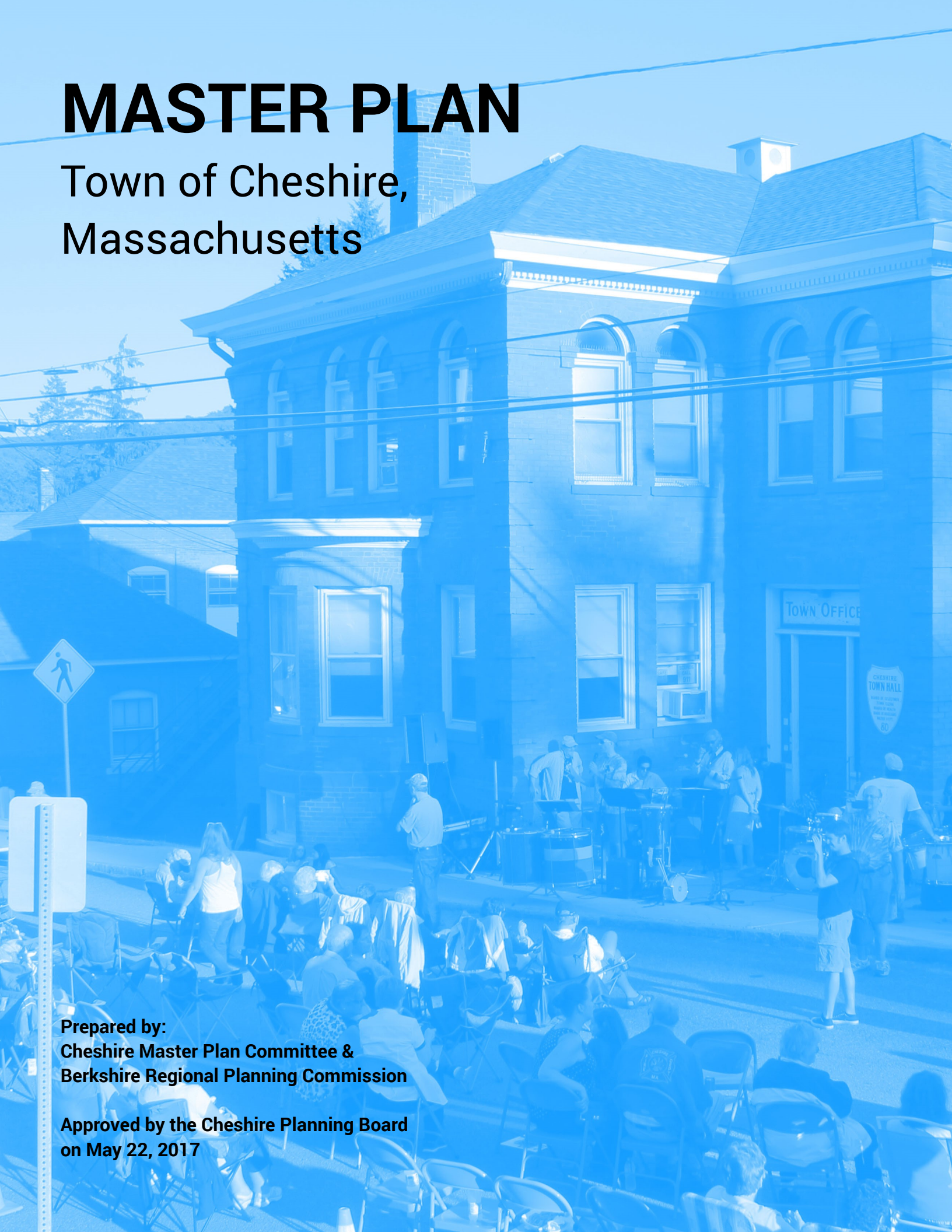
MASTER PLAN

Town of Cheshire, Massachusetts



Prepared by:
Cheshire Master Plan Committee &
Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

Approved by the Cheshire Planning Board on May 22, 2017

MASTER PLAN

2017

Town of Cheshire, Massachusetts

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Town of Cheshire

Massachusetts 01225

PLANNING BOARD

APPROVAL

On this date, Monday, May 22, 2017, the Cheshire Planning Board approved the submission of the Cheshire Master Plan.

The Cheshire Master Plan Committee will forge ahead with the establishment of an Implementation Committee and the Cheshire Planning Board will continue to track the progress of this initiative.

A copy of the Cheshire Master Plan is available for viewing at the Cheshire Town Library.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Planning Process and Plan Creation was Spearheaded by the Following:

Cheshire Board of Selectmen and Planning Board

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

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All Town Boards, Committees, and Staff

Citizens of Cheshire

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Cheshire Master Plan began development in early 2016 and was completed in 2017. The Master Plan is an advisory document that sets a clear direction for the community. The Master Plan is intended to guide policy decisions, investment, and decision-making for the next 10-15 years.

PROCESS

The Cheshire Master plan was created through a broad public outreach process that included:

- A public opinion survey
- Public forums
- Listening sessions with different groups in town
- Stakeholder interviews with board and committee members, town staff, and others
- Master Plan Committee meetings

HOW TO READ THIS DOCUMENT

The Master Plan chapters are focused around a single aspect of life in town. Each chapter begins with a vision statement that describes the desired future condition related to the topic. After the vision statement is a section of narrative that describes the existing conditions for each topic area. Each chapter ends with a set of goals, objectives, and actions that when implemented will help achieve the vision. The goals, objectives, and actions are the heart of the plan. They are the specific items and projects the town will focus on as it implements the plan.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Population and Demographics

Vision

Cheshire is a town where residents can live, grow, work, and remain in the community for a lifetime. The town attracts and retains diverse residents and families through its superior schools, growing community of small businesses, and the overall quality of life.

Existing Conditions

Cheshire has a population of around 3200 year-round residents. Based on population projection estimates, the town's population is expected to decline over the next twenty years or so. The median age of a Cheshire resident has increased from around 40 years old in 2000 to around 47 years old in 2014. Projections indicate that this aging trend will continue, with over half of all residents being age 55 and older by 2030.

Economy

Vision

Cheshire has a sustainable and vibrant local economy with a diverse range of businesses. Businesses, and the town which supports them, take great pride in the community and collaborate to make Cheshire a better place for all. These local attractions, combined with the town's natural beauty, assets, and recreational opportunities, create a quality of life that is sought out by visitors, and where people want to live and raise their families.

Existing Conditions

Cheshire has an economy based around small local businesses. Around 60 businesses registered with the town in recent years, and represent a variety of small businesses and independent entrepreneurs. However, most residents commute outside of town for employment.

The plan recommends that the town assist in the formation of a Business Association that would help guide economic development activities in town. Some strategies that are proposed include establishing a Farmer's Market in town, encouraging and promoting agricultural and other businesses, exploring business feasibility, and hosting business development workshops in town among others.

Other recommendations of this chapter include enhancing signage and landscaping at town gateways, using the town website to better promote business and destinations, and continuing to hold events in the community.

Economy Goals

Goal 1: The Economy is Strong and Growing
Goal 2: Community Connections and Overall Attractiveness of the Town are Enhanced to Draw New Residents and Visitors

Infrastructure

Vision

Cheshire creatively and proactively addresses, maintains, and upgrades its infrastructure; utilizing sustainable methods, meeting high standards, and making strategic and wise investments to keep pace with changes in the community.

Existing Conditions

The infrastructure section of the plan focuses on town buildings and facilities, as well as drinking water infrastructure. Cheshire has several buildings and facilities, including the town hall, town hall annex, highway department garage, and others. Repair needs were identified for most town buildings. The town has a small public drinking water system that serves residents in the village center. Wastewater in the community is treated through use of on-site septic systems, as there is no public sewer system.

The plan recommends that the town conduct an assessment of all public buildings and facilities to determine needs. The town should determine if repairs and upgrades to existing facilities are warranted or if its needs would be better met through new facilities. The plan also recommends that the town begin the initial steps of looking at the feasibility of a sewer system in the community.

Infrastructure Goals

Goal 1: Infrastructure Meets Changing Town Needs and Reduces Energy Costs.

Services

Vision

Cheshire provides high quality and fiscally sound services to its residents. These services are natural offshoots of its forward-thinking and proactive outlook, its commitment to self-betterment, technology, best practices, and its close-knit community.

Existing Conditions

The services section of the plan describes the services that the town provides to residents. There are many services provided in the form of road maintenance, waste collection through the town's compactor and transfer station, as well as emergency medical, law enforcement, and fire protection services. This chapter also describes the town's finances. Road maintenance and educational expenses are the town's major expenses. Overall, Cheshire has a relatively low tax rate compared to other communities in the Berkshires. The town has the ability to raise millions in additional taxes should it need to and is in no danger of approaching its levy ceiling (2.5% of all assessed property value). This means that Cheshire has some flexibility with its finances to respond to emergencies or other unforeseen expenses.

The plan recommends several strategies related to services. The town should comprehensively review its finances, budget, and staffing requirements to seek out cost savings. The town should aggressively pursue grant funding to offset town costs and advance projects. The plan recommends a suite of strategies intended to promote public engagement and participation, as well as active communication and transparency. Finally, this chapter includes recommendations aimed at the town library and to help support seniors in the community to maintain quality of life and allow residents to age-in-place.

Services Goals

Goal 1: Proactively Address Town Needs Through Public Engagement, Long-Term Planning, and Additional Sources of Funding.
Goal 2: Provide High Quality Services to Maintain Quality of Life and Allow Residents to Age-in-Place

During the creation of the Master Plan, the Adams Cheshire Regional School District (ACRSD) worked with the University of Massachusetts' Collins Center to develop a cost analysis study that examined restructuring the school district. In response to the study, the district chose to close Cheshire Elementary School and relocate students to other district schools to reduce expenses and enhance overall services and program offerings. The closure of the elementary school was opposed by many residents. At the time of this writing in June 2017, the town and several community groups are still exploring options that would allow the school to remain open. The Master

Plan recommends that the town continue to explore these options. However, if none are viable in the long run, the town should begin the process of finding ways to reuse the school facility and building. To aid this process, a building reuse committee should be formed.

Services—Schools and Education Goals

Goal 1: District Schools Provide the Highest Quality of Education to All Students and Have a Level 1 Designation, While Remaining Cost-Effective and Affordable to Residents and Taxpayers.

Housing

Vision

Cheshire will provide safe and affordable housing for all ages and incomes, creating a town where residents can live and grow for a lifetime.

Existing Conditions

Cheshire's existing housing stock is comprised primarily of single family residences. There are few rental units in the community. There are few seasonal housing units in the community, although this number is growing.

Housing affordability is an issue in Cheshire and throughout the region, as home values have risen significantly. Housing for young families and for seniors were important issues within the community.

The plan recommends that the town form a Housing Committee to be able to more effectively address this issue. The plan also recommends that the town review a number of proposed changes to its existing zoning bylaw to encourage housing development, such as an Accessory Dwelling Unit (or Mother-in-Law Apartment) bylaw, and a common driveway bylaw, among others. Finally, it is recommended that in the long term the town create a housing strategy to better provide housing for young families and seniors.

Housing Goals

Goal 1: Provide Housing for All Ages and Incomes

Transportation

Vision

Cheshire will provide a well-maintained road network and transportation system, where residents of all ages and abilities can move safely and efficiently—whether by driving, biking, walking, or public transit.

Existing Conditions

Cheshire has a road network of approximately 63 miles. Of these, the town is responsible for maintaining for 46 miles (74%). The rest are maintained by the state or are privately owned. Public transit service is provided by the Berkshire Regional Transit Authority (BRTA), which also provides paratransit to disabled individuals in the community. The town operates its own van service for seniors. There are several roadways in town eligible for federal transportation funding, including Old Cheshire Rd./ Lanesboro Rd., Church St/Main St./Wells Rd. and Route 116. Road and bridge maintenance was a top issue in the community.

It is recommended that the town develop a repaving and maintenance plan for its roadways, as well as continue its strong working relationships with the Massachusetts Dept. of Transportation (MassDOT) and BRTA. Other initiatives include continuing participation in the MassDOT Complete Streets Program and implementing a town wayfinding system.

Transportation Goals

Goal 1: Provide a Complete and Well-Maintained Transportation System That Safely Accommodates Vehicles, Pedestrians, and Cyclists.

Land Use

Vision

Cheshire's active village center provides space for residences, business, and civic life—nestled in rural, agricultural, and scenic surroundings. Appropriate regulation supports these uses and the town's economic development, recreation, and conservation goals.

Existing Conditions

Cheshire is mostly forested, but also contains

extensive agricultural and residential land uses. The town has a relatively dense village center, and is surrounded by more rural development, agricultural land, and extensive state land holdings which are largely undeveloped. Cheshire's village center has a much younger population with lower income than residents living outside this area.

The Plan recommends that the town explore changes to its zoning bylaw to reinvigorate Cheshire Village, such as by separating the Cheshire Village area from and possibly expand business zones. It is also recommended that the town explore mechanisms to protect rural character, such as updated commercial development design standards, a strengthened sign bylaw, and possible adoption of the Scenic Mountains Act.

Land Use Goals

Goal 1: Reinvigorate Cheshire Village
Goal 2: Advance Economic Opportunities in Town
Goal 3: Maintain the Town's Rural Landscape and Small Town Character

Natural and Cultural Resources

Vision

Cheshire's abundant water resources, agricultural lands, wetlands, rare species and wildlife habitat, and other natural resources are cherished, actively used, and adequately protected by state and local regulations. Moreover, its rich historic and cultural resources—derived from the town's natural heritage—are recognized, preserved, and readily accessed.

Existing Conditions

Cheshire has abundant natural resources found in its many forests, lake and other water resources, and unique environments. Some water resources, including Cheshire Lake, are considered by the EPA to be impaired, due to pollution, invasive species, and for other reasons.

The town also has extensive cultural and historic resources, including buildings, monuments, cemeteries and other noteworthy features. The statewide database of cultural and historic resources notes nearly 200 such features in Cheshire.

The plan recommends that the town work with the State and the Cheshire Lake Association to update the management plan for the lake. A number of other strategies should also be pursued to protect soils, forests, and other natural environments. The plan also recommends that the town continue to promote and protect historic and cultural resources through the ongoing work of the Historical Commission.

Natural and Cultural Resource Goals

Goal 1: Natural Resources Are Protected, Promoted, and Well-Managed
Goal 2: Historic Resources Are Protected and Promoted

Open Space and Recreation

Vision

Cheshire is a recreation destination in the Berkshires, centrally located between the cities of North Adams and Pittsfield, and affording easy access to all the region has to offer. Cheshire Lake, the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail, the Appalachian Trail, Cheshire Cobbles, and thousands of acres of state reservation and wildlife management area provide outdoor enjoyment for all.

Existing Conditions

Cheshire has abundant open space, which is generally defined as land that is not used for residential, commercial, or industrial uses. Open space is often protected from future development in some way. In Cheshire open space is primarily protected by the state, although there is some protected farm land as well. Cheshire has a number of important recreation destinations, including the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail, the Appalachian Trail and Cheshire Cobbles, as well as state reservation and Wildlife Management Areas (WMA). The town also maintains park and public areas around town hall and at the Stafford Hill Memorial, as well as several hundred acres of watershed land.

The Plan recommends that the town develop an Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) to access state grant funds and address specific needs for town-owned lands. Other important initiatives include

advocating to the state for improved amenities or to explore creative uses for state-owned lands.

Open Space and Recreation Goals

Goal 1: Cheshire Is the Outdoor Playground of the Northern Berkshires

IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

The plan calls for numerous actions. To make implementation easier, the final chapter lists each action and assigns a relative time, priority, and who is responsible for initiating the implementation of the action. Ideally, the town will use this tool as it plans annual priorities from year to year.

Recommendations for Additional Committees and Organizations

The Plan recommends that the following organizations be created to help implement the plan.

- Business Association
- Housing Committee
- Master Plan Implementation Committee
- School Building Reuse Committee (if Cheshire Elementary remains closed)

APPENDICES

In addition to the plan for the town's future, there are a number of appendices that highlight key issues, legal considerations, and survey feedback received from the community.

Appendices

A. Maps
B. Key issues
C. Existing Conditions Tables
D. Public Survey Results
E. MGL Chapter 41

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

WELCOME TO CHESHIRE!

Cheshire is a small town located in northern Berkshire County and has around 3000 year-round residents. Cheshire is located in the scenic Hoosic River Valley, where vast farmlands meet the Hoosic River at the state's highest peak. Berkshire County is the western-most county of Massachusetts. The Berkshire region is known for its outdoor recreation opportunities, as well as cultural destinations such as museums, theaters, and music venues.

WHAT DOES THIS PLAN ADDRESS?

This Plan addresses a wide range of issues and priorities as expressed by the town through survey responses received at the start of the planning process. Some highlights, which illustrate recurring themes in the Plan and its policies, include:

Town Finances
Cheshire will take a hard look at its finances, reviewing major town costs, such as debt, insurance, and other benefits, and developing a long range Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) to help guide large future expenditures. Moreover, Cheshire will examine its staffing needs and develop a system for performance evaluation for all town staff. Additionally, the town will aggressively pursue grant funding as a means to supplement existing tax revenue.

Public Engagement, Participation, and Transparency
The town will take measures to better engage the public and keep them informed of town events, as well as examine ways to increase public participation, particularly around Annual Town Meeting. Cheshire will also seek out ways to better integrate students and young people into town activities and decision-making.

Expand Opportunities for Business While Protecting Rural Character
The Town of Cheshire will examine ways to promote business growth, such as developing a Business Association or Economic Development Committee and potentially expanding the business zoning district in town. However, rural character is critically important to Cheshire residents. The town will also explore ways to safeguard rural character, such as design requirements for commercial developments, an updated sign bylaw, and more.

Promoting and Developing Recreation, Historic, Agricultural, and Cultural Assets
Cheshire has its own unique recreation, historic, and cultural destinations in a region known for these assets. The town should cultivate and promote these assets to draw new residents and visitors to the community. The town will also explore ways to promote its agricultural resources, like establishing a Farmer's Market, among other strategies.

Infrastructure
Throughout the Plan, recommendations are made to address town buildings and facilities, its public drinking water system, roads, and bridges.

Reactivating Cheshire Village Center
Throughout the Plan, recommendations are made to reactivate Cheshire Village. These include examining opportunities for new business, improving landscaping, seeking grant funding, or establishing a separate zoning district for the village center.

ABOUT MASTER PLANS

A Master Plan is a document that sets a blueprint for town decision-makers to use in their day-to-day actions as part of managing the town. It is an advisory document, not a regulatory document. The purpose of this Plan is to create an opportunity for the town to reflect and determine what it wants for its future and then chart out the preferred actions to achieve that vision. It is then the responsibility of the town's elected and appointed officials to pursue the actions identified in the implementation chapter of this plan. Gradual regulatory, programmatic, and organizational changes, as well as priority investments, will help achieve the Plan's goals and vision.

How does the Master Plan Relate to Other Town Plans and Documents?

The Master Plan takes precedence over other plans of

the community such as transportation plans, Open Space and Recreation Plans, area plans, and other area- or topic-specific documents. The Master Plan is typically more general than these other plan documents. However, the Master Plan provides overarching guidance to the content of other plans in that they should be consistent with the policies established in the Master Plan.

An important function of the Master Plan is to ensure priorities and approaches in one area, such as land use, relate to another, such as transportation. Because all of the topics are addressed within a single document, the policies in these different areas are developed to be consistent and supportive, thus safeguarding the potential danger of conflicting policies that can occur in a more fragmented planning approach. Other town plans can then use this framework to reach a finer level of detail in a particular subject area. For a list of the topics required by Massachusetts law to be addressed in a Master Plan, see Appendix D.

While the Master Plan is not a regulatory document, it does set the policy for the town to develop new bylaws to regulate land use decisions. For more on how the plan impacts land use and bylaw decisions see Chapter 8: Land Use.

WHAT DOES THE PLAN CONTAIN?

