

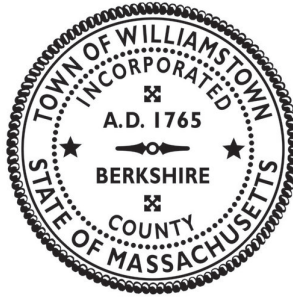
Envisioning Williamstown 2035

A Comprehensive Plan for the Future

November 2023







ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Town of Williamstown would like to thank all those who helped shape Envisioning Williamstown 2035 - Williamstown's long-range plan to guide future land use, growth, and development - including the Comprehensive Planning Steering Committee, Town Staff (special thanks to Andrew Groff, Community Development Director) the consulting team, and the community at large. Special thanks to the dedicated volunteers of the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee for their work in guiding the comprehensive planning process. Members included:

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This Comprehensive Plan was approved unanimously by the Steering Committee on November 7th, 2023 and by a 4 to 1 vote by the Planning Board on November 14th, 2023.





LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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



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Part 1

Introduction



WHAT IS ENVISIONING WILLIAMSTOWN 2035?

Envisioning Williamstown 2035 is the result of a community-wide effort to understand the town as it exists today and to plan for its future.

Comprehensive plans provide a way for communities to plan for and respond to change over time, and serve as long-range (10+ year) visionary documents that guide the municipality's physical evolution. How Williamstown decides to steward its natural resources and built environment now, and in the future, will have a direct impact on its residents, the local economy and its businesses, its community character and vibrancy, the quality of its transportation system, the diversity of housing opportunities, the quality and longevity of its public facilities and services, and its overall resilience.

Envisioning Williamstown 2035 helps the community imagine—and create—a preferred future.

Envisioning Williamstown 2035 was created to inform and guide these efforts and is intended to be a “living document”, as conditions in town will inherently change over time. It will inform land use and other policy decisions, infrastructure investments, and other initiatives in Williamstown that will need to be initiated or accomplished over the next decade. The Plan will serve as a “road map” and starting point for fostering a desirable, inclusive, and sustainable place to live, work, and visit. To accomplish this, the Plan identifies policies and strategies for advancing key community priorities. The Plan also sets the stage for more detailed capital planning, area planning, and development regulations that will be focused on during implementation.

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING IN MASSACHUSETTS

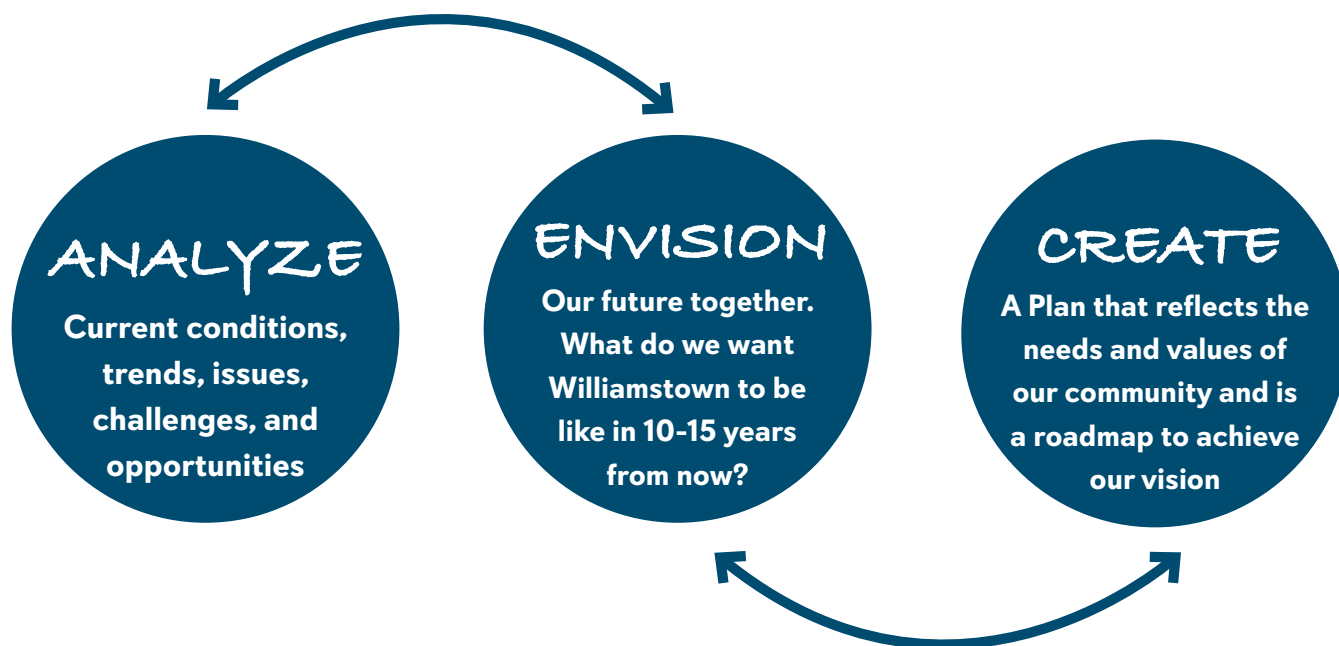
The Commonwealth of Massachusetts directs Planning Boards established in any City or Town under Chapter 41, Section 81D to “make a master plan of such city or town or such part or parts thereof as said board may deem advisable and from time to time may extend or perfect such plan”. The resulting plan is intended to provide “a statement, through text, maps, illustrations or other forms of communication, that is designed to provide a basis for decision making regarding the long-term physical development of the municipality.”

While a comprehensive or master plan is not a regulatory document, it does provide the legal basis for zoning and other land use regulations. It also provides a big-picture view of where a community is today and a community vision for where it wants to be, along with actions necessary to achieve the community’s vision. The comprehensive plan addresses a wide range of topics related to development and land use, including transportation; natural resources; housing; parks and open space; public facilities and services; economic development; historic and cultural resources; and sustainability, equity, and inclusion.

This Comprehensive Plan for Williamstown is a policy document that includes actions specific enough to provide clear direction, while also allowing some level of flexibility in how these efforts are implemented. In some cases, the Plan identifies issues and projects that will require further analysis, study, and discussion. The vision and overarching planning framework in this document were shaped by the community members themselves through public engagement throughout the planning process.

To achieve this vision, collaboration among town staff, local officials, community partners, non-profit organizations, local businesses, developers, property owners, residents, regional organizations, state agencies, and others will be required. Together, this will build the momentum needed to accomplish the projects that will help Williamstown remain a viable, vibrant, and resilient place to live, work, and visit. As projects, policies, and programs are evaluated and created, Williamstown should ensure that these initiatives are consistent with the Vision and Future Land Use Strategy presented in this comprehensive plan.

OUR PROCESS FOR ENVISIONING WILLIAMSTOWN IN 2035



Envisioning Williamstown 2035 is the result of more than two years of organizing, research and analysis, outreach and engagement, and planning for the future of the community.

The planning process for this comprehensive planning initiative included the following elements:

GUIDANCE FROM THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE

Regular meetings with Town staff and the Steering Committee guided the development of Envisioning

Williamstown 2035, and ensured that the Plan reflected the vision, needs, and desires of residents, community realities, and integrated known priorities and projects already underway.

REVIEW OF MUNICIPAL AND REGIONAL PLANS AND DOCUMENTS

The consulting team collected and reviewed all available plans, studies, and reports that were completed by the Town and other partners to better understand the existing conditions of Williamstown, key issues, and opportunities already identified, and challenges the town is facing.

ANALYSIS OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

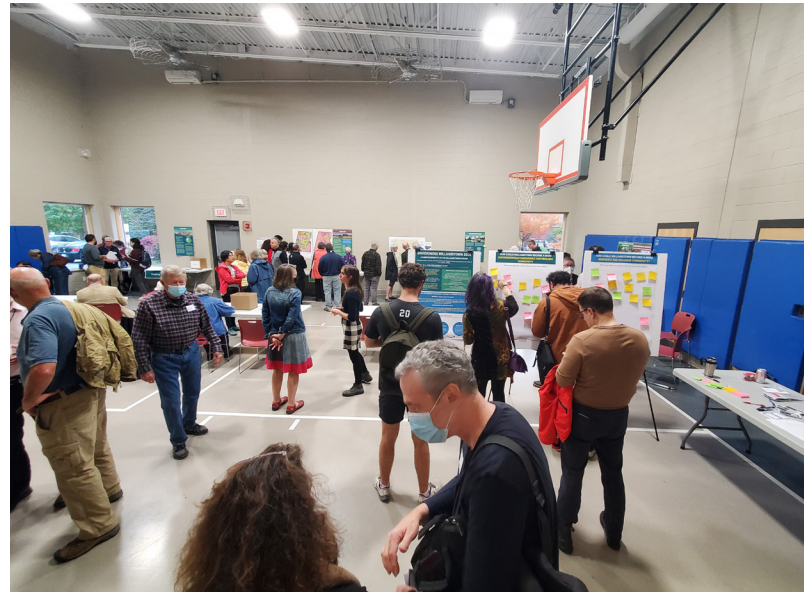
The consulting team then further inventoried and analyzed a variety of topics to inform the development of this Comprehensive Plan. These include housing, economic development, transportation, public facilities and services, natural resources, parks - open space - recreation, historic and cultural resources, and land use. For all of these topics existing data on current conditions, observable trends, and specific issues were explored during this analysis and provided a foundation for the creation of the vision, future land use strategy, and implementation actions included in this Plan were created. The Appendix includes the full Existing Conditions Analysis report, providing a deeper understanding of Williamstown today.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Along with the inventory and analysis of existing conditions, community desires and priorities drove the creation of this Plan. During each phase of the outreach and engagement process, members of the public were involved and given the opportunity to contribute to the project through the following mechanisms:

GETTING THE WORD OUT

A project website, fliers, email sign-up, and online feedback form were used to keep the public informed throughout the planning process. The website received 4,843 total visits and had 1,432 unique website users. Early on in the project, a naming contest helped raise awareness of



this planning initiative and resulted in the name Envisioning Williamstown 2035.

TABLING

Members of the Committee helped to get the word out about this comprehensive planning effort by tabling at the Farmers Market and other events. This provided an opportunity to connect with individuals in the community to gather input, discuss the project, and collect contact information for future communications.

COMMUNITY FORUM EVENTS

On October 13th, 2022, the Town of Williamstown held two back-to-back community forum events at the Williamstown Youth Center. The purpose of the forums was to share current information and data on Williamstown with the public, and to learn about community member's perspectives, thoughts, and vision for the future of the town.

An alternative online tool was also made available to the wider community that mirrored the community forum events. An interactive display was also hosted at the public library. This increased participation and provided other options to those who were unable to attend the community forum events.

A group of Williams College students contributed to the Comprehensive Plan by conducting additional outreach for Envisioning Williamstown 2035 as part of their Environmental Planning coursework. The students conducted targeted community outreach to typically underrepresented populations including:

- Youth (K-12 population)
- Seniors
- Low-income residents
- People employed in (but not living in) Williamstown
- Williams College students



During the Spring of 2023, Steering Committee members hosted several public events to share and solicit feedback on the draft vision statement and Future Land use strategy. These events were held at a variety of locations throughout the community.

The feedback from the public engagement process drove the development of the vision, future land use strategy, and implementation actions in this Comprehensive Plan. The Appendix includes a summary report further detailing these outreach mechanisms, and the key findings collected through the public engagement phases of this project.



NAVIGATING THIS PLAN

Envisioning Williamstown 2035 is structured to be a holistic and visionary planning document.

It was written to be accessible to a variety of users and easy to navigate depending on an individual's interests or priorities. Community issues are multidisciplinary by nature and best addressed through integrated efforts and approaches. Opportunities and challenges related to housing, transportation, natural resources, community facilities, and other topics are interrelated and land use planning tie many of these topics together. To be a truly effective and holistic plan, this document must embrace cross-departmental and cross jurisdictional approaches to find places where priorities and opportunities converge, and then identify how they may be leveraged to meet the community's vision. To assist with this, the Plan has been assembled in five parts as outlined below:

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

Provides an overview of Envisioning Williamstown 2035 and the process that was used to develop this path forward.

PART 2: WILLIAMSTOWN TODAY AND TOMORROW

Provides a summary of where the community is today and highlights the town's opportunities and challenges looking into the future. This provided the baseline understanding that helped to inform the town's vision and future land use strategy that follow. The vision and future land use strategy explain where the community is headed, and how land use changes in Williamstown should be guided over time as this plan is implemented.

PART 3: PLANNING THEMES AND FRAMEWORKS

Introduces the planning themes and frameworks that the remainder of the plan is organized within. This is where Williamstown's commitment to the overarching community planning frameworks of Sustainability and Community Resilience and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion are first introduced. The four planning themes, which were informed by public outreach, analysis of community conditions and issues, and in-depth conversations with the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee, provide the organization of this part of the plan.

The planning themes are:

- **Distinct and Diverse**
- **Stewardship and Services**
- **Welcoming and Connected**
- **Character and Place**

Each theme includes community driven priorities and actions that together will shape the future policies, best practices, and projects Williamstown will pursue during implementation. These themes touch on the many topics typically addressed including land use, housing, transportation, natural resources, the local economy, and others and bring these components together to facilitate coordinated action across local government and the community as a

whole. This approach breaks down the traditional planning silos and encourages holistic and collaborative approaches to implementation.

PART 4: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN AND MATRIX

Includes an overview of the implementation process that will bring this Plan to life over the coming decade. This includes a matrix of actions organized under the four planning themes and information on how to best organize, prioritize, and track the implementation of Envisioning Williamstown 2035. This will help inform and guide Williamstown's future policy changes, capital improvement planning, infrastructure investments, and other initiatives over time. Together, the whole community can commit to a dedicated implementation effort and work to make the vision of Williamstown's future a reality.

PART 5: APPENDICES

Two important supporting documents have been included in the Appendix to serve as resources, and to provide access to the work that informed the creation of this Plan. This includes the Existing Conditions Analysis Report and an Outreach and Engagement Report.



Part 2

Williamstown Today and Tomorrow



WILLIAMSTOWN TODAY: CURRENT CONDITIONS, OPPORTUNITIES, AND CHALLENGES

Located in Northern Berkshire County and bordering both Vermont and New York, Williamstown's landscape is notable for its steep wooded hillsides, open fields and vistas, and in-town neighborhoods. With Williams College in the core of the town, there is a constant blend of campus and community life that makes Williamstown unique in the region. The town center and surrounding neighborhoods provide a diversity of housing and businesses. Outside the town center and nearby areas, Williamstown quickly becomes much more rural in its character. Large fields, working farms and forestlands, rolling hills, single-family residences, and narrow, unpaved back roads all

contribute to the distinct feel of these areas. Finding ways to balance the protection of the remaining agricultural lands (which support existing and future farming in these areas of town) and forest lands while also accommodating future development is a challenge residents will need to address together. Housing affordability, for both limited rental units and homeowner units, high housing construction costs, and environmental constraints that impact new development also continue to be pressing issues in town as boards, committees, organizations, and developers work to increase the diversity and availability of high-quality affordable housing units in Williamstown.



