into year-round residences.

Second and seasonal homes are distributed throughout town. However, there appears to be higher concentrations in the southeast region of the community near the Connecticut boarder. Newly constructed second homes have also shown a trend to be located along Route 41.

Sheffield Second Homes by Street			
Street	No. of Homes	Street	No. of Homes
ALUM HILL RD	1	KELLOGG RD	3
ASHLEY FALLS RD	4	KELSEY RD	5
BARNUM ST	4	LIME KILN RD	1
BAY LANE	1	MAIN ST	3
BEARS DEN RD	2	MAPLE AVE	3
BERKSHIRE SCHOOL RD	10	MILLER AVE	1
BLAIR LANE	2	MT WASHINGTON RD	1
BOARDMAN ST	10	N. MAIN ST	1
BOW WOW RD	13	N. UNDERMOUNTAIN RD	5
BRUSH HILL RD	4	OLD JOE RD	3
BULL HILL RD	2	PARK LANE	1
CLAYTON RD	2	PHEASANT LN	1
COOPER HILL RD	3	POLIKOFF RD	2
COUNTY RD	9	RANNAPO RD	5
CURTISS RD	2	ROTE HILL	7
DAVIS LN	1	S. UNDERMOUNTAIN RD	15
EAST MAIN ST	1	SALISBURY RD	10
EAST RD	2	SYCAMOR TERRACE	1
EAST STAHL RD	1	SHEFF-EGREMONT RD	2
FIDDLEHEAD TR	3	SHUNPIKE RD	3
FOLEY RD	6	SILVER ST	12
GIBERSON RD	1	SPRING HOLLOW LANE	1
GLENNANA WAY	3	UNDERMOUNTAIN RD	1
GUILDER HOLLOW RD	1	VALLEY VIEW RD	2
HEWINS ST	4	VEELEY RD	3
HICKEY HILL RD	3	WATER FARM RD	1
HOME RD	4	WEST RD	5
HULETT HILL RD	2	TOTAL	199

Source: Sheffield Assessors Office

A total of 27 new second homes were built in Sheffield between 1992 and 2001 averaging over \$351,000 in assessed value, significantly higher than both ANR and subdivision dwellings. New second homes tend to be larger and more expensive than year-round homes in Sheffield. However, they also have fewer bedrooms than ANR and subdivision dwellings. New second homes have had a much larger lot size, over 12 acres on average. In all, nearly 350 acres of land were incorporated into new second home lots between 1992 and 2001.

The fiscal impact of seasonal housing in Sheffield is mixed. Compared to other communities in the South Route 7 Corridor Area, Sheffield has a lower percentage of seasonal homes. It also has a higher than average single-family tax bill. Communities such as Egremont and Stockbridge, which have a significant amount of seasonal, housing stock, (28% and 32%, respectively) also have the lowest average single-family tax bills in the area.

Home Values and Fiscal Implications of Seasonal Housing Stock					
South Route 7 Corridor Communities	Total Housing Units	% Seasonal Homes	FY02 Single-Family Assessed Value	FY02 AVG Single-Family Tax Bill	Local Tax Bill as % of State Median
Egremont	866	27.9%	\$252,416	\$2,312	88.0%
G. Barrington	3,352	7.0%	\$180,683	\$2,822	107.4%
Lee	2,327	13.2%	\$143,383	\$2,222	84.6%
Lenox	2,713	13.2%	\$228,215	\$2,739	104.2%
Sheffield	1,634	13.0%	\$200,798	\$2,610	99.3%
Stockbridge	1,571	32.1%	\$139,135	\$2,057	78.3%
W. Stockbridge	769	17.8%	\$202,177	\$2,798	106.5%
Average	1,890	17.7%	\$192,401	\$2,509	95.5%

Source: Housing for Everyone Final Report, May 2002

On the surface, second homes in Sheffield tend to provide a significant source of tax revenue with a comparatively low demand on municipal services. These homes are typically located on existing public roads or private roads, have fewer bedrooms and school-aged children, and often secure open lands in conservation and preservation programs. However, the growing market for second homes in Sheffield and the value of these dwelling units has contributed to a rising cost of land and year-round homes. This effect may be making it more difficult for year-round residents with lower incomes and reliant on the region for employment to afford housing in the community.

While the demand for second homes is certainly a factor in rising homes prices, it can't be viewed as the leading factor. Glenanna Way provides a glimpse of what might really be happening in Sheffield. The houses in this subdivision sell at or above the higher median for housing, \$332,500. But only three homes there are second homes, according to figures from the Assessor's Department. If Glenanna Way is typical, another reason for higher housing prices might be that Sheffield has good housing values compared to other towns in South County, and has more cultural and civic amenities than many of the smaller communities. The overall trend in Northeast real estate and Sheffield's role as a suburb to Great Barrington are also important factors in rising home prices.

6. Home Sales & Cost Trends

The majority of homes sold over the past 10 years have been single-family homes. However, there have been relatively few overall residential sales in Sheffield during this last decade with an average of 10 total residential sales per year. In the early 1990s, the number of sales was actually less than the number of new homes constructed in town over the same period of time. (Only 8 single-family homes were sold in 1993). However, as the housing market continues to rise, the number of homes put on the market and sold over the last 3 years has averaged over 50. The fairly limited supply of homes for sale in Sheffield has contributed to the growing demand for housing and rapidly rising costs.

According to homeowners surveyed in the last two censuses, home values increased slightly during the 1990s. Of those surveyed, the median home value rose from \$139,500 in 1990 to \$153,600 in 2000, an increase of 10%. The median home value reported in 2000 in Sheffield is significantly higher than reported throughout Berkshire County. However, it was less than the reported median single-family home sales price in 2000 of \$166,500. (See the chart on the next page.)