Master Plan guidance is provided in a number of ways, including maps of current and desired conditions, illustrations of concepts, and policy language. At the core of the plan is a vision statement of the overarching objectives the town wants to accomplish for its future. The vision is the foundation for a number of goals, more specific objectives, and action statements. Together these establish the blueprint for what the town will do to achieve its vision. They will serve as a guide for town policy and decision-makers for the life of the plan.

Vision

The vision is the "big picture" statement of where the town would like to be in five, ten, or twenty years from now.

Goals

Goals go into greater detail on the different pieces that the town will need to pursue in order to make the vision a reality.

Objectives

These are the specific strategies that the town will pursue to achieve the goal.

Actions

Actions are the specific tasks that individuals or groups will need to do in order to achieve specific policy statements.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

This Plan was developed through a planning process that included a few key ways of participation and feedback from the community:

Cheshire Master Plan Committee

The Cheshire Master Plan Committee was created to guide development of the Master Plan. The Committee included representation from the Select Board, Planning Board, School Committee, and Advisory Board, among others.

Stakeholder Interviews

To gather information to develop the plan, 27 town staff, board members, and others were interviewed by Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC). The interviews helped to establish a baseline for ongoing work and projects in Cheshire and gathered input on the desired future direction of the community. Notes from Stakeholder interviews are included in Appendix D.

Survey

A survey was developed to gain feedback from Cheshire residents regarding aspects of the Master Plan. The survey was made open to the public on March 14, 2016, and was concluded on April 8, 2016.

Over 341 year-round residents, seasonal residents, second homeowners, and business owners responded to the survey. The results of the public survey are included in Appendix D.

Listening Sessions

Master Plan Committee members attended meetings of several organizations, including the Fire Dept., Rod and Gun Club, Garden Club, and Parent Teacher Group to speak with members about their thoughts on the town and its future. For notes from listening sessions, see Appendix D.

Public Forums

The Master Plan Committee held two open public forums in January and April of 2017 to gather input on the plan. The first forum sought broad input on the plan, while the second reviewed draft goals, objectives and actions. For notes from the first public forum, see Appendix D.

PLAN OVERVIEW

This Plan contains eleven total chapters in addition to this introduction that address the following aspects of the town:

Chapter 2: Population and Demographics

This chapter presents population and demographic trends in Cheshire and outlines key issues.

Chapter 3: Economy

This chapter provides an overview of the key economic sectors present in the town and makes recommendations on how the town can support the retention and expansion of economic activity in the future.

Chapter 4: Infrastructure

Chapter 4 contains an overview of town infrastructure including drinking water infrastructure, public buildings, and facilities. This chapter makes recommendations for future infrastructure improvement and development.

Chapter 5: Services

This chapter provides an overview of the fire, police, and other services provided in the town and sets goals and policies for the town to pursue in order to maintain and enhance services in the future.

Chapter 6: Housing

This chapter provides an overview of housing supply and needs both now and in the future and presents town goals and policies to address future housing in the town including options for young families and seniors.

Chapter 7: Transportation

This chapter highlights key features and issues with the current transportation system, and then establishes goals and policies for the town to pursue in order to maintain and enhance this system in the future.

Chapter 8: Land Use

This chapter contains a description of the current land use patterns and constraints, and identifies goals and policies for future land use.

Chapter 9: Natural and Cultural Resources

This chapter summarizes the natural environment, as well as cultural and historic attributes of the town, and sets goals and objectives for the town to pursue.

Chapter 10: Open Space and Recreation

This chapter summarizes the open space and recreation elements of Cheshire, and sets goals and objectives for the town to pursue.

Chapter 11: Vision

This chapter outlines the vision statements that were developed for each element of the Master Plan.

Chapter 12: Public Process

This chapter outlines the public process that was used to develop the Master Plan.

Chapter 13: Implementation Strategy

This chapter contains an overview of the different types of actions that will be needed to implement the plan and the range of entities that will be involved in that process. Additionally, it includes the Implementation strategy and action plan, which details the actions, responsible parties, and relative priority for each action called for in the plan.

Appendices

A. Maps
B. Key issues
C. Existing Conditions Tables
D. Public Survey Results, notes from listening sessions, stakeholder interviews, and 1st public forum
E. MGL Chapter 41

CHAPTER 2: POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

VISION

Cheshire is a town where residents can live, grow, work, and remain in the community for a lifetime. The town attracts and retains diverse residents and families through its superior schools, growing community of small businesses, and the overall quality of life.

TRENDS AND CONDITIONS

Historic and Projected Growth Rates

The estimated population of Cheshire in 2014 was 3,211 residents, making it the 10th highest in Berkshire County. This is about 8% lower than the town's peak population of 3,479 in 1990. Prior to 1990 the town's population was on a steady upward trend (from a low of 1,221 in 1900), with the largest percent increases occurring between 1900 and 1910, and between 1940 and 1970.

Population projections from the Donahue Institute at UMass Amherst show a declining trend, however, with an estimated population of 2,457 in 2035 (see **Table 2.1**). This trend is consistent with the majority of Berkshire County municipalities.

Population Age

Comparing the American Community Survey's (ACS) 5-year average from 2010-2014 to the US Census from 2000 shows that the population of Cheshire is aging. The median age increased by 7.2 years, from 40.6 to 47.8 years old. In the same 14-year period, the percentage of residents aged 55 and older has increased from roughly 25% of the total population to 39%. This trend is projected to continue, with the 55+ age cohort estimated to comprise approximately 55% of the population in 2030 (see **Figure 2.1**). See Table 2.2 for more age data.

Some of this change may be attributable to the aging of existing town residents, as well as outward migration of young people moving away to pursue jobs or educational opportunities. The decreasing number of younger residents and increasing number

POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS AT A GLANCE

Age

The median age of a Cheshire resident increased from 40.6 to 47.8 between 2000 and 2014. By 2030, projections indicate that those 55 and older will make up around 55% of the population in Cheshire.

School Enrollment

Enrollment of Cheshire students in regional academic schools has dropped from 91% in 2000-2001 to 78% in 2014-2015.

Population Projections

The total year-round town population is expected to decline by several hundred residents over the next 20 years or so.

of older residents is a trend that has been identified in regional county-wide planning.

This trend also reveals itself in school enrollment data. Between the 2000-2001 school year and the 2014-2015 school year, there has been a 27% decrease in both overall school enrollment (575 and 417 students, respectively) and public school enrollment (525 and 324 students, respectively).

Cheshire is part of the Adams-Cheshire Regional School District, which also receives students from the towns of Adams and Savoy as well as school-choice students. Cheshire Elementary contains pre-school through 5th grades. Hoosac Valley Regional Middle & High School contains grades 6 through 12.

Enrollment of Cheshire students in regional academic schools has dropped from 91% in 2000-2001 to 78% in 2014-2015, although overall public school enrollment remains high at 93.8%. This change is due to an increase in enrollment at regional vocational technical schools (33 more students in vocational schools), charter schools (19 more students), and out-of-district public schools (8 more students). See **Table 2.3**.

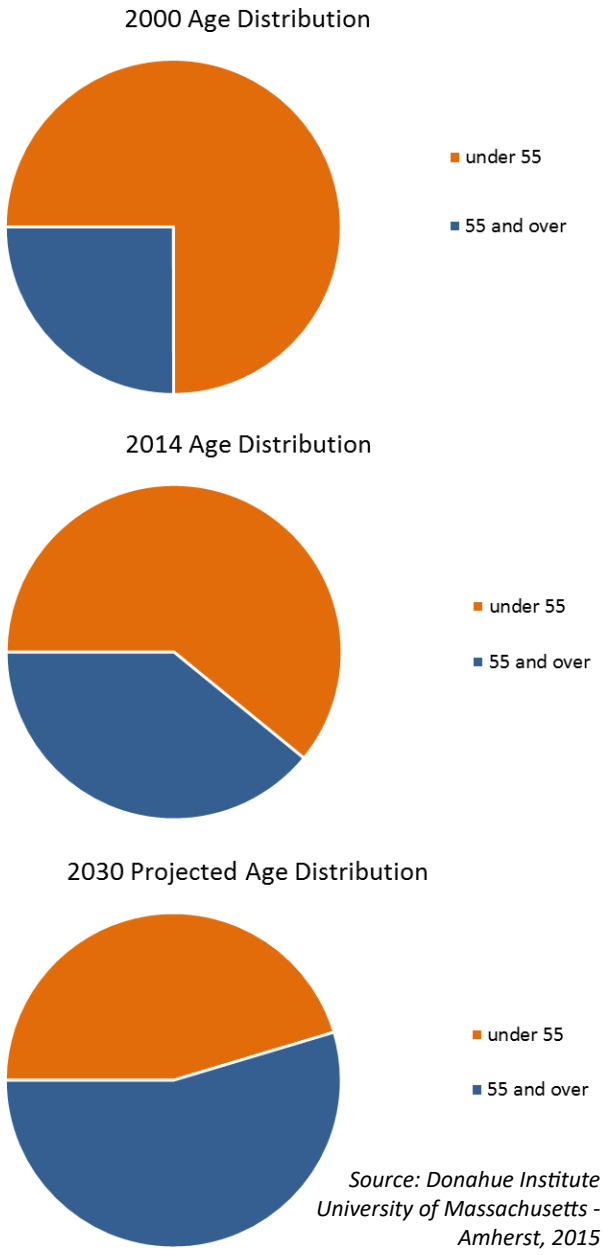
Race, Ethnicity, and Diversity

The vast majority of Cheshire's population (98%) is white. Within the remaining percentage of the population, there were some changes between the 2000 Census and the 2014 ACS estimates. For instance, the number of African Americans increased from 13 to 23 individuals, while the number of Asian Americans decreased from 18 to 0, and residents from two or more races decreased from 22 to 7.

Births and Deaths

Births and deaths in Cheshire between 2000 and 2010

Figure 2.1—Age Distribution of Cheshire Residents in 2000, 2014, and 2030



Source: Donahue Institute University of Massachusetts - Amherst, 2015

TABLE 2.1 - Projected Population Change in Cheshire from 2010 to 2035

Source: Donahue Institute University of Massachusetts - Amherst, 2015

Year	US Census **2010**	Projection **2015**	Projection **2020**	Projection **2025**	Projection **2030**	Projection **2035**	**Projected 2015-2035 Change**
Population	3225	3107	2993	2854	2685	2457	-701 (21.7%)

Table 2.2 - Cheshire Population Characteristics 2000-2014				
Sources: 2000 US Census, 2010-2014 American Community Survey				
	2000		2014	
Total Population	3401	100%	3211	100%
Under 5 years	171	5.0%	148	4.6%
5 to 9 years	212	6.2%	218	6.8%
10 to 14 years	264	7.8%	167	5.2%
15 to 19 years	232	6.8%	222	6.9%
20 to 24 years	142	4.2%	116	3.6%
25 to 29 years	173	5.1%	144	4.5%
30 to 34 years	198	5.8%	119	3.7%
35 to 39 years	269	7.9%	144	4.5%
40 to 44 years	298	8.8%	193	6.0%
45 to 49 years	301	8.9%	244	7.6%
50 to 54 years	290	8.5%	241	7.5%
55 to 59 years	219	6.4%	283	8.8%
60 to 64 years	146	4.3%	337	10.5%
65 to 69 years	152	4.5%	241	7.5%
70 to 74 years	120	3.5%	80	2.5%
75 to 79 years	103	3.0%	189	5.9%
80 to 84 years	59	1.7%	48	1.5%
85 years and over	52	1.5%	77	2%
Median Age	40.6 years		47.8 years	
Households	1367		1372	
Average Household Size	2.49 people		2.34 people	
Minority Population (%)	1.4%		1.6%	
Median Household Income	$ 41,981		$ 54,741	
Families below poverty level (%)	4.6%		4.60%	
Mean travel time to work (Minutes)	22.1		24.1	
Population Density (Residents/mi^2)	123.6		116.7	

both average about 28 individuals per year, but can fluctuate greatly from year to year, as shown in **Figure 2.2**. If the aging population projections hold true, a gap between births and deaths will become noticeable.

Public Survey Results

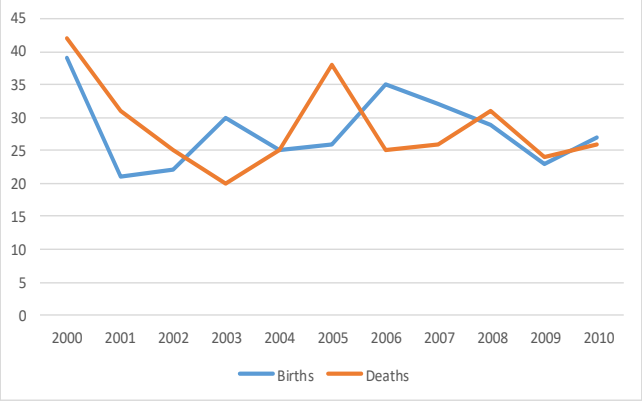
In the 2016 public survey in support of the Cheshire Master Plan, just over half (50.9%) of all survey respondents said they had been a resident of Cheshire for 30 or more years, and another 19% said they had been a resident for between 20 to 30 years.

Roughly 60% of respondents were between the ages of 50 and 75 years old, and another 18% were between 36 and 49 years old. There were few survey responses from younger age groups, with only 3 total responses for residents between the ages of 18 and 24, and only 1 response from a resident younger than 18.

The vast majority of survey respondents reported to be homeowners, only a handful of respondents reported that they were renters.

TABLE 2.3 - School Enrollment of Cheshire Students in 2000-2001 and 2014-2015								
Source: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education								
School Type	Regional Academic Schools	Regional Vocational Technical Schools	Charter Schools	Out-of-District Public Schools	Home Schooled	In State Private & Parochial Schools	**Total Public School**	**Total Overall Enrollment**
2000-2001	525	0	0	7	0	43	532	575
2014-2015	324	33	19	15	12	14	391	417

Figure 2.2—Births and Deaths in Cheshire, MA 2000—2010



Source: Massachusetts Department of Health

KEY POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHIC ISSUES

Aging Population

The residents of Cheshire are increasingly older, a trend that is found in most communities in the Berkshires.

Declining Population

Cheshire's population peaked in 1990 and has been decreasing since. Most communities in the Berkshires face this same trend.

CHAPTER 3: ECONOMY

VISION

Cheshire has a sustainable and vibrant local economy with a diverse range of businesses. Businesses, and the town which supports them, take great pride in the community and collaborate to make Cheshire a better place for all. These local attractions, combined with the town's natural beauty, assets, and recreational opportunities, create a quality of life that is sought out by visitors, and where people want to live and raise their families.

TRENDS AND CONDITIONS

Labor Force

As of the 2010-2014 American Community Survey, the total number of residents age 16 and older in Cheshire was 2,607 persons, or approximately 81.2% of the total estimated population of the town (3,211 residents). Of this population, 66% (about 1,721 individuals) are considered "in the labor force," and of those 59.9% are employed. The remaining 34% are considered "not in the labor force." Based on the percentage of individuals in the labor force, Cheshire ranks the 11th highest out of 32 in the county.

It is important to note how employment figures are calculated. Only persons over the age of 16 who are not members of the military, or institutionalized (such as in prison, in a nursing home, or mental health facility) are used to calculate employment figures. This population of individuals over the age of 16 is considered the population that is eligible to work. Employed and unemployed individuals are combined to estimate what is considered the "civilian labor force." Individuals who have received any payment for work are considered employed. Individuals who are laid off from work or are actively seeking employment are considered unemployed. Individuals who are not employed, laid off, or not actively seeking employment are considered not in the labor force. Individuals in this category might include retirees, homemakers, students, the independently wealthy, or a person without a job who has stopped looking for work (perhaps temporarily). A person in this last

ECONOMY AT A GLANCE

Composition
Cheshire has a labor force of around 1,700 individuals. This includes residents aged 16 years or older and able to work.

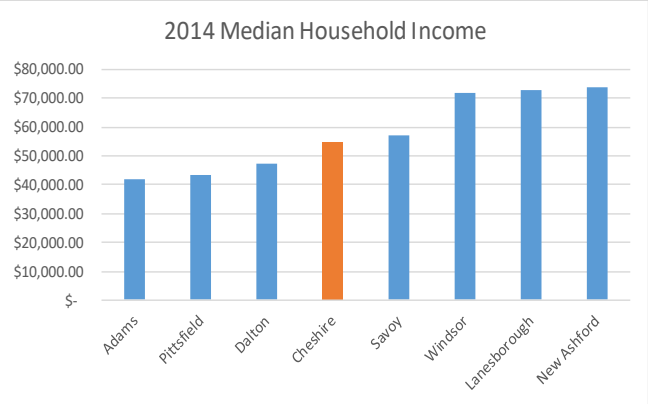
Local Business
Around 60 businesses registered with the town over the last few years. Most are small local businesses or independent entrepreneurs.

Household Income
Cheshire's median household income is higher than the surrounding towns of Adams, Pittsfield, and Dalton, but slightly lower than Savoy, Windsor, Lanesborough, and New Ashford.

Additional tables related to this chapter may be found in Appendix C

Table 3.1 - Employment Status by Age, Town of Cheshire, MA							
Source: 2010-2014 American Community Survey							
AGE (Population 16 years and over only)	Estimated Number of Individuals	Employed	% of pop. age 16 and older	Unemployed (Laid off or looking for work)	% of pop. age 16 and older	Individuals Not in Labor Force (not employed, laid off or looking for work)	% of pop. age 16 and older
16 to 19 years	148	66	2.5%	20	0.8%	62	2.4%
20 to 24 years	117	81	3.1%	19	0.7%	17	0.7%
25 to 44 years	602	462	17.7%	48	1.8%	93	3.6%
45 to 54 years	486	430	16.5%	21	0.8%	35	1.3%
55 to 64 years	620	399	15.3%	33	1.3%	187	7.2%
65 to 74 years	320	123	4.7%	19	0.7%	178	6.8%
75 years and over	314	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	314	12.0%
Total	**2,607**	**1,561**	**59.9%**	**160**	**6.1%**	**886**	**34.0%**

Figure 3.1— 2014 Median Household Income



category is sometimes referred to as a "discouraged worker."

The unemployment rate was measured as 6.1% during the American Community Survey (ACS), and represents an estimated 160 out of 2,607 individuals. This value is lower than the value for the county (6.5% according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics). The unemployment rate has increased from its value in 2000 (3%), but has decreased from its peak in 2009 of 8.6%. In comparison to surrounding towns, Cheshire has a higher unemployment rate than Lanesborough, Windsor and Dalton. However, Cheshire's unemployment rate is lower than that of New Ashford, Savoy, and Adams. Cheshire is ranked the 10th highest out of 32 in the county based on its unemployment rate.

The American Community Survey is able to provide a breakdown of employment status by age within the Town of Cheshire (**Table 3.1**). Roughly 44.5% of 16 to 19- year-olds are considered to be in the workforce, although 13.5% of that age cohort is unemployed. The 42% of this group that is not in the workforce might represent high school or college students who are attending school and do not have a job or recent graduates that have not yet begun to look for work.

The percentage of employed individuals is highest in the 45-54 age group with 88.4% of 486 people employed. Unemployment was the highest in the 25-44 year old age group. It was estimated that 48 persons in this group were unemployed (7.9%).

For individuals in the 55-64 year-old age group, 30% were considered "not in the labor force" meaning they are neither employed, laid off, nor seeking employment. Beyond the age of 65, the percentage of individuals not in the labor force increases to over 77%. This likely includes retired individuals who are no longer working or seeking work. None of the 314

Table 3.2 - Occupation by Industry of Workers in Cheshire, MA				
Source: 2000 US Census , 2010-2014 American Community Survey				
Category	**2000**	**2014**	**# Change**	**% Change**
Employed civilian population 16 years +	1724	1561	-163	-9%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	21	40	19	90%
Construction	164	77	-87	-53%
Manufacturing	234	141	-93	-40%
Wholesale trade	31	10	-21	-68%
Retail trade	233	309	76	33%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	52	60	8	15%
Information	42	47	5	12%
Finance, insurance, real estate, and rental and leasing	118	77	-41	-35%
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services	86	95	9	10%
Educational, health and social services	478	482	4	1%
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services	129	110	-19	-15%
Other services (except public administration)	67	73	6	9%
Public administration	69	40	-29	-42%

residents older than 75 were considered in the labor force.