Williams College is an economic anchor of Williamstown, but there are other notable businesses and institutions that also attract visitors and employees to the community. Tourism and visitation is a major driver of the local economy, as Williamstown and the broader region boasts a number of destinations including the Clark Art Institute, Mass MoCa, museums, a theater, proximity to the Mt. Greylock State Reservation, and several outdoor recreation opportunities. The increase in remote workers living

in Williamstown is another emerging trend that has been observed and may provide some new opportunities and some new challenges, especially as they relate to housing development and reduced affordability.

As a small town, the existing municipal facilities and services appear to be serving the population adequately. Aside from the need for improvements to the Town Offices, Fire Department facility (construction planned for 2024), Harper Senior Center, and the Library, the other municipal structures have received the reasonable levels of investment and the roadway system is well maintained. Looking into the future, the timely coordination of facility and infrastructure projects should be coordinated through the capital improvement planning process.

Passage of a net zero carbon resolution set the stage for incorporating net zero greenhouse gas emissions, sustainability, and resilience objectives into the design and operation of municipal sites, structures, and fleets, and to identify related opportunities to explore across all sectors. This represents a strong commitment to reducing emissions going forward. Related to this, the biggest threat to the existing transportation system, water and sewer system, and stormwater system is from climate change as large isolated storm events have started to



During this planning process, the following directives emerged as community priorities for future planning:

- Balancing the conservation of Williamstown's natural landscapes with strategically guiding future development.
- Understanding infrastructure needs to guide capital improvement planning and support future growth.
- Addressing housing issues related to housing affordability and housing diversity through regulatory and non-regulatory methods.
- Investing in alternative transportation improvements including pedestrian, bicycle, public transit, trail, and EV infrastructure.
- Building sustainability and equity into the implementation of this Plan.
- Supporting and retaining existing businesses and attracting new businesses.

impact different areas of the community at various times causing flooding and increased river bank erosion.

While Williamstown does have sidewalks and multi-use pathways in some areas, additional investment in pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure would increase alternative transportation connections throughout town and encourage biking and walking to key destinations are safe, accessible, and well-connected throughout the community.

Through the passing of town resolutions and the establishment of the Diversity, Racial Equity, and Inclusion Committee, Williamstown has been demonstrating its

commitment to creating a vibrant, safe, and accessible community that supports the lives of all who live, work, and play in town. Looking ahead, there is a strong desire to continue supporting initiatives that yield tangible results for creating a more equitable and inclusive community, celebrating the past and present diversity of Williamstown's residents, and supporting the needs of both long-time and newly arriving residents. While the historic structures and sites in the town center area contribute to the charm of the community, they alone do not represent an accurate or complete history of Williamstown. There is an interest in acknowledging and highlighting life in

Williamstown prior to the arrival of European settlers to communicate a more complete and accurate historical record.

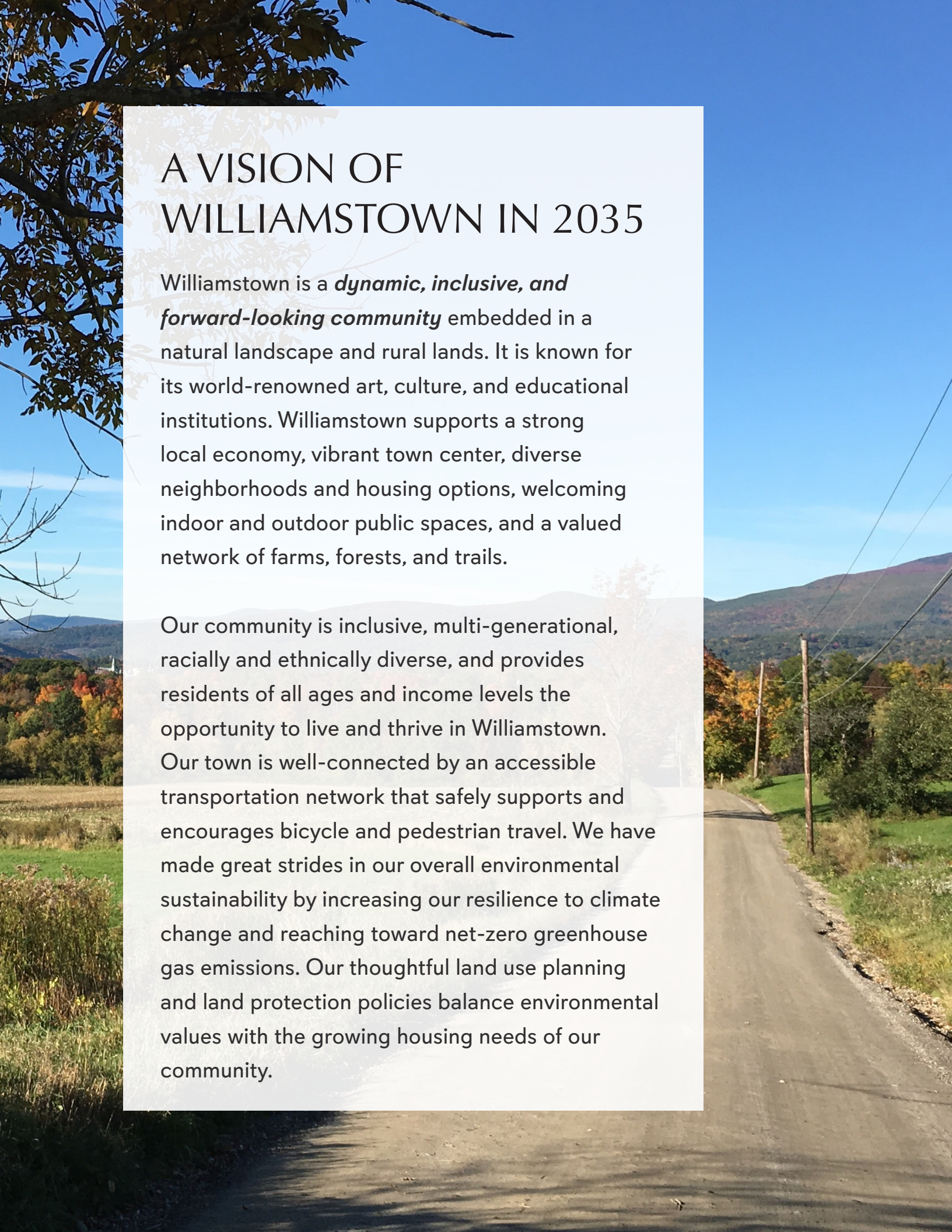
Williamstown is a wonderful community, and is attracting residents and visitors for good reason. Planning for the next decade or two of life in Williamstown is an opportunity to make this exceptional and unique community an even better place to live, work, learn, and





WILLIAMSTOWN TOMORROW: ENVISIONING OUR FUTURE

Williamstown's vision for the future has been informed by robust public engagement activity. The vision is written as a broad, aspirational statement in the present tense to help readers visualize what Williamstown will be like in 2035. This Comprehensive Plan and the actions identified in the implementation section will provide the road map for achieving the Vision, but it will be the collaborative efforts of residents, the town administrator, town committees, and other partners that will bring this Plan to life over the coming decade. To provide additional context to the Vision Statement a description of the Future Land Use Vision follows. This Future Land Use Vision serves as a bridge from the Vision Statement to the Future Land Use Strategy presented in the next section of this Plan.



A VISION OF WILLIAMSTOWN IN 2035

Williamstown is a *dynamic, inclusive, and forward-looking community* embedded in a natural landscape and rural lands. It is known for its world-renowned art, culture, and educational institutions. Williamstown supports a strong local economy, vibrant town center, diverse neighborhoods and housing options, welcoming indoor and outdoor public spaces, and a valued network of farms, forests, and trails.

Our community is inclusive, multi-generational, racially and ethnically diverse, and provides residents of all ages and income levels the opportunity to live and thrive in Williamstown. Our town is well-connected by an accessible transportation network that safely supports and encourages bicycle and pedestrian travel. We have made great strides in our overall environmental sustainability by increasing our resilience to climate change and reaching toward net-zero greenhouse gas emissions. Our thoughtful land use planning and land protection policies balance environmental values with the growing housing needs of our community.

IMAGINING HOW OUR TOWN WILL LOOK AND FEEL

The town center with its pedestrian, and bicycle friendly, tree-lined streets, and accessible and vibrant commercial areas are the heart and civic center of the community. Infill development provides new housing and commercial activity that blend with the distinctive character of each neighborhood.

Residential neighborhoods feature a variety of housing types with easy access to a mix of commercial and social engagement spaces. Investments in revitalized community centers, recreational, educational and art facilities and outdoor meeting places all contribute to community life through active, creative, and engaging activities for all.

Development of new housing options and community gathering spaces lead to new faces and friends, evidence that the town has become a more diverse and inclusive community connected through strong personal relationships. In turn, these relationships make the community more resilient to future challenges.

Expanded renewable energy resources, electrified and energy-efficient homes and buildings, and a robust transportation system are helping the community meet its climate and sustainability goals. Native and pollinator plantings are thriving and providing essential habitat and food for all

forms of wildlife, not just pollinators. We have turned back the clock on loss and fragmentation of food sources and habitat; invasive species and pesticide use are in decline.

Radiating out from the town center are greenways of protected natural resources and multi-use pathways connecting residents and visitors to schools, recreation facilities, museums, and neighboring communities. In the more rural parts of town, agricultural activities and related economic opportunities are succeeding. A variety of active and productive farms, cooperative gardens, and creative farm stores and agritourism are revitalizing the economy.

In rural areas new housing and mixed-used development are concentrated in compact areas while agricultural lands and critical natural resources are supported for use as farm land and for the environmental services they provide including carbon sequestration, flood protection, and wildlife habitat. The network of recreational trails that connect the town center to remote hillsides serve many ages and abilities, and offer a variety of recreational activities. Williamstown is beloved by its residents and many visitors for its welcoming presence in Berkshire County, for its arts and culture, beauty, recreational opportunities, and thriving economy.

OUR STRATEGY FOR GUIDING FUTURE LAND USE ACTIVITY

This section of the Comprehensive Plan provides a visual overview of how land use changes including new development, infrastructure investments, and resource protection will be guided over the next ten to twenty years to achieve Williamstown's vision for the future. The Future Land Use Map and area descriptions that follow were informed by public input and careful analysis of the existing conditions in the community. The process used to create the future land use areas and map included identifying portions of the community that share similar conditions currently, as well as similar desired characteristics for the future.





Town of Williamstown, MA
Future Land Use

- | | | | |
|---|-------------------------|--|---------------|
|  | Mixed Use |  | Town boundary |
|  | Williams College Campus |  | Other road |
|  | Intown Neighborhoods |  | Major road |
|  | Rural Center | | |
|  | Rural Neighborhoods | | |
|  | Forestlands | | |



Prepared by Zak Brohinsky
Resilience Planning & Design
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Data sources: Town of
Williamstown, MassGIS, RP&D

IN-TOWN NEIGHBORHOODS

In-Town Neighborhoods are, or could be, relatively well served by municipal infrastructure and services, and will continue to be defined by medium to high density residential development. Over time, infrastructure improvements to the transportation network in these areas will become better connected, and safer for a range of transportation options. Infill development opportunities exist in these areas, and a variety of housing unit types should be encouraged at a variety of densities. Infill refers to the development of vacant or under-utilized parcels within existing areas that are already largely developed. Opportunities to employ alternative parking or transportation solutions may exist to reduce the area of land covered with impervious asphalt or similar surfaces and encourage low impact transportation options.



WILLIAMS COLLEGE CAMPUS

Located at the core of the town center, and a defining aspect of Williamstown, the Williams Campus will continue to be a distinct land use area in the community. The proximity of the campus to the many In-Town Neighborhoods and several of the identified mixed-use areas provides opportunities for coordinating land use changes and improving transportation infrastructure. Williamstown will continue to pursue partnership opportunities with the College as the town and campus work to implement their newly adopted plans.



MIXED-USE AREAS

These areas of Williamstown can accommodate new development, infill development, and redevelopment activity that includes a mix of commercial and residential uses that are healthy, lively, and diverse. These areas are primarily located along transportation corridors

that need larger transportation investments over time, and in some cases off-corridor pathways may be possible and preferred. This will ensure these areas are accessible to all, walkable, and bikeable. Development regulations and redevelopment activity in these areas should be coordinated, reflect the surrounding character, and should be arranged in clusters with shared driveways rather than linear strips of development with frequent driveways. Each area represents an opportunity for thriving small shops, service providers, and other businesses; residences, community gathering places, and electric vehicle chargers. The regulations that govern site and building design in these areas should also ensure accessibility, affordability, and natural resource protection are addressed and embraced, while also reflecting our commitment to net zero emissions.



RURAL NEIGHBORHOODS

The agricultural lands, forestland, and natural environment of these areas contribute to the sustainability and rural character of Williamstown and offer opportunity for appropriate types of economic development. The residential areas of these neighborhoods will remain lower density overall with the intent to encourage a rural land use pattern. They will likely continue to have relatively limited municipal infrastructure and services. Land use activity will remain largely agricultural (including working farms) and residential, and where future development occurs, it should include an affordable and attainable variety of homes.



Natural resources protection, land stewardship, and removing regulatory barriers to promote and support agricultural operations and related businesses are priorities. This should include incentives to increase agriculture-based activity, agritourism, homesteading, opportunities for BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) farmers, and farming

enterprises. To balance these identified needs and guide future development activity, new regulatory tools will be required. This may include the use of conservation subdivision regulations, feature based lot sizing, lot size averaging, or other innovative regulatory mechanisms.

RURAL CENTER

This area of the community is a historic, current, and potential site for an increasingly vibrant center to the south Williamstown neighborhoods. The envisioned rural center will provide increased opportunities for mixed-use developments that complement the rural setting and surroundings. This should include small businesses with an emphasis on agriculture-based businesses, and opportunities for more compact lots and homes. The existing drinking water distribution system in this area of the community will require investment to ensure that existing and future residents continue to have access to high quality water.



FORESTLANDS

The forested hillsides and properties included in these areas of the community include lands roughly over 1,000 feet in elevation, and Stone Hill in the center of the community. These portions of Williamstown are envisioned to remain predominately forested, but some low-density residential sites and open fields do exist. The major benefits provided by the lands in these areas include contiguous habitat and recreation corridors, carbon sequestration, flood control, and other important ecosystem services. Williamstown's forestlands contribute to the beauty and attractiveness of the town. Residential and commercial development will be discouraged in these areas and the focus will be on protection of natural resources services along with low impact recreation and forestry.