Home Values for Owner-Occupied Homes in Sheffield & Berkshire County					
Specified Owner-Occupied Housing Unit Value	Sheffield				County
	1990		2000		
	No.	%	No.	%	%
Sample	596		816		
Less than \$50,000	16	2.7%	12	1.5%	2.5%
\$50,000 to \$99,999	110	18.5%	87	10.7%	35.1%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	215	36.1%	289	35.4%	32.2%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	153	25.7%	239	29.3%	14.5%
\$200,000 to \$299,999	79	13.3%	167	20.5%	10.3%
\$300,000 or more	23	3.9%	22	2.7%	5.4%
\$300,000 to \$499,000	N/A		12	1.5%	4.2%
\$500,000 to \$999,999	N/A		10	1.2%	1.1%
\$1,000,000 or more	N/A		0	0.0%	0.1%
Median (dollars)	\$139,500		\$153,600		\$116,800

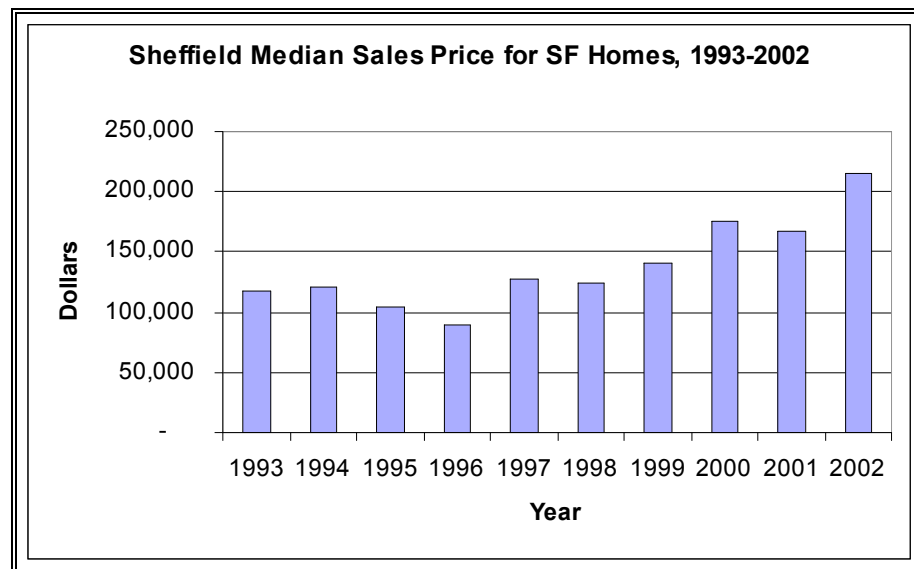
Source: U.S. Census

The median sales price for residential properties in Sheffield dropped off in the late 1980s and early 1990s as the recession took hold of the community. Since then, prices have been climbing fairly steadily in Sheffield as listed in the table below.

Sheffield Median Sales Price for Residential Properties				
Year	1-Family Homes		All Sales	
	# Sold	\$ Price	# Sold	\$ Price
1993	8	118,006	76	85,000
1994	12	120,500	102	59,500
1995	11	105,000	82	53,750
1996	15	90,000	73	85,000
1997	30	127,875	88	93,850
1998	28	124,750	90	105,000
1999	40	141,000	103	116,000
2000	62	166,500	119	145,000
2001	51	175,000	108	131,250
2002	51	212,000	107	170,000

Source: the Warren Group

Overall, the median price for residential property has increased significantly over the past 10 years. While there have been a few peaks and valleys over the last decade, single family homes on average have increased in sales price by \$93,994 (or 80%) since 1993. In particular, median sales prices have been climbing very fast over the past 5 years with single-family prices rising by over 70%.



The “median home price” covers many different sizes of houses in many different neighborhoods. While, this diversity helps make Sheffield a place residents want to be, a closer analysis of home prices and its impact on affordability to local residents is needed.

When the median (the number at which there’s an equal number above and below) and the average (the sum divided by the number of items) are close, it indicates that data is fairly uniform. The 2002 median sale price of homes in Sheffield was \$212,000. But that median and the average for all houses are quite far apart. A “cluster analysis” that divides houses into two groups—sale price above and below the overall median—shows a very tight correspondence with the averages. That means there are two very different housing markets in Sheffield, one with a median price of \$134,500 and

one with a median price of \$332,500. This analysis more clearly defines the housing market (and opportunities) in Sheffield.

Home Sales in Sheffield, 2002*				
Transaction type	Number in 2002	Total value	Average	Median
Transfers	60	NA	NA	NA
Home sales	71	\$18,854,000	\$265,000	\$212,000
Home sales without outliers	68	\$15,899,000	\$233,809	\$211,000
Home sales above median of \$211,000	34	\$11,320,000	\$332,941	\$332,500
Home sales below median of \$211,000	34	\$ 4,579,000	\$134,676	\$134,500
Land sales	39	\$ 2,964,000	\$ 76,000	\$ 50,000
*Source: <i>Sheffield Times</i> . Numbers are rounded. Transfers are transactions with no value or value of \$500 or less. Home sales are those listed with a street address. Outliers in 2002 included two sales of more than \$1MM and one of \$5,000. Land sales are those listed with street name but no number.				

These two medians reflect the realities of housing in Sheffield—the differences in the actual properties in size and neighborhoods (e.g., houses on County Rd. or Undermountain Rd. vs. Clayton Rd. or Polikoff Rd.). It may well be that there was once a predominately lower-priced market in Sheffield (median house prices were below \$150,000 as recently as 1999), and that a new type of market has shaped up since then, one that caters to people who want to live in Sheffield because it's a great place with good housing values (and thus use Sheffield as a suburb) and a small number of second-home owners.

7. Home and Rental Vacancy Rates & Costs

Homeowner vacancy rates vary significantly across Berkshire County. Countywide, vacancy rates have remained low and changed little over the past 10 years. Vacancy rates in South County are the lowest in the County. Sheffield (at 1% homeowner vacancy rate) has the 6th lowest in the County and third lowest in South County.

Rental vacancy rates in South County are very low compared to statewide and regional norms. While South County has 58% of Berkshire County's entire inventory of seasonal housing units, it provides just 13% of all renter-occupied units and 7% of the low and moderate-income housing units in the Berkshires today. The small inventory of units available for rent helps explain the significantly low vacancy rates in these communities. The overall demand for housing in South County explains why both homes and apartments do not stay on the market for very long.

8. Housing Cost Burden⁶

⁶ Housing Cost Burden: A household paying more than 30% of its monthly gross income on housing costs is said to be "housing-cost burdened." Housing-cost burden is one indicator of a housing affordability gap.

The “housing cost burden” throughout the South Route 7 Corridor Area appeared to diminish in the 1990s according to the last two Census counts. In 1990, 48% of the area’s renters and 26% of the area’s homeowners were paying more than 30% of their monthly income on housing costs, both of which dropped by 11% and 5%, respectively.

Incidence of Housing Cost Burden in the Route 7 South Subregion, 2000						
Town	Renters			Homeowners		
	Sample	Burdened	%	Sample	Burdened	%
Egremont	103	22	20.4	364	104	28.6
G. Barrington	1,122	417	37.1	1,375	318	23.1
Lee	751	302	40.3	1,465	196	13.4
Lenox	719	302	42.0	1,126	301	27.1
Sheffield	281	92	32.7	816	227	27.8
Stockbridge	324	83	25.6	518	86	14.6
W. Stockbridge	100	33	33.0	365	80	21.9
2000 Total & Average	3,400	1,251	36.8	6,029	1,312	21.8
1990 Total & Average	3,022	1,295	48%	5,187	1,337	26%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

In Sheffield, over a third of homeowners were paying more than 30% of their monthly income toward home expenses in 1990. The homeowner cost burden declined slightly in 1999 as the number paying more than 30% of monthly income fell to 27%. For renters in Sheffield, the rate of cost-burdened occupants fell to 32%. While the rate of Sheffield residents, both homeowners and renters, burdened by home expenses exceeds both the county and state levels, it is less on average than the Route 7 South Subregion.