Income

Per capita income, as measured by the 2010-2014 American Community Survey, was $29,458, and median household income was $54,741. An estimated 295 households had an income of less than $25,000, and 141 households had received Food Stamp/SNAP benefits in the last 12 months. Four hundred thirty-two (432) households included retirement income,

Table 3.3 - DBA Licenses by Category in Cheshire, MA	
Source: Town of Cheshire	
Category	**# of Businesses**
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	5
Construction	12
Manufacturing	1
Wholesale trade	0
Retail trade	8
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	1
Information	0
Finance, insurance, real estate, and rental and leasing	2
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services	8
Educational, health and social services	5
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services	7
Other services (except public administration)	8
Public administration	0
Unknown	6

and the mean retirement income was $21,084. Based on per capita income, Cheshire ranks the 7th lowest out of the 32 municipalities in the Berkshires.

Cheshire's median household income (**Figure 3.1**) is higher than the surrounding towns of Adams, Pittsfield, and Dalton. Median income is slightly lower than Savoy, and is substantially lower than neighboring Windsor, Lanesborough, and New Ashford. Based on median household income, Cheshire ranks the 11th lowest in the county.

According to the 2010-2014 American Community Survey, 4.6% of families in Cheshire were living in poverty, a percentage that is unchanged since the year 2000. Based on the number of families in poverty, the town ranks 15th highest in the county.

In term of individuals, roughly 7.7% of all individuals in Cheshire were living in poverty, making it 14th highest

in the county based on this metric. This percentage has increased from its level of 6.6% measured in the year 2000.

When examining child poverty, 28.65% of children under the age of 5 years old were considered to be living in poverty in Cheshire, ranking the town the 5th highest in the county. This percentage has increased from its level of 0% measured in the year 2000.

For people over the age of 65, 2.7% were considered to be living in poverty, ranking the town the 7th lowest in the county based on this measure. This percentage has decreased from its level of 6.3% measured in the year 2000.

Occupation

Since 2000, the employment and occupation of Cheshire workers has shifted. Between 2000 and 2014, industries that saw notable gains include agriculture, which nearly doubled in numbers from 21 to 40 jobs, and retail, which had a 33% increase and a gain of 76 jobs. There were modest to minimal gains in the industries of transportation, information, professional services, education, health services, and "other services" categories. Declines in percentage of Cheshire workers were most substantial in wholesale trade (21 workers, or 68%), and construction (87 workers, 53%), with public administration, manufacturing, finance, and arts/entertainment all losing 15%-42% of their workers. Overall, there was a loss of 163 workers (9%) between 2000 and 2014. See **Table 3.2**.

The "other services" category is used to describe several broad occupation areas including repair and maintenance, personal and laundry services, religious, grantmaking, civic, professional and similar organizations, and private households (cooks, maids, housekeepers, gardeners, etc.).

Cheshire matches regional patterns in Berkshire County in the declines it has seen in the construction and manufacturing occupations (Sustainable Berkshires 2013). These two industries are projected to decline the most in the county in the coming years. Moreover, it matches Berkshire County in growth occupations such as educational, health and social services, the broad "other services" category described above, and in the growth of professional and scientific occupations. However, the decline in Cheshire workers employed in the arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services industry, goes against the county-wide trend of growth in these occupations.

Regional Services

As noted in **Table 2.2**, the mean travel to work time is approximately 24 minutes. According to Google Maps, a drive from the geographic center of Cheshire to either of Berkshire County's two cities, North Adams to the north and Pittsfield to the south, can be accomplished within that time. It is likely that many people are employed in the cities or other surrounding towns. Pittsfield and North Adams also offer many retail and other services that are likely used by Cheshire residents.

Town "Doing Business As" Licenses

Many towns collect a small fee for "Doing Business As" or DBA licenses. The purpose of a DBA is primarily for consumer protection and public information. A DBA creates a record of business names, the real name of any person doing business under that name, and a physical address. Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 110, §5 states that any person conducting business under any title or business name other than the real name of the person conducting the business must file a certificate. A person is defined as an individual, a partnership, or a corporation. The licenses are typically renewed every four years.

While DBA licenses can help to identify many businesses in a community, it will not identify them all. DBA licenses may lapse and expire, and businesses may knowingly or unknowingly not register.

In Cheshire, there are 63 businesses that have current (not expired) DBA licenses with the town (See **Table C1** in Appendix C). The vast majority belong to small local

business owners and entrepreneurs. The evaluation of DBA licenses can provide a cross-section of business type located in the town.

The most numerous business type in Cheshire can be categorized in the construction industry (12/63 or 19%). Following this business type are businesses in the retail trade, professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services, and the broad "other" services category (8/63 or 12.6%) for these three respective categories. Finally, 7/63 or 11% of all businesses fall into the arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services category. Six businesses were unable to be categorized (**Table 3.3**).

Local Business Resources

Cheshire is served by two very active economic resource and business marketing groups: 1Berkshire and Berkshire Grown.

1Berkshire

1Berkshire is the single point of entry for business assistance and economic development support throughout the Berkshires. The entity provides access to important services every business needs—marketing, networking, professional development, and more. Through this effort, the Berkshire Chamber of Commerce, Berkshire Creative, and the Berkshire Visitors Bureau join as one, providing collaborative support that encourages continued growth and success.

Member Organizations Located in Cheshire:
Bedard Bros. Auto Sales Inc.
Gale Floor Covering
Old New England Property Maintenance
Republic Services
Whitney's Farm Market and Garden Center

Berkshire Grown

Berkshire Grown is a not-for-profit organization working to promote local farms and the local businesses that support them.

Member Organizations Located in Cheshire:
Ayrhill Farms
Elmartin Farm

Public Survey Results

Based on the results of the public survey, nearly half of residents (49.3%) were in favor of encouraging development of new businesses and services in the local economy. Another quarter of the population (24.1%) favored a focus on retaining and supporting existing businesses. Only a minimal amount (1.5%) felt that there was too much economic development in Cheshire and that any additional development should be discouraged. The remainder of respondents were unsure about economic development in Cheshire (9.3%), felt that the town's economy is growing at a good rate, but we need to do a better job at managing its development (8.9%), or had a different opinion not expressed as an option (7.0%).

The pubic survey also sought feedback about which types of businesses or services residents currently use in Cheshire versus elsewhere in Berkshire County, and what types of businesses or services they would like to see encouraged or discouraged in Cheshire. The type of Cheshire business most used by the respondents was identified to be a *Gas station/Convenience store* (75.1%, 199 respondents). Other Cheshire businesses included *Financial services – such as a bank* (57.6%, 151), *Automotive sales and service* (57.6%, 141), *Restaurant* (52.6%, 140), and *Farming/agriculture/ farm stands* (50.6%, 133).

Respondents mainly wanted to encourage *locally-owned small businesses* (75.4%, 199), and businesses related to tourism, as evidenced by responses favoring *Inn/B&B* (86.7%, 215), *Country store* (78.8%, 201), and *Tourism and recreation related business* (81.4%, 193). A high proportion of respondents wanted to discourage *Regional/National chain stores* (78.5%, 204) and *Commercial businesses* (72.2%, 177).

KEY ECONOMY ISSUES

Economic Vitality

The Master Plan Committee felt that economic vitality in Cheshire, including encouraging and recognizing small and local business, was a key issue in the town.

Farmer's Market

Committee members felt that organizing a Farmer's Market in the town would be a way to encourage the local economy and help to build community.

Leveraging Assets to Strengthen the Economy

The town should capitalize on its beautiful natural and man-made resources to strengthen the economy. These include the vast areas of state land, Cheshire Lake, and the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail.

ECONOMY STRATEGIES AND RESOURCES

Tax Increment Financing (TIF)

How Does it Work?

A TIF agreement is a local real estate property tax exemption negotiated between a municipality and an expanding or relocating company. A community can exempt up to 100% of taxes created by new growth, while taxes are still collected on the baseline value of the property pre-development. The town can establish a TIF for certain areas of the community, or create one specific to a proposed new development. The town can determine the amount to which property taxes are reduced (up to 100%) and the time the agreement can be in place (up to 20 years).

What Does it Accomplish?

Incentivizes job and business creation by reducing property taxes for new development.

ECONOMY GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND ACTIONS

Goal 1: The Economy is Strong and Growing

The town will work to ensure its economy is strong and growing. This will be accomplished by encouraging collaboration in the business community and town entrepreneurs and examining creation of business incentives as well as promoting local business and the town's agricultural products.

Objective: Cultivate Town Businesses and Agricultural Resources Through Collaboration, Encouraging Local Entrepreneurship, and Providing Incentives.

The town will explore a variety of strategies to strengthen local businesses, including reviewing existing zoning, easier to follow permitting, and tax incentives. Several strategies are also proposed to develop agricultural businesses, including establishment of a Farmer's Market, business development workshops, and encouraging collaboration between local business and students.

Action: Encourage formation of a local business group or association with the purpose of economic development and securing grants.

Action: Reach out to owners of vacant or underutilized buildings, particularly in Cheshire Village, to seek out opportunities for new or expanded business.

Action: Explore feasibility of businesses to improve quality of life and attract visitors to the community, with priorities being a local general store or small grocery, outdoor recreation based businesses, specialty food and other specialty businesses, breweries and wineries, pubs and improved night life, and seasonal businesses, such as cafés or an ice cream shop.

Action: Coordinate with arts and cultural councils and other organizations, such as in North Adams and Pittsfield, for potential job connections.

Action: Encourage local farms and other businesses to join Berkshire Grown, 1Berkshires and other Chamber of Commerce organizations.

Action: Encourage local farms and businesses to interact with schools and educate residents about their work and products.

Action: Encourage local farms to train and mentor young farmers. Encourage local farms to host educational events. Encourage local farms to provide land access (lease, etc.) to beginning farmers.

Action: Establish a Farmer's Market in Cheshire.

Action: Host business development workshops and trainings in town with a focus on existing entrepreneurs, retirees, and recent high school and college graduates.

Action: Review zoning and other regulations to determine changes that will promote business growth and expansion.

Action: Create a section of the town website with an easy to follow explanation of the town's development and permitting process.

Action: Explore implementing a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) agreement to attract business to Cheshire.

Action: Collaborate regionally to advocate for faster broadband internet service as a way to promote economic growth.

Objective: More Effectively Promote Town Business and Assets.

The town will utilize its website to promote town business, while engaging in branding and marketing the town as a destination to attract new residents and visitors.

Action: Utilize the town website to better promote local business and town destinations.

Action: Engage the community to create a town logo for branding purposes.

Action: Actively market and promote the quality of life, access to recreational opportunities and low tax rate as reasons to move to Cheshire, particularly for families, telecommuters, or those who work from home. Utilize a variety of media to disperse this message.

Goal 2: Community Connections and Overall Attractiveness of the Town are Enhanced to Draw New Residents and Visitors

The town will attract new residents and visitors and strengthen the sense of community for residents by enhancing gateways, working with local property owners, and seeking grant funds. Cheshire will also enhance draws to the community, such as recreation, and historic and cultural assets. The town will examine the existing Community Center, as well as annual events, as ways to strengthen ties between residents.

Objective: Enhance the Attractiveness and Scenic Quality of the Community

The town will enhance gateways, improve and standardize signage, utilize town property, and work with private landowners to beautify the community.

Action: Create multi-level standards for business signage in town as a way to brand the community and enhance its small-town charm and feel.

Action: Continue work to establish signs and improve landscaping at "gateways" to the community, such as along Route 8.

Action: Improve landscaping and aesthetics along Church St. and around all town properties.

Action: Contact property owners to identify opportunities to improve building facades and landscaping around the community.

Action: Seek grants to study and revitalize commercial and village areas in Cheshire.

Objective: Create and Enhance Draws and Attractions in the Community

The town will leverage recreation, state lands, and historic and cultural assets to create attractions to the community that enhance quality of life and attract new residents and visitors.

Action: Continue to advocate for and coordinate regionally on Ashuwillticook Rail Trail Extension projects.

Action: Advocate for improved access and amenities on state-owned lands.

Action: Promote and utilize local historic assets to draw people to the community. Promote use of the Mass. Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit.

Objective: Strengthen Community Connections

The town will pursue ways to strengthen the sense of community and connections between residents by looking to its existing Community Center, as well as local events like the block party.

Action: Explore potential changes to the Community Center, such as new programming or physical expansion, to better meet town needs and provide space for collaboration and entrepreneurship.

Action: Encourage hosting of events in Cheshire.

Action: Continue to hold events such as the annual block party. Explore creation of an annual town fair or festival.

Action: Explore creation of a community garden somewhere in town.

Objective: Ensure Cheshire is a Town for All

The town will pursue training and education for town staff and schools to ensure the town is a welcoming place for all.

Action: Host diversity and gender awareness training and events for town staff, schools, and residents.

Action: Create a way to welcome new residents in Cheshire, such as a welcome packet or similar.

CHAPTER 4: INFRASTRUCTURE

VISION

Cheshire creatively and proactively addresses, maintains, and upgrades its infrastructure; utilizing sustainable methods, meeting high standards, and making strategic and wise investments to keep pace with changes in the community.

TRENDS AND CONDITIONS

Existing Town Infrastructure

Cheshire currently has several major town buildings and facilities including Town Hall and Town Hall Annex, a Senior/Community Center, Police Station, Highway Dept. Garage, and Elementary School.

Several public water supply systems provide drinking water to different areas of town. However, many residents utilize private residential well systems as their drinking water source.

All buildings and residences in Cheshire are served by onsite septic systems.

For a discussion of town roads, see Chapter 7—Transportation.

Drinking Water

*For mapped subsurface drinking water infrastructure, please see **Map 2—Infrastructure** in Appendix A.*

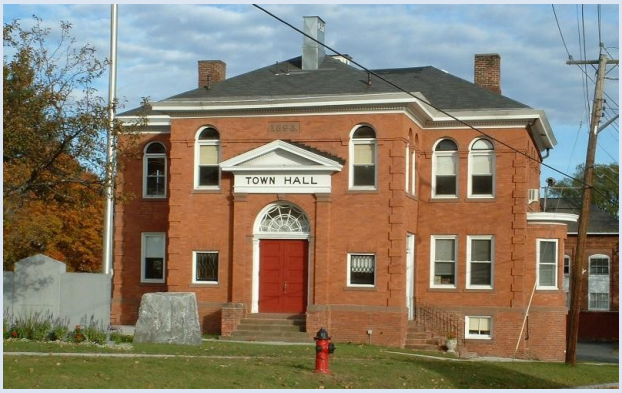
*For mapped public drinking water supplies, please see **Map 9—Water Resources** in Appendix A.*

*Public drinking water wells are listed in **Table 3.1**.*

For information on the Cheshire Water Dept./Water Commission and watershed lands, please refer to Chapter 5—Services, and Chapter 10—Open Space and Recreation.

Drinking Water System

Public drinking water supply data shows fifteen public water supply sources in the Town of Cheshire. These wells fall into three categories including Community Groundwater wells (GW), Transient Non-Community water systems (TNC) and Emergency Surface Water (ESW) systems. TNC systems serve fewer than 25



INFRASTRUCTURE AT A GLANCE

Drinking Water

Cheshire has three public water systems that provide drinking water to different areas of town. However, many resident utilize private onsite well systems as a drinking water source. Drinking water wells that supply the Town of Adams are also located in Cheshire.

Public Buildings and Facilities

Cheshire has many needs for its town buildings and facilities. The town will comprehensively examine these to guide future repair and investment or determine if new municipal facilities are warranted.

Wastewater Infrastructure

The town has no public sewer or wastewater treatment system. All wastewater treatment is provided by onsite septic systems.

Table 4.1 - Public Water Supply Wells in Cheshire, MA			
Source: Mass GIS Public Water Supplies 2014			
SOURCE_ID	SITE_NAME	TYPE	LOCATION/OWNER
1058002-02G	WELL 2	GW	Pine Valley Mobile Home Park
1004000-01S	BASSETT BROOK RESERVOIR	ESW	
1058011-01G	WHITNEYS FARM MARKET AND COUNTRY GARDEN	TNC	
1004000-03G	CHESHIRE HARBOR 3	GW	Adams Fire District
1058001-02G	WELL 2	GW	Hutchinson Water Company
1058000-01S	KITCHEN BROOK RESERVOIR	ESW	
1058000-02G	NEW WELL 1 (02G)	GW	Cheshire Water Dept.
1058002-01G	WELL 1	GW	Pine Valley Mobile Home Park
1058001-05G	WELL 5	GW	Hutchinson Water Company
1058009-01G	CHESHIRE GREENE	TNC	
1004000-02G	CHESHIRE HARBOR 2A	GW	Adams Fire District
1058000-03G	WELL 2 (03G)	GW	Cheshire Water Dept.
1058004-01G	COUNTRY CHARM RESTAURANT	TNC	
1004000-04G	CHESHIRE HARBOR 4	GW	Adams Fire District
1058001-04G	WELL 4	GW	Hutchinson

GW = Community Groundwater Well, serves a population of 25 or more year-round and can have multiple connections (public drinking water system).
TNC = Transient Non-Community Well, serves at least 25 people daily, 60 days or more per year, such as at a campground or restaurant.
ESW = Emergency Surface Water
Note: Public well data is from 2014. Some business names may have changed.

people daily and are generally located at sites such as restaurants and campgrounds. GW wells are those that make up the public water system in Cheshire. ESW systems include two emergency reservoirs located in Cheshire. Both of these ESW systems are currently unused. The Town of Cheshire owns 857 acres of watershed land that was originally meant to protect water quality in these now unused surface water reservoirs.

According to the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) 2002 Source Water Assessment and Protection (SWAP) Report for the Cheshire Water Department, Cheshire's groundwater supply wells are located east of Route 8, north of the center of town. Well #2 was constructed as a back-up well and is located 25 feet from Well #1. The two wells are pumped alternately to meet the system water demand. Both wells are 12 by 18-inch diameter, gravel-packed wells, 51 feet in depth with 10-foot screens and submersible pumps. Water from the wells is pumped to a motor control and chemical feed building where Calciquest (blended orthophosphate/ polyphosphate compound) is added to the water to sequester the hardness created by calcium and magnesium in the water.

The wells are located on the edge of a buried valley aquifer and utilize water from an unconfined, sand and gravel aquifer within the Hoosic River valley. Although there is some evidence of fine-grained material in the aquifer, there is no protective clay layer at the site to prevent potential contaminants from entering the aquifer from the ground surface. Wells located in

these geological conditions are considered to have a high vulnerability to contamination due to the absence of hydrogeologic barriers that can prevent potential contaminant migration from the surface.

The Town of Adams' wells are also located within Cheshire, approximately 6,400 feet north (downgradient) of the wells. Bedrock at the well site is mapped as the Kitchen Brook dolomite, a fine-grained massive dolomite with a quartz and calcite-rich region in the upper section. The dolomite contributes to the hardness of the water in the aquifer. The complex bedrock geology of the lowlands and surrounding uplands is mapped as folded and faulted schists, quartzites as well as some marbles and dolomites.

These drinking water supply wells are protected by Zone I and II areas. Zone I includes a 400' radius area around the wellhead. The water supplier (Town of Cheshire) must own or control (such as through a conservation restriction) all land in Zone I. Only water supply activities may take place within these zones. Zone I areas are considered priority areas for hazardous waste inspections and enforcement, and waste site remediation.