Part 3

Community Planning Themes and Frameworks



PLANNING THEMES

Four distinct community planning themes have been identified to reinforce the Vision and Future Land Use Strategy presented in Envisioning Williamstown 2035:

DISTINCT AND DIVERSE

STEWARDSHIP AND SERVICES

WELCOMING AND CONNECTED

CHARACTER AND PLACE

Within each of these themes, there are a series of planning elements that provide additional context and detail about the community, and the actions needed to implement the Vision and Future Land Use Strategy. This approach is a deviation from the traditional chapter approach often used in comprehensive plans where topics are addressed in silos and often not presented holistically. The themed approach of this plan has required looking across topics and understanding the complexity of the community in new ways.





Figure 1: Frameworks, Themes, and Elements of Envisioning Williamstown 2035

PLANNING FRAMEWORKS

This comprehensive planning process identified two overarching planning frameworks that informed the writing of the Vision, and will guide the implementation of this comprehensive plan. These two frameworks have been woven into each of the themes and elements within the Plan. This is not to say these topics are more important than any other topic discussed in the Plan, but rather that they are central to the community's work to implement Envisioning Williamstown 2035. They are:

- **SUSTAINABILITY AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE**
- **DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION**

Together, these frameworks, themes, and elements provide the structure for Envisioning Williamstown 2035. They express and reinforce the opportunities this comprehensive plan seeks to leverage, and the issues raised by the public that need to be holistically addressed. Figure 1 provides a visual of the frameworks, themes, and elements for Envisioning Williamstown 2035.

To effectively plan for the future, the community must commit to responsible stewardship of its natural systems and the built environment; address global

challenges, like climate change, with local actions; and be an inclusive and welcoming community that provides opportunities for all existing and potential new residents. Implementation of Envisioning Williamstown 2035 will help the community rise to these challenges. The two planning frameworks below are at the core of this work and will be used to inform the implementation efforts that bring this Plan to life.

SUSTAINABILITY AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Climate change, loss of habitat, and other threats to natural resources are impacting communities throughout the northeast, the country, and the world. Williamstown is aiming to be a more resilient community that is actively addressing these challenges through coordinated, community-based public and private efforts that mitigate the impacts of climate change and achieve carbon neutrality, protect natural resources and ecosystem services, reduce waste, and increase environmental sustainability.

Together, community sustainability and resilience planning will ensure that Williamstown is a community that is socially connected, addresses residents' current challenges while planning for the needs of future generations, and can withstand future hardships or

disasters while fostering community recovery. At the municipal scale, this will require actions be taken at the site level, town-wide, and into the surrounding region. Through land use regulations, infrastructure investments, and local, state, and national partnerships, the community will strive to provide clean energy, reduce energy consumption, minimize the reliance on fossil fuels in homes, businesses, educational institutions and municipal operations. Williamstown will protect and rehabilitate natural habitats and find innovative solutions to other pressing climate issues.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

Williamstown is focused on meeting the needs of all residents. Together, residents have committed to creating an accessible and welcoming community, in which individuals can achieve their full potential. Looking ahead, diversity, equity, and inclusion will guide and inform policy development, infrastructure investment, capital improvement planning, and local governmental processes and initiatives. This will help identify and address issues that some members of our community face disproportionately including lack of transportation alternatives, secure and affordable housing options, food access, social and recreational opportunities, and the need for other support services.

Equitably planning for the future of Williamstown will include direct outreach to and participation by the populations in town that are typically underserved and marginalized. These populations may include people of color, youth, older



adults, lower income individuals, those with disabilities, those who speak English as a second language, veterans, LGBTQ+ individuals, and others. Involving a diversity of the population in local government and planning will lead to a more supportive community that addresses all needs.

PLANNING THEME 1

DISTINCT AND DIVERSE

Williamstown is a special place. The buildings and infrastructure, businesses and institutions, residents and visitors, and network of natural resources help distinguish Williamstown from other communities in the region and create a unique sense of place. As Williamstown strives to be an eclectic, diverse, and inclusive community for existing and future residents, it must address the increasing need for a range of housing alternatives and the economic diversification that will continue to support local businesses, residents, and employees.

Over the coming decade, the town will also be forced to address and adapt to other increasingly complex issues. Many of these emerging issues present opportunities to collaborate with other towns and organizations in the region. This collaboration will expand the capacity and available solutions related to housing, the economy, the stewardship of natural resources, transportation and other infrastructure investments, climate change, equity, and other needs. The results of these efforts will be a stronger, more inclusive, and resilient community. The key elements Williamstown will focus on to create a more distinct and diverse community include:

DIVERSE HOUSING SOLUTIONS:

Foster the development of a variety of housing solutions to better accommodate existing and future residents of varied incomes, life stages, and needs.

ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION:

Encourage economic diversification that supports businesses and employees, resulting in a strong and resilient economy.

REGIONAL COOPERATION:

Participate in regional initiatives to expand capacity, share resources, and address regional issues.



DIVERSE HOUSING SOLUTIONS

Objective: Foster the development of a variety of housing solutions to better accommodate existing and future residents of varied incomes, life stages, and needs.

Providing diverse housing alternatives for existing and future residents will require identifying and implementing strategies that increase housing opportunities for all residents through the town's housing planning and policies.

Williamstown will leverage both regulatory and non-regulatory approaches to create a diverse housing supply composed of a variety of unit types and levels of affordability. The first step that should be taken is the completion of a policy and regulatory audit. This is an opportunity to evaluate the existing land use regulations (Zoning, Subdivision, and Site Planning Regulations) against the new Comprehensive Plan to identify where there is inconsistency, and to highlight any disconnects that exist. The identified disconnects may include existing barriers and new opportunities that will need to be addressed through a combination of regulatory changes and non-regulatory initiatives.

POSSIBLE REGULATORY STRATEGIES

During this process, the community will research and consider regulatory provisions that address the affordability and availability of housing units in Williamstown. This may include:

- New zoning provisions for *cottage developments and co-housing* opportunities.
- *Inclusionary provisions* to ensure affordability, conservation subdivisions, and the incentivizing of housing types and other mechanisms that

serve the changing needs and demographics of the population.

- The creation and adoption of a catalog of pre-approved *infill housing and accessory dwelling unit designs*. Sometimes called “pattern zones”, this approach would complement the proposed implementation action associated with transitioning to a form-based code for some areas of the community. Such resources and regulatory tools clarify expectations, reduce development costs, and encourage building designs that fit into the context of existing neighborhoods.
- The creation of a *housing-specific Tax Increment Financing (TIF) program* or other tax incentive program to promote affordable and mixed-income housing development.
- The development and implementation of *short-term rental regulations* to minimize negative impacts on Williamstown's housing supply, neighborhood life, residential zoning codes, and the hotel industry.

NON-REGULATORY SOLUTIONS

The community is also interested in pursuing non-regulatory approaches that will require collaboration with a range of partners on the creation of new voluntary programs, and on outreach and education initiatives related to housing solutions. This could include:

- The creation of a program and materials that *educate the public on the value of accessory dwelling units*, and how to navigate the regulatory process to create a rental unit that will help increase the available rental housing stock in Williamstown.

- Collaborating with Williams College to identify and explore new opportunities for the creation of ***employer assisted housing***. This could include working with Williams on the development of neighborhood appropriate multi-family housing to assist the community with meeting the important housing goals identified in this Plan.
- Establishing a new local program to acquire deed restrictions to ***convert existing market-rate homes to affordable homes***. This is a method to preserve the existing housing stock as year-round affordable rental and ownership opportunities for Williamstown homeowners.
- Seniors have been identified as a specific segment of the population with specific housing needs and challenges. To provide Williamstown's older residents opportunities to age in place, the community should support the creation of additional ***senior-specific housing units***, but also identify grant programs for accessibility improvements and for critical repairs to existing homes.
- Exploration of ***shared living models*** that help utilize the existing housing stock, particularly larger single-family houses, for house-sharing and congregate living arrangements that should be permitted and promoted as alternatives.

ENSURING SUSTAINABILITY AND EQUITY

All of the housing related efforts outlined in Envisioning Williamstown 2035 are intended to make the community more equitable and inclusive, and should also strive to increase the sustainability of the community as well. As new housing units are built or renovated, there is a need to provide housing opportunities for a range of income levels. New units should also be energy efficient, with no fossil fuel systems, in order to help achieve the goal of net zero emissions.

HOUSING TOOLBOX: FOR MASSACHUSETTS COMMUNITIES

Creating a community with a variety of housing types, sizes, and locations can be achieved as a matter of right or by special permit in accordance with the state's Zoning Act. Options include:

- Allowing new residential and mixed-use developments with alternative site patterns (e.g., flexible development or clustering) and/or a variety of housing types (e.g., detached single-family, townhouse, duplex, garden apartment).
- Providing density bonuses or other forms of zoning relief in exchange for including some affordable units.
- Zoning by right for open space through open space residential design (OSRD), used fairly frequently for conservation subdivisions.

These techniques can lead to reduced construction costs, more efficient land use, and greater housing choice, but they may not produce more income-restricted affordable units without an inclusionary requirement. Fortunately for Williamstown the Massachusetts Housing Partnership has created an excellent resource that can be found at <https://www.housingtoolbox.org/>

ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION

Objective: Encourage economic diversification that supports businesses and employees, resulting in a strong and resilient economy.

Williamstown is committed to efforts that encourage economic diversification to support local businesses and employees, provide residents and visitors with services, and contribute to a strong and resilient economy.

This starts with supporting Williamstown's existing local businesses and ensuring a strong workforce. This will require addressing housing and transportation needs throughout the community and investing in necessary public infrastructure and services. Another key strategy is to identify ways to enhance and grow key industry clusters in Williamstown such as agriculture and agritourism, outdoor recreation, and arts and culture. An early action related to this might include developing a visitors map and online platform highlighting assets and destinations and creating sample itineraries for "A Day in Williamstown."

IDENTIFYING REGULATORY CHANGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Changes to the zoning regulations can also assist with these diversification efforts. This could include creating an agricultural overlay district to reduce limitations on the suitable economic use of agriculture lands. Such an effort would also allow for greater diversification of revenue streams and more sustainable business models that could include small retail operations, events, food preparation and sale, brewery/winery/cidery, accommodations, and other compatible uses. There is also an opportunity to promote the creation of

mixed-use development areas that align with the future land use map, and support the creation of higher density, multi-family, affordable, year-round housing development adjacent to non-residential businesses providing services and employment opportunities. To accomplish this, the town will need to identify possible amendments to the zoning regulations for these areas to guide redevelopment and new development that is context sensitive and promote sound and sustainable site designs. This is a wonderful opportunity to weave together growth and protection related needs through the creation of more sustainable models of development that will serve residents, visitors, and the environment.

COLLABORATION AND PROMOTION

Outside of the regulatory efforts related to the local economy there are also opportunities to work with cultural and art institutions in Williamstown to find ways to cross-promote and market to a national and global audience beyond the current initiatives individual organizations are currently undertaking. This could also include an effort to create studio and office spaces for artists, creatives, and entrepreneurs who may benefit from proximity to Williams College, the Clark, and other institutions in the region. Supporting the growth of home-based businesses and remote workers should also be pursued in collaboration with local organizations that are providing networking opportunities, workspace, and services to entrepreneurs, small businesses, and telecommuters.

The local non-profit land trusts (Williamstown Rural Lands & Berkshire Natural Resources Council), along with other organizations and volunteer groups, also present an opportunity to

continue developing the network of on- and off-road trails that connect major points of interest in Williamstown as well as to surrounding assets (Mt. Greylock, MASS MoCA, etc.) in an effort to make Williamstown a hub for hiking, cycling, and other outdoor activities. This could be paired with the High Road initiative underway to make the region desirable for multi-day adventures which would help support existing businesses in town and possibly lead to an expansion of businesses as visitation and activity increases.

ENSURING SUSTAINABILITY AND EQUITY

Williamstown's effort to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions can be an economic driver in the community as services and skills will be required to retrofit existing buildings and infrastructure. These efforts will spark innovation and have the potential to stabilize energy costs. However, gaining access to a skilled workforce is a challenge in Williamstown as it is throughout the region for a variety of reasons. Although unemployment rates have been low many residents of Williamstown and surrounding communities have not been able to share in some of the prosperity and growth that has been generated locally. As efforts are made to address housing, transportation alternatives, business diversification and other issues through the implementation of this Comprehensive Plan, new opportunities will be created for many individuals, and this will have positive impacts on their families and our community. These efforts are necessary to promote economic diversification, and a diverse and engaged population of residents.

PARTNERSHIPS FOR GROWTH:

A Plan to Enable the Commonwealth's Regions to Build, Connect, and Lead

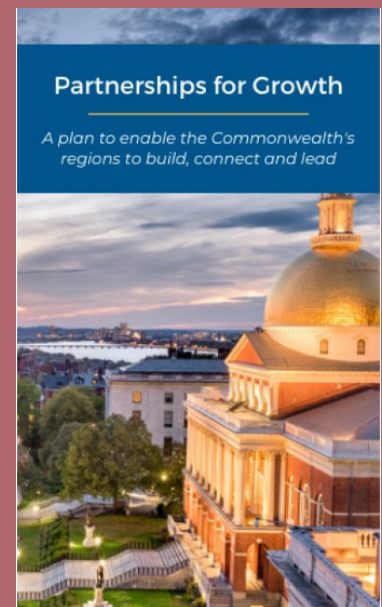
The identified pillars of this state initiative are:

- Respond to the Housing Crisis
- Build Vibrant Communities
- Support Business Competitiveness
- Train a Skilled Workforce

These focus areas are very much in line with Envisioning Williamstown 2035. It looks across sectors and issues to imagine the holistic approach necessary to create a strong and resilient economy.

Under these four Pillars are a series of Principles that are also closely aligned with the work ahead in Williamstown:

- Regional Strategies
- Accessible Government
- Environment
- Equitable Opportunity
- Infrastructure



REGIONAL COOPERATION

Objective: Participate in regional initiatives to expand capacity, share resources, and address regional issues.

Williamstown's commitment to participating in regional initiatives will expand the community's capacity, provide opportunities to share resources, and engage the community to address issues that extend well beyond the municipal boundary.

To accomplish this, existing inter-municipal and shared service agreements should be maintained, and additional opportunities for collaboration on shared services and procurement should be explored. This includes watershed restoration and protection efforts through regional partnerships with neighboring towns, especially North Adams, and watershed protection groups such as Hoosic River Revival and the Hoosic River Watershed Association (HooRWA).

EQUITABLE AND SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS ARE POSSIBLE

This Plan Element also includes transportation related initiatives with state and regional partners in Massachusetts and Vermont to complete the regional multi-use paths and to expand public transit services. Housing is another significant regional issue and participation in initiatives such as the Housing the Berkshires Coalition, will enable Williamstown to work with neighboring communities to address shared housing challenges.