Selected Owner & Renter Costs in Sheffield, Berkshire County and the State						
	Sheffield				County	State
	1989		1999			
	No.	%	No.	%	%	%
Specified owner-occupied housing units	585		816			
With a mortgage	357	61.0%	553	67.8%	65.0%	71.6%
Less than \$300	9	1.5%	0	0.0%	0.3%	0.1%
\$300 to \$499	60	10.3%	21	2.6%	3.2%	1.2%
\$500 to \$699	47	8.0%	57	7.0%	9.0%	3.8%
\$700 to \$999	108	18.5%	135	16.5%	22.4%	11.8%
\$1,000 to \$1,499	118	20.2%	214	26.2%	20.5%	26.3%
\$1,500 to \$1,999	15	2.6%	98	12.0%	5.7%	15.8%
\$2,000 or more	0	0.0%	28	3.4%	3.9%	12.6%
Median (dollars)	\$ 907		\$ 1,129		\$ 971	\$ 1,353
Not mortgaged	228	39.0%	263	32.2%	35	28.4
Median (dollars)	\$ 244		\$ 372		\$ 339	\$ 406
Selected Monthly Costs As A Percent of Household Income						

Specified owner-occupied housing units	585		816			
Less than 20 percent	253	43.2%	377	46.2%	55.8%	51.4%
20 to 24 percent	82	14.0%	132	16.2%	14.2%	15.0%
25 to 29 percent	58	9.9%	80	9.8%	9.0%	10.3%
30 to 34 percent	67	11.5%	40	4.9%	5.7%	6.4%
35 percent or more	125	21.4%	187	22.9%	14.6%	16.2%
Not Computed					0.7%	0.6%
Gross Rent						
Specified renter-occupied housing units	305		281			
Less than \$200	6	2.0%	20	7.1%	8.4%	7.1%
\$200 to \$299	13	4.3%	25	8.9%	8.1%	6.0%
\$300 to \$499	82	26.9%	34	12.1%	30.9%	14.1%
\$500 to \$749	114	37.4%	106	37.7%	35.3%	28.7%
\$750 to \$999	30	9.8%	32	11.4%	8.3%	21.8%
\$1,000 or more	7	2.3%	27	9.6%	3.2%	18.7%
No cash rent	53	17.4%	37	13.2%	5.8%	3.6%
Median (dollars)	\$ 532		\$ 565		\$ 499	\$ 684
Gross Rent As A Percent of Household Income						
Specified renter-occupied housing units	305		281			
Less than 20 percent	83	27.2%	86	30.6%	32.8%	23.1%
20 to 24 percent	26	8.5%	33	11.7%	12.6%	12.5%
25 to 29 percent	31	10.2%	24	8.5%	11.4%	11.8%
30 to 34 percent	11	3.6%	42	14.9%	8.0%	7.7%
35 percent or more	101	33.1%	50	17.8%	27.6%	28.6%
Not computed	53	17.4%	46	16.4%	7.6%	6.2%

Source: U.S. Census

9. Housing Affordability Gap

An “Affordability Gap” means the difference between prevailing home prices and what households in a given income range can afford to pay for housing costs. To determine this gap, a comparison is made between median single-family home sale prices to the home buying power of a community’s median family income.

In 2000 the Citizens Housing and Planning Association (CHAPA) conducted a survey of the affordability gap and housing costs for each community in the State. They concluded that Berkshire County had a fairly limited “affordability gap” (i.e. that in most communities, the median single-family home sales price was considerably less than what a median income family could afford at the time). However, in all but two communities (Richmond and Lenox), the Berkshire County towns with affordability gaps are located in South County.

Housing Costs and Incomes in South Berkshire County ⁷					Page 2.22
Town Master Plan; To Section 2. Who We Are	Sub-Region/Town	Median Sale Price (2000)	Median Income (Est.)	Affordable Price	
	South County				
	Alford	\$ 340,000	\$ 49,583	\$ 148,377	

Sheffield's affordability gap was estimated to be \$37,632 in 2000. By comparison, this represented the second lowest affordability gap in the County (of the 9 towns that have a gap). While the median home sales price has increased over the last three years, other factors such as lower interest rates and higher area incomes may be preventing the affordability gap in Sheffield from widening significantly.

10. Anticipated Housing Needs

Throughout Berkshire County, maintaining housing affordability appears to be most pressing in South County. While this region has a larger share of the County's land wealth, it lags behind in regional income levels. Providing affordable housing opportunities to low to moderate- income persons in Sheffield is a difficult challenge.

"Low- and moderate-income housing" can be defined as housing affordable to persons with incomes at or below 80% of the median family income for the metro- or non-metro area where they live.⁸

The median cost of a single-family home in Sheffield in 2002 was \$212,000 while the median household income was approximately \$45,000. At 80% of the medium income (or \$36,000) the annual amount that a moderate-income household could affordably spend on housing costs would be about \$10,800 or \$900 per month.

Common Definition of Affordable Housing

A widely accepted definition for "affordable housing" is where households earning 80% of the median household income of the community can afford the median cost of a home assuming that no more than 30% of the households income is spent on housing costs (including rent/mortgage payments and basic utilities).

To provide affordable housing opportunities to low and moderate income residents throughout the state, each municipality is required to provide for 10% of the total year-round housing inventory as eligible subsidized

dwelling unit. The number of housing units, which count toward the municipality's 10% goal for low and moderate-income housing, includes both eligible subsidized and affordable units, and market rate units in certain eligible subsidized developments.

According to the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), the inventory of all long-term use-restricted subsidized low and moderate income housing in Sheffield is as listed in the table below.

In its most recent assessment of Chapter 40B housing inventories (October, 2001), the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development counted a total of 30 conventional public housing units and rental assistance units meeting the affordability requirement in Sheffield. (Federal Section 8 certificates, a rent subsidy program, are not permitted as part of this count). This represents 2.11% of the Town's total housing stock – well below the State's 10% requirement.