Zone II areas are considered the primary recharge area for the aquifer. These areas are defined by hydrogeologic studies approved by DEP. Zone II areas have many restrictions intended to preserve water quality. For example, siting of landfills or transfer stations are generally not allowed in Zone II areas. Use of certain pesticides is also restricted in these areas. There are also special conditions placed on Title 5 septic systems in Zone II areas among other provisions. In Cheshire, the Zone II area lies primarily east of Route 8 and stretches from Harbor Road south to Cheshire Lake. The Zone II area includes much of Cheshire Village.

The SWAP report goes on to describe that the Cheshire water system has a high susceptibility to contamination. Some key land use and protection issues that could impact water quality include residential land use, transportation corridors, agricultural activities, and hazardous materials storage and use. Approximately, 50% of the Zone II area consists of residential land that is not served by sewer. There is no clear count of how many residential homes utilize oil versus gas or whether the oil tanks are above or below grade. There is at least one private property which has a 2000-gallon underground storage tank (UST). If managed improperly, septic systems, use of hazardous chemicals, heating oil storage and stormwater from residential land can be detrimental to water quality.

Route 8, a major transportation corridor, is another potential threat to water quality in Cheshire. Roadway construction, maintenance, and typical highway use can all be potential sources of contamination. Accidents can lead to spills of gasoline and other potentially dangerous transported chemicals. Roadways are frequent sites for illegal dumping of hazardous or other potentially harmful wastes. De-icing salt, automotive chemicals and other debris on roads are picked up by stormwater and wash in to catch basins. Potential ways to mitigate threats to water quality caused by this land use include stormwater improvements, catch basin cleaning and maintenance, and hazardous materials emergency response planning.

Agricultural areas are another land use concern within Cheshire's Zone II. Pesticides and fertilizers have the potential to contaminate a drinking water source if improperly stored, applied, or disposed. If not contained or applied properly, animal waste and manure are other potential sources of contamination to ground and surface water sources. The SWAP report recommends working with farmers to make them aware of the water supply and to encourage the use of a US Natural Resources Conservation Service farm plan to protect water supplies.

Finally, hazardous materials storage and use is a concern within the Zone II area of Cheshire. Many small businesses, municipalities, and industries use hazardous materials, produce hazardous waste products, and/or store quantities of hazardous

materials in underground or aboveground storage tanks. These include a 10,000 gallon UST at the Cheshire Elementary School, and a 1000 gallon UST at the First Baptist Church. If hazardous materials are improperly stored, used, or disposed, they become potential sources of contamination. Hazardous materials should never be disposed of to a septic system or floor drain leading directly to the ground. Moreover, the SWAP report lists eight gas stations, service stations, or auto repair shops within the Zone II area. These facilities are potential contributors of hazardous chemicals to the town's water system. The SWAP report recommends working with and educating local businesses on best management practices for protecting water supplies.

History and Context of Cheshire's Public Water Supply

Drinking water in Cheshire is provided by both publicly and privately maintained sources. There are 560 connections serviced by the Town of Cheshire public water system, which is maintained by the Cheshire Water Dept. This system serves buildings and residents in the Cheshire Village area. Water for this system is provided by two wells located east of Route 8, north of the center of town. These two wells were constructed in the late 1990s. This public drinking water system has been in place for some time. Some of the original supply pipes were originally installed in the 1870s. The drinking water system was privately owned and maintained until it was purchased by the Town of Cheshire in 1971.

For many years, Cheshire's water supply was provided by the Kitchen Brook Reservoir. However, revisions to federal law in the early 1980s prompted the town to seek another source of drinking water for town residents. Beginning in the early 1980s, Cheshire was in violation of standards of the Federal Safe Drinking Water Act, primarily due to the lack of enhanced treatment measures for water supplied by the Kitchen Brook Reservoir. The Federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) rejected the town's requests for exemption and in 1996 calculated financial penalties against Cheshire of approximately $23 million. The town negotiated a far lower penalty and entered an administrative consent order with the agency. The order included an agreement to create a new water supply.

Three options were explored for this new water supply including creation of a water treatment and filtration system at the existing reservoir, purchase of water from the Town of Adams, or creation of the new well system. In the end, the town chose to develop its current well-based water supply system.

The town worked with several engineering and hydrology firms to explore locations for its water supply wells over the course of a year. In total, eight test wells were drilled, but only one–on the Krutiak property–proved to be sufficient to supply water for the town. The town used eminent domain to take approximately 10 acres of this property to locate its drinking water supply wells. As part of this taking, the property owners were compensated $33,000. However, in February of 2001, the Krutiaks filed a suit for an assessment of damages for unfair compensation for property taken. In June of 2004, a Superior Court jury returned a verdict for damages of $400,000. The Cheshire Board of Selectmen appealed this decision for some time, and eventually the appeal was thrown out. Accumulated interest on the award amount caused it to swell to around $1,000,000. As of 2016, the town is still paying back these damages to the property owner.

The town continues to invest in its public water system. In 2015, the town replaced water mains in the Cheshire Village area. The town also recently installed water meters at all locations that utilize the public water system. Previously the town charged a flat fee for all users of the water system. With the installation of water meters, the town has switched to a fee based on usage. Water meters are also part of cost saving and maintenance strategy that will help to identify leaks in the water system and target future maintenance activities and projects.

The town is also updating a source water protection

Table 4.2 - Town-Owned Buildings and Facilities in Cheshire, MA		
Source: Cheshire Master Plan Steering Committee 2016		
Name	**Address**	**Needs / Possible Work Identified**
Town Hall	80 Church St.	New gutters, cramped meeting spaces
Highway Department Garage	6 Main St.	New lighting
Transfer Station/ Compactor	6 Main St.	Unknown
Fire Station	29 South St	Rear wall is sinking
Police Station	80 Church St.	ADA accessibility issues
Senior/Community Center	119 School St.	New cabinets
Cheshire Elementary School	191 Church St.	ADA accessibility issues
Town Hall Annex	84 Church St.	Cramped meeting spaces

plan and asset management plan that outlines capital and maintenance projects for the system. To support this updated plan, Cheshire recently mapped its water services, main valves, and hydrants using a Global Positioning System (GPS) (Guerino 2016).

Other Public Water Supplies

Beyond the drinking water supply system that serves Cheshire Village, there are two other drinking water supply systems in town; however they are privately owned and managed. A smaller public water system serves residents of the Pine Valley Mobile Home Park. Another system is owned by the Hutchinson Water Company and provides drinking water to approximately 120 homes (roughly 400 residents) along Hutchinson Lane and Wilshire, Devonshire, and Yorkshire Drives.

Moreover, water supply wells serving the Town of Adams are also located in the Town of Cheshire. The Town of Adams also owns a backup emergency water supply reservoir, the Bassett Brook Reservoir, that is located in Cheshire.

Public Buildings and Facilities

*Public buildings and facilities are listed in **Table 4.2**.*

Town Hall

Town Hall is located on Church St. Town Hall provides meeting space for town boards and committees and houses the Town Clerk, Assessor, Water Dept., and other town staff. The Cheshire Public Library is also located within Town Hall (see **Figure 4.1**).

Town Hall Annex

The Town Hall Annex houses the Town Administrator and Building Inspector. The annex is located just north of Town Hall.

Police Station

The Police Station is located just north of Town Hall.

Senior/Community Center

The Cheshire Senior/Community Center is located on School St. This building houses the Council on Aging and is used to provide programs for seniors and others. It also provides publicly accessible meeting space for boards and committees.

Figure 4.1 Cheshire Town Hall is located on Church St. The building houses administrative offices and departments as well as the town library. The building was recently listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Highway Dept. Garage

The Highway Dept. Garage is located at 6 Main St. This structure provides space for the Highway Dept. and its equipment.

Fire Station

The Cheshire Fire Station is located at 29 South St.

Public Survey Results

Survey respondents were divided about potential town infrastructure initiatives, including: *create a town sewer system, create a multi-purpose town building including administrative offices and space for community activities, pursue underground wiring in the center of town, and develop a new energy efficient town hall/police building* . Responses for these potential initiatives were roughly split between *support*, *oppose*, and *neither support nor oppose*.

Support amongst respondents was at 50% or more for the following infrastructure initiatives: *create a youth center with gym facilities, beautification of Church St, establishment of a town center, create a space for a community garden, and energy efficiency upgrades to town buildings.*

References

Guerino, Jack. November 2, 2016. IBerkshires. Cheshire Must Vote Again On Increasing Select Board. Available from: http://www.iberkshires.com/story/53298/Cheshire-Must-Vote-Again-On-Increasing-Select-Board.html

Cheshire Water Department. 2016. Personal Communication.

INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGIES AND RESOURCES

Green Communities Program

The Mass. Green Communities Program is a state incentive and grant program designed to help finance local energy efficiency and renewable energy projects. As of January 2017, just over half of all municipalities in the Commonwealth participate in the program.

To be eligible for competitive state grant funding, towns must meet five criteria, which include:

- Providing as-of-right siting in designated locations for renewable/alternative energy generation, research and development, or manufacturing facilities.
- Adopting an expedited application and permit process for as-of-right energy facilities.
- Establish an energy use baseline and develop a plan to reduce energy use by twenty percent (20%) within five (5) years.
- Purchasing only fuel-efficient vehicles.
- Setting requirements to minimize life-cycle energy costs for new construction. One way to meet these requirements is to adopt the new Board of Building Regulations and Standards (BBRS) Stretch Code.

KEY INFRASTRUCTURE ISSUES

Comprehensive Assessment of Town Buildings/Facilities

The town has many needs for its aging buildings and facilities. The town should comprehensively examine these to determine what improvements or repairs are necessary and generate a spending plan to address them. This assessment should also determine if town needs could be better addressed through new or expanded municipal facilities.

INFRASTRUCTURE GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND ACTIONS

Goal 1: Infrastructure Meets Changing Town Needs and Reduces Energy Costs

Cheshire will strategically address its infrastructure needs by evaluating town buildings and facilities, continuing improvements to its drinking water system, and examining the potential for wastewater treatment in the community. Moreover, the community will better engage the public and seek opportunities to reduce long-term costs during major infrastructure work.

Objective: Evaluate All Town Buildings and Facilities

The town will examine needs for all town buildings and other facilities, integrating potential projects into a Capital Improvement Plan to strategically guide investment.

Action: Conduct a comprehensive needs assessment for repairs and upgrades to town buildings and facilities. Determine if repairs to existing structures will be cost-effective, or if new facilities are needed to meeting existing needs.

Action: Integrate recommendations into Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). (See Chapter 5: Services).

Action: Explore participation in the Mass. Green Communities Program to access grant funding for energy efficient upgrades to town buildings.

Objective: Continue to Maintain a Safe Supply of Drinking Water

The town will continue investment and planning for its public water system to maintain a safe supply of drinking water.

Action: Address potential threats to water quality by following the recommendations of the Source Water Assessment and Protection (SWAP) Report.

Action: Continue ongoing update of water system master plan. Integrate recommendations into Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).

Action: Include the Water Dept. in proposed staffing study. Determine what structure (existing department or independent water district) is most appropriate for the Water Dept.

Objective: Evaluate Sewer Needs

The town will conduct a feasibility study for a potential sewer system in Cheshire to protect water resources over the long-term.

Action: Conduct an initial feasibility study for a sewer system in Cheshire. Determine if sewer and wastewater treatment service could be provided by connection to existing systems in surrounding communities.

Objective: Proactively Study Opportunities for and Engage Residents about Upcoming Infrastructure Projects

Cheshire will work proactively to engage residents about large projects and infrastructure work in the community. The town will also ensure that wise investments made during larger projects, such as burying overhead utilities or combining road and water utility work to generate long-term cost savings, are not overlooked.

Action: During major road projects, determine if utility work, such as burying overhead infrastructure, can be included at a reasonable cost. Seek out other opportunities to combine infrastructure work.

Action: Educate and engage residents about major infrastructure projects and associated costs.

Action: Examine opportunities to implement renewable energy projects, such as a solar array, in town.

CHAPTER 5: SERVICES

VISION

Cheshire provides high quality and fiscally sound services to its residents. These services are natural offshoots of its forward thinking and proactive outlook, its commitment to self-betterment, technology, best practices, and its close-knit community.

TRENDS AND CONDITIONS

Boards, Committees, and Town Departments and Services

Select Board

Cheshire has a three member Select Board. Board members serve as the chief elected officials in town, and are responsible for coordinating, directing, and supervising staff on all aspects of town governance. The Select Board is also responsible for appointing members of many town boards and committees and preparing the yearly town budget, with the aid of the Finance Advisory Board and other officials. Board members work closely with the Cheshire's part-time Town Administrator to advance projects and resolve issues as they arise. In Cheshire, the Select Board also serves as the Mobile Home Rent Control Board, as the Police Commissioners, and also organizes the yearly Memorial Day Parade.

Board of Health

The Cheshire Board of Health has three members. In Massachusetts, local Boards of Health have a number of responsibilities and authorities. The board is responsible for disease prevention and control, health and environmental protection, and promoting a healthy community. One primary duty of the Board of Health is reporting and following up on communicable disease investigations. The Board of Health also performs duties such as inspecting restaurants and other food establishments for potential health violations. Additionally, it is responsible for review and inspection of septic systems and private drinking water wells installed in Cheshire. The Board of Health also oversees the duties of the Animal Inspector, which inspects the health and living conditions of

SERVICES AT A GLANCE

Select Board

The Select Board serves multiple functions, including oversight of town operations, staffing, and budget preparation. The board also serves as the town's Conservation Commission, Police Commission and Mobile Home Rent Control Board. The town is transitioning from a 3-member to 5-member Select Board

Public Safety and Emergency Management

The Police and Fire Departments, as well as the town's Emergency Planning Committee provide & coordinate emergency response and planning in the community.

Finances and Taxes

Cheshire has relatively low taxes compared to many surrounding communities. The town is far from reaching its tax levy ceiling (2.5% of all assessed property value) and has excess override capacity (or the ability to raise taxes) should needs arise.

Additional discussion of services may be found in Appendix C: Existing Conditions Summary

livestock located in the town, as well as other duties. It is also responsible for inspection of rental dwelling units (usually due to complaints) and inspection of solid waste transfer stations.

Board of Assessors

The Board of Assessors includes three members who are elected to the position. The primary responsibility of the Board of Assessors is to accurately and fairly assess all property in the Town of Cheshire at full and fair cash value. The town reviews sales and the market every year and reassesses values based on changing conditions.

Water Commissioners/Water Department

The Water Commission mission statement is *"to provide safe drinking water to our customers, be in compliance with all current and new drinking water regulations, be fiscally sound, and be sensitive to our customer needs."*

The Cheshire Water Commission includes three members who are elected by town residents for 3-year terms.

The Water Commission and Water Department are responsible for overseeing the maintenance and operation of the town's public water system, which provides drinking water to approximately 560 customers in the Cheshire Village area.

The Water Department is funded through an enterprise accounting fund. In Massachusetts, municipalities can create an enterprise fund through town meeting vote. The Massachusetts Department of Revenue explains that enterprise funding "establishes a separate accounting and financial reporting mechanism for municipal services for which a fee is charged in exchange for goods or services. Revenues and expenses of the service are segregated into a fund with financial statements separate from all other governmental activities." An enterprise fund is a useful accounting and project management tool that allows investment earnings and any surplus to be retained in the enterprise fund instead of being combined with the general municipal fund.

The Water Department has also explored possible creation of a Water District in Cheshire. In Massachusetts, a Water District is a separate legal entity and is created through both a town vote and special state legislation. A Water District is a separate entity from the municipality and need not be subject to the supervision of the municipality or any department, commission, board, or agency of the municipality. The district is controlled by a 3-member board and elected by the voters of the municipality for staggered terms. Typical corporate powers are given. The district may set fees, rates, rents, delinquency charges, and other charges for the services that it furnishes. Any monies collected as fees, rates, rents, charges, etc., shall be paid over to and remain with the district.

If a district were to be created in Cheshire, it would likely include existing water system users only. Those outside of the district boundary would not be able to vote on measures impacting the district; however, as a separate legal entity, no tax revenue from those outside the district help fund the district. Essentially, through creation of a Water District, those using the water system in Cheshire would be able to vote on issues impacting it, help determine its budget and priorities, and provide input as to its future and direction. Those outside of the district boundary, such as residents who rely on private water wells, would not vote on district issues.

Highway Department

The Cheshire Highway Department provides road maintenance and snow removal services for the town in addition to performing some other general maintenance tasks. The Highway Department has a staff of five, including a Superintendent.

The town participates in the regional group purchasing program, which allows towns to pool their resources to purchase materials, such as salt or gravel, at a reduced price.

Transfer Station

Cheshire provides for waste removal services through its transfer station. Household trash and recyclable

materials can be brought here for transfer to a regional landfill.

Planning Board

The Cheshire Planning Board provides site plan review services, reviews and decides on certain types of permits/approvals, and administers the subdivision of land within the town. This board is also primarily responsible for reviewing and updating the general bylaws and land use regulations—the zoning bylaws. The Planning Board is one of the town's special permit granting authorities and as such is responsible for reviewing special permit applications for certain uses in each of the town's zoning districts.

Under Mass. General Law Chapter 41 Section 81D, the Planning Board is responsible for creation, approval, and revision of the town Master Plan.

Library Board of Trustees and Cheshire Public Library

The nine-member Library Board of Trustees oversees the operation of the Cheshire Public Library, located in Town Hall. The library is part of the Central & Western Mass. Automated Resource Sharing (CWMARS) system. Through this system, many libraries in Central and Western Mass. are linked electronically, so that library patrons can browse the titles of any library in the system and allows for interlibrary loan services. The library has recently been expanding its offerings beyond its book collection to include other media such as DVDs and audiobooks. The library also offers many programs such as talks by authors, a pre-school reading time, and short classes on various subjects.

Farm/Agricultural Commission

This six-member commission is appointed by the Select Board and serves as a local voice advocating for farmers, farm businesses, and farm interests.

Recreation Committee

The Cheshire Recreation Committee is appointed by the Select Board and is comprised of three members. The Recreation Committee supports athletic leagues in town through donations and organizes concerts and other events held in Cheshire. The committee works closely with the Cheshire Elementary School to support and promote physical activity and play.

Mobile Home Rent Control Board

The Mobile Home Rent Control Board regulates rents and set standards for use or occupancy of mobile home park accommodations and eviction therefrom.

In Cheshire, the Select Board serves as the Mobile Home Rent Control Board. According to Cheshire general bylaws, the board *"may make rules and regulations, compel attendance of persons and production of papers and information, and issue appropriate orders which shall be binding on both the owner and tenant of such Mobile Home Park accommodations."*

Conservation Commission

The Cheshire Conservation Commission is a three-member board that provides site plan review and administers the Massachusetts Wetland Protection Act (WPA) as well as the Rivers Protection Act (RPA).

Council on Aging

The Council on Aging (COA) provides services to seniors in Cheshire. The Council on Aging operates a van for Cheshire residents, however it must be scheduled in advance of any trip and is used primarily for food and medical needs. The COA utilizes the Cheshire Senior/Community Center to distribute hot lunches on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays. It also distributes "brown bags" of food staples from the Western Mass. Foodbank in Northampton to those in need. The COA also organizes and provides a range of activities and special programs for seniors, including bingo, quilting, computer instruction, trips to local events, and an annual Christmas party.

Emergency Planning Committee

The Emergency Planning Committee includes nine members appointed by the Select Board. This committee coordinates emergency response entities in town and develops response procedures in case of emergency.

Historical Commission

The Historical Commission is responsible for town-wide historic preservation planning and can nominate local buildings and other historic resources for recognition at the state and federal level. Moreover, the Historical Commission collects and curates artifacts of local historic significance and collaborates on exhibitions and publications meant to bring attention to the history of Cheshire. Recently, it worked with a consultant to prepare a report to nominate Cheshire Town Hall for listing at the state level and on the National Register of Historic Places. The commission is also preparing a publication on the history of dairy farming in the town and recognizes local homeowners who reside in historic structures through honorary plaques. The plaques let passersby know the significance of historic buildings in the town and are provided at the request of homeowners.