These regional efforts will help provide opportunities and alternatives for many residents and the regions workforce. Some of these efforts will also assist the community in working toward

NORTH ADAMS ADVENTURE TRAIL A Multi Town Trail Initiative

This pending multi-use trail project is a wonderful opportunity for regional cooperation. Once completed the trail will extend from the Williamstown line to downtown North Adams and will effectively link MASS MoCA and MCLA to destinations in Williamstown. The Trail has the potential to serve in the transportation and circulation network connecting existing and future community and cultural assets while also providing new access to underutilized natural resources. It contributes to the community needs of safe alternative transportation, public health and wellness, and intra-neighborhood connectivity. As envisioned, it will be a resource and attraction, encouraging new generations to visit and, more importantly, to stay and explore.

a more sustainable and resilient future. Ensuring health, wellness, and opportunities to engage socially through recreational activities is also important. As the community continues to address the need for increased field space and recreation facilities, it should also explore opportunities to partner with North Adams on solutions.

PLANNING THEME 2

STEWARDSHIP AND SERVICES

The quality of life for Williamstown's residents and the resilience of the community are closely linked to the town's shared natural resources and public infrastructure, and the many services and benefits both provide. This is reflected in the Vision and Future Land Use Strategy in this Plan, and in the community's ongoing commitments to land conservation, equity and inclusion, and thoughtful land use planning. This commitment to stewardship is also evident in the community's adoption of its net-zero emissions goals which will enhance energy conservation and efficiency, expand renewable energy production, and reduce dependency on fossil fuels. It is critical that future efforts include opportunities for all residents to participate and benefit regardless of income level, and specific efforts should be made to involve and address the needs of both owners and renters.

The key elements Williamstown will focus on to promote critical stewardship of its assets within the community include:

FISCALLY RESPONSIBLE PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES:

Plan for fiscally responsible and well-managed municipal facilities and services that are high quality, meet the needs of residents and visitors, are net zero carbon, and are sustainable.

NATURAL RESOURCE PROTECTION, CONSERVATION, NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS:

Protect, conserve, and steward Williamstown's shared natural resources through regulations, conservation, and other strategies while also embracing nature-based solutions.

ENERGY CONSERVATION AND PRODUCTION:

In keeping with its net-zero emissions commitment, Williamstown aims to enhance energy conservation and efficiency, expand renewable energy production, and reduce dependency on fossil fuels.



FISCALLY RESPONSIBLE PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Objective: Plan for fiscally responsible and well-managed municipal facilities and services that are high quality, meet the needs of residents and visitors, are net zero carbon, and are sustainable.

Williamstown seeks to create and manage municipal facilities and services that are accessible to all community members and that are high quality, sustainable, fiscally responsible. These facilities and services should meet the needs of residents and visitors and meet the town's net zero emissions goals.

The steps needed to achieve these goals rely on detailed assessments of the municipal buildings and infrastructure. This will require completing and updating facility condition assessments of each town-owned building to create a record of all internal and external building components, their useful life, and replacement schedules. This will also require conducting assessments of all municipal infrastructure (water, sewer, stormwater, etc.) to create a record of their condition and needs, and to assist with the planning for improvements over time.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

The suggested facility and infrastructure assessments will expand and further implement the town's asset management programs across municipal departments, facilities, and utilities. Asset management informs facility and infrastructure maintenance, replacement, and prioritization in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). Asset management is critical to managing municipal

expenses because it helps forecast and proactively plan for and even stagger capital expenditures. Williamstown will take these efforts a step further by using climate change data and projections to assess risks, and to identify mitigation and adaptation measures that will protect these structures and the many people they serve. These assessments also need to consider the changes necessary to make these municipal sites and structures universally accessible, more energy efficient, renewable energy powered, and a reflection of nature-based design solutions.

With these comprehensive and holistic assessments in place, Williamstown will identify and pursue high priority municipal facility and infrastructure projects, and will be better prepared to address unanticipated needs when they arise. This should include addressing the needs of the existing Town Hall, Senior Center, and Library. It may also include identifying opportunities for a Community Center (for seniors, athletic recreation, arts) and additional municipal outdoor recreation facilities (this could be for organized sports such as basketball, soccer, etc.). The infrastructure specific assessments will also help identify high priority infrastructure improvement projects within the existing water and wastewater systems, and specific expansions that need to be planned and financed to support the Vision and Future Land Use Strategy.

Asset Management of Municipal Facilities

Long-range monitoring and maintenance of municipal assets (buildings and infrastructure) will ensure consistent and timely investment is made towards priority projects, and will guide investment decisions into the future. The municipal infrastructure in Williamstown is the legacy of multi-generational investments, and stewarded by municipal staff and volunteers. Increasingly, we are recognizing the value of tracking and monitoring this investment to better plan for future upgrades and replacements. To accomplish this, many municipalities are now turning their attention toward asset management programs as a process for making informed decisions to achieve the goal of delivering services, managing risks, and getting greater value for the money invested.

Asset management helps municipal departments confidently evaluate and communicate trade-offs between service, cost, and risk. This provides the community with a way of prioritizing projects and resources, and can be used to inform the capital improvement planning process. In doing so, it helps the community decide what infrastructure needs to be replaced or renewed, and how many years they can get out of the investment. It also helps the community figure out how much they should be saving for future infrastructure investments, and can demonstrate accountability to residents and businesses in the community.

Asset information, condition rankings, and maintenance history can be assigned to each of the individual buildings and infrastructure components being monitored. Each distinct asset can also be linked to service requests, work orders, repair costs, and other information. These items can also be queried to identify prior repair histories, recurring or pending maintenance

needs, or pending inspection needs. Asset management plans often include the following components:

- **Existing Facilities and Infrastructure:** inventorying and documenting the current condition of each asset.
- **Level of Service:** defining how the system or asset should be performing over the long term.
- **Risk Exposure:** identifying and prioritizing recommended improvements to the various facilities and infrastructure.
- **Financial Implementation Plan:** identifying the potential impacts to user rates and taxes based on the proposed capital improvements recommended.
- **Asset Management Program and Maintenance Plan:** documenting next steps and recommended workflows for the continued maintenance and support of the asset management program.
- **Communication Plan:** creating a summary of internal and external communications to educate and inform all stakeholders on the development and use of the asset management program.

NATURAL RESOURCE PROTECTION, CONSERVATION, NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS

Objective: Protect, conserve, and steward Williamstown's shared natural resource through regulations, conservation, and other strategies while also embracing nature-based solutions.

Throughout Williamstown, its forested hillsides, farmland, and other habitats are an important aspect of the community.

Many of the properties that compose this network of natural lands provide a variety of benefits to the community including ecosystem services such as clean air and water, habitat, carbon storage, flood control, food production, viewsheds, recreation opportunities, and many others. Continuing to protect and steward these important natural resource areas is a high priority in Williamstown, and will require a combination of approaches and partnerships including updated regulations and strategies. Over the coming decade, Williamstown will continue to strengthen its regulatory toolbox and direct land use strategically to address both additional development needs and additional natural resource protection, farmland preservation, and other conservation efforts.

LAND CONSERVATION

Williamstown should continue to strategically pursue opportunities for the acquisition and conservation of environmentally important properties for the many benefits they provide to the community. Within this effort, the town should strive to achieve a goal of no loss of working farmland acres, and should work to preserve the existing forest canopy. These land conservation related efforts will provide access to natural areas, long term carbon storage, and opportunities for local food production. For Williamstown, supporting

the preservation of these intact natural resources and working farmlands while addressing the future housing needs of the community is an area of critical community focus in the near term. This effort should be informed by the findings of the regulatory and policy audit that has been suggested as a major action in this Comprehensive Plan.

REGULATORY STRATEGIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE UPGRADES

Guided by this Comprehensive Plan, the town will need to consider the development and adoption of some new regulatory tools that support and guide this balanced approach. This should include the consideration of a Conservation Subdivision provision, and, for smaller developments, a Lot Size Averaging or Feature Based Density regulation.

The town's site design regulations should also be reviewed and revised so that they promote innovative ways to protect and incorporate natural resources at the parcel scale while reflecting modern planning best practices. This may include modifying municipal standards to require the implementation of low impact stormwater best management practices, blue-green infrastructure (an approach to urban flood resilience), and nature-based solutions to reduce impervious cover that exacerbates flooding, provide for passive aquifer recharge, and promote low impact development design strategies. These regulatory changes are also an opportunity to consider ways to better protect vegetated buffers along intermittent streams, and around vernal pools and isolated wetlands within the community. These protections

will provide habitat, improve water quality, and increase flood storage benefits. Paired with municipal infrastructure updates that will reduce flooding, the town will address a key natural hazard outlined in the 2019 Williamstown Hazard Mitigation Plan. These regulatory and infrastructure related initiatives will be much more effective if coordinated broadly with state, regional, and private partners.

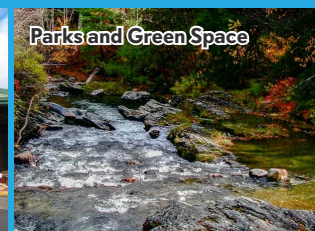
Ecosystem services are the many benefits that nature provides. These benefits can be direct or indirect—small or large. In Williamstown this includes clean air and water, carbon storage, flood control, food production, pollination, and many others.

WORKING WITH NATURE AND OUR NEIGHBORS

The protection and establishment of nature-based solutions is another critical aspect of this approach. According to FEMA, Nature based solutions are sustainable planning, design, environmental management and engineering practices that weave natural features or processes into the built environment to promote adaptation and resilience. This is most often accomplished by restoring or creating natural areas as a critical component of development sites, roadways, and other infrastructure in an effort to retain and restore ecological connections. Promoting the use of nature-based solutions throughout Williamstown through the land use regulations, incentives, and educational initiatives will help meet the climate resilience and natural resource protection goals of this Plan. These strategies invite everyone to participate in creating solutions and complement the efforts to reduce energy consumption and increase renewable energy production. The Town should lead by example by creating changes to land management practices on municipal properties. This could include

NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS

Nature-based solutions like protecting forests, planting meadows, or restoring wetlands are a fundamental strategy to addressing the climate crisis. Just like reducing greenhouse gas emissions, deploying renewable energy, and increasing energy efficiency nature-based solutions are critical and accessible. Natural solutions can reduce emissions, remove carbon from the atmosphere and lock it away, make ecosystems more resilient, and lower climate change risks for residents. These solutions are often lower in cost than conventional alternatives, and provide an opportunity for everyone to get involved in the solutions Williamstown needs. Nature-based solutions create multiple benefits including improving human, economic, and ecosystem health. Strategies include:



creating meadow areas to reduce mowing, save energy, and support pollinators, planting native perennials, and implementing other strategies that can serve as models for private property owners and renters. Homeowners and renters should also be encouraged and supported to take an active role in this work through educational initiatives and incentives.

ENERGY CONSERVATION AND PRODUCTION

Objective: In keeping with its net-zero emissions commitment, Williamstown aims to enhance energy conservation and efficiency, expand renewable energy production, and reduce dependency on fossil fuels.

This Comprehensive Plan is an opportunity to build on Williamstown's net-zero emissions commitment and recognize the many other municipal initiatives that complement this pledge.

Enhanced energy efficiency measures, expanded renewable energy production, and reduced dependency on fossil fuels should be further defined and monitored through a Net Zero Plan. Municipal efforts to increase energy efficiency and renewable energy production will set a positive example, as well. Residents also indicated an interest in continuing the municipal composting program, and where possible, expanding this program to include businesses. Composting reduces energy consumption and emissions associated with solid waste disposal and can help retain soil nutrients within the community.

INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENT NEEDED

Williamstown should also work to address the critical energy infrastructure limitation that exists due to the limited capacity of the electric utility grid system to accommodate increased electricity demands and future large scale renewable energy projects in the area. This is a significant issue and an opportunity for collaboration with Williams College and other agencies and organizations to identify solutions that will support the town's goals for electrification and renewable energy production. This may require advocating for support from State Officials, National Grid, ISO New England, and other partners who are also committed to net zero emissions and decarbonization.

ENSURING EQUITY AND INCLUSION AS WE STRIVE FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Outside of the governmental and infrastructure specific actions, there is a need to support and incentivize the efforts of residents, land owners, businesses, and other institutions to complete energy conservation measures and install renewable energy systems. This might include an effort to promote the installation of battery storage systems considering the significant infrastructure limitation Williamstown is facing with national Grid. Efforts to broadly involve the community should include informational and educational campaigns that show residents how to upgrade their home energy systems, electric mobility options, and how to identify and secure the available rebates, incentives, and tax credits available. It is extremely important that creative strategies be employed throughout this process to ensure that all residents have opportunities to participate in these meaningful changes regardless of housing tenure or income level.



Above: An architect's rendering of the proposed new Williamstown Fire Station on Main Street (Route 2) shows the solar photovoltaic panels that are planned.

Achieving net zero emissions will require commitments from the town administrator, volunteer groups like the Cool Committee, residents, businesses, and regional and state partnerships. There are a variety of ways that Williamstown residents and business owners can become involved in energy efficiency and renewable energy efforts. Williamstown's Cool Committee has begun paving the way for these efforts locally. This work will require outreach and education to potential participants. There may also be some new opportunities to explore in order to further engage renters, homeowners, and others in achieving the goal of becoming a Net Zero Community.

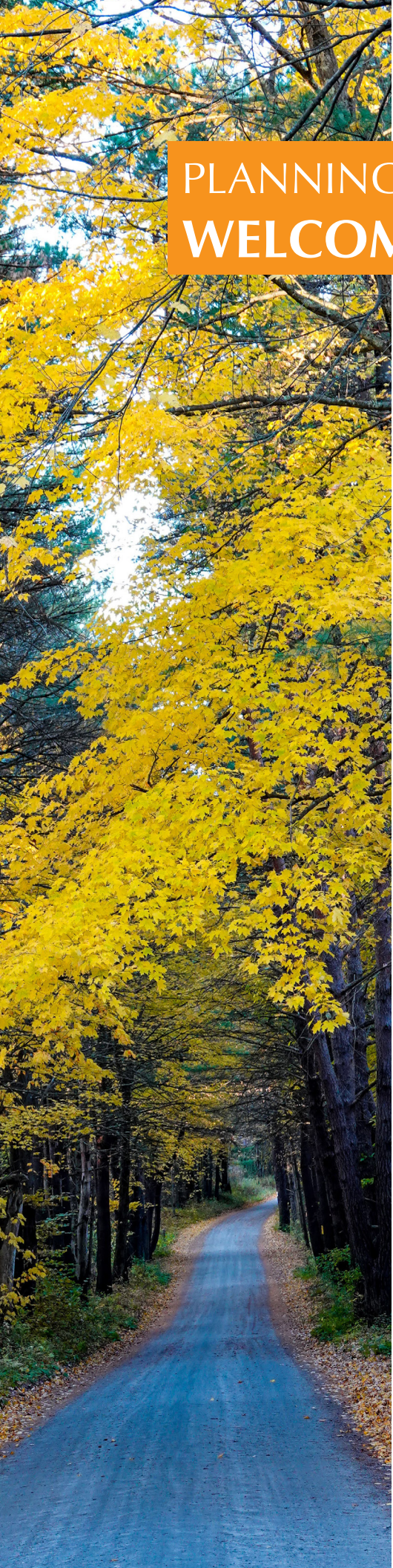
CASE STUDY: ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND RENEWABLE ENERGY FOR ALL *Plymouth, New Hampshire*

An example of this work can be found in Plymouth, New Hampshire where the nonprofit Plymouth Area Renewable Energy Initiative (PAREI) has been working to educate and engage homeowners, renters, and business in energy efficiency improvements and renewable energy production. Their newest initiative is called NH Solar Shares. A program that is installing solar panels on third party host sites so that more individuals and families can receive solar energy and reduce their electric bill. The program is for community members who want to join Solar Shares and become a shareholder. Shareholders must have an electricity account with the local utility and be eligible to receive NH Fuel Assistance. The solar energy generated is then provided to shareholders as a monthly credit on their electric bill.