Even though Sheffield added additional eligible subsidized housing units during the 1990s, the actual percentage as a total of the Town's housing stock declined slightly (from 2.39% to 2.11% of total housing stock). This is not unusual. According to the most recent Chapter 40B housing inventory, low and moderate-income housing units constitute 8.45% of all year-round homes in Massachusetts while 10 years ago it was 8.54%

Berkshire County Affordable Housing by Community						
Community	2000 Population	Resort/Retirement	Year-Round Units 2000	Total Eligible Units 2001	CH.40B Units	% Subsidized 2000 Base
Adams	8,809		4,352	341	341	7.84%
Alford	399	√	173			0.00%
Becket	1,755		739			0.00%
Cheshire*	3,401		1,458	3	3	0.21%
Clarksburg	1,686		683	7	7	1.02%
Dalton	6,892		2,831	156	156	5.51%
Egremont	1,345	√	624			0.00%
Florida	676		279			0.00%
Great Barrington	7,527		3,116	173	173	5.55%
Hancock	721		341			0.00%
Hinsdale	1872		775	8	8	1.03%
Lanesborough	2,990		1,299			0.00%
Lee	5,985		2,542	130	130	5.11%
Lenox	5,077		2,354	166	166	7.05%
Monterey	934	√	417			0.00%
Mount Washington	130		69			0.00%
New Ashford	247	√	107			0.00%
New Marlborough	1,494	√	630			0.00%
North Adams	14,681		7,061	906	906	12.83%
Otis	1,365		600			0.00%
Peru	821		334			0.00%
Pittsfield	45,793		21,000	1,697	1,697	7.96%

Richmond	1,604		718			0.00%
Sandisfield	824	√	351			0.00%
Savoy	705		313	21	21	6.71%
Sheffield*	3,335	√	1,422	30	30	2.11%
Stockbridge*	2,276	√	1,066	61	61	5.72%
Tyringham	350	√	146			0.00%
Washington	544		210			0.00%
West Stockbridge	1,416	√	632			0.00%
Williamstown	8,424	√	2,926	128	128	4.37%
Windsor	875	√	378			0.00%
County Average	4,217		1,873	273	273	2.35%
<i>Source: Mass. Dept. of Housing & Community Development</i>						

Affordable housing is a growing issue in Sheffield as well as the County and South Route 7 Corridor Area. There are several communities in Berkshire County that have little or no subsidized housing, and as a whole, the 31 communities are averaging 2.35% of housing stock deemed affordable. Only one community, North Adams, exceeds the state's 10% subsidized housing goal. Sheffield is one of only 3 towns in South County (there are 12 altogether) that has any such housing.

South Route 7 Corridor Progress Toward 10% Low & Moderate-Income Housing Units					
Sub-Region/Town	Year-Round Homes	Chapter 40B Units	Chapter 40B% (DHCD 2001 Inventory)	Chapter 40B "Gap"	Prior Chapter 40B%
Egremont	624	0	0.00	62	0
Great Barrington	3116	173	5.55	139	5.70
Lee	2542	130	5.11	124	5.79
Lenox	2354	166	7.05	69	6.15
Sheffield	1422	30	2.11	112	2.39
Stockbridge	1066	61	5.72	46	5.92
West Stockbridge	632	0	0.00	63	0

Source: Mass. Dept. of Housing & Community Development

In the South Route 7 Corridor Area, a number of communities exceed the County average but over 600 additional units of affordable housing would be needed to meet the State's 10% requirement. In Sheffield alone, an additional 112 affordable units would be necessary to reach this threshold. (See chart below.)

Low-Income Housing by Occupancy Restrictions			
Community	Elderly & Disabled Units	Unrestricted Units	Percent Unrestricted
Great Barrington	105	68	39.3%
Lee	76	54	41.5%
Lenox	158	8	4.8%
Sheffield	22	8	26.7%
Stockbridge	61	0	0.0%
Total	422	138	24.6%

With a relatively low percent of housing stock considered affordable, Sheffield may be vulnerable to comprehensive permits. To ensure that zoning and other local bylaws do not exclude affordable housing, M.G.L. Chapter 40B allows a developer of subsidized low and moderate income housing to request a Comprehensive Permit from the ZBA in order to bypass certain local zoning and other regulations, including density. While the ZBA has limited power to deny a comprehensive permit (all decisions are subject to appeal before the State Housing Appeals Board), the Board can impose reasonable restrictions with regard to the size of the development, site planning, and other specific characteristics of the project. However, the conditions imposed cannot make the project economically unfeasible.

If and when **comprehensive permits** are filed in Sheffield, the Town should negotiate with developers to ensure that the project will best meet the community's housing needs and legitimate planning concerns. Such negotiations may lead to a friendly permitting process. Additionally, if Sheffield takes an active role in site selection and project planning it assures that projects meet the community's planning objectives. This approach has been adopted by a number of municipalities in Massachusetts.

Anticipated Housing Needs

Affordable housing is an issue that afflicts numerous communities throughout the Berkshires and around the State. A regional approach is needed to effectively address housing needs. Factors such as housing demand, available land for development or building stock for rehabilitation, job availability, and funding resources are all important factors in providing affordable housing, and, in many cases, lay outside of Sheffield.

On the local level, addressing affordable housing needs in Sheffield must be factored into the overall Land Use Plan. The goal is to increase the affordable housing stock toward meeting local residents' needs and complying with the State's requirement, while preserving Sheffield's control in managing residential growth and other land use objectives.

The statistical data collected and trends analyzed in this chapter indicate a need to improve housing opportunities for a variety of age and income levels including both ownership and rentals. Feedback from the Community Survey, public workshops, and Master Plan subcommittee meetings prefer this be accomplished while maintaining the existing small town atmosphere and rural character of Sheffield.

11. Housing Assistance Programs

Rehabilitation Programs:

- **HOME Investment Partnership Program** – Zero or low interest loans for housing developers who pass these loans on to homebuyers and renters. This program targets very low and low-income households. In a rental program, 20% of units must be set aside for

households earning 50% or less of the area median income; 10% for households earning 80% or less of median income. In a home ownership program, it is necessary that all households are at 80% or less of the area median income without regard to proportions.

- **Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Program** – Federal tax credits are available for developers of affordable rental housing. At least 20% must be for very low-income households. As an alternative, 40% of the units may be set aside for households at 60% or less of the area median income.
- **Housing Stabilization Fund** – The HSF was created to stabilize communities by providing financial support for the acquisition, preservation and rehabilitation of affordable housing with a specific emphasis on reuse of distressed properties. It can also be used to allow new construction on infill sites created by demolition of distressed properties. Both profit and non-profit developers are eligible for the program, which can be used for both rental and project-based home ownership.
- **Soft Second Loan Program** – This program makes home purchasing easier by combining a conventional first mortgage with a publicly subsidized second mortgage. Municipalities in partnership with lending institutions are eligible for this program.
- **Housing Innovation Funds** – HIF was created to support alternative forms of rental and ownership housing such as a specialized level of management or social services, an innovative financing or ownership structure or other features such as transitional housing types, limited equity cooperatives, and preservation of expiring use properties. They are available on a competitive basis to non-profit developers only (i.e. Construct, Inc., CDC's, housing trusts, etc). Rental units must remain affordable for at least 30 years. Of the total units, at least 50% must be occupied by households earning below 80% of the area median gross income. Of the lower income group, at least 50% (or 25% of the total units) must be occupied by households earning below 50% of the area median gross income.