Cemetery Commission

The three-member Cemetery Commission is responsible for selling lots at the town cemetery and organizing general maintenance of cemetery grounds.

Zoning Board of Appeals

The Zoning Board of Appeals includes three members who are appointed by the Select Board. The board reviews compliance with the Cheshire zoning bylaws. The Zoning Board of Appeals is one of the town's special permit granting authorities, the other being the Planning Board, and is responsible for reviewing special permit applications for certain uses in the town's zoning districts.

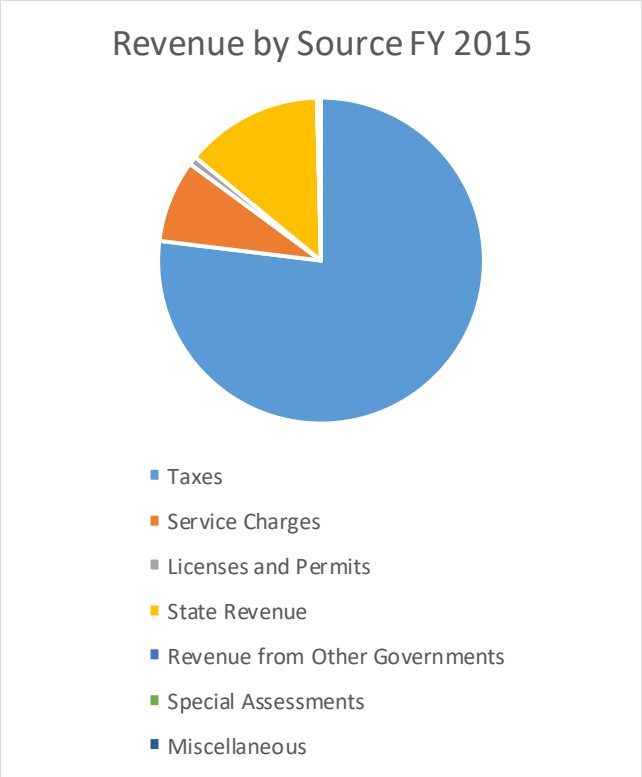
Finance Advisory Board

The Finance Advisory Board includes six members that are appointed by the Town Moderator. The board provides guidance on and reviews town budgeting.

Police Department/ Law Enforcement Services

The Cheshire Police Department includes a Police Chief and six officers. Only one staff member is full time, and the rest are employed part time. The deptartment provides public safety and law enforcement services to the town.

Table 5.1—FY 2015 Town of Cheshire, MA Revenue by Source



Source: Mass. Dept. of Revenue 2016

Revenue Source	Amount ($)	% of total
Taxes	3,973,872	77%
Service Charges	422,086	8%
Licenses and Permits	43,653	1%
State Revenue	704,419	14%
Revenue from Other Governments	1,485	< 1%
Special Assessments	17,760	< 1%
Miscellaneous	1,815	< 1%
Total Revenues	5,165,090	100%

Taxy Levy by Source (note: does not include motor vehicle excise tax)	
Residential Levy	$3,202,113
Open Space Levy	$0
Commercial Levy	$223,441
Industrial Levy	$21,129
Personal Prop. Levy	$82,077
Total Tax Levy	$3,528,760

Table 5.2—Town of Cheshire, MA Expenditure Trends			
Source: Mass. Dept. of Revenue 2016			
Type	Amount ($)	% of FY15 total	% change since 2005
General Government	294,603	6%	-9.46%
Police	109,767	2%	59.62%
Fire	28,135	<1%	14.75%
Other Public Safety	48,719	<1%	61.98%
Education	2,886,684	56%	39.74%
Public Works	1,160,634	23%	10.25%
Human Services	45,313	<1%	56.82%
Culture and Recreation	27,014	<1%	17.18%
Fixed Costs	348,767	7%	39.35%
Intergovernmental Assessments	26,932	<1%	-5.46%
Other Expenditures	16,508	<1%	-16.67%
Debt Service	163,651	3%	-11.82%
Total Expenditures	5,156,727	100%	25.67%

Cheshire is also home to station B-4 of the Massachusetts State Police, located along Route 8. This station patrols the northern half of Berkshire county, south to the Town of Washington, Mass.

Schools and Educational Services

See Chapter 5A—Schools.

Fiscal Conditions

Revenue

Currently, all municipal functions are funded by property, excise, and other taxes; service fees; licenses; and state and federal transfer payments. (Refer to **Table 5.1**) For Fiscal Year (FY) 2016, the property tax rate was $12.26 per $1,000 of assessed value (15th lowest in county). This rate has gone up since 2006, when it was $9.10/$1,000. Property taxes in FY15 made up 77% of Cheshire's revenue (10th lowest % in the county). This is up from 60.4% in 2003. Total property tax revenue has gone from $2,334,769 in 2003 to $3,973,872 in 2015, an increase of 70%. State revenue has dropped from 23.9% to 13.6% of the overall revenue and the actual amount has gone down from $923,948 to $704,419. Overall, revenue has gone up 25.1% to $5,165,090 in FY15.

Table 5.3—Town of Cheshire, MA Tax Levy Statistics	
Source: Mass. Dept. of Revenue 2016	
Maximum Levy Limit	$ 3,745,106
Total Tax Levy	$ 3,711,905
Excess Levy Capacity	$ 33,201
Levy Ceiling (2 1/2% of total assessed value)	$ 7,569,137
Override Capacity	$ 3,857,232
Total Assessed Value	$ 302,765,482
Tax Levy as % of Assessed Value	1.23%

In 2000, the average single family property was assessed at $108,049 and had a tax bill of $1,243. In 2016, the average single family home was assessed at $205,248 (10th lowest) and had a tax bill of $2,516 (9th lowest). The average single family tax bill has gone up 102.4% during that time, while assessed value has gone up 90.0%. Inflation has gone up 39.8% during this time.

A key component in raising revenue is the valuation of property. In 2016, the valuation of the town was just over $228.4 million (14th lowest). This has declined from 2012 when the valuation was over $231.4 million. The loss of over $3 million in valuation forces the tax rate to go up to raise the same amount of money. The tax rate has gone up from $9.60/$1000 assessed in 2012 to $12.26/$1000 assessed in 2015 (15th lowest). In addition, the taxes raised through property taxes has gone up from $3,347,970 in 2012 to $3,973,872 in 2015 (16th lowest). This increase amounts to $625,902 or almost 19% over four years.

Expenditures

In FY2015, Cheshire expended $2,886,684, or 56.0%, of its budget on education, an increase of 39.7% since 2005. (Refer to **Table 5.2**) Public Works saw an increase of $107,903 or 10.2%, to bring its total expenditures to $1,160,634. General government decreased by $30,767, or -9.5% to $294,603, while fixed costs saw an increase of 39% bringing its total to $348,767 and Human Services saw an increase of 56.8%, bringing its total to $45,313. Police expenditures increased by 59.6%, Fire by 14.7% and Other Public Safety by 62%, bringing all public safety spending to $186,621. Overall, expenditures have gone from $4,103,273 in 2005 to $5,156,727 in 2015 (14th highest out of 32), an increase of 25.6%.

As the town's population gets older, those on fixed incomes will face an increased challenge in paying their taxes as the rate continues to go up, but the incomes do not.

Levy Limit

For fiscal year 2016, the town had a tax levy of approximately $3,711,905 and excess levy capacity of $33,201. Cheshire's FY16 levy ceiling, which is the highest taxes can be raised through an override vote and is based on 2.5% of assessed value, is $7,569,137. This results in a difference of $3,857,232 between the current levy and the ceiling. Based on current trends, Cheshire is not in danger of hitting the levy ceiling in the near future (20 years+) unless assessed values drop dramatically and numerous override votes are needed. See **Table 5.3** for additional information.

Best Practices and Community Compact

Community Compact is a "voluntary, mutual agreement entered into between the Baker-Polito Administration and individual cities and towns of the Commonwealth" (Mass. Office of the Governor 2016). As part of the Compact, municipalities agree to implement at least one best practice chosen from a variety of several options. Once approved, a written agreement is created between the state and the municipality. Resources for technical assistance are then prioritized for the communities that have entered into the Compact. The Compact Agreement also provides incentives for participation by allowing municipalities extra points on certain grant applications and allowing participation in grants specific to the Community Compact Program.

Cheshire signed its Community Compact agreement with the state in May of 2016. As part of the agreement, the town pledged to adopt the best practice of Sustainable Development and Land Protection. The language of the agreement states that in Cheshire "there is a Master, Open Space and Recreation, or other Plan to guide future land conservation and development; Smart growth consistent zoning has been adopted; Investments in infrastructure and land conservation are consistent with the Mass. Sustainable Development Principles. "

Regionalization and Shared Services

In an effort to reduce municipal expenses, regionalization and shared services have been discussed throughout Massachusetts and the Berkshires (Shanks 2016). These could take many forms, such as sharing staff members, lending or sharing equipment, jointly procuring goods, or collectively contracting for services to create efficiencies and cost savings.

There are several ways that municipalities can share services. These include the development of mutual aid agreements (such as those that exist for many emergency services), shared service agreements, or the creation of regional districts.
There are many factors to consider when exploring regionalization and shared services. The town may wish to conduct a study of municipal services in similar communities to determine if its own needs are met through existing services or if changes in policies or practices could create efficiencies or cost savings. One metric that might provide for a useful comparison is based on size. Based on the 2010 Census, Cheshire is closest in size to Lenox and Sheffield (both larger in population) as well as Lanesborough and Hinsdale (both smaller in size). These communities might serve as a starting point for comparison with the town.

Age Friendly Resolution

In late January 2017, the Cheshire Select Board adopted an "age friendly community" resolution affirming its commitment to supporting policies that will help older adults in the community. Some items described in the resolution include more accessible streets, easier access to public transportation, encouraging access to fresh food, and encouraging active lifestyles.

Public Survey Results

Water Department

In the public survey conducted in support of the Master Plan, respondents were split about many issues and potential initiatives dealing with the town's public water system. Roughly 35% of respondents neither supported nor opposed the statement *expand the area served by public water.* In regards to the statement *split off the Water Department from the town to a user-only controlled water district,* 37% were in favor, with another 27% stating they needed more information or had never heard about the issue. A similar question in the survey asked if *the town should keep the current Cheshire Water Dept. structure*. Only 17% agreed with the statement, 35% disagreed, and another 46% had no opinion about the statement.

Expansion or Improvement of Services

Expansion or improvement of town services was favored by 50% or more respondents in regards to the following service areas: *condition of town roads, town government communication to the public, school programs, town-wide activities, educational offerings for all ages, school facilities, and recreational facilities*.

Survey respondents were most in favor (at 50% or more support) of keeping the following service areas the same: *Fire Dept., emergency medical services, Police Dept., recycling/waste disposal, cleanliness of town, and library services.*

In response to a general question about support for increases or decreases in taxes to support expanded services, 52% of respondents were in favor of keeping taxes and services the same. Only 35% were in favor of increasing taxes to increase services. Finally, another 12% were in favor of decreasing taxes and reducing services. In regards to a similar question about options to provide services more cost-effectively, 52% of respondents were in favor of sharing services with other towns. Another 24% of respondents said the town should subcontract services. Another 27% of respondents were unsure about options to most cost-effectively provide services in Cheshire.

Town Communications to the Public

In response to the question: *do you feel you are adequately informed about town government affairs,* 44.7% of respondents answered *no*. Another 33.6% said *yes*, and 21.55% said they were *unsure*. However, a majority of respondents were in favor of expanding town government communications to the public (54%).

Five-Member Select Board

Several write-in comments in the public survey expressed support for the creation of a five-member Select Board. Additionally, this view was also expressed by many of those who participated in stakeholder interviews conducted by BRPC. Those interviewed and respondents to the public survey felt that a five-member board would provide greater diversity to town discussions and decision-making.

KEY SERVICES ISSUES

Five-member Select Board

The Master Plan Committee felt that the town should transition to a five-member Select Board, as expressed by town votes.

In-Town Collaboration

The town should continue and expand its good work to collaborate with local organizations (such as the Lion's Club, etc.) on projects and other opportunities.

Communications to the Public/ Public Participation

Over half of respondents to the public survey said they received news about the town from local media outlets such as 1berkshires.com or the *Berkshire Eagle*, rather than from the town itself. The Master Plan Committee felt that the town should improve and expand communications to its citizens to include improved digital communication. The town should also seek new ways to simplify public participation and make it more convenient.

Schools

Cheshire's school system presents a significant financial and organizational challenge. Moreover, perception and quality of the town's schools could have an impact on the attractiveness of the town to new families, which could affect demographics within the community. The increasing number of students moving to out-of-district schools is a sign that schools in the town should be addressed comprehensively. Additionally, survey respondents said that school issues were one reason they planned to move from Cheshire. The town must work to improve school quality and performance, while reducing education costs.

Long-Term Financial & Staff Planning

The town should engage in long-term financial planning, to include a review of all town expenditures and staffing. As part of this process, the town would review benefits and salaries for all town employees and officials, and develop job descriptions and performance review practices. As taxes are the main source of revenue in the community, the town should identify and apply for relevant grant opportunities to supplement its existing resources.

Age-Inclusive Planning and Support

Cheshire's aging population should prompt planning for a more age-inclusive community and spur the creation of new support mechanisms and services for its older population.

SERVICES STRATEGIES AND RESOURCES

Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)

How Does It Work?

A Capital Improvement Plan or Program (CIP) is a long-term blueprint for planning a community's capital expenditures. A CIP typically has two parts, a program and a budget, and typically looks at expenditures over a 5 to 10 year period. The program identifies capital items, usually tangible assets or projects, like new equipment or roadwork, that costs above a certain threshold. The second part of the plan, the budget, is the upcoming year's spending plan.

What Does It Accomplish?

- Creates a systematic process for financing town projects.
- Provides for evaluation of alternatives and solutions as opposed to "crisis" decision-making.
- Creates greater transparency about future town expenditures.

SERVICES GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND ACTIONS

Goal 1: Proactively Address Town Needs Through Public Engagement, Long-Term Planning, and Additional Sources of Funding

The town will work to address needs by proactively engaging residents, completing several long-term planning studies, and seeking out additional sources of funding to give it greater financial flexibility.

Objective: Implement Recommendations of the Cheshire Master Plan

The town should create a robust system to implement the Master Plan and keep residents informed of and involved in its initiatives.

Action: Appoint a Master Plan Implementation Committee.

Action: Assemble a pool of volunteers to help with Master Plan implementation.

Action: Regularly engage and update residents about implementation activities.

Action: Track progress on the Master Plan and update quarterly. Prepare an annual summary of Master Plan implementation activities to include in the annual report.

Objective: Review and Address Town Staffing, Budget, and Finances

The town will comprehensively review staffing, salaries, and expenses to determine ways to most effectively serve town residents. The town will also put measures in place to review employee performance and track day-to-day departmental activities. Moreover, the town will develop a long-range Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) that will help to prioritize major town expenditures and make its budget process more transparent.

Action: Develop a municipal salary and staffing study that compares Cheshire to surrounding communities.

Action: Develop job descriptions and a system of performance review for all municipal staff. Ensure job descriptions include requirements for relevant trainings and certifications.

Action: Explore shared services and staffing with surrounding communities, such as a human resources or community development position.

Action: Examine expanding the role of the Town Administrator.

Action: Develop a succession plan for all town department heads or chairpersons/"overlap" all new hires with employees retiring or leaving Cheshire.

Action: Review compensation for board and committee members.

Action: Review benefits for town employees, elected and appointed officials, and board and committee members.

Action: Engage in comprehensive review of the town's "fixed costs" such as insurance or debt payments. Ensure cost saving alternatives are sought out.

Action: Implement/improve timesheet requirements for all employees.

Action: Develop a long-range Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) that integrates all town departments, is revised yearly, and is open to public comment.

Action: Encourage local business to bid on town projects.

Action: Hold regular staff meetings.

Action: Ensure multiple staff members are trained and certified in state procurement law.

Objective: Seek Out Additional Sources of Revenue

The town will seek grant funding that will reduce the financial burden on taxpayers. Moreover, the town will ensure regular contributions to its stabilization funds to ensure adequate financial resources are set aside for emergencies, to supplement other revenue sources, or for a "rainy day." Finally, the town will explore adoption of the Community Preservation Act as a way to fund other projects in the community.

Action: Engage all departments and boards to aggressively identify and seek grant funding.

Action: Ensure regular contributions to town stabilization funds.

Action: Investigate the adoption of the Community Preservation Act (CPA) by the town as a potential funding source for town projects.

Objective: Develop a Town Climate that Encourages Public Engagement and Participation

The town will work to develop an overall climate that encourages engagement and participation through several measures and initiatives. These initiatives are intended to promote greater engagement, education, and sharing of information around the development and adoption of the annual town budget. They are also intended to develop ways to engage and foster cooperation between various boards, committees, and town staff, as well as allow residents to more easily participate in town decision-making.

Action: Transition to a 5-member Select Board to better represent the needs of town residents.

Action: Research and evaluate a system of term limits for town officials.

Action: Survey town residents about changes to public meetings (including annual town meeting) to increase attendance and voter participation.

Action: Develop and hold regular "All Boards" meetings with representatives from all town boards, committees, and commissions.
Action: Implement regular short informational meetings regarding town meeting warrant articles and budget items, such as a "baby" town meeting.

Action: Expand the internal budgeting process to engage more town staff.

Action: Ensure all public meetings are accurately recorded and accessible. Explore video recording of Select Board and other key meetings.

Action: Create and implement a standardized format for all town meeting minutes.

Action: Ensure a public comment component of all meetings of all boards and committees.

Action: Continue to coordinate with community groups to hold events and gatherings in town.

Action: Organize volunteer drivers to provide transportation to town meeting and elections.

Action: Seek out ways to better engage and involve students in the planning and development of the town, by strengthening connections between schools, students, and town activities.

Action: Find ways to regularly appreciate residents for their contributions to our community.

Action: Find ways to recognize contributions of town officials and staff for their work and contributions to the community.

Objective: Encourage More Active Communication and Transparency in Town

Cheshire will develop systems and means to better communicate with residents to ensure they are aware of what is going on in town.

Action: Develop or expand circulation of an informational newsletter in town, such as the "Cheshire Chatter"/Develop a town email list or email newsletter.
Action: Ensure adequate notifications to the public around meetings, town events, and emergencies.

Action: Identify and implement improvements to the town website. Ensure regular and timely postings to the town website so that residents can access materials and remain aware of town activities.

Action: Improve notification and public engagement around tree removal along town roads.

Goal 2: Provide High Quality Services to Maintain Quality of Life and Allow Residents to Age-in-Place

The town will provide high quality services through the library and Council on Aging. These key services help to maintain quality of life and provide ways to residents to age-in-place and remain in Cheshire for as long as they wish.

Objective: Identify and Implement Improvements to the Town Library

The town will continue to provide high quality services through the library and seek out ways to supplement its funding through grants.

Action: Continue to provide high quality services through the public library.

Action: Include the library in a needs assessment for town buildings and facilities.

Action: Continue to seek grant funding for the library.

Objective: Maintain Positive Working Relationships and Collaboration with Private Organizations in the Community

The town will continue its good work to engage various organizations in the community and collaborate on projects for the benefit of all.

Action: Continue to collaborate with local organizations on projects throughout town.

Objective: Continue to Provide High Quality Services to Seniors in Cheshire.

The town will continue to provide and improve services to seniors and ensure they are actively engaged in town activities.

Action: Continue to seek grant funding for COA activities.

Action: Explore opportunities to expand on-demand transportation for seniors, such as through reimbursement of volunteer drivers, particularly for medical appointments.

Action: Ensure Cheshire participates in regional “age friendly” planning efforts.

Action: Develop and maintain an active outreach program to ensure that older residents are aware of and encouraged to participate in activities.

Action: Explore feasibility of locating an urgent care facility or medical offices in town.