- The program lasts for two years.
- There is no fee to get involved.
- Shareholders must have an interest in learning and sharing information about solar energy, saving energy dollars, energy conservation and how clean energy helps our environment.



Above: The NH Solar Shares site in Plymouth NH doubles as a public park.



PLANNING THEME 3

WELCOMING AND CONNECTED

Williamstown strives to be a welcoming and connected community, where residents have opportunities to connect with each other and to the places they frequent throughout town. Williamstown will also provide all residents of different ages, backgrounds, and abilities, opportunities to build relationships, share perspectives, collaborate, and participate fully in community life. To become a more connected community, the town will make transportation improvements, so that residents and visitors are able to move around between key destinations, such as work, shopping, residential areas, parks, and community facilities. This will enable travelers to better utilize transportation modes beyond the single-occupancy vehicle (such as walking and bicycling). Williamstown's physical environment should also support social connections, strong neighborhoods, and resilient social networks, all of which are necessary components of a thriving community.

Key elements Williamstown will focus on to cultivate a more welcoming and connected community include:

PLACEMAKING:

Create opportunities for placemaking, community events, and gathering spaces that build and sustain relationships.

MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM:

Provide and maintain a well-designed, affordable, and integrated multi-modal transportation network that is accessible, convenient, and well-connected for diverse modes of travel to move between a variety of destinations.

A TRANSPARENT AND REPRESENTATIVE LOCAL GOVERNMENT:

Prioritize clear municipal communications, transparency, and broader representation within local government to ensure diverse perspectives are represented and that barriers to participation are reduced.

PLACEMAKING

Objective: Create opportunities for placemaking, community events, and gathering spaces that build and sustain relationships.

Placemaking is a people-centered approach to the planning and design of public (and potentially private) spaces within a community, including parks, streets, plazas, trails, and buildings.

It's a collaborative process focused on increasing activity, events, community building, and the revitalization of public spaces throughout the town to foster a stronger, more tight-knit community, build a sense of place, support civic engagement, and boost business activity. Williamstown's public spaces have the potential to build physical, cultural, and social connections, be welcoming to all, support the local economy, build on its history and identity, and transform underutilized areas of town. The Town has the potential to support community driven placemaking initiatives by removing barriers to completing placemaking projects, creating a process and standards for placemaking projects to occur, and promoting these initiatives throughout the community.

Placemaking strategies can include:

- The closure of streets for festivals, markets, or recreational activities.
- Transforming on-street parking into temporary pocket parks.
- Temporary and permanent public art that reinforces community identity and history (along trails, in community gardens, on streets, on building facades, integrated with other infrastructure such as telephone poles, etc.).
- Repurposing existing public spaces that are underutilized.

WHAT MAKES A GREAT PLACE?

A great public place is one that is active with people and activity, where social and economic exchanges occur, where friends run into each other, and where cultures mix. According to Project for Public Spaces, they represent the "front porches" of a community and include libraries, parks, schools, streets, and other spaces where neighbors interact with each other and work together. In evaluating public spaces around the world, Project for Public Spaces has found that successful places share the following qualities:

- They are **accessible** (well-connected to other areas of the community, walkable, and convenient to get to for a wide range of people)
- People are engaged in **activities** there (informal and formal gathering opportunities that bring people to an area of town, which can impact local businesses and property values)
- The space is **comfortable** and has a positive image (safe and has places to sit with shade, and are attractive and well-maintained)
- It is a **sociable place** (welcoming for all populations, friendly/neighborly, interactive)



- Adding amenities or enhancing existing public spaces (seating, lighting, trees, landscaping, signage, events, etc.).
- Creating new public spaces that can provide space for community gathering, flexible programming, and events.

BUILDING ON WILLIAMSTOWN'S ASSETS AND DEVELOPING PARTNERSHIPS

Williamstown is well-positioned to embrace placemaking as an approach to contributing to its vibrancy and welcoming atmosphere. Some of the town's assets include:

- Its network of ***potential partners*** including local businesses, local schools, volunteer organizations, youth/teen groups, arts and cultural institutions, and Williams College.
- Its commitment to ***supporting the arts*** and its community of artists, makers, creative professionals, and entrepreneurs.
- Its demonstrated value of ***community building*** and community events (evident in many of the small-town events that already draw community members and visitors to town).
- Its ***existing vibrant community spaces*** that can continue to be improved upon, such as gathering spaces, parks, recreation facilities, etc.
- Its ***future land use pattern***, which creates opportunities for placemaking throughout town ranging from the denser town center environment to the parks and trails present in the rural areas.

WEAVING IN SUSTAINABILITY AND EQUITY

Placemaking has the potential to make Williamstown more livable, walkable, and connected, supporting “smart growth” land use planning. Sustainability goals related to promoting alternative transportation options, local food production and promotion, and building a strong community network (which inherently increases community resilience) have the potential to

CASE STUDY: A PLACEMAKING PLAYBOOK *Burlington, Massachusetts*

The Town of Burlington, Massachusetts received a grant from the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative to create a “placemaking playbook” for the Burlington Town Center. The playbook provides guidance for placemaking strategies desired in town to spur additional activity to support local businesses, activate and transform the many parking lots and other underutilized space that exist in the area, and to support additional events at the parks and supporting trails that connect into the downtown. The playbook also supports creative, short-term installations that will encourage people to interact with each other and downtown businesses.

be addressed through placemaking initiatives. Examples include planting edible gardens to enhance a place while supporting local food efforts, ensuring lively public spaces are connected by safe biking and walking routes, and creating opportunities for building meaningful relationships in the community.

A thriving community that has social and economic opportunities for all can foster equitable development and social inclusion. When successful, these places can reflect the priorities of the community and encourage a sense of belonging. In thinking about how best to integrate equity goals into placemaking initiatives, it's important to engage all populations in the act of placemaking and in the use of community spaces and events, from youth to adults of varying abilities and background. Additionally, considering the physical access of public spaces is critical to ensuring they are accessible to diverse populations and better understanding the perceived image of spaces from various population's perspectives may provide guidance for future improvements.

MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

Objective: Provide and maintain a well-designed, affordable, and integrated multi-modal transportation network that is accessible, convenient, and well-connected for diverse modes of travel to move between a variety of destinations.

Safe, connected, and resilient streets are critical to the quality of life, health, and mobility of residents (and visitors) in Williamstown.

Transportation is centered around mobility – or how well people in a community can get around from place to place, whether that be by vehicle, on foot, or by bicycle. The town’s land use pattern and roadway network geared to multi-modal transportation will support increased mobility, and has the potential to reduce carbon emissions, provide more transportation choices, support physical activity, and be safe, convenient, and accessible to a variety of transportation modes.

A multi-modal transportation system provides safe, convenient, and accessible transportation choices so that community members can move around town (and the broader region). Williamstown should identify and invest in multi-modal transportation improvements that enhance connectivity for vehicles, pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users; expand pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure; evaluate and potentially expand public transit services; and expand electric vehicle charging infrastructure. Looking forward, all users of the transportation system should be considered in future planning efforts, including those with assisted mobility needs (such as those who use walkers, wheelchairs, etc.).

While there are some identified deficiencies in Williamstown’s existing transportation

network (such as limited public transit and areas underserved by pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure), the town has been making strides towards embracing changes that advance the development of a stronger multi-modal transportation system. The Town has adopted a complete streets policy, already has 16 miles of sidewalk in town (mostly in the center), recently finished constructing a new multi-use pathway for walking and biking, has access to some public transit options, and already has 14 electric vehicle charging stations in town (though mostly on campus properties).

WEAVING IN SUSTAINABILITY AND EQUITY

A multi-modal transportation system has the potential to improve the equity of transportation options in the community by creating an accessible and affordable transportation network for everyone. Regardless of whether individuals own a vehicle or cannot drive, there should be other transportation options for them to use to get to work, appointments, and other destinations. Equity should be an embedded lens for future transportation planning efforts in Williamstown.

Transportation infrastructure also presents the potential for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and enabling Williamstown to meet its future net zero energy goals. Promoting alternative transportation options and increasing infrastructure that supports these options (including pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure and expansion of electric vehicle charging stations) will provide more opportunities for community members to travel around town in other modes besides a

single occupancy, gas-powered vehicle. Future investments made in bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure should also include safety enhancements, outreach and education efforts, covered storage, and other amenities that support this shift in transportation choice.

CREATING A NETWORK OF COMPLETE AND GREEN STREETS THROUGH MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Designing a complete and green street network requires the community to reimagine the existing automobile dominated transportation system as a safer and more efficient, economical, equitable, and sustainable transportation system for all. Complete Streets are streets for everyone, accommodating all modes of travel to the greatest extent possible. Green streets integrate landscaping and street trees into the streetscape environment to provide stormwater management, habitat, and climate resilience benefits.

The Complete Streets approach provides a consistent process for planning, designing, building, and operating streets in a way that considers and enables safe access for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities. Complete Streets make it easy to cross the street, walk to shops, and bicycle to work and other places. They allow buses to run on time and make it safe for people to walk to and from public transit stops.

Creating Complete Streets means Williamstown must change the approach to maintaining roadways and must work with transportation agencies to advocate for these changes on non-locally maintained routes. Williamstown has already made a commitment to complete streets by adopting a complete streets policy in 2016 formalizing the commitment to ensuring every transportation project will make the street network better and

safer for drivers, transit users, pedestrians, and bicyclists. Future efforts should build off this commitment.

To plan for a network of complete streets that support a multi-modal transportation system, the town should complete a Multi-Modal Transportation Network Plan to ensure that Williamstown's transportation network reflects the 2016 Complete Streets Policy and that new or improved facilities meet this standard. The Multi-Modal Plan should:

- Identify improvements to existing infrastructure, and areas where new infrastructure could be feasibly constructed to promote walking, bicycling, and transit use.

CASE STUDY: COMPLETE AND GREEN STREETS PROGRAM

City of Madison, Wisconsin

The City of Madison's Complete and Green Streets Program identified what they call "street values" which shape how decisions are made and what is prioritized in their transportation system. These values guide decisions related to the design, operation, and use of streets and transportation in the City of Madison and could serve as inspiration for Williamstown as the town furthers its alternative transportation goals. They include:

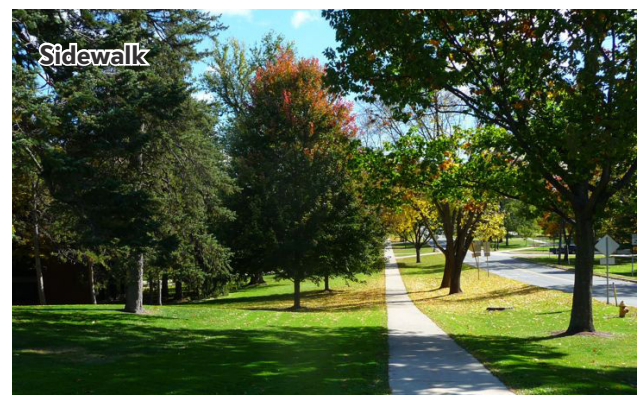
- **Putting people first:** prioritize safety, comfort, and well-being which de-emphasizes speed and convenience.
- **Supporting community:** create safe, welcoming places and emphasize short trips and access to local destinations.
- **Fostering sustainability:** promote walking, biking, and transit and use streets to expand the urban tree canopy and clean stormwater.
- **Centering equity:** engage inclusively, provide access to opportunities, prioritize, and support the needs of historically underserved people (race, culture, age, income, and gender identity).

- Identify opportunities to “green” the town’s streets utilizing landscaping and street trees to better manage stormwater, provide habitat, and increase climate resilience.
- Guide the construction of Complete and Green Streets along all state routes, and major local roadways to the greatest extent feasible.
- Help the town enhance the quality, safety, and connectivity of pedestrian infrastructure, assess the sidewalk and pathway network to identify gaps, and then prioritize specific projects in the community. This will include better connections between the new multi-use path and the town center, campus, and surrounding neighborhoods.
- Assess the feasibility and possibilities for expanding public transportation and alternative transportation options (car sharing, bike sharing, etc.) to make transportation more accessible to all and more sustainable.

“TESTING” TRANSPORTATION DESIGN SOLUTIONS

Tactical urbanism refers to short-term, low-cost, and scalable interventions or pop-up projects aimed to catalyze long-term change. Pop-up and interim street transformation projects provide the town the opportunity to test design solutions and quickly and cheaply demonstrate how town streets can be reimaged to meet new and emerging needs. Pop-up projects show community members how roadway space could be redistributed to prioritize different street users, particularly for walking and bicycling, and seek to enhance the use of the street as a public realm. They often repurpose existing infrastructure, allow towns to trial and refine new designs before making capital investments, and can create acceptance and demand for similar projects town wide. Projects may include temporary bike lanes, pop up parklets (parking spaces transformed into pocket parks), and temporary crosswalks. These projects allow the public to try out this infrastructure and provide their opinions and concerns related to the potential new long-term change in design.

COMPLETE STREET ELEMENTS IN WILLIAMSTOWN



A TRANSPARENT AND REPRESENTATIVE LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Objective: Prioritize clear municipal communications, transparency, and broader representation within local government to ensure diverse perspectives are represented and that barriers to participation are reduced.

An effective local government is powered by diverse community leaders and volunteers, promotes meaningful public engagement that influences local decision making, effectively communicates its services and programs to the full breadth of its community members, and removes barriers to community participation in municipal planning processes.