Tax Relief Programs:

There are a number of tax relief programs that the Town could choose to adopt in support of affordable housing including the following:

- **Senior Citizen Property Tax Work-Off Program** – The Town of Sheffield may adopt a program authorizing residents aged 60 or older to volunteer their services to the community in exchange for a property tax reduction. The maximum allowed is \$500, and the rate of service cannot exceed the minimum wage.
- **Historic Owner-Occupied Residences** – Sheffield has the option of adopting a special assessment that captures the increased value of substantially rehabilitated historic residences over a period of five years, with 20% of the increased assessed value added each year until the full value is reached. This can be an additional incentive for historic homeowners to continue to occupy and make appropriate renovations that may contribute to preserving the character of the community.

- **Low and Moderate Senior Income Tax Credit** – Sheffield has the option of providing this tax credit for property taxes on low and moderate-income senior citizens with a maximum of \$375 per year.
- **Income Tax Credit for Septic System Repair/Replacement** – The State allows for income tax credits of up to \$1,500 yearly (to a maximum of \$6,000 over 5 years) for expenses incurred to meet Title V compliance for a principal residence or to connect to a municipal sewer service, under certain conditions.
- **Lead Paint Removal Credit** – The state provides a state income tax credit for up to \$1,500 for each housing unit where lead paint is removed in compliance with state regulations. Unused credits may be carried over for up to 7 years.

Regional Housing Organizations:

- **Berkshire Housing Development Corporation (BHDC)** – BHDC is the most prominent housing development organization in the region. It has the experience and development capacity to provide technical assistance to less experienced groups and developers. It has also collaborated with housing developers on smaller projects.
- **Construct, Inc.** – This non-profit organization based in Great Barrington has worked independently and with BHDC to package and develop small mixed income projects.
- **CDC of South Berkshire** – This organization has the necessary organizational structure to consider housing development ventures but no current experience. The CDC Board, represented by business and finance leaders from the region, has indicated their interest in housing development.

Private Funding Opportunity

- **The Community Preservation Act (CPA)**- This new state law enables local communities to establish a transfer fee on the sales of homes in the community. The funds accumulated can be set aside and used for the creation of affordable housing, historic preservation and purchase of open space. This could be an effective tool for Sheffield in combating residential sprawl, enhancing local facilities and preserving cultural and scenic resources. Prior to the passage of the CPA, some towns created similar funds through home rule petitions to the legislature with the funding mechanism of a real estate transfer fee. If that is a preferred funding mechanism, such a petition could be investigated by the town.
- **Limited Equity Cooperatives** – In this structure, each resident in a housing development is a shareholder in a member-controlled management corporation, which holds title to the property. Residents lease the units from the Coop, and elect a board of directors. Purchase of the stock is similar to a down payment but usually costs less. Members pay a proportional share of coop's mortgage, taxes, maintenance, and operating expenses. To preserve the housing as affordable, a formula determines the resale value of the stock. The formula is

geared to provide a fair return on members' investment while keeping resale value in a price range accessible to low and moderate-income members.

Limited equity co-ops offer specific advantages over rental housing, including security, tax deductions, and some equity build-up, while housing costs remain lower in the long run. The cooperative is eligible for government subsidies that can reduce purchase costs or provide financing for the building.

Limited equity homeownership limits the resale prices of condos or single-family units, in a manner similar to limited equity coops. This approach is required through some state and federal subsidized programs and could be built into any locally developed program to preserve affordability. Typically, the length of deed restrictions used to limit equity remains in place no longer than 40 years.

HOUSING ACTION PLAN

The purpose of this section is to present a vision for the future of housing in Sheffield that reflects the wishes of the community as accurately as possible and to outline various strategies for achieving that vision.

Overall Goal

To expand housing opportunities for people of all ages and income levels while preserving the small town atmosphere and rural character of the town.

All inhabitants in the Southern Berkshires are affected in some way by the rising price of housing, both ownership and rental opportunities. Those who already own or rent homes may have children, grandchildren, or neighbors who need moderately priced housing opportunities. Those who rent have watched their monthly expenses mount as rents continue to increase. Thus, the bulk of this plan deals with the issue of “affordable” housing which can be defined as what a person or household earning 80% of the median area income of \$36,000 can afford to pay (either through available subsidies or reasonable market choices) without spending more than 30% of that income on housing costs (either rent or mortgage payments plus taxes and basic utilities). When we refer to “affordable housing” in this report, it also includes workforce and moderately priced housing.

The broader issue addressed in this plan concerns the impact of all types of residential development on the general character of the town. Given the development pressures on this area, it is imperative to take action now to ensure that Sheffield’s farmland and open spaces, wildlife habitats and scenic vistas are treated like the assets they are while addressing our housing needs. Future residential development can take place in concert with these features, and this plan presents some of the most innovative, efficient and least intrusive strategies for achieving that balance so we can have “Smart Growth,” consistent with the growing movement in the Commonwealth and around the country and in keeping with funding requirements for many state and federal funding sources.

This Housing Action Plan is based on the analysis conducted under Section 2.0 of the Master Plan and was developed in coordination with the Master Plan Steering Committee and Housing Subcommittee.

Housing Objectives

1. **Encourage the reuse of existing structures and infill development wherever possible to meet all general, senior, workforce and affordable housing needs.**
2. **Develop a definitive plan to achieve the goal of 10% for low and moderate income housing as outlined in Chapter 40B.**
3. **Encourage the development of small-scale and scattered site, senior, low and moderate income housing as needed by the current residents.**
4. **Develop partnerships with local and regional housing organizations to assist in providing more affordable housing in town.**

5. **Provide incentives through land use regulations to expand affordable housing opportunities.**

Housing Recommendations

The Housing Action Plan presents new strategies based on the inventory, analysis, and assessment of housing trends and the needs stated above. These strategies reflect the Community Goals and Objectives Statement and include recommendations and initiatives that Sheffield can use in future endeavors to manage and guide residential development.

Recommendation 1. Create organization(s) for the promotion, ownership or management of affordable housing in Sheffield.

Sheffield recognizes that affordable housing is critical to the well-being of the community. The town could initiate relationships with local and regional housing organizations, businesses, and religious institutions for the purpose of expanding housing opportunities for year-round residents. A standing committee would ensure not only continued attention to the issue but also regard for its recommendations.

a. Appoint a Housing Partnership Committee.