Action: Continue use of the library and Community Center to offer educational programming. Consider expanding offerings to include technology and computer related programming.

CHAPTER 5A: SCHOOLS AND EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

TRENDS AND CONDITIONS

Adams Cheshire Regional School District

The Adams Cheshire Regional School District (ACRSD) includes two elementary schools, the C. T. Plunkett School in Adams and Cheshire Elementary in Cheshire. After elementary school, students from both towns attend Hoosac Valley Middle and High School (HVMHS).

Adams Cheshire Regional School District Committee

The School Committee is an elected body that oversees the school district. Members work with the School Superintendent to set broad policies, develop a recommended budget, and monitor the overall operation of the School Department. The Committee is comprised of seven members in total, with three representing Cheshire and four representing Adams.

In response to increasing school costs and declining enrollment across the county, the Berkshire County Education Task Force, was created to examine ways to improve educational services and offerings as well as reduce costs to communities. A member of the Adams-Cheshire Regional School Committee participates in this task force and their work is ongoing.

School District Study

The Adams-Cheshire Regional School District received state grant funding in 2016 to *"undergo a third-party cost analysis study and review of the Adams-Cheshire Regional School District that will provide information on how to best restructure the district"* (Guerino 2016). The study was conducted by the UMass Boston Collins Center for Public Management.

The Collins Center Study examined population change, including declining overall population, youth population, and subsequent declining student enrollment in the district and across the region. In the northern Berkshires, the percentage decline in the school age population (age 5-19) has been highest for Cheshire and New Ashford.

The study highlighted the needs for renovation in both district elementary schools. Needs for Cheshire Elementary include roof, electrical, heating, window, and insulation work. New ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliant lifts and the need for larger classrooms was also highlighted.

Needs for Plunkett Elementary include a roof for the boiler room, a slate roof for the gym and auditorium, a replacement ADA compliant lift, and work on the school cafeteria.

The Collins Center also presented a detailed study of the district facilities based on square footage requirements per student. All district schools were found to have excess capacity. The report estimated that the three district school facilities have a capacity for 1,655 students but currently provide for only 1,318 students (as of 2016).

Per pupil spending in the district was around $13,200. The state average is around $14,400. However, when looking at per pupil spending on benefits, such as employer retirement contributions and insurance costs, district spending (around $3100/student) was much greater than the state average (around $2400/student). The study noted that if per pupil benefit spending matched the state average, around $885,000 could be saved.

The study included several "community conversations" which gathered input from district residents and students. Two "core" fundamentals of "maximizing the contribution of the ACRSD to community sustainability" and "maximizing student preparedness for the next phase of life" were identified as part of these outreach efforts. Other general community values included improving educational outcomes, increasing district financial sustainability, increasing enrollment, and improving in-school experience, district administration and operations, as well as community image were noted as part of public process and resident conversations.

Existing conditions and recommendations from the

report were presented to the ACRSD committee at several public meetings in January and February of 2017. The study identified 13 general recommendations for the district to undertake to improve educational outcomes for students and reduce district costs. They are:

1. Transfer health benefits for current employees and retirees from the Berkshire Health Group to the Massachusetts Group Insurance Commission (GIC).

2. Transfer pension system assets from the Town of Adams' retirement system to a system with a better rate of return such as the State's Pension Reserves Investment Trust (PRIT).

3. Undertake steps to reduce special education enrollment and costs to approach the state average.
   - 3A. Create a defined special education team chairperson structure.
   - 3B. Enhance data collection around special education to create indicated programming and interventions.
   - 3C. Increase professional learning spending to focus on strategies for inclusion and meeting the needs of all students.
   - 3D. Staff every Kindergarten and first grade classroom with a paraprofessional, thereby reducing or eliminating the need for including one-to-one paraprofessionals in IEPs (Individual Education Plans).
   - 3E. Enhance the District's Response to Intervention (RtI) Tier 2 and 3 strategies and staffing to reduce the number of IEPs.

4. Increase enrollment in the high school by increasing offerings and incentivizing students/parents to choose Hoosac Valley High School.
   - 4A. Consider partnering with local vocational school to provide programming or to offer satellite classrooms open to ACRSD students.
   - 4B. Actively strive to retain 7-8th graders as they move to high school.

5. Increase district-wide funding for professional learning to support district goals.

6. Reduce teacher absenteeism and funding teacher substitutes as needed.
   - 6A. Closely monitor teacher attendance data to identify strategies to reduce absenteeism and amend contract to incentivize attendance.
   - 6B. Consider utilizing the language from the collective bargaining agreement to have teachers who have free periods cover classes during colleague absences.
   - 6C. At a minimum, cover classes that contribute to improvement to current Level 3 status of schools.
   - 6D. Consider hiring permanent substitutes at the middle/high school level. If they are not needed in the classroom on a particular day, they can assist teachers however possible.

7. Control/moderate fiscal impact of future teacher's cost of living and annual step increases on the budget.
   - 7A. Review teacher's salary schedule and revise to smooth out the steps in the schedule. Review top steps to ensure they are within area medians.
   - 7B. Review administrative salaries to ensure they are within areas medians. Consider a temporary freeze on increases for non-union personnel.

8. Reduce number and value of stipends.

9. Develop or enhance the district nepotism policy

10. To address the District's Level 3 status, develop and implement a plan of Turnaround practices.

11. Engage with surrounding communities about joining the district.

12. Improve communication with students and parents.
    - 12A. Create and distribute an electronic survey

and paper surveys to gather information about areas of concern.

12B. Send a regular newsletter to parents keeping them informed about district activities and progress.

12C. Consider renaming the district.

13. Create a Feasibility Study Committee to determine the district's elementary school space needs and evaluate at least 3 scenarios.
    13A. Renovate Cheshire Elementary.
    13B. Renovate Plunkett Elementary.
    13C. Construction of a new school or addition at the Hoosac Valley Middle and High School Campus.

In addition to the general recommendations, the Collins Center proposed eight "space use alternatives" to achieve cost savings throughout the district and improve academic benefits.

Principles involved in the development of the space use alternatives include:

- Maximize funding spent in the classroom.
- Use space efficiently and use "best" space first.
- Place students at the center of all decisions.
- Provide 3+ classrooms per grade per school.

Alternatives Proposed for Hoosac Valley Middle/ High School (HVMHS):

A1. Transfer 8th graders to the high school and relocate 4th and 5th grade to the middle school portion of the building.

A2. Transfer 8th graders to the high school and relocate kindergarten, and 1st grade to the middle school portion building and Pre-K to early childhood education room.

Alternatives Proposed for Elementary Schools:

B1. Move all Pre-K to 3rd grade students to Cheshire Elementary, and close Plunkett Elementary ($555,600 in savings).

B2. Move all Pre-K to 3rd grade students to Plunkett Elementary, and close Cheshire Elementary ($426,000 in savings).

B3. Move all 2nd to 5th grade students to Cheshire Elementary, and close Plunkett Elementary ($513,100 in savings).

B4. Move all 2nd to 5th grade students to Plunkett Elementary, and close Cheshire Elementary ($376,500 in savings).

Additional Alternatives Proposed:

C. Move Pre-K through 7th grade to HVMHS and move 8th to 12th grade to Plunkett Elementary.

D. Create three separate districts with a superintendency union for oversight.

Significant Events Following the Collins Center Report

In late January, the chair of the Adams' Select Board wrote a letter to the editor of 1berkshires which advocated for closing Cheshire Elementary over the Plunkett Elementary School, citing a 2014 study which identified many repairs needed for the facility. The letter stated that the Town of Adams would not support renovations to Cheshire Elementary calling such expenses "exorbitant" and "irresponsible." The letter also noted the ongoing Berkshire County Education Task Force study, and stated the opinion that "in the very near future K-12 will be housed entirely at Hoosac Valley Middle and High School."

On February 8th, 2017, the ACRSD was presented with the eight "space use alternatives" outlined previously. The Collins Center cited some of the benefits of consolidating the district's elementary schools, stating that "it would allow more services at the single school, correct the student-to-teacher ratio, offer more inclusion, more programming, and more access to education support and extracurricular activities." Also noted was the fact that a school closure might not be permanent, leaving options open for the district to renovate one of the schools in the future. The Collins Center also stated that while space use alternatives "C" and "D" were considered, neither were found to be financially viable.

In response to the proposed options, both Adams and Cheshire considered leaving the school district and independently funding their own elementary schools. However, to achieve this, individual school budgets would increase substantially and both communities would have to vote to dissolve the district. Both towns viewed elementary school closure as potentially devastating to their communities and sense of identity, and a loss that would only compound years of economic hardship.

On February 22nd, 2017, Stephen Hemman of the Massachusetts Association of Regional Schools spoke to a group of School Committee members, faculty and town officials. He cited the difficulties in dissolving school district agreements and in funding K-12 education as an individual community. Hemman provided the district with four possible options:

- Remain as a Regional School District as currently exists.
- Dissolve the district and both towns go their own way.
- Amend the Regional Agreement to have two K-5 elementary districts and keep the 6-12 Regional District.
- Remain as a Regional School District but create an elementary budget for each town and a Regional District (6-12) Budget.

Hemman cited benefits and drawbacks to each of these options. For instance, amending the regional agreement to have three districts would create three separate school committees and create 18 bargaining units for negotiating with union employees, as well as create three sets of insurance and state reporting requirements.

Setting aside three separate budgets for schools would keep the district intact, but each community would be responsible for maintaining their own school buildings. Maintaining three separate budgets could be complicated.

Hemman discussed the benefits of regional school districts, stating that a larger student body makes it possible to fill more extensive programming and fund it. Hemman stated that this is especially useful at the high school level because it allows more opportunity for sports, extracurricular activities, and classes.

On March 9, 2017, the ACRSD committee voted along town lines (4-3) to close Cheshire Elementary School. The vote fueled much resentment among Cheshire residents, who felt dominated by Adams, the larger community. Several Cheshire residents called for a re-vote on the closure and called for Cheshire residents to pull their children out of district schools and use school choice to attend other districts.

Financial conditions between the communities have led to tensions between the communities who pool resources to fund education. The district is also hampered by requirements for proportional spending, meaning that spending increases by Cheshire must be met by proportional increases in spending by Adams.

Cheshire has a moderate tax rate and has the legal ability to raise millions in additional tax revenue (should it need to) before encountering its levy ceiling (2.5% of all assessed property value).

Adams has a relatively high tax rate for the county, and is nearing its levy ceiling. Once a community has reached its levy ceiling it can no longer raise taxes. At this point, communities must seek out ways to reduce expenses, such as through budget cuts or elimination of staff positions.

Thus, while Cheshire can potentially raise additional revenue to provide for education costs as well as potentially independently fund its elementary school, Adams has refused to contribute to potential increases in education costs, and has limited ability to do so.

On March 27th, 2017, the ACRSD committee met to approve a school budget. The budget required a vote of five committee members to be approved. However, as with the school closure vote, committee members

voted along town lines and the budget was not passed. Committee members from Cheshire proposed passing a budget that would fund both schools for another year, ultimately leaving the decision to each town to decide whether they could afford to keep their respective schools open. The budget failed to pass at two subsequent votes.

In early April 2017, the school committee unanimously approved a budget for fiscal year 2018. The committee debated passing a higher budget or pursuing a supplementary budget that would allow the Cheshire Elementary school to remain open, but ultimately decided not to.

While the Cheshire Select Board has not supported the school closure decision and is still seeking ways to keep its local elementary school open, it has also begun to plan financially for the school's closure and explore options for reusing the structure. The town administrator contacted the town insurance carrier to schedule a survey of the building to examine changes to insurance pricing. The board also discussed the possible use of the building by the school district central administrative office as well as use of the athletic fields by various groups.

The Cheshire Select Board has also begun researching what it would take to amend the regional school district to allow Cheshire to contribute more to the school district and independently fund the elementary school.

Amending the district agreement would require a 2/3 vote of the school committee. An alternative method for amending the district agreement would require 10% of registered voters in either town to petition the school committee for changes. The committee would then send the amendment articles to each town for a vote, which would again require the support of at least 10% of registered votes.
A Cheshire citizen's group has also formed and created a petition asking the town's state representatives to find emergency funds to keep the school open. In the event that this option does not prove fruitful, the Cheshire Selectmen are also putting an article on the annual town meeting warrant that would appropriate funding to allow the school to remain open. Approving this amendment will require a proposition 2 1/2 override by town voters.

Other options to fund the elementary school include using existing town free cash and stabilization funds to allow the school to remain open and continue to educate students there.

Dr. Robert Putnam, Superintendent of the ACRSD, attended a Master Plan committee meeting in April of 2017. At the meeting he reported on the status of the school and plans for the future.

Dr. Putnam reported that even if the Cheshire Elementary school is to remain open during the 2017-2018 school year, he intends to combine students from both Adams and Cheshire into the district's two elementary school buildings. This would be accomplished by maintaining Kindergarten through third grade classes at one school, while having fourth grade through seventh grade at the other. Combining the grades (which are currently divided between the two elementary schools) would allow class sizes to be more evenly distributed.

Dr. Putnam explained that the decision to close Cheshire Elementary was primarily based on costs. Keeping the school open would have meant that several staff "interventionist" positions would have been cut. Combining the elementary schools allowed these positions to remain.

Dr. Putnam also explained that cost increases as well as declining enrollment are two issues that the district may face for years, and securing additional funding to allow Cheshire Elementary to remain open will not eliminate these issues. In the long term, Putnam advocated for a single unified school campus at the site of the Hoosac Valley Middle and High School which would house all district students.

Public Survey Results

Educational Services and Schools

Respondents to the Master Plan survey voiced their opinion as to the future of education in Cheshire. Only 27% supported continuing with the regional school district, but with modifications to the existing agreement. Another 23% said the regional school district should continue to exist as it is. In response to the option of *combining with another school district,* 20% were in favor. Finally, 17% said the town should pursue other options. Additionally, 11.9% stated that they had *other* opinions regarding the future of education in Cheshire.

KEY EDUCATION ISSUES

Education Quality

Local schools must provide the highest quality of education to students to ensure they have opportunities in future higher education or as part of the workforce. Providing a quality education is not only essential to residents and their children, but is a key way that new residents and school choice students may be attracted to the community.

Keeping Cheshire Elementary Open While Preparing for the Worst

The town should explore all feasible measures to fund the elementary school to allow it to remain open and provide education to students. However, the town should also prepare for contingencies should the school not remain open. If the school cannot remain open, the town should explore ways to reuse the facility to its benefit.

EDUCATION GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND ACTIONS

Goal 1: District Schools Provide the Highest Quality of Education to All Students and Have a Level 1 Designation, While Remaining Cost-effective and Affordable to Residents and Taxpayers

District schools will provide the highest quality of education to students, while working toward a Level 1 accountability designation. The town will achieve this by strengthening its curriculum, branding the school, and working to effectively prepare students for higher education or the workforce. Local schools will remain cost-effective and affordable by managing costs. The town and district will manage costs by seeking out ways to reduce school expenses, pursuing grant funding, and better engaging officials and residents about the school budget process to ensure all can make informed decisions. The town will also continue to engage in planning that will seek a long-term funding solution that will allow Cheshire Elementary School to remain open and provide education to local students. However, in the event that longer-term funding is not secured, the town should prepare to find ways to reuse the school building to benefit the town. Finally, the town and the school district should engage in long-term planning that will examine the potential of providing a single school campus for all district students or joining with other communities to help manage costs and continuing to provide high quality educational services.

Objective: Seek Ways to Effectively Manage School Costs Without Sacrificing Education Quality

The town and school district will seek ways to manage school costs, by reviewing and implementing feasible cost saving measures, seeking grant funding, and better engaging residents and officials around the school budget process.

Action: Review and determine the feasibility of recommendations of the Collins Center study of the ACRSD. Implement accordingly.

Action: Continue to participate in the regional Berkshire County Education Task Force.

Action: Seek out grants to supplement existing funding.

Action: Actively engage town officials and educate residents about the school budget process.

Objective: Schools and Educational Services Provide Students with Programs and Instruction that Result in Student Success Evidenced in Data from Standardized Testing as Well as Success After Graduation. These Successful Quality Schools Attract Out-of-District "School-Choice" Students as Well as Families to Relocate to the Community

The town and school district will review benefits and other measures to attract and retain effective teachers to the district. The town and school district will explore ways to enhance the education of local students, such as by developing programming and branding the school district with niche programming that will attract new students. Moreover, schools and the town will find ways to strengthen connections between employers, colleges, and universities to ensure that students have opportunities beyond the classroom and after graduation.

Action: Review compensation and other benefits to attract and retain effective teachers (e.g., salary, salary incentives, tax incentives as a Cheshire resident, free compactor use, discounts on other town fees).

Action: Review professional development and other training opportunities for teachers.

Action: Review school curriculum.

Action: Collaborate with local organizations to provide connections and opportunities for students before and after graduation.

Action: Survey parents about changes to school committee meetings (venue, time change, etc.) that would encourage more parent participation. Implement any findings.

Action: Strengthen links and programming between schools, students and town activities. Develop ways to better engage students and young people in town affairs and decision making.

Action: Examine programming to brand district schools and create specialty niche programming (such as STEM, STEAM, the arts, etc.) that will attract new students to the district and prepare existing students for college and the workforce.

Action: Explore ways to strengthen connections and programming between district schools, local colleges and universities, and regional employers.

Objective: Advocate for Regional Changes that Will Help Support Local Schools

The town and schools will pursue changes at the state and regional level that will support local schools. The town will also focus on strengthening communication and relationships between Adams and Cheshire around school issues and the yearly budget process. Finally, the town will work to reexamine the school district agreement and pursue appropriate changes.

Action: Coordinate with other communities to advocate for changes to state school funding legislation, especially in regards to reimbursement for transportation.

Action: Explore ways to strengthen communication and relationships between Adams, Cheshire, and other surrounding communities around education, the school budget, and other issues.

Action: Collaborate with Adams on mutually agreeable changes to the school district agreement.

Objective: Explore and Pursue All Possible Options to Allow Cheshire Elementary to Remain Open Until an Acceptable Longer-Range Solution is Finalized

The town will explore all possible options to allow Cheshire Elementary School to remain open and providing education to students, until longer-range funding and organizational solutions can be finalized.

Action: Explore use of town funds, such as

stabilization, free cash, or appropriated through town vote, to supplement existing school funding.

Action: Explore private funding to supplement existing school funding.

Action: Advocate for state funds to allow the elementary school to remain open.

Objective: In the Event that Cheshire Elementary is Closed, Explore Ways to Reuse the Building to Benefit the Town

In the event that securing funding for the school does not provide revenue for the school to remain open in the long term, the town should explore ways to reuse the school building. The town should form a building reuse committee and develop a reuse plan that will examine potential uses for the facility.

Action: Form a School Building Reuse Committee.

Action: Coordinate with school district officials to determine what building contents will be retained by the district and what will be retained by the town.

Action: Explore changes to the elementary school lease agreement with the school district. Change appropriate items.

Action: Examine cost sharing agreements with local organizations to use school facilities to provide for continued maintenance and use of the facility.

Action: Prepare a building reuse plan that examines potential uses of the elementary school building. Determine if the school facility could be used to address town needs, such as space for housing, municipal departments, local business, or community functions.

Objective: Engage in Long-Term Planning for the School District

The town and district will engage in long term planning that will examine the potential of a single school district campus at HVMHS or the possibility that the district will reconfigure to include additional communities or join with surrounding communities as part of other districts.

Action: Examine potential of a single school district campus at Hoosac Valley Middle and High School that would provide education for all elementary, middle, and high school students in the district as well as for other surrounding communities.

Action: Explore reconfiguration of the school district with other towns.

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CHAPTER 6: HOUSING

VISION

Cheshire will provide safe and affordable housing for all ages and incomes, creating a town where residents can live and grow for a lifetime.