Building a welcoming community extends from and to its civic life, which should be accessible to all community members. Transparency and representation are essential principles of local government in all land use policies and every elements of this Plan and its implementation. Most, if not all, of these principles can also apply to local government generally, even outside the context of land use or planning. As the town works to achieve its Vision and Future Land Use Strategy over the next ten years, it will focus on the following priorities.

ENHANCING MUNICIPAL COMMUNICATIONS

The Town of Williamstown will examine its current communication strategies (the town website, newsletter, and other media channels) it uses to update and inform residents regarding existing town programs, projects, services, and initiatives

to extend their reach to the broadest range of residents. Moving forward, a key priority for the town will be to develop a strategic municipal communication plan to enhance communication to residents and other community members, identify new potential communication methods that are not currently being utilized, and to identify ways to improve existing communication channels (such as better utilization of social media or more frequent digital communication to email subscribers).

PROMOTING EQUITABLE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN PLANNING INITIATIVES

Williamstown has already shown it is committed to working towards becoming a more equitable and inclusive town across all sectors of community life, from municipal operations to school life to policing. Moving forward, a major priority for the town is to continue improving its community engagement processes, which includes how the town engages the public in decision making around plans and policies, are equitable, inclusive, and just. Whenever there is a change or perceived risk from a community perspective (in terms of a new policy, project, etc.), communities must be informed of the change and be provided with opportunities to participate in the planning and decision-making process to achieve an equitable outcome. Developing a community engagement toolkit to guide municipal outreach processes could help identify additional ways to engage historically underserved communities in town, such as youth, older adults, people of color, those with disabilities,

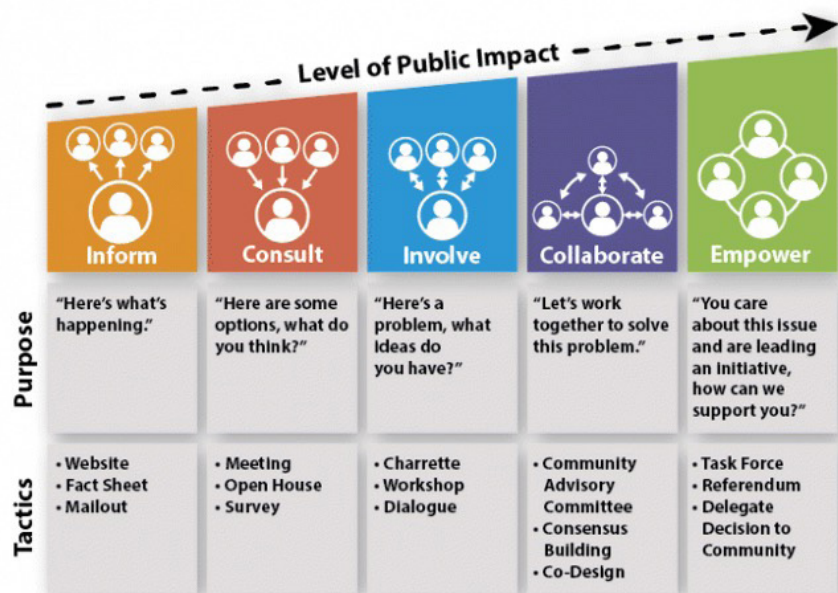
and others, and to reduce barriers to public involvement and participation in local decision making. For example, research has shown that lack of time, work schedules, family demands, and availability of transportation can curtail people's ability to be more civically engaged. An equitable community engagement strategy should:

- Consider all stakeholders in all project outreach and include relevant, population- specific outreach for each stakeholder group, as resources are available.
- Provide diverse ways for the public to learn and engage in municipal projects and events.
- Support community participation at town meeting.
- Allocate resources to public outreach to promote equitable outcomes.
- Reduce barriers to participation (such as transportation needs), create culturally appropriate engagement settings, and ensure participation reflects community demographics.
- Determine the appropriate and desired level of engagement for each project and communicate this to residents and neighborhoods.
- Develop an evaluation tool to measure how equitable public outreach process are in the future.

EXAMPLES OF EQUITABLE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Many other municipalities and community organizations have begun to develop public participation programs with the intention of including diverse voices in municipal projects. Examples of diverse community engagement strategies aimed at achieving this goal include:

- Online resources such as interactive maps, engagement platforms and surveys and cell phone based participation methods.
- TV, print, and social media coverage in relevant languages of community.
- Public forums and events in relevant languages and community-based locations at different times of the day and week.
- Paid community outreach roles for residents from underserved communities.
- Partnerships with existing community-based organizations and networks.
- Representative community advisory boards.
- Racial equity toolkits for department staff to develop more equitable operations.



Adapted from the IAP2 spectrum of public participation

Above: When conducting outreach to the public regarding a new policy, program, or project, consider the desired level of public impact for that particular project. The graphic above illustrates common categories of public involvement, engagement, and collaboration.

A vertical photograph on the left side of the page shows a person standing in a shallow river, fishing. The river is surrounded by dense, vibrant green trees and foliage, with sunlight filtering through the leaves. The water is calm, reflecting the surrounding greenery.

PLANNING THEME 4 CHARACTER AND PLACE

Over the next decade, Williamstown will continue to engage in land use and community planning that contributes to a strong sense of place and character. Williamstown's community character includes its built environment, small town and historic character, natural landscapes, and other specific destinations (such as Williams College, the Clark Art Institute, and the Williams College Museum of Art) that help to create a unique sense of place.

As the town works towards achieving its Vision for Future Land Use, its land use policies and design standards should support and contribute to its character and work towards its goals related to housing, natural resource protection, transportation, and others. These policies should help Williamstown continue to be a livable community with attractive neighborhoods, civic spaces, and commercial areas that are walkable, bikeable, and have access to abundant parks and recreation opportunities. Additionally, Williamstown's arts and cultural assets, and its history, should be celebrated and integrated into the fabric of community life and its built environment to support the local economy and quality of life in town. The community's character also provides an attractive environment for pedestrians, bicyclists, and outdoor enthusiasts. Key elements Williamstown will focus on to amplify, celebrate, and protect its community character and sense of place include:

LAND USE POLICY AND DESIGN:

Adopt land use policy and design standards that preserve and contribute to our sense of place, address community issues and needs, and protect our shared resources.

ARTS, CULTURE, AND HISTORY:

Share and support the arts, history, and cultural assets as a vital part of Williamstown's community character, economy, and life in town.

PARKS AND RECREATION:

Provide a variety of parks and recreation opportunities throughout the community for all to promote access to nature, a variety of recreation opportunities and facilities, and support a livable community.

LAND USE POLICY AND DESIGN

Objective: Adopt land use policy and design standards that preserve and contribute to our sense of place, address community issues and needs, and protect our shared resources.

Land use policy and the design of the built environment directly shapes the physical character of a community and its land use pattern.

Williamstown's land use pattern is influenced by the density of buildings, street layout, land use types, presence of open space and natural resources, the road network, and more. Land use policies, including zoning bylaws, site plan regulations, and subdivision regulations, play a critical role in ensuring the land use pattern, and thereby character, of the town is preserved, reinforced, or in some cases, changed to better meet the town's future vision and goals.

WEAVING IN SUSTAINABILITY AND EQUITY

Planning for sustainable and equitable land use involves local decision making which can impact affordable housing, access to transportation, green space, and overall quality of life. Historically, land use planning and zoning policies have not always supported community health, wellness, and equitable development, especially for marginalized populations, including low-income households, those with disabilities, people of color, and others.

Additionally, conventional zoning (which regulates development based on the segregation of uses and people) has created communities that are segregated, auto-centric, disjointed, and sprawling throughout the country. There are opportunities to improve the town's land use policies to promote future development is people-centered, compact,

"Focus on creating places rather than separation. Rather than starting with the premise that different uses and people should be isolated from one another, zoning codes should focus on the physical character of the places they regulate and the inherent value of diversity of form, use, and people. Often, the places that are most appealing are those that are walkable and varied with an integration of uses, building types, and opportunities for social interaction. Even in areas that are predominantly residential, for example, use-based zoning segregates large from small and single-family detached from multi-family. A code based in creating places will allow for structures that accommodate both large and small units to be proximate to one another, as long as the structures fit in with the context of the surrounding area."

"How Can Zoning Be Made More Equitable"
Smart Growth America

and walkable in appropriate areas. Zoning codes that enable and encourage opportunities to use alternative modes of transportation--walking, biking, transit--put the areas regulated by these codes within reach of households with a wider range of incomes. An example of this is by reducing parking requirements, which can make areas more compact and accessible by non-motorized modes, with the added benefit of reducing the cost of housing.

COMPLETING A COMPREHENSIVE POLICY AND REGULATORY AUDIT

Comprehensive Plans are the foundation for determining any changes to land use policies. Land use policy, or zoning and other land use regulations, guide how the community is developed over time and are important tools for achieving the town's vision for future land use. Completing an audit of the town's existing land use regulations, including its zoning, site plan regulations, and subdivision regulations, provides an opportunity for the town to identify inconsistencies between the comprehensive plan and the current regulations. An audit report should identify and assess:

- Deficiencies of existing standards,
- Areas of improvement (related to allowable uses, dimensional standards, environmental standards, etc.),
- New standards that can be considered to better meet the vision and goals of the comprehensive plan, and
- Recommendations for zoning changes/ amendments

After completing the Policy and Regulatory Audit, the Town should rewrite and reformat the zoning bylaws to better meet the needs and goals of the community in a user-friendly, readable, simplified style that incorporates visuals. Conventional zoning bylaws (and their associated administrative processes) can be difficult to navigate, unclear, and burdensome for many property owners. Zoning and other land use regulations should be accessible, readable, and user-friendly. They should be easy to locate online with content that's easy to navigate and includes links from the table of contents and between sections. Graphics, tables, and charts should be used where appropriate to better illustrate or clarify difficult or ambiguous concepts or confusing regulations. Improvements should also be considered so the bylaws follow a logical sequence, the standards are simplified, duplicate information is reduced, supporting visuals are identified, and contradictions are addressed.

FORM-BASED CODE

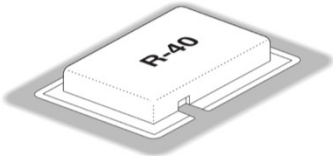
Form based codes are one of the more effective land use tools for shaping pedestrian-scaled, mixed use, and active village and town centers. This regulatory approach was developed as a direct response to increasing sprawling development. This form of zoning is more focused on design, addressing the relationship between building facades and the public realm, the form and mass of buildings in relation to one another, and the scale and types of streets and blocks. The regulations and standards in form-based codes are presented in both words, clearly drawn diagrams, and other visuals. This form of zoning is not meant to prescribe architectural design standards - rather, this form of code is focused on building placement, massing, and site design to create an active and vibrant community. They are keyed to a regulating plan that designates the appropriate form and scale (impacting character) of development, rather than merely distinctions in land-use types. Form based codes are regulatory, not advisory, making them different than design guidelines. They

*"A **form-based code** is a land development regulation that fosters predictable built results and a high-quality public realm by using physical form (rather than separation of uses) as the organizing principle for the code. A form-based code is a regulation, not a mere guideline, adopted into city, town, or county law. A form-based code offers a powerful alternative to conventional zoning regulation. This approach contrasts with conventional zoning's focus on the micromanagement and segregation of land uses, and the control of development intensity through abstract and uncoordinated parameters (e.g. dwellings per acre, setbacks, parking ratios, etc.), to the neglect of an integrated built form."*

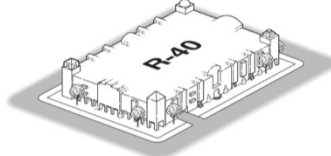
- Form Based Code Institute

Conventional Zoning

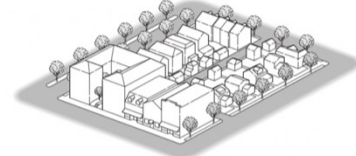
Density use, FAR (floor area ratio), setbacks, parking requirements, maximum building heights specified

**Zoning Design Guidelines**

Conventional zoning requirements, plus frequency of openings and surface articulation specified

**Form-Based Codes**

Street and building types (or mix of types), build-to lines, number of floors, and percentage of built site frontage specified.



Above: Anticipated results from various approaches to guiding land use through regulations.

Source: Form Based Code Institute

describe what a community *wants* to see, rather than what they don't want to see. They are easier to understand as they're typically more concise and organized for visual access, communicating concepts like density clearly to the reader. They also enable incremental growth more successfully, resulting in less reliability on one developer to implement the vision for a compact, pedestrian oriented, and active environment.

ELEMENTS OF A FORM BASED CODE

- **Regulating Plan** – a plan or map of the regulated area designating the locations where different building form standards apply.
- **Public Standards** – specific elements in the public realm: sidewalk, travel lanes, on-street parking, street trees, furniture, etc.
- **Building Standards** – Regulations controlling the features, configuration, and functions of buildings that define and shape the public realm .
- **Administration** – a clearly defined and streamlined application and project review process.
- **Definitions** – a glossary defining the precise use of technical terms.
- **Optional Elements** – architectural standards, landscaping standards, signage standards, and environmental resource standards.

ARTS, CULTURE, AND HISTORY

Objective: Share and support the arts, history, and cultural assets as a vital part of Williamstown's community character, economy, and life in town.

Arts, culture, and history play an important role in community planning, contributing to vibrant village centers and enhancing a community's vitality, social life, and livability.

Williamstown's cultural assets encompass places of cultural, artistic, and historic significance, which enrich lives by providing opportunities for people from different walks of life to socialize, learn, and play; providing experiences that help people engage with the past, present, and future; and creating unique, exciting opportunities to understand and interact with the built and natural environments.

ACKNOWLEDGING THE TOWN'S HISTORY

Williamstown's history includes both colonial and pre-colonial histories. However, most of the historic and cultural resources in Williamstown are currently focused on colonial history (i.e. since the founding of the town). Williamstown is located on the ancestral homelands of the Stockbridge-Munsee Mohicans, who are the indigenous peoples of the region. Historically, Mohican Nation territory extended into New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Vermont, Connecticut, and Massachusetts. The colonial settlement that is now called Williamstown resulted in the forced evacuation of the Stockbridge Munsee peoples from their homelands from the early 1700s through the early 1800s. They exist as a sovereign tribal nation in Wisconsin today. In 2020, the Stockbridge-Munsee Community's Historic Preservation Extension Office opened in Williamstown, in partnership with Williams College, to protect the Mohican's past,

EXAMPLES OF WILLIAMSTOWN'S CULTURAL ASSETS

- **Museums** including the Clark Art Institute, Williams College Museum of Art, and the Williamstown Historical Museum
- **Historic Resources** including historic districts, historic sites, and archaeological sites
- **Williamstown Cultural District**
- **Active Working Farms**
- **Gathering Spaces** such as the Milne Library, Council on Aging, Williamstown Youth Center, Sand Springs, and coffee shops
- **Community Events** - Farmers market, 4th of July parade, annual holiday walk, etc.
- **Visual and Performing Arts Sites** such as Images Cinema
- **Trails** such as those at Pine Cobble, Stony Ledge, and the RRR Brook Trail.

present, and future through the safeguarding of cultural heritage sites, conducting archaeological research, and repatriating ancestors and culturally significant items.