An independent standing Housing Partnership Committee needs to be established with broad representation. This committee would communicate with homebuilders and generate ideas for the use of state programs and locations for affordable and mixed-income housing development. This proactive approach makes it more likely that the site selection and development process will meet Sheffield's housing objectives. The committee's responsibilities would include:

- Working with other town boards to carry out the affordable housing strategy/plan.
- Reviewing 40B proposals and making recommendations to the Zoning Board of Appeals. (A summary of Chapter 40B and recent changes in state laws is included in Appendix 1: Glossary of Terms.)
- Serving as a clearinghouse for information on affordable housing for the use of other town boards and residents.
- Facilitating the exchange of information regarding affordable housing with the State.

b. Establish housing ownership and management entities.

Some possible options are the following:

- Local Housing Authority – Housing authorities are nonprofit corporations formed by the municipality. They are typically governed by a Board of Directors elected by residents of the community. Because local residents govern these authorities, they generally undertake projects that meet local housing needs in a way that reflects the goals of the community.
- CDC's and Non-Profits - Affordable housing can be developed and/or owned by non-profit groups (such as Construct, Inc.), community development corporations (CDC's), or religious institutions. The advantages of this approach are that housing can be developed less expensively and remain affordable in perpetuity.

- Community Land Trust in the Southern Berkshires (CLTSB) – The CLTSB is a non-profit organization made up of members throughout the South Berkshire area. It owns land that it leases to individuals who own the buildings on it. (Leases are typically for 99 years and are both renewable and inheritable.) The CLT lease allows people to buy a house for what it is worth without having to buy the artificially inflated land that it sits on. The lease restricts the resale price of the home to the value of the building and other improvements in or on the land, that is, the cost of rebuilding the same house and grounds again at the time of sale. This makes it affordable for every subsequent buyer, not just the first. No one buying that house will ever again have to pay for the inflated price of the land in the bargain

c. Consider a regional approach to meeting affordable housing needs.

The committee could interact with other South County towns to strengthen Construct, Inc. or other regional non-profit housing development organizations whose specific mission is expanding affordable housing opportunities in ways that meet the capacities, needs and land use goals of these smaller communities.

d. Create a Comprehensive Permit (Chapter 40B) Subcommittee.

(For a description of Chapter 40B see Appendix 1. Glossary of Terms.) The benefit of this subcommittee would be to have greater control over the type and scope of affordable housing development earlier in the process. The subcommittee would include members of the Housing Partnership Committee, Planning Board, Building Inspector, School District, Conservation Commission, Selectmen and public safety agencies (Police, Fire, and Highway Departments). (ZBA members would be excluded in order to remain neutral during the 40B hearing process.). The purpose of the committee would be to initiate discussions with a 40B developer in order to:

- Inform the developer of necessary prerequisite forms and procedures to be completed before an application can be considered.
- Discuss the particular affordable housing needs of the town.
- Discuss any environmental, health or safety issues associated with designated properties.
- Maintain open lines of communication and a healthy working relationship between the developer and the town, if at all possible.
- Ensure that the appropriate committees/boards are aware of developer's plans in a general way.
- Help to initiate the negotiation process (if deemed appropriate).
- Create an educational package outlining and encouraging developers to work with these guidelines.

This subcommittee could also reach out to developers interested in creating “friendly” 40B development. Doing this would benefit Sheffield in that it would allow the town to work with developers who are town residents or who have developed housing in town before, select developers for specific projects, and have greater control over the type and scope of housing developed.

e. Create a database of regional, state and federal housing information.

The committee would seek technical assistance, project sponsorship, and co-developer support from established housing planners and developers in the region such as BHDC and Construct, Inc.

Recommendation 2: Consider converting existing housing to affordable housing units.

All of the following programs could be used to qualify existing homes in Sheffield as eligible under Chapter 40B. Using this strategy means less land is lost to new residential development, the number of smaller homes being razed or “mansionized” is reduced, deteriorated properties are improved, tax revenues increased, and the percentage of total housing stock which is “affordable” increases compared to new development. Examples of programs to be considered by the town include the following:

a. Identify properties for affordable housing opportunities.

The “Housing for Everyone” Report determined that in each of the seven South County Subregion communities there were below-market homes, and a number at risk. Sheffield could identify these homes and target them for “rights of first refusal” and acquisition by non-profit organizations. Investing HOME, CDBG, and other funds in existing housing stock is a common technique used by rural development organizations to preserve and expand the supply of affordable housing. This approach increases the supply of affordable housing without new construction or land consumption.

b. Evaluate an Accessory Apartment Amnesty Program.

This program would provide an opportunity for homeowners with accessory apartments (both legal and not currently approved) to qualify these units as affordable housing. The benefit would be to bring accessory apartments up to code and increase the number of eligible affordable housing units within the existing housing stock. Homeowners interested in applying for the program would be required to place a deed or affordable housing restriction on the accessory apartment declaring that it remain affordable housing during and after the homeowner has left the home. Any such apartments would need to meet septic and water codes. These apartments would be available for people of all ages. The process of creating this program would be as follows:

- Update records of accessory apartments and identify all such units.
- Review the current bylaws to ensure that regulations are consistent with the goals of the program.
- Advertise the program and inform apartment owners of the benefits of participation.
- Seek funding for renovation of units to meet code requirements.

c. Explore land swaps as an option for affordable housing.

The town can exchange parcels it owns which are not desirable for public use (but are potentially good new home locations) for private parcels where residential growth is not desirable. While Sheffield does not currently have a large amount of town-owned land, it could exercise its right of first refusal on certain Chapter 61 lands when they go up for sale to use in a land swap for affordable housing.

Recommendation 3: Identify appropriate areas of Sheffield for new housing.

The town could be active in guiding the location of general and affordable housing (possibly selecting sites in town with better access to services), and in discussions and negotiations with 40B proposal developers (and in arguing against certain 40B development proposals if they are not conducive to achieving town's goals), and in bringing land use boards together to discuss affordable housing strategy. An approach to site evaluation would include:

- Identification of town-owned buildings not currently in use
- Identification of town-owned buildable land
- Identification of parcels of non-town owned land to consider for future purchase
- Identification of parcels where development would be prohibited for reasons of environmental sensitivity or health and safety concerns.
- Listing of each parcel's development assets and constraints.
- Prioritizing properties for affordable housing development

a. Identify areas for mixed use including multi-family housing.

Create small areas on existing local highways or main roads where a higher concentration of buildings and uses would be permitted on a compact site. Land use regulations could be amended to provide for a higher density of uses, including multi-family dwellings for 4 or more units. It would be preferable to site these areas near village centers.

b. Use tax title properties and other public lands for mixed-income residential developments where appropriate.