TRENDS AND CONDITIONS

Housing Stock Conditions

As of the 2009 –2014 American Community Survey, there were an estimated 1571 housing units. Of these housing units, the vast majority (1241, or 79%) were of the 1-unit detached type. Another 215 or 13.7% are categorized as mobile homes. Approximately 2.7% of homes are of the 1-unit attached type. The remaining 4.6% of homes have 2 or more units. Please note that data from the 2010 Census lacks this analysis of housing units. The remainder of this chapter will primarily rely on data from the 2000 and 2010 US Census for consistency.

Housing Ownership and Occupancy

*For a table of housing occupancy characteristics, see **Table 6.1.***

As of the 2010 Census, there were 1529 housing units in Cheshire. The majority of these are owner occupied (77.9%). Another 211 units (13.7%) were renter occupied. Vacant homes in Cheshire, which includes unoccupied homes for sale or rent, recently purchased homes which are not yet occupied, or actual abandoned homes, comprise 5.1% or 78 total units. Lastly, another 48 units (3.1%) are considered for "seasonal, recreational, or occasional use."

Between 2000 and 2010, the number of housing units in Cheshire increased by 4%, from 1470 to 1529 units. The number of renter occupied units decreased over the same period, while the number of owner occupied units decreased. While the number of seasonally or occasionally used units in Cheshire is a relatively small percentage of the overall housing stock (3.1%), this number grew by 300% between 2000 and 2010, from 12 to 48 units.

HOUSING AT A GLANCE

Housing Type
The vast majority of housing units in Cheshire are the single family detached type.

Occupancy
Most housing in the community is occupied by year-round residents. There is little seasonal housing. However, the number of seasonal housing units the town is increasing.

Housing Burden
Available data indicates that around 28% of homeowners and renters may be housing burdened, meaning they pay 30% or more of their income in housing costs.

Figure 6.1—Single Family Home Sales Price in Cheshire, MA

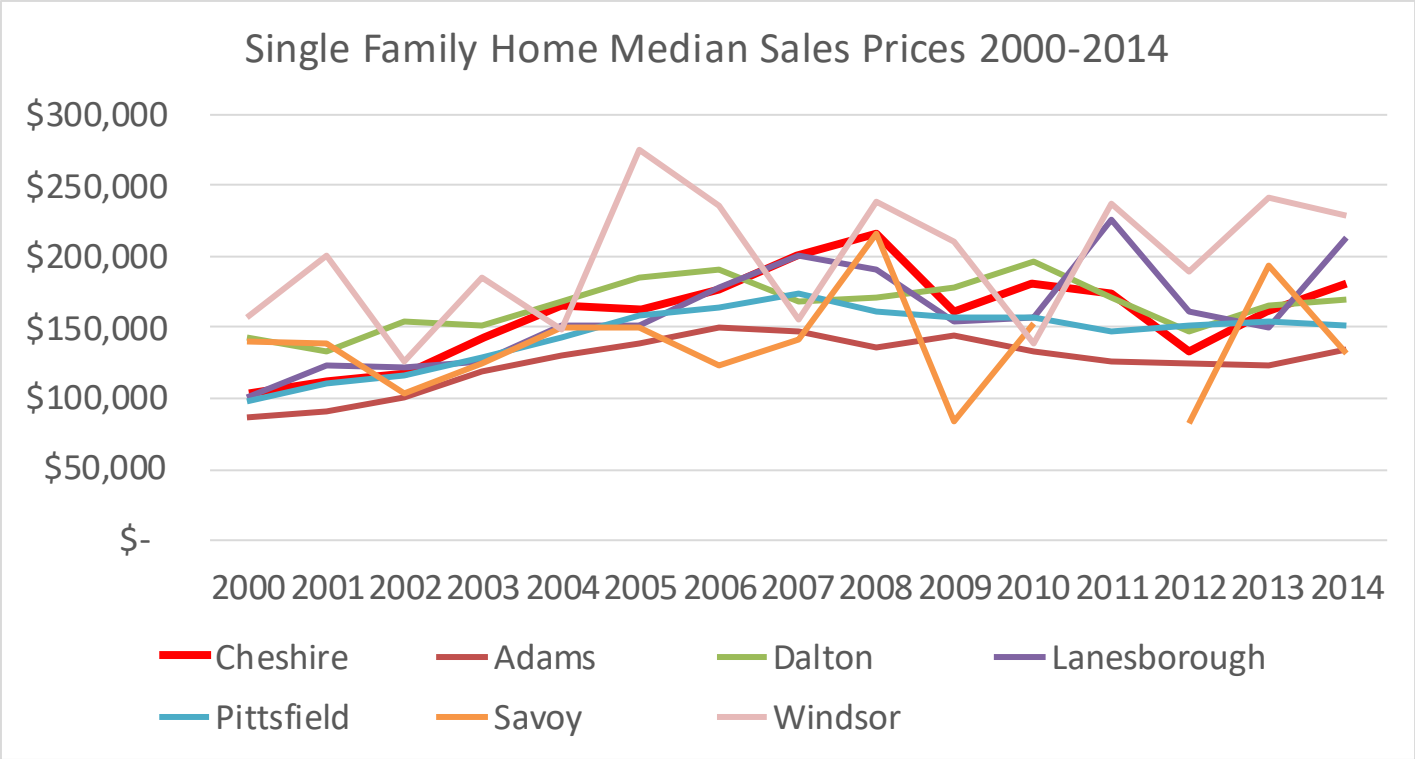


Table 6.1— Housing Occupancy in Cheshire, MA 2000-2010					
Source: 2000 and 2010 US Census and 2014 American Community Survey					
	# in 2000	% of total, 2000	# in 2010	% of Total, 2010	**% Change 2000-2010**
Owner-Occupied Year Round	1151	78.2%	1192	77.9%	3.5%
Renter Occupied Year Round	216	14.6%	211	13.7%	-2.3%
Vacant Units (includes unoccupied homes for sale or rent or abandoned homes)	91	6.1%	78	5.1%	-14.2%
Seasonal	12	.8%	48	3.1%	300%
Total Housing Stock:	**1470**	100%	**1529**	100%	4.0%

None of the town's housing units are listed by the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) as Chapter 40B qualifying units (DHCD, 2014). "Chapter 40B Units" are units considered affordable by low- and moderate-income households with long-term restrictions that ensure it will continue to be affordable. Low income is defined as income equal to or less than 80% of the median income for the area. Moderate income is defined as income between 80 and 95% of the median income for the area. Chapter 40B authorizes a housing agency or developer to obtain a single comprehensive permit for the construction of subsidized low- or moderate-income housing. If a community in which less than 10% of its total year-round housing stock is subsidized low- or moderate-income housing denies a comprehensive permit, or imposes conditions that make the project economically unviable, the developer may appeal to the state Housing Appeals Committee for review of the local action.

Table 6.2— Home Value and Housing Costs in Cheshire, MA		
Source: 2010-2014 American Community Survey		
Value of Homes	Number	%
Less than $50,000	118	10.0%
$50,000 to $99,999	9	0.8%
$100,000 to $149,999	212	18.0%
$150,000 to $199,999	261	22.1%
$200,000 to $299,999	325	27.5%
$300,000 to $499,999	223	18.9%
$500,000 to $999,999	33	2.8%
$1,000,000 or more	0	0.0%
Total (owner occupied units)	1181	100.0%
Median value: $198,600		
Median Monthly Housing Cost (with mortgage): $1,326		
Median Monthly Housing Cost (with no mortgage): $407		
Median Rent: $733		

Home Value and Sale Trends

Home Sales

Between 2000 and 2015, the number of home sales in Cheshire reached a high of 35 sales in 2005 and declined to its lowest number of 20 in 2008. Since 2008, home sale numbers have been in the low- to mid-20s with 24 home sales in 2015.

Home Value Trends

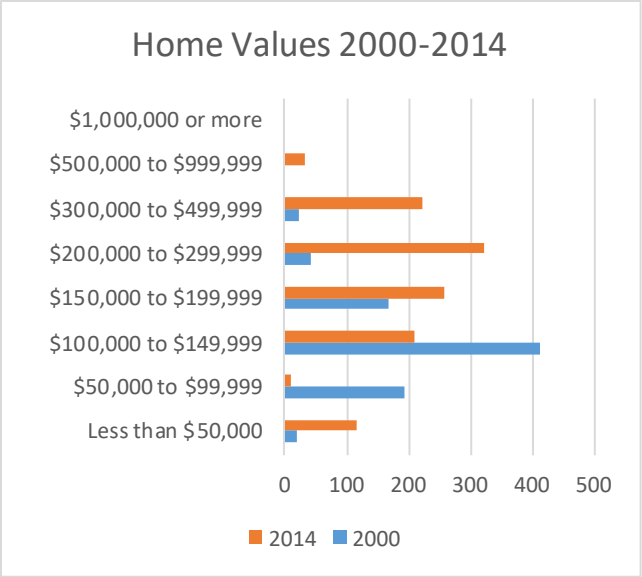
*For a figure displaying home value trends for Cheshire and neighboring communities, see **Figure 6.2.***

*For tables displaying home values and housing costs for Cheshire see **Figure 6.2** and **Table 6.1***

The median sale price of single family homes in Cheshire reached a maximum of $216,250 in 2008. From this year, prices decreased to a minimum of $132,750 in 2012, but have risen steadily since then. As of 2015, the median sale price of a single family home was $179,000.

Between 2000 and 2014, the median value of a home increased from $124,100 to $198,600, an increase of $74,500.

Figure 6.2—Home Values in Cheshire, MA



Housing Issues

*For a table displaying housing issues for Cheshire see **Table 6.3.***

The US Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) catalogues housing issues in a community based on data gathered from the decennial Census and American Community Survey (ACS). The primary housing concern in Cheshire identified by HUD is housing cost burden, which is defined as housing costs that are equal to or greater than 30% of income. HUD data indicates that around 28% of homeowners and renters have a housing cost burden of 30% or more; around half of these households pay over 50% of their income on housing.

Indicators of Housing Need

According to the Massachusetts Housing Partnership, there are several indicators of housing need (Housing Needs Workbook 2003).

Rental Housing Need

One indicator of rental housing need is the rental vacancy rate. In general "a rental vacancy rate below 5% is considered a condition where renters are subject to limited choice and increasing rental costs." According to the two most recent Census ACS releases

Table 6.3 - Housing Issues in Cheshire, MA				
Source: HUD, 2015 based on the 2008-2012 Census American Survey				
Income Distribution Overview	Owner	Renter	Total	% of Total
Household Income <= 30% HAMFI*	195	40	235	17%
Household Income >30% to <=50% HAMFI	185	10	195	14%
Household Income >50% to <=80% HAMFI	225	85	310	22%
Household Income >80% to <=100% HAMFI	135	15	150	11%
Household Income >100% HAMFI	520	0	520	37%
Total	1265	150	1415	100%
Housing Problems** Overview	Owner	Renter	Total	% of Total
Household has 1 of 4 Housing Problems	350	50	400	28%
Household has none of 4 Housing Problems	915	100	1015	72%
Cost Burden not available	0	0	0	0%
Total	1265	150	1415	100%
Housing Cost Burden*** Overview	Owner	Renter	Total	% of Total
Cost Burden <=30%	930	95	1025	72%
Cost Burden >30% to <=50%	185	15	200	14%
Cost Burden >50%	154	40	194	14%
Cost Burden not available	0	0	0	0%
Total	1265	150	1415	100%
*HAMFI stands for “HUD Area Median Family Income.” For the year 2015, HAMFI in the town of Cheshire was equal to $67,700. HUD calculates its own income values differently from those reported in Census information. Census data for income is adjusted based on the consumer price index (CPI) and inflation trends. Finally the value is rounded to the nearest $100.				
**The four housing problems are: incomplete kitchen facilities, incomplete plumbing facilities, more than 1 person per room, and cost burden greater than 30%.				
***Cost burden is the ratio of housing costs to household income. For renters, housing cost is gross rent (contract rent plus utilities). For owners, housing cost is "select monthly owner costs," which includes mortgage payment, utilities, association fees, insurance, and real estate taxes.				
Note: All data is by household. HUD household totals have been rounded.				

(2010-2014 and 2011-2015), the rental vacancy rate in Cheshire was estimated at 0%.

Rent costs are another indicator of possible rental housing need. If many renters pay more than 30% of their income on rent, indicating housing burden, this may indicate the need for additional rental housing. The most recent ACS estimates that over 50% of renters pay more than 30% of their income, and indicates a “mismatch between rental costs and renter household incomes.”
The number of rental units in a community is another indicator. Mass. Housing Partnership guidance indicates that communities should, in general, have around 30% of housing units be rental units. In Cheshire, the latest ACS data indicates that about 17% of units are rental units (242/1406).

Senior Housing Need

Potential indicators of senior housing need include the number of seniors in the community who are paying more than 30% of their income on rent. According to ACS data, this figure is estimated at 17%, but has a

wide margin of error. These individuals would likely qualify for subsidized senior housing if it were provided in the area. Another indication of senior housing need is if this figure is more than twice the available senior housing units in the community. Currently, dedicated senior housing is only available in surrounding communities.

Sustainable Berkshires Plan

In 2013, BRPC completed its Sustainable Berkshires Plan, a regional plan focused on improving quality of life in the county. One element of this plan was a comprehensive assessment of housing in the county. BRPC ranked communities in the Berkshires based on an integrated and inclusive neighborhood score that evaluated a variety of community factors including having a mix of ages, incomes, and cultural backgrounds, access to jobs and high performing schools, access to different housing options and choices (including rental and ownership), and if the community contained a mix of home values. Based on this ranking system, Cheshire was found to have a "low" ranking. The plan states that affordable housing production in the community is a "moderate priority" in relation to other communities in the Berkshires. Moderate priority affordable housing production areas are "secondary markets, near jobs and with good schools, but less served by transit and municipal infrastructure. These are generally adjacent to high priority areas or those communities targeted for reinvestment in affordable housing. Also, these are slightly smaller towns with lower staff capacity."

Public Survey Results

The public survey asked a broad question about the importance of various types of housing in Cheshire. Respondents stated it was most important to have *more options for young families* (68%), *adaptive reuse or redevelopment of older/historic properties* (65%), *more options for seniors/elderly (single story or assisted living)* (60%), and *more single-family homes* (48%).

Respondents said that more *multi-unit/multi-family housing such as condominiums (*59%) and *more housing for low-income families (*55%*)* were unimportant for Cheshire to have.

KEY HOUSING ISSUES

Building Capacity to Address Housing

The town should increase its own local capacity to address housing by forming a housing committee and ensuring that members have access to training and other educational opportunities.

Housing for Seniors and Young Families

In the long term, the town should create a strategy to address housing for seniors and young families. Creating more housing opportunities for individuals at either end of the age spectrum will help create a town where residents can age-in-place and remain for a lifetime.

HOUSING STRATEGIES AND RESOURCES

Open Space Residential Design (OSRD) Bylaw or Open Space Residential Subdivision

Where Does It Apply?

Also known as a "flexible residential development" bylaw, this generally applies to larger developments (5+ homes) outside of more densely developed areas, such as village centers. The town can also define what areas the bylaw would apply to by creating a district for this type of development.

How Does It Work?

An OSRD zoning bylaw allows a development with smaller lot sizes in exchange for the developer providing a minimum percent of the total site as permanently protected contiguous open space (can include agricultural lands). A density bonus is typically offered as an incentive to the developer to select this option.

What Does It Accomplish?

- Conserves open space and connectivity of open spaces and habitat areas.
- Requires less roadway which in turn creates less impervious surface, which reduces stormwater runoff and improves water quality.

Accessory Dwelling Unit or "Mother-in-Law Apartment" Bylaw

Where Does It Apply?

The town can define in what zoning districts a potential accessory dwelling unit can be allowed.

How Does It Work?

Accessory units, also known as "in-law" apartments, accessory apartments, or secondary units, provide additional housing that can be integrated into existing single family neighborhoods, to provide a typically lower-priced housing alternative with little or no impact to the existing look and character of the neighborhood. Such bylaws allow for the creation of and set standards on additional housing units in or on the same parcel as an existing home. The town will have to establish standards for this type of housing should it pursue creation of a bylaw. This could include determining the maximum size of such apartments, restrictions on whether the owner must live in the house or the number of bedrooms.

What Does It Accomplish?

- Retains neighborhood character.
- Allows for seniors or retirees to remain in the community as they age by:
  making it easier for caregivers or family members to live with them; or
  providing them with extra income created through a rental unit.
- Creates lower cost housing alternatives that would allow younger families to move to the area.

Cohousing

Where Does It Apply?

Cohousing is generally not excluded by zoning regulations, however restrictions on multi-family housing can make establishing cohousing difficult. If the town wishes to encourage cohousing, it should review potential changes to its bylaws pertaining to multi-family housing.

How Does It Work?

Cohousing is a community of private homes clustered around a shared space, such as a common house or outdoor space. It may also refer to individual apartments that share some facilities in the same building, such as living or kitchen space.

What Does It Accomplish?

- Sharing tasks such as childcare, cooking, and transportation can give residents more flexibility with time and finances.
- Alternative to single family housing that may appeal to seniors, retirees, and young families.

Common Driveway or Rear Lot Development Bylaw

Where Does It Apply?

These types of bylaws typically apply to large lots with limited ability to subdivide because of inadequate road frontage or landlocked parcels.

How Does It Work?

Common driveway bylaws typically allow two residential lots to share a driveway. There may be requirements for the owners to create an agreement for shared maintenance and repair.

Rear lot development bylaws allow a larger residential lot that lacks adequate road frontage to subdivide and create a "rear lot" that is developable. The town can establish standards for the size of the rear lot. Typically, no more than one rear lot is allowed to be divided from the larger lot.

What Does It Accomplish?

- Allows landowners to divide otherwise undevelopable land created by frontage restrictions.

- Allows for development away from road frontage, thus preserving rural character as seen from the roadway.

HOUSING GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND ACTIONS

Goal 1: Provide Housing for All Ages and Incomes

Cheshire will provide housing for all ages and incomes. It will work to strengthen local resources to address housing, raise awareness of housing programs available to residents, and examine the reduction of local barriers to housing development as a long-term strategy to address housing within the community.

Objective: Strengthen Town Resources to Address Local Housing Issues

Cheshire will form a local housing organization, strategic partnerships with other organizations dealing with housing, and develop its capacity to take on housing as a critical issue.

Action: Research and form a local housing organization, such as a committee to focus on Cheshire housing items. Ensure committee members have access to training and information-sharing opportunities.

Action: Form partnerships with local housing organizations, such as Habitat for Humanity, Community Land Trust of the Southern Berkshires, Berkshire Housing, Construct Inc., developers, and others.

Action: Form partnerships with local realtors, banks, and landlords to assess local housing needs.

Action: Continue ongoing work to apply for CDBG (Community Development Block Grant) funds. Utilize potential CDBG funds to rehabilitate existing housing for low- to moderate-income residents and plan and implement other projects throughout the community. Reapply for CDBG funds in subsequent years.

Action: Develop a comprehensive program to address poor quality properties that degrade the community.

Action: Utilize volunteers to assess homes of seniors in Cheshire to address possible aging-in-place renovations or upgrades.

Objective: Increase Resident Awareness of Housing Programs and Incentives.

Cheshire will educate residents about housing incentives and other programs.

Action: Host a first time homebuyer's class in town and encourage renters, students, and young families to attend.

Action: Research and advertise housing purchase and rehabilitation incentives and programs on the town website. Some examples of these include Federal Housing Administration (FHA) incentives, Veteran's Administration grants for disabled individuals, and others.

Objective: Reduce Barriers to Housing Development

Cheshire will review many aspects of its existing zoning to determine if there are local barriers to housing development and determine if they can be reduced.

Action: Review minimum lot size and setback requirements for residential use in the residential zoning district to assess whether changes could promote housing development.

Action: Research and pursue adoption of an accessory dwelling unit (mother-in-law apartment) zoning bylaw.

Action: Review zoning bylaws pertaining to multi-family dwellings in town. Consider allowing development (either new or conversion of existing structures) of 2-3 unit dwellings in the Business and Residential districts by-right. If pursued, establish appropriate development standards (height, maximum lot coverage, screening, etc.) for multi-family dwellings.