The town should continue to strengthen its relationships to the Stockbridge Munsee community through the local tribal preservation office. The town should explore opportunities to highlight pre-colonial history, and support the current work of the Stockbridge Munsee community, especially in relation to their ongoing connection to their ancestral homelands.

PUBLIC ART AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Public art is any type of art intended for public spaces or the public realm. According to Americans for the Arts, it is typically created by artists who “endeavor to generate dialogue with the community, at times about the issues central to their lives.” Public art can be reflective of and responsive to social political, and historical issues, cultures, and human experiences, while energizing and activating people and places. Public art can take many forms and be both temporary or permanent ranging from sculptures, murals, installations, performances, festivals, music, dance, theatre, paintings, text, chalk, graffiti, yarn bombs, functional art (like street furniture or signage) digital experiences, and more.

Local governments that invest in public art planning and programming do so because they see art and culture as intrinsically valuable to public life and recognize its effectiveness in advancing planning and community development goals and objectives. These include:

- Enhancing the human experience in the public realm;
- Celebrating community identity and culture;
- Promoting positive community and civic engagement;
- Promoting economic development and tourism;
- Advancing civic design objectives for parks, plazas, open spaces, streetscapes, trails, bus stops, light rail, and other public infrastructure; and
- Creating jobs in creative industries -- for artists, fabricators, engineers, construction workers, architects, and others.

As part of the town’s placemaking initiatives, Williamstown should investigate opportunities and partnerships to integrate temporary and permanent public art installations into the streetscape, built environment, and along trails.

RECOGNIZING INDIGENOUS HISTORY

Case Study: Abenaki Trails Project *New Hampshire*

The goal of the Abenaki Trails Project is to visibly honor and share a more inclusive history of the Abenaki people, indigenous to the northeast region of this country, to highlight historical Abenaki sites and to accentuate the positive indigenous history within the towns many continue to live in today. The Abenaki Trails Project is working towns and their historical societies throughout New Hampshire to highlight sites in their town and to erect and or install monuments and/or signage to educate visitors about the Abenaki people and their influence on the area. These sites will form an Abenaki Trail which people can travel from learning about Abenaki history and the impact they continue to have on communities today.

Creating an Abenaki Mural *Montpelier, VT*

Abena Songbird, Abenaki artist, and a team of other creatives are painting a mural depicting Abenaki culture and history at the Montpelier Transit Center. In partnership with the Montpelier Public Art Commission, the mural is meant to depict important symbols to the people of the dawnland, including strawberries, sweetgrass, fiddleheads, a hummingbird for resilience, a sunrise, and an ash tree.

PARKS AND RECREATION

Objective: Provide a variety of parks and recreation opportunities throughout the community for all to promote access to nature, a variety of recreation opportunities and facilities, and support a livable community.

Recreation, parks, and open space are critical components of any community's quality of life.

Inherent in the concept of local public parks, open spaces, and recreation areas is the idea that all members of a community — regardless of age, race, ethnicity, gender, ability level, or socioeconomic status — have access to a safe place to gather, play, exercise, and enjoy being outdoors.

Parks and recreation areas provide a wide array of benefits to the communities they serve, including improved health, environmental sustainability, and an overall elevated quality of life.

Williamstown prides itself on maintaining significant areas of official open space in and around the community and, in the future, is committed to planning for a robust parks and recreation system, including a network of neighborhood and community parks, recreation centers, and various programs and activities, which will provide opportunities for all residents.

WEAVING IN SUSTAINABILITY AND EQUITY

Planning for parks and recreation has evolved over the last few decades. No longer regarded as simply playgrounds and ballfields, parks and open spaces are being increasingly viewed as green infrastructure, with the potential to contribute to

RECREATION RESOURCES IN WILLIAMSTOWN INCLUDE:

- Parks
- Conservation areas and wildlife sanctuaries
- Trails and multi-use paths
- State Parks
- Playgrounds
- Schools/Athletic Fields
- Cultural centers (such as the Clark Institute)
- Recreation centers (Sand Springs and Williamstown Youth Center)

community resiliency and sustainability. This can be accomplished by increasing and/or protecting existing ecosystem services within parks and recreation resources, such as trees and other vegetation that provide stormwater runoff, wildlife habitat, and climate resilience benefits. Additionally, ensuring that communities have adequate access to public parks is a critical component of promoting social equity.

An equitable parks and recreation network includes facilities and programs that:

- Are connected to and integrated into the community.
- Meet the recreation needs of our diverse community.
- Are welcoming and designed for all regardless of race, income, ability, age, gender or sexual orientation.

- Are equitably distributed through the community.
- Are accessible, ADA-compliant and affordable.
- Connect the community through trails and complete streets.

STRATEGIC PARKS AND RECREATION PLANNING

There is a need for a comprehensive parks and recreation plan that will guide the planning of new recreation facilities and athletic fields, maintenance and improvements to existing facilities, identify new opportunities for outdoor recreation, and additional opportunities for additional recreation programming, and enhance connectivity between recreation resources through trail and pathway connections. Other initiatives could also be considered as part of this effort, such as developing cohesive signage to help with the overall branding, marketing, and wayfinding within and between recreational sites across Williamstown.

Key issues and topics that should be addressed in this plan include:

- Explore solutions to expand athletic field and court space for various sports.
- Identify new ways to collaborate with partners and ways to improve existing collaborations (such as the schools, Williamstown Youth Center, Sand Springs Pool, Williams College, and neighboring towns) to effectively meet recreation needs.
- Identify ways to expand recreation planning, maintenance, and program development capacity (including the addition of staffing).
- Assess physical access limitations at the town's existing recreation sites, including:
 - Distribution and quality of public access points to Williamstown's various open space and recreation facilities; and
 - How accessible Williamstown's recreation sites are by transportation for different

- populations and neighborhoods
- Assess other access limitations at the town's existing recreation sites, including:
 - How accessible these spaces are by level of comfort and safety; and
 - The perceptions of how welcome community members feel on recreation land that is publicly/private owned
- Build off of the pending Open Space and Recreation Plan update and the 2018 Recommendations for Enhancements to Williamstown's Parks and Recreation Offerings.
- Identify a strategic path forward regarding trail maintenance and development, public access of trails, stewardship needs, and connectivity opportunities (especially with the addition of a shared trails coordinator position).
- Identify recreation areas where new amenities are needed.
- Promote Williamstown's existing recreation resources to increase knowledge of the town's many recreational assets.



Above: Williamstown's recreation sites, which contribute to resident's quality of life.

Part 4

Implementation Plan and Matrix



IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

The actions listed in the implementation section on the following pages will help Williamstown implement its Vision for the future by guiding the town's land use policies, capital improvement planning process, and other initiatives. These actions were informed by the Existing Conditions Analysis Report, the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee, feedback from the public, and input provided by Town staff.

An expanded implementation table will be maintained by the Town's Community Development Department and overseen by the Planning Board. This table will include additional detail for each action related to the level of priority, status of action, responsible party, potential partners. It will also be publicly available on the town's website and the status of actions will be updated on an annual basis.

It is important to note that each of the primary implementation areas identified below incorporate multiple actions to achieve the desired goals. These initiatives and the other actions that follow will be informed and guided by Williamstown's commitment to Sustainability and Community Resilience and to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. These important frameworks have been woven into the actions listed under each of the plan elements on the following pages.

The primary implementation areas that Williamstown will be focusing on over the next ten to fifteen years include:

- **Completion of a land use policy and regulatory audit**, and the completion of regulatory amendments and bylaw updates to ensure consistency with the vision and future land use plan outlined in the Comprehensive Plan.
- **Completion of a town-wide municipal facilities and infrastructure assessment** and the effective utilization of asset management plans to inform and guide the capital improvement planning process.
- **The development and implementation of diverse housing strategies** to better accommodate existing and future residents of varied incomes, life stages, and needs.
- **Completion of a Multi-modal Transportation Network Plan** to ensure that Williamstown's transportation network reflects the 2016 Complete Streets Policy, and that new or improved facilities meet this standard.

DISTINCT AND DIVERSE

1. Diverse Housing Solutions

Foster the development of a variety of housing solutions to better accommodate existing and future residents of varied incomes, life stages, and needs.

1.1	Conduct a policy and regulatory audit to promote diverse housing solutions to better accommodate existing and future residents of varied incomes, life stages, and needs. During this process, the community will research and consider regulatory provisions that address affordability. This may include new provisions for cottage developments, co-housing opportunities, conservation subdivisions, townhouses, small apartments, manufactured housing, and others types of homes that serve the changing needs and demographics of the population.
1.2	Promote the development of mixed income multifamily housing in locations that are consistent with the Vision and Future Land Use Plan, and through incentive zoning provisions such as reductions in parking requirements and allowing on-street parking.
1.3	Create zoning amendments to allow cottage courts. Cottage courts can include units at various prices, including affordable and efficient housing opportunities for extremely low-income households and people who are at risk or those who are unhoused.
1.4	Work with architects on the creation and adoption of a catalog of pre-approved infill housing designs. Pre-approved building plans, sometimes called “pattern zones” if they are used in a specific area of the community, allow the town to clarify and expedite permitting for a set group of designs that are based on architecture and desired density of the neighborhood. Such programs reduce development cost and time for small-scale projects and encourage designs that fit into the context of existing neighborhoods.
1.5	Establish an inclusionary zoning provision to promote the development of affordable housing units which could include, but is not limited to, density bonuses, growth control exemptions, and a streamlined application process.
1.6	Adopt an Urban Center Housing Tax Increment Financing (UCH-TIF) program or another tax incentive program to promote affordable and mixed-income housing development.
1.7	Investigate the feasibility of a real estate transfer tax or similar mechanism to support the creation of affordable housing.
1.8	Create a program to educate the public on accessory dwelling units and the town’s standards to increase the available rental housing stock in Williamstown.
1.9	Collaborate with Williams College and other major employers to explore new opportunities for employer assisted housing. This could include working with these institutions on the development of neighborhood appropriate multi-family housing on their own land to meet appropriate community housing goals.
1.10	Establish a new local program to acquire deed restrictions to convert existing market-rate homes to affordable homes. This is a method to preserve the existing housing stock as year-round affordable rental and ownership housing and assist existing Williamstown homeowners.
1.11	Develop and implement Short Term Rental regulations that balance property-owners’ economic needs and opportunities with impacts on Williamstown’s housing supply, neighborhood life, and residential zoning codes.
1.12	Research programs that offer services for seniors who wish to age in place, such as a small grants program for accessible improvements and/or make critical repairs. Investigate possible funding sources. This may include applying for Community Preservation funds for property acquisitions to create affordable housing.

1.13	Create an inventory of sites that could provide space for future housing developments of multiple types. The focus of the inventory should be on properties located on existing infrastructure within In-Town Neighborhoods. While the Town's Lowry Property presents an attractive, well-located site, its legal status as possible conservation land remains unresolved.
2. Economic Diversification	
Encourage economic diversification that supports businesses and employees, resulting in a strong and resilient economy.	
2.1	Identify ways to enhance and grow key industry clusters in Williamstown such as agriculture and agritourism, outdoor recreation, and arts and culture. An early action might include developing a visitors map and online platform highlighting assets and destinations and creating sample itineraries for "A Day in Williamstown."
2.2	Work with cultural and art institutions in Williamstown to find ways to cross-promote and market to a national and global audience beyond current initiatives individual organizations are undertaking.
2.3	Identify opportunities to create studio and office spaces for artists, creatives, and entrepreneurs who may benefit from proximity to Williams College, the Clark, and other institutions in the region.
2.4	Support the growth of home-based businesses and remote workers while protecting the quality of the residential neighborhoods. This could include supporting organizations that are providing networking opportunities, workspace, and services to entrepreneurs, small businesses, and telecommuters. It could also include looking for opportunities to create additional shared workspaces and co-working opportunities.
2.5	Collaborate with the local non-profit land trusts (Williamstown Rural Lands & Berkshire Natural Resources Council) to establish a network of on- and off-road trails that connect major points of interest in Williamstown as well as to surrounding assets (Mt. Greylock, MASS MoCA, etc.) to make Williamstown a hub for hiking, cycling, and other outdoor activities. This action would help support existing service-based businesses in town and possibly lead to an expansion of businesses as visitation and activity increases.
2.6	Consider changes to the zoning regulations or create an agricultural overlay district to reduce limitations on suitable economic use of agriculture lands. This will allow for a diversification of revenue streams and more sustainable business models that could include small retail operations, events, food preparation and sale, brewery/winery/cidery, accommodations, etc.
2.7	Promote the creation of mixed-use development areas that align with the future land use map, and support the creation of higher density, multi-family, affordable, year-round housing development. To accomplish this the town will identify possible amendments to zoning regulations for these areas to encourage redevelopment and development that is context sensitive and promote sound site design.
2.8	Support Williamstown's existing local businesses by supporting a strong workforce. This will require addressing housing and transportation needs, and investing in public infrastructure and services.
3. Regional Cooperation	
Participate in regional initiatives to expand capacity, share resources, and address regional issues.	
3.1	Existing intermunicipal and shared services agreements should be maintained, and further collaboration on shared services and procurement should be explored.
3.2	Participate in the Hoosic River watershed protection initiatives. This should include watershed restoration and protection efforts through regional partnerships with neighboring towns, especially North Adams, and watershed protection groups such as Hoosic River Revival and the Hoosic River Watershed Association.