Sheffield may have tax title and other public land or buildings that are suitable for reuse or development for affordable and mixed-income housing.

c. Make use of donations or below market sales where appropriate.

Use of donations or transfer of land or buildings at below market rate to a developer who agrees to provide low and moderate income housing (secured by a deed or affordable housing restriction) can help to reduce construction costs.

d. Explore local and regional possibilities for Transfer of Development Rights (TDR).

It may be appropriate to work with surrounding communities to identify areas where increased density could be encouraged (receiving zones) and discouraged (sending zones) in order to promote Smart Growth principles. This could provide general and affordable housing where it is best able to be supported and maintain open space, forests or agriculture where it is most important.

e. Encourage the town, with community assistance, to exercise its 'Right of First Refusal' for properties that are good candidates for its Housing Plan unless it is more appropriate for the property to remain in its farm, forest, recreation or wildlife habitat condition.

For properties that are good candidates to move forward its Housing Plan, where it is not more appropriate for the property to remain in its farm, forest, recreation or wildlife habitat

condition - Private property owners are eligible for tax reductions when they devote their property to agricultural, horticultural, forestry, open space or recreational use. Similar mechanisms can be put in place for nonprofit housing organizations. If the owner decides to sell the land, the municipality could exercise its “right of first refusal” to buy the property at its fair market price in an effort to further its housing objectives in accordance with Smart Growth principles. Such a site might include a combination of affordable housing, open space and other public purpose uses.

Recommendation 4. Expand and enhance established neighborhoods with development that incorporates the characteristics of traditional New England village design.

It would be beneficial to provide opportunities to enhance smaller-lot neighborhoods, particularly around Sheffield Center and Ashley Falls, through narrow lots with reduced front yard setbacks, recessed garages (located behind the front of the house on the side or rear), and the short end (gable) of house facing the street. Examples of traditional neighborhood development patterns in Sheffield can be found on Elm Court, Maple Avenue, and the central area of Ashley Falls. The key is maintaining architectural continuity. Large, small, single and multiple story homes can all “fit” with similar architectural character in the New England village tradition.

a. Encourage housing and live-work units in commercial areas.

Upper story apartments in commercial buildings (such as in Sheffield Center) can provide new residential opportunities for low and moderate-income residents, make use of underutilized or vacant space, generate new income for property owners, and turn a business district into a more viable mixed-use community.

b. Encourage in-fill of new homes for low and moderate-income households where public water is available.

Detached housing can be within reach of moderate-income households provided that densities are high enough. Opportunities exist in some of the older neighborhoods for infill development where higher density is permitted and public water is available.

c. Encourage renovation of large older homes into multi-family units where appropriate and especially in existing neighborhoods.

Many older homes were built to accommodate large or extended families and often additional boarders or guests. These structures can often be renovated to house multiple families or individuals, where sufficient water and septic capacity exist.

d. Encourage “life cycle” housing in Sheffield.

Conventional development typically segments people according to housing type, size and price range. This is not the case with traditional neighborhoods, which typically have a mix of housing accommodating a mix of people. Life cycle housing allows people to remain in the same neighborhood even as their needs change by mixing housing size and cost. Social networks can remain intact, children need not be uprooted from familiar schools, and elderly persons can remain near friends and families.

e. Use quality site development and construction practices.

Lot frontage is probably the single most important determinant of site development costs and long-term municipal costs. Street and utility construction and maintenance costs vary with frontage requirements. Front yard setbacks are next in importance as driveways and service lines vary according to them. Smaller setbacks, frontages and road width requirements also make a neighborhood more walkable by “enclosing” street space. The integration of outdoor space is a critical principle of good design and a precondition for street activity.

f. Consider providing guidelines and patterning with incentives to follow them.

The town could create or modify existing guidelines from other communities to encourage development according to the principles outlined above and provide incentives, perhaps in streamlined permitting processes, to adhere to them.

Recommendation 5. Prepare zoning, subdivision and building code revisions to improve residential quality for all income groups and promote Smart Growth principles.

The Town could facilitate high quality residential development and create new opportunities through a series of revisions and amendments to the Zoning Bylaws, Subdivision Regulations, Building Codes and other applicable land use regulations. Provisions to encourage “recycle-reuse” housing strategies, “open space residential development” (a new form of cluster design) and co-housing (allowing unrelated families to share resources and common space) may take longer to implement but will yield results more in keeping with the character and needs of the community.

a. Promote a reasonable diversity of residential density with architectural consistency but without the appearance of crowding.

Density is necessary for affordability. Higher density means less land per unit and thus lower construction costs. However, higher densities are less noticeable when there is open space integrated into the development or on nearby land. Other elements that create the perception of spaciousness are small housing clusters, architectural consistency, commons, short blocks, low buildings, and natural landscaping. These can be accomplished through alternative design such as traditional neighborhood development, open space residential development, cluster development or planned unit development.

b. Consider a demolition delay ordinance.

This ordinance would require property owners to obtain a permit prior to demolition with a requirement that demolition not begin for a minimum period of time (typically 30 to 60 days). This technique can protect small homes and buildings which have become obsolete for their intended use but may be affordable housing opportunities if they can be saved through a combination of zoning, financial and other options that the town or private entities may be able to assemble prior to demolition. This is also applicable and valuable to historic homes and historic preservation efforts.

c. Consider provisions for accessory apartments, in keeping with the character of the neighborhood, in all residential districts.

Accessory apartments are located on existing residential properties, either within the original houses, garages or carriage houses, or as small separate structures. These apartments increase the supply of affordable housing and are well suited to small households, elderly and single people. Development cost is lower than that of new construction and there is less impact on open space or agricultural land. Allowing construction of new accessory apartments (in addition to the Accessory Apartment Amnesty Program outlined in Recommendation 2) effectively increases residential densities while preserving the neighborhood character as long as provisions are made to reduce potential impacts. Some specific considerations for amendments to the zoning ordinance for accessory apartments are:

- That they be in keeping with the character of the neighborhood.
- Requirement for owner occupancy on the premises
- Limits on the amount of alteration to ensure that the apartment remains accessory and does not become primary.
- Limit on the number of bedrooms permitted
- Minimum and maximum size requirements for the structure to be altered
- Restrictions on occupancy (live-in help; number of occupants, limit on unrelated occupants, etc.).
- Deed or affordable housing restrictions to control future alterations
- Parking requirements and guidelines

(Some municipal examples: Adams, Lexington, and Wenham)

d. Consider the careful conversion of larger homes to multifamily housing.

Converting large homes to smaller units (either as rental apartments or condominiums) can maintain the property owner's investment in a building that may be too expensive to maintain as a single residence or in which the extra space is no longer needed. If additional units are property use-restricted, they may be added to the town's Chapter 40B inventory through the Local Initiative Program⁹. It may also be possible to work with the CDC of South Berkshire or other interested organizations to subsidize the creation of accessory units or the conversion of single-family homes with CDBG or HOME funds.

(Some municipal examples: Ipswich, Lenox, North Andover, Stockbridge; Acushnet, Hamilton, West Stockbridge, and Williamstown).

e. Consider provisions for Inclusionary Zoning to expand affordable housing opportunities.

The State of Massachusetts authorizes communities to enact inclusionary zoning provisions allowing for the construction of housing for persons of low and moderate income. These regulations can provide density bonuses (allowing more homes per acre than permitted by underlying zoning) in exchange for affordable housing units. This technique can assist the town in achieving the required 10% affordability requirement under M.G.L. Chapter 40B (www.mhdfund.com). (Municipal example: Duxbury).

f. Prepare for Chapter 40B Comprehensive Permits

To date, Sheffield has not received any applications for Comprehensive Permits under the State's Anti-Snob Housing Act (Chapter 40B). However, the community could prepare itself by adopting guidelines that facilitate review of such permits and manage the permitting process effectively. The Town could also solicit "friendly" comprehensive permits, in

keeping with the small-town rural character of the town and neighborhood, coupled with use of the State's Local Initiative Program (LIP), to secure long-term affordability and increase housing opportunities in all income ranges.

g. Consider additional “village” areas where high-density neighborhoods already exist.

Additional residential districts in Sheffield could be considered for higher density through improved open space design, package treatment plants and other development techniques. This could recognize and enhance the neighborhoods' sense of community as well as providing additional housing opportunities in keeping with Smart Growth principles.

h. Provide universal access information to landowners when applying for building or renovation permits.

Guidelines and brochures already exist to help land or home-owners to think through universal design issues. This information could be provided early in the building or renovation process as a service to the applicant to help them and the town plan for the future. *See also model ordinances and web site resources in Appendices.*

i. Consider alternative housing accommodations for the elderly.

Recommendation 6. Utilize innovative public and private funding and technical assistance programs to maintain and produce additional affordable housing opportunities.

There are a number of state administered housing assistance programs aimed at providing affordable home ownership and rental opportunities. Many of them fund and encourage the development of mixed-income projects sponsored by community housing partnerships and developers. Often, these housing programs provide sufficient funds to bring high quality housing within reach of low and moderate income households. (See chart on next page.)

Selected Housing Assistance Programs	
Program	General Description
Low-Income Housing Tax Credit	See below

(LIHTC)	
Home Program	See below
Housing Stabilization Fund (HSF)	Acquisition, preservation, reuse
Capital Improvement & Preservation Fund	Preserve/improve existing projects where prepayment may terminate use
Soft Second Mortgage Program	Publicly subsidized 2 nd mortgages
Housing Innovation Fund	See below
Sr. Citizen Property Tax Work-off Abatement	Optional community service in exchange for tax reduction for 60 years and over.
Historic Owner-Occupied Residences	Tax stabilization for restored properties
Low/Moderate Income Seniors Income Tax Credit	Annual income tax credit for seniors
Income Tax Credit for Septic System Repair/Replacement	Tax credit for private septic system upgrades or sewer connections
Lead Paint Removal Credit	Tax credit of \$1,500 per units

Some programs that may have particular benefits in terms of fulfilling Sheffield's housing needs are:

a. Rehabilitation Programs.

- HOME Investment Partnership Program
- Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Program
- Housing Stabilization Fund
- Soft Second Loan Program.
- Housing Innovation Funds

b. Tax Relief Programs.

There are a number of tax relief programs that the Town could choose to adopt in support of affordable housing including the following:

- Senior Citizen Property Tax Work-Off Program
- Historic Owner-Occupied Residences
- Low and Moderate Senior Income Tax Credit
- Income Tax Credit for Septic System Repair/Replacement
- Lead Paint Removal

c. Regional Housing Organizations.

- Berkshire Housing Development Corporation (BHDC)
- Construct, Inc.
- CDC of South Berkshire.

d. Private Funding Opportunity.

- The Community Preservation Act (CPA)
- Limited Equity Cooperatives

Recommendation 7. Take steps (including the preparation of revisions and amendments to existing Zoning Bylaws, Subdivision Regulations and Building Codes) to ensure that all residential development takes place within a framework

that protects the rural integrity and small town character of Sheffield.

All members of the community will benefit from actions taken now to preserve those features of Sheffield that define it and make it a desirable place to live, work, and visit. These include the farms, open spaces and uninhabited forest regions, the traditional residential neighborhoods near the village centers, the old stone walls, the dirt roads, the older trees, the wildlife habitats and the wooded mountainsides to the east and west which are visible from many parts of town. These features are the backbone of property value in the area.

a. Take advantage of open space and natural resource protection opportunities in residential development.

Sheffield can use development techniques such as cluster/planned unit development, conservation subdivision design, transfer of development rights (TDRs), local land trust programs, and infill development programs, all of which are being used successfully by many communities to protect rural “resources”.

b. Consider an Open Space Residential By-law.

By providing for open space residential development Sheffield would create more opportunities for traditional neighborhood design with narrower streets and lots, setback reductions, sidewalks, street trees, common passive and active recreational areas, and open space protection. Focusing on community enhancing features will also enhance economic benefits.

c. Designate areas to be protected by the Berkshire Scenic Mountains Act.

Sheffield adopted the Scenic Mountain Act in the 1970's, so just needs to define the applicable areas and regulations. The purpose of this act is to allow any town in Berkshire County to protect its watershed resources and to preserve the natural scenic qualities of its environment. Sheffield could use the provisions of this law to ensure that the mountainsides and ridges on its eastern and western borders are not developed in a way that scars the landscape or creates watershed hazards.
(Municipal example: Alford).

d. Encourage the use of common driveways where appropriate.

The town could encourage people building on new or existing lots to share driveways and thereby reduce the loss of open or untouched space that occurs where new driveways are carved into the landscape. This arrangement is also useful for accessing sites that are hidden from view and as such are desirable development locations.

e. Encourage maintenance of existing trees and planting of new ones, especially in areas of new residential development.

Trees provide significant cooling in developed areas, are effective in controlling humidity, and can act as windbreaks in extreme weather. They are also one of the best investments for home appreciation. As opposed to clear cutting lands for new homes, existing trees of a certain size (i.e. 18 inches in diameter or more) would be preserved where possible. New

trees would be planted where existing trees cannot be saved, in treeless areas along streets and in the center of cul-de-sacs. Trees could also be used as buffers between adjacent land uses.