3.3	Work with state and regional partners in Massachusetts, Vermont, and New York to complete the regional multi-use paths and to expand public transit services.
3.4	Participate in regional housing initiatives, such as the Housing the Berkshires Coalition, to work with neighboring communities to address shared housing challenges.
3.5	Investigate a partnership with North Adams to share field space and recreation facilities.
STEWARDSHIP AND SERVICES	
4. Fiscally Responsible Public Facilities and Services	
Plan for fiscally responsible and well-managed municipal facilities and services that are high quality, meet the needs of residents and visitors, are net zero carbon, and are sustainable.	
4.1	Pursue high priority infrastructure improvement projects including improvements to the water and wastewater distribution and collection systems.
4.2	Pursue high priority municipal facility projects including siting, improving, and/or building the following: Town Hall, Community Center (for seniors, athletic recreation, arts), Senior Center, Library, and additional municipal outdoor recreation facilities (this could be for organized sports such as basketball, soccer, etc.).
4.3	To effectively invest in facility maintenance and capital planning, the town should complete facility condition assessments of each town-owned property to have a record of all internal and external building components, their useful life, and replacement schedules. Having a facility plan and schedule will also help prioritize items in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).
4.4	Conduct assessments of all municipal infrastructure (water, sewer, stormwater, etc.) to create a record of the condition, and to assist with the planning for improvements over time. Having an infrastructure plan and schedule will also help prioritize items in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). This plan should include: • The retirement of the City of North Adams water system within Williamstown by providing these residents with Town water. • Working with the owners of the Waubeeka Springs water system to ensure continued survival of the private water system serving the 5 Corners area.
4.5	Use the facility and infrastructure assessments to expand and further implement the Town's asset management programs across municipal departments, facilities, and utilities. This detailed asset tracking will inform infrastructure maintenance and help Williamstown plan for the replacement of public infrastructure.
4.6	Using regional and local climate change impact assessment projections, conduct an infrastructure risk assessment and develop appropriate mitigation and adaptation measures to protect critical infrastructure and services. Protect critical water and sewer infrastructure from the continued bank erosion along the Hoosic River or relocated.
4.7	Work toward Net Zero Emissions by: • Including environmental objectives in all purchasing decisions; transitioning the town's fleet of vehicles to electric; • Developing an energy efficiency program for existing buildings and utilities such as street lights; converting existing fossil fuel/wood based heating and cooling systems to electric in all municipal facilities/buildings; • Ensuring that any new building are designed and constructed to net zero standards; and expanding the Town's solar energy production to meet the Town's total energy needs. • Including nature-based solutions and changes to site maintenance on municipal properties.

5. Natural Resource Protection and Conservation	
Protect, conserve, and steward Williamstown's shared natural resources through regulations, conservation, and other strategies.	
5.1	Continue to prioritize municipal infrastructure updates that will reduce flooding, which is a key natural hazard faced by Williamstown as outlined in the 2019 Williamstown Hazard Mitigation Plan. Minimize soil erosion and water quality impairments, protect wildlife and fisheries, and continue to support sustainable forest management. Priorities should include replacing undersized culverts that exacerbate flooding, ice jams, sedimentation, and erosion damage, while also preventing aquatic organism passage. Road-stream crossings should accommodate the higher precipitation events projected to occur with increased severity and frequency due to climate change.
5.2	Research ways to better protect vegetated buffers along intermittent streams, and vernal pools and isolated wetlands within the community. This process may identify regulatory or non-regulatory approaches that increase surface water and wetland protection locally.
5.3	Review the town's site design regulations and identify innovative ways to protect and better incorporate natural resources and reflect modern planning best practices. This may include modifying municipal standards to require the implementation of stormwater best management practices, blue-green infrastructure, and nature-based solutions to reduce impervious cover that exacerbates flooding, passive aquifer recharge, and low impact development design strategies.
5.4	The current Confined Aquifer District overlay and Water Resource District overlays provide protective regulations for the integrity of the aquifer and recharge areas. However, modern best practices for development such as low impact development should be incorporated to reduce surface and groundwater pollution from non-point sources and strengthen Williamstown's drinking water resources.
5.5	Continue to work with state, neighboring municipalities, and private partners on the protection of the Hoosic River, its tributaries, and its watershed from the impacts of current and historic pollution, flooding, drought, and other hazards both natural and manmade.
5.6	Continue to explore opportunities for the acquisition and conservation of environmentally important areas in Williamstown through partnerships with local land protection organizations and private land owners. Protected natural areas provide critical ecosystem services that benefit everyone in town: flood protection, food production, water filtration, habitat for all creatures including pollinators and wildlife, carbon sequestration, and scenic beauty. The Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program and the Nature Conservancy identify core habitat and critical habitat to help guide strategic biodiversity conservation in Massachusetts. Furthermore, this identified core and critical habitat is largely along the streams and rivers of the Town – conservation and protection of these areas will also help secure vegetated buffers along the freshwater resources that prevent erosion and slow and absorb precipitation to filter pollutants and reduce risk of flooding. Williamstown should utilize these and other resources to prioritize future efforts.
5.7	Consider the adoption of new regulatory mechanisms such as a Conservation Subdivision and Lot Size Averaging Regulations to balance development with natural resource protection values and conservation efforts. Conservation Subdivisions refers to residential developments in which the buildings are clustered together with variable lot sizes and frontage in order to protect the greatest amount of open space.
5.8	Consider establishing a goal of no loss of working farmland acres.

5.9	Continue efforts related to the management of town forests for carbon sequestration. This could be further informed by a canopy analysis town-wide and identification of forest management practices that increase carbon capture. Forests should also be monitored for effects of climate change, such as stress from forest pests and diseases or precipitation changes.
5.10	Support local food production through farmland preservation, the farmers market, and community gardens. Farming, as an industry, in Williamstown would benefit from additional conservation easements in the Town that are created ensuring that good quality, affordable land is available to farmers. Programs such as the Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) Program and the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) should be utilized for additional farmland preservation. Land that is already cleared (not forested) and has a well for water were noted as the most valuable opportunities. In addition, support the continuity of farms (i.e., existing farmland is not replaced by development), allocate funds specifically for working farmlands, and include the housing needs of farmers and farm labor in affordable housing planning.
5.11	Catalogue existing lands with Ch. 61 protection for their ecological, agricultural, or other important values and set priorities for their potential permanent protection in the event the Town is offered a right of first refusal on a parcel of Ch. 61 land. Additionally, create a policy and process to be followed when the Town receives a notice of intent to convert a Ch. 61 parcel.

6. Energy Efficiency and Production

In keeping with its net-zero emissions commitment, Williamstown aims to enhance energy conservation and efficiency, expand renewable energy production, and reduce dependency on fossil fuels.

6.1	Develop a Net Zero Plan in collaboration with community, regional, and state partners.
6.2	Support and incentivize the efforts of residents, land owners, businesses, and institutions to complete energy efficiency measures, replace heating systems, and install renewable energy systems and battery storage systems. These efforts should include opportunities for all regardless of income level, and efforts should be made to involve owners and renters.
6.3	Intentionally and pro-actively offer informational and educational campaigns to show residents, businesses, and landlords how to upgrade their home energy systems and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, on electric mobility options, and how to evaluate and access the various types of rebates, incentives and tax credit programs available at the state and federal levels.
6.4	A critical infrastructure limitation exists with the limited capacity of the National Grid system to accommodate future large scale renewable energy projects in Williamstown. This is a significant issue that will require collaboration with Williams College and other agencies and organizations to develop solutions that will support the town's goals. Advocate for support from State Senator and House Representatives, National Grid, ISO New England, and partner with other organizations such as Williams College who are also committed to net zero emissions and decarbonization.
6.5	Continue the municipal composting program and if possible, expand this program to include businesses. These efforts will help retain soil nutrients within the community and reduce emissions.

7. Nature-Based Solutions

Protect, conserve, and steward Williamstown's shared natural resources through regulations, conservation, and other strategies while also embracing nature-based solutions.

7.1	Local regulations should be developed or revised to encourage nature-based solutions so that they are integrated into all new development and redevelopment projects.
7.2	Plant native trees and plants and improve current land management practices on municipally owned lands to reflect sustainable management best practices.

7.3	Provide educational materials on nature based solutions that will encourage residents and landowners implement these solutions on private properties. These could include meadow areas, native plantings, and perennial gardens.
WELCOMING AND CONNECTED	
8. Placemaking	
Create opportunities for placemaking, community events, and gathering spaces that build and sustain relationships.	
8.1	Pursue partnerships and opportunities for coordinating placemaking projects that incorporate public art, community gathering, public space improvements, and relationship building between neighbors, community members, businesses, local leaders, and others. These projects should reflect historically marginalized artists and groups, and would be a good opportunity to collaborate with members of the Stockbridge-Munsee community.
8.2	Identify a location and process for the creation of a town square or central gathering place. This space will provide opportunities for flexible programming, events, and informal gathering in the town center. Potential locations include, but are not limited to, the Town Green at the top of Spring Street, the area near the Town Hall, Field Park, etc.
8.3	Develop a municipal placemaking guidebook and standards to both promote community-driven placemaking initiatives in Williamstown and to provide guidance on implementing these initiatives.
8.4	Improve pedestrian/cycling facilities and wayfinding in the community by connecting points of interest such as the Clark Art Institute, WCMA, Williamstown Youth Center, Spring St, Cole Avenue Businesses, Williamstown Plaza, and trails. This would assist people as they navigate the campus / town center and make it easier to connect to the Clark and other destinations.
9. A Transparent and Representative Local Government	
Prioritize clear municipal communications, transparency, and broader representation within local government to ensure diverse perspectives are represented and that barriers to participation are reduced.	
9.1	Create an equitable community engagement toolkit to guide all municipal public outreach and community engagement activities that incorporate best practices and strategies to enhance broad and equitable participation in local decision making.
9.2	Develop strategies and an overarching approach to enhance municipal communication to residents and other community members regarding town projects, initiatives, permitting regulations, and events. This should include examining the town website, newsletter, media channels, and messaging.
9.3	Create a strategy to promote civic engagement and a culture of participation in town affairs and town meeting. Increase the presence of town boards and committee activities to the broader community.
9.4	Educate the community, especially historically underserved populations, about services, programs, and support available and provided by the town and regionally.
10. Multi-Modal Transportation System	
Provide and maintain a well-designed, affordable, and integrated multi-modal transportation network that is accessible, convenient, and well-connected for diverse modes of travel to move between a variety of destinations.	

10.1	Complete a Multi-modal Transportation Network Plan ensure that Williamstown's transportation network reflects the 2016 Complete Streets Policy and that new or improved facilities meet this standard. Identifying opportunities for greening streets to better manage stormwater, provide habitat, and increase climate resilience should also be a priority within this Plan. This Plan should identify improvements to existing infrastructure, and areas where new infrastructure could be feasibly constructed to promote walking, bicycling, and transit use.
10.2	Use the Multi-modal Transportation Network Plan to guide the construction of Complete and Green Streets along all state routes, and major local roadways. These facilities should accommodate all modes of travel (pedestrians, bicycles, automobiles, and transit) in a more sustainable way through the inclusion of street trees, native plantings, and natural infrastructure solutions.
10.3	As part of the Multi-modal Transportation Network Plan, the town will work to enhance the quality, safety, and connectivity of pedestrian infrastructure, assess the sidewalk and pathway network to identify gaps, and then prioritize construction and upgrade projects in the community. This will include better connections between the new multi-use path and the town center, campus, and surrounding neighborhoods.
10.4	Redesign Main Street along the Town Green through campus from Field Park to Cole Ave to calm traffic, reduce speed, and improve both pedestrian and vehicular safety. This should include further restoration of the Green's historic tree cover and the burying of all overhead utility lines.
10.5	Incorporate placemaking and tactical urbanism practices into the transportation infrastructure design process. This will allow the town to test design solutions and engage the community in the process before designs are finalized and construction begins.
10.6	Assess the feasibility and possibilities for expanding public transportation and alternative transportation options (ride sharing, car sharing, bike sharing, etc.) to make transportation more accessible to all and more sustainable.
10.7	Identify opportunities to add electric vehicle charging stations in municipal parking areas, and encourage other landowners to do so in public and private parking lots as well.

CHARACTER AND PLACE

11. Arts, Culture, and History

Share and support the arts, history, and cultural assets as a vital part of Williamstown's community character, economy, and life in town.

11.1	Acknowledge and share all aspects of the town's history. This presents an opportunity to highlight life in Williamstown prior to the arrival of European settlers to transparently communicate a more complete historical record. These efforts should also increase the presence of the Stockbridge-Munsee's art, culture, and history in Williamstown. It should also include understanding and communicating the experiences of BIPOC people in Williamstown with compassion.
11.2	Integrate temporary and permanent public art installations into the streetscape, built environment, and along multi-use trails. These installations should reflect historically marginalized artists and groups, and would be a good opportunity to collaborate with members of the Stockbridge-Munsee community.
11.3	Promote and market the town's arts and cultural assets to the broader public including more well-known places, such as the Clark Institute, as well as community-based places and events of cultural significance, such as the town's trail systems, Williamstown Historical Museum, the Williams College Museum of Art, the Williamstown Theater Festival, and annual events. Consider how or whether community events and celebrations create and support an inclusive community.

12. Land Use Policy and Design

Adopt land use policy and design standards that preserve and contribute to our sense of place, address community issues and needs, and protect our shared resources.

12.1	Complete a Policy and Regulatory Audit of Williamstown's existing land use regulations against the adopted Comprehensive Plan to identify disconnects and inconsistencies that must be addressed through regulatory amendments over the coming years.
12.2	After completing the Policy and Regulatory Audit, rewrite and reformat the zoning bylaws to better meet the needs and goals of the community in a user-friendly, readable, simplified style that incorporates visuals.
12.3	Strongly consider developing a Form Based Code for all mixed-use development areas as indicated on the Future Land Use Map to further clarify the development process and what Williamstown desires from developers. This type of zoning would provide an opportunity to streamline, help visualize, and clearly communicate the Regulatory requirements (including building form, density, site design, and streetscape) and opportunities to future applicants.
12.4	Appreciation for dark night skies and quiet have been identified as important elements of the town's character. In addition to the potential implementation of statewide standards, Williamstown should investigate changes to its current regulations within zoning and its general bylaws develop regulations or guidelines within the town to protect against light and noise pollution, and provide education and outreach on the subjects.
12.5	Develop a new base zoning district to cover the area containing the Williams College campus that can effectively balance community and college land use goals within the confines of the Dover Amendment in Mass General Law. The Dover Amendment prohibits the regulation of the educational use of the college's property but does allow regulation on height, size, and bulk of structures as well as development standards for issues such as parking. Appropriate regulation of these aspects of the campus could be a foundation for a productive and cooperative town / gown working relationship.

13. Parks and Recreation

Provide a variety of parks and recreation opportunities throughout the community for all to promote access to nature, diverse recreation opportunities and facilities, and support a livable community

13.1	Maintain the variety and quality of parks and recreation opportunities for all to promote access to nature, diverse recreation opportunities and facilities, and support a livable community. Identify improvements needed at existing parks and recreation facilities and plan to invest in said improvements over time.
13.2	Identify and develop additional recreation facilities and opportunities throughout the community. This should include a combination of trail connections into the town center that can serve both a recreation and transportation purpose, and new parks or spaces for both passive and organized/ active recreation (playgrounds, basketball, pickleball, etc.).
13.3	Create a Strategic Conservation and Outdoor Recreation Plan for Williamstown that identifies and prioritizes undeveloped land for acquisition/conservation, trail and pathway connections, and new opportunities for outdoor recreation. This should include identifying locations for additional outdoor recreation fields.
13.4	Develop cohesive recreation signage to help with the overall branding and marketing of recreational offerings across Williamstown. Given the diversity of offerings and partners involved, a cohesive signage design and mapping could help unify the recreational services provided throughout town.
13.5	Promote coordination between town departments, community partners, and town boards and committees to provide additional programs that engage people in a variety of outdoor activities.