Action: Research and evaluate the appropriateness of common driveway and rear lot development bylaws.

Action: Research and evaluate the appropriateness of an Open Space Residential Design bylaw.

Action: Research and evaluate the appropriateness of zoning changes to allow for Cohousing.

Objective: Develop a Long-Term Strategy to Address Housing Within the Community

Cheshire will develop a long-term strategy to address housing in the community, particularly for seniors and young families, by developing a Housing Needs Assessment and Action Plan.

Action: Develop a Housing Needs Assessment and Housing Action Plan.

Action: Examine options to address senior housing (including allowing for home health aides) and housing for young families.

REFERENCES

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US Dept. of Housing and Urban Development. 2016. Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) Data Tool. Available from: https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/cp.html.

CHAPTER 7: TRANSPORTATION

VISION

Cheshire will provide a well-maintained road network and transportation system, where residents of all ages and abilities can move safely and efficiently—whether by driving, biking, walking, or public transit.

TRENDS AND CONDITIONS

Road Jurisdiction and Maintenance

*For mapped road jurisdiction, please see **Map 3—Road Jurisdiction** in Appendix A.*

Road maintenance is performed by several entities within the Town of Cheshire, including state, municipal, and private organizations who have jurisdiction over different roads within the community. State entities, including the Mass. Dept. of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and the Mass. Dept. of Transportation (MassDOT), are responsible for maintaining 18.2% of all road miles in the town, including Route 8 and several roads on the Mt. Greylock Reservation (see **Table 7.1**). Private entities, such as individual homeowners or a homeowners' association, are responsible for just under five total miles of roadway, or about 7.8% of all road miles in Cheshire. Roads around the Pine Valley Mobile Home Park are an example of privately maintained roads. However, the majority of roads within the town are the responsibility of the Cheshire Highway Dept. The town has jurisdiction over 46 miles of roadway or around 73.9% of all roads within the municipality.

Table 7.1 - Road Maintenance Demand by Entity

Source: Mass. GIS MassDOT Roads 2015 and Town of Cheshire Highway Dept.

Maintenance Responsibility	Road Miles	% of Total
DCR	3.94	**6.2%**
MassDOT	7.61	**12.0%**
Town of Cheshire	46.73	**73.9%**
Private	4.93	**7.8%**
Total	**63.21**	**100.0%**

TRANSPORTATION AT A GLANCE

Roads and Bridges

The Cheshire Highway Department is responsible for maintaining approximately 47 miles of roadway and 10 bridges.

Ashuwillticook Trail

The Ashuwillticook Rail Trail is a shared-use path located on a former rail line. The trail travels between Lanesborough and Adams, passing along the shore of Cheshire Lake.

Public Transit

Public transportation is provided by the Berkshire Regional Transit Authority, which has a fixed route bus service that runs through town. The Council on Aging also operates a van that is available for use by seniors.

Municipal Equipment Needs

Based on a recent 1Berkshires article, Cheshire is in need of new equipment for the Highway Dept. While the town had been prudent about regular equipment replacement, recent budget cuts forced the town to delay any new purchases. At a Select Board meeting, the Highway Superintendent recommended the replacement of the town's oldest truck, as well as a new loader. However, while these items were cited as the town's most immediate needs, the article noted that other equipment is also in need of replacement (Guerino, DPW Equipment 2017).

Regional Roadways

Two major regional roadways serve Cheshire. The first is Route 8, which runs north to south through the community, roughly following the line of the Hoosic River through the town's central valley. Route 8 runs through the entire length of Berkshire county, from the Connecticut state line at Sandisfield, north to Clarksburg, and ending at the Vermont state line. Route 8 is maintained by MassDOT. The second regional roadway is Route 116. Route 116 begins near Springfield, MA and travels north and then northwest through Western Massachusetts. In Cheshire, the roadway passes through the northeast corner of the town. The roadway ends where it intersects Route 8 in the nearby Town of Adams. Although Route 116 is a numbered state route, it is maintained by the Town of Cheshire.

Route 116 Scenic Byway

Route 116 is a federally designated Scenic Byway. The Scenic Byway program was established in the early 1990s and provided grant funding to help promote tourism and economic development for less travelled roadways across the nation. The program was established to protect roads that have one of six "intrinsic qualities": archeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational, and scenic. While the Scenic Byway program provided transportation funding for many years, it is currently unfunded. However, the Scenic Byway designation along roadways remains.

Senior and Disabled Transportation

Specialized transportation services for seniors and disabled persons in Cheshire are provided by the Pittsfield-based Berkshire Regional Transit Authority (BRTA) Paratransit, which also offers a door-to-door chair-car (van with a wheelchair lift) service.

Senior transportation services are also available through the Cheshire Council on Aging (COA), which uses its own van. Those wishing to use the van must make an appointment with the COA.

Public Transit

Fixed route bus service is available in Cheshire through the BRTA. The route travels between Pittsfield and North Adams. In Cheshire, bus service is found along Route 8 and includes stops at the Farnum's Road intersection near the Cheshire Hills development neighborhood, as well as near Adams Community Bank, where there is a dedicated bus shelter available. However, riders may flag down the bus anywhere along its route, and bus drivers will stop in safe locations to discharge passengers.

Nonmotorized Transportation

Complete Streets

"Complete Streets" is a transportation concept that examines the design of roadways to enable safe access for all users, regardless of age, ability, or mode of transportation (automobile, bicycle, public transit, or on foot). Complete Streets is not a "one size fits all" solution, but rather a kit of parts and possible solutions that can be applied to any street or roadway. Complete Streets also connects with issues of public health by improving safety for all roadway users and encouraging exercise through walking and cycling.

MassDOT recently created a new transportation funding incentive program intended to spur Complete Streets transportation projects at the local level. The program has three tiers. At Tier 1, municipalities were required to attend a training session and develop a Complete Streets policy affirming their commitment to incorporating complete streets principles into future roadway projects. At Tier 2, municipalities were

required to develop a prioritization plan of projects, and at Tier 3, a list of projects must be submitted to compete for construction funding.

To participate in the program, the town of Cheshire developed a municipal Complete Streets policy that was adopted by the Select Board on April 12, 2016.

Pedestrian Travel

A small sidewalk network serves much of the Cheshire Village area as well as along Route 8, and is available as part of the Ashuwillticook shared use path described below.

Bicycle Travel

Cycling is available on all existing roadways as well as the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail. There are no dedicated on-street facilities in Cheshire—cyclists must utilize available road shoulder on all roadways.

Ashuwillticook Rail Trail

The Ashuwillticook Rail Trail is a shared-use path that travels between Lanesborough, Cheshire, and Adams for roughly 12 miles and was constructed in the early 2000s. The trail is ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) accessible and open to pedestrians and cyclists. The trail runs parallel to Route 8 along the eastern shore of Cheshire Lake. North of the lake, the trail passes through the center of Cheshire Village near the DPW building as it continues toward its terminus in Adams.

Plans are underway to extend the Ashuwillticook from its starting point in Lanesborough south to Crane Avenue in Pittsfield. Additionally, the trail will be extended north to Lime St. in Adams, and again in a separate project, to Hodges Cross Rd. in North Adams. These extension projects will lengthen the trail by around 4.5 miles. Yet another shared-use path project will begin in Williamstown and extend eastward along Route 2 toward North Adams.

The Lime St. section of the extension is currently under construction, and the mile-long section will be open for nonmotorists in 2017, while the extension from Lime St. to Hodges Cross Rd. is still being designed. Construction is anticipated to be funded during the fiscal year 2020. The extension of the trail south to Crane Ave. in Pittsfield is also currently being designed. Funding is expected in fiscal year 2018. Plans for a bike path extending east from Williams-town are also expected to be funded in fiscal year 2018.

The overall goal of these projects is that the northward and eastward extensions will eventually meet in North Adams, where the path will travel through the center of the city. While achievement of this vision is many years away, these completed projects will create a continuous shared-use path that is over 20 miles in length.

Bridges

Bridge data is maintained by the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) National Bridge Inventory (NBI) and includes bridges that have a span of at least 20 feet. MassDOT then catalogs smaller bridges, which are between 10 and 20 feet in length. Data from the inventory indicates sixteen bridges in Cheshire, with 13 of these bridges catalogued by the NBI and three listed as short span bridges catalogued by MassDOT. Of all the bridges in Cheshire, MassDOT is responsible for maintenance of six of the 16 bridges, while the town is responsible for the remaining ten (see **Table 7.2**).

In 2015, MassDOT closed a bridge on Sand Mill Rd. (over Dry Brook) due to structural deficiencies, forcing some residents to take up to a 4-mile detour to get to their homes. The town funded design and construction to repair the bridge using its Chapter 90 allotment and issued a notice to proceed for the contractor to begin work in January of 2017 (Guerino, Sand Mill Bridge 2017).

Thankfully, no other bridges in the community are listed as structurally deficient. However, one bridge (O3H, also on Sand Mill Rd.) is listed as functionally obsolete. A functionally obsolete bridge is "no longer by design functionally adequate for its task" (FHWA 2015) and may not have any structural deficiencies. As an example, functionally obsolete bridges may be too narrow and cause traffic congestion or may have inadequate clearance for larger vehicles. Notes from

Table 7.2 — Bridges in Cheshire, MA									
Source: MassDOT Bridges 2016									
Bridge ID #	Structure Length (meters)	Bridge Owner	Structurally Deficient?	Posted	Structure Category	Bridge Inspection Date	Over	Under	Deficiency
00L	13.2	MUN	NO	Open	Bridge (NBI)	10/6/2015	HWY CHURCH ST	WATER HOOSIC RIVER	
00M	8.5	MUN	NO	Open	Bridge (NBI)	3/2/2015	HWY WELLS RD	WATER SOUTH BROOK	
AV3	6.5	MUN	NO	Open	Bridge (NBI)	3/4/2015	HWY WINDSOR RD	WATER DRY BROOK	
0BN	16.2	DOT	NO	Open	Bridge (NBI)	11/16/2015	ST 8 SOUTH ST	WATER HOOSIC RIVER	
0BP	9.4	DOT	NO	Open	Bridge (NBI)	11/16/2015	ST 8 SOUTH ST	WATER KITCHEN	
53X	9.2	MUN	NO	Open	Bridge (NBI)	3/27/2015	HWY NOTCH RD	WATER SOUTH BROOK	
0CU	12	DOT	NO	Open	Bridge (NBI)	2/2/2016	ST116 SAVOY RD	WATER DRY BROOK	
0CV	18.3	DOT	NO	Open	Bridge (NBI)	2/2/2016	ST116 SAVOY RD	WATER DRY BROOK	
5WE	21	MUN	NO	Open	Bridge (NBI)	5/1/2015	HWY HARBOR RD	WATER HOOSIC RIVER	
03G	14.6	MUN	YES	Closed	Bridge (NBI)	7/14/2016	HWY SAND MILL RD	WATER DRY BROOK	
03H	13	MUN	NO	Open	Bridge (NBI)	7/18/2016	HWY SAND MILL RD	WATER DRY BROOK	FO
03J	12.5	MUN	NO	Open	Bridge (NBI)	3/2/2015	HWY E MAIN ST	WATER SOUTH BROOK	
03L	11.3	MUN	NO	Open	Bridge (NBI)	7/18/2016	HWY NOTCH RD	WATER SOUTH BROOK	
4Y1	5.9	MUN	UNKNOWN	Open	Short Span Bridge	NO CURRENT INSPECTION	HWY SAND MILL RD		
4Y2	5.2	DOT	NO	Open	Short Span Bridge	3/18/2015	ST 8 SOUTH ST		
4Y3	4.6	DOT	NO	Open	Short Span Bridge	3/18/2015	ST 8 NORTH ST		

this bridge's inventory record indicate that guardrails, railings, and transitions for bridge 03H "do not currently meet acceptable standards."

MassDOT requires that all bridges be inspected at regular intervals not to exceed 24 months. Bridges with diminishing structural ratings may be inspected at shorter intervals. MassDOT regularly notifies municipalities of bridge inspections it conducts and provides them with copies of inspection reports.

Crashes and Accidents

MassDOT collects data on crashes involving motor vehicles from state and local Police reports. Data from the three-year period between 2012 and 2014 reveals patterns about traffic crashes within the town. Over the three-year period, there were 205 reported crashes in Cheshire. Luckily, none of these crashes involved fatalities. However, around 64% of the crashes involved property damage and roughly 29% involved non-fatal injuries.

Table 7.3—Traffic Accidents in Cheshire, MA					
Source: MassDOT 2012-2014 Crash Data					
CRASHES BY TYPE	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**		**NOTES**
Total Crashes	71	75	59		
Fatality	0	0	0		
Non-fatal Injury	19	25	16		
PDO	42	48	42		
Not reported	10	2	1		
DAY OF WEEK	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**		**NOTES**
Sunday	11	7	6		
Monday	10	6	6		
Tuesday	8	17	12		
Wednesday	10	11	5		
Thursday	12	10	9		
Friday	11	9	11		
Saturday	9	15	10		
TIME OF DAY	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**		**NOTES**
4 AM - 10 AM	16	19	12		
10 AM -4 PM	25	25	19		
4 PM - 10 PM	19	23	18		
10 PM - 4 AM	11	8	10		
WEATHER	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**		**NOTES**
Clear	48	34	29		54% Clear
Clear/Other		2			
Cloudy	7	14	7		
Cloudy/Severe Crosswinds	1				
Cloudy/Fog		1	1		
Cloudy/Rain	1	2	1		
Cloudy/Snow/Sleet	1	1	1		
Rain	4	2	4		
Snow/Ice	4	12	10		
Other/Not Reported	5	7	6		
ROAD SURFACE	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**		**NOTES**
Dry	49	43	39		64% dry
Wet	8	14	7		
Ice	4	9	2		
Snow/Slush	6	6	10		
Sand/Dirt/Mud	3	1	1		
Not Reported	1	2			
MONTH	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**		**NOTES**
January	12	9	10		High winter months; low summer
February	3	3	10		
March	3	2	6		
April	3	7	1		
May	9	6	7		
June	8	7	2		
July	6	5	2		
August	2	3	3		
September	8	3	2		
October	4	11	4		
November	8	13	7		
December	5	6	5		
COLLISION TYPE	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**		**NOTES**
Angle	4	7	3		54% Single Vehicle Crash
Head-on	2	5	2		
Not Reported	1	1	2		
Rear-end	21	19	14		
Rear-to-rear	1	0			
Sideswipe	5	4	3		
Single Vehicle Crash	37	39	35		

Details on the remaining crashes (around 7%) were not reported (see **Table 7.3**).

The majority of crashes (over 50%) involved only one vehicle, occurred on clear days, and on primarily dry roads. Over the three year data period, the number of crashes increased during the winter months, as might be expected in New England.

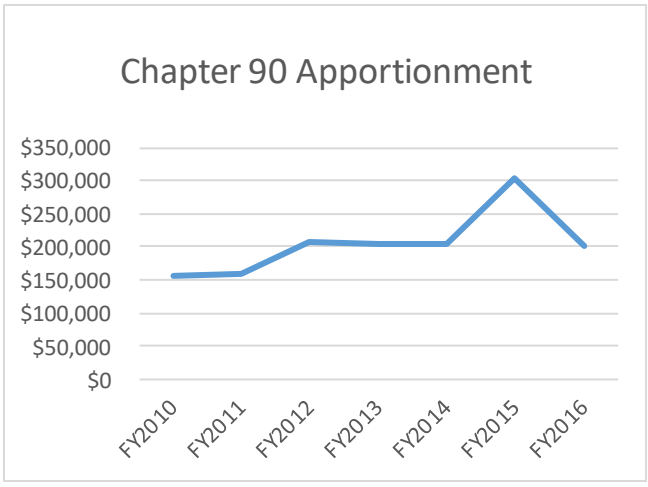
MassDOT utilizes latitude and longitude collected at each crash to map locations and determine if crash clusters emerge. Crash clusters are locations where two or more crashes occur within a 25 meter area. These data are useful for determining the locations of dangerous intersections or other hazardous segments of roadway. While there were over 200 crashes reported in Cheshire, none occurred close enough to trigger designation as a crash cluster. Nevertheless, by mapping crash locations, it is clear that the vast majority of reported crashes occur along Route 8. For crash locations, please refer to **Map 3a—Accidents** in Appendix A.

Transportation Funding

Federal Funding

In Massachusetts, towns may nominate potential road repairs and improvements to their Regional Planning Agencies as part of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). This program helps to allocate federal funding towards eligible transportation projects. Cheshire may nominate projects to the TIP program administered through the Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) which is staffed by employees of Berkshire Regional Planning Commission. Only roadways designated as "arterial" or "collector" are eligible for funding through the TIP. This means that the only locally maintained roadways that are federal-aid eligible are Old Cheshire Rd./ Lanesboro Rd, Church St/Main St./Wells Rd. and the portion of Route 116 that passes through town. Additionally, the town has a representative that serves on the regional Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC). This advisory committee helps to prioritize projects nominated to be included in the TIP for funding.

Figure 7.1—Chapter 90 Apportionment in Cheshire MA



State Funding—Chapter 90

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts provides roadway funding to municipalities through its Chapter 90 reimbursement program. This program provides funding for roadway projects not eligible for the TIP and is allocated based on a funding formula. The Chapter 90 funding formula utilizes three variables: local road mileage (58.33%) as certified by MassDOT, local employment level (20.83 %) derived by the Department of Labor and Workforce Development, and population estimates (20.83%) from the US Census Bureau.

As a reimbursement program, the town must fully fund any roadway project before it can be compensated by state funding. Yearly Chapter 90 funding for Cheshire is around $200,000 (see **Figure 7.1**). In FY2015, Governor Charlie Baker authorized the release of additional Chapter 90 funds to municipalities, which increased Cheshire's funding level for that fiscal year by around $100,000.

Local Funding

According to the 2015 Town of Cheshire Annual Report, the town expended approximately $247,000 on Highway Department administration costs, including salaries, vacation and fringe benefits, as well as dues and meetings. The town also expended

roughly another $257,000 on highway maintenance, including repair, asphalt, engineering services, as well as equipment purchase and rental. Other highway related expenses in the town budget report were approximately $113,000 for tools, gas and oil, and $172,000 for snow and ice removal during this year.

Transportation and the Environment

Climate Change Adaptation, Wildlife Passage, and Stream Crossings

In Massachusetts and New England, climate change is expected to increase the frequency of storms and the amount of precipitation. Since 1970, annual temperatures in New England have increased by 2° Fahrenheit (F) and winter temperatures have increased 4°F. Regionally, most winter precipitation now falls as rain, not snow (US EPA 2015). Existing roadway infrastructure, such as culverts and bridges, may be undersized and unable to accommodate the greater amount of water anticipated with climate change, leading to a higher likelihood of damage requiring costly replacement.

Simple climate adaptation measures could take the form of increasing the size of culverts and bridges during replacement. Additionally, the amount of gravel or stone armoring around these pieces of infrastructure can be increased to help reduce scour and erosion caused by larger and more frequent storms. Towns should consider their road infrastructure as one of the key ways to adapt to future climate change—and proactive planning to address this infrastructure as a long-term way to reduce risk from possible damage and minimize replacement costs.

Moreover, increasing the size of bridges and culverts during replacement can have other ecological benefits. In 2010, MassDOT updated their design guidance for bridges and culverts for wildlife passage at freshwater streams. This guidance requires municipalities to meet updated standards for wildlife passage when constructing new bridges or culverts, or during the replacement of these structures. In general, replacement culverts and bridges must span the stream channel by 1.2 times the bankfull width, and must have a natural bottom substrate, among other requirements. New bridge or culvert installations must meet additional requirements, with “bridge” type culvert design, as opposed to pipe or arch type designs, being preferred. These guidelines were formulated to ensure that wildlife of all types can utilize the stream channel for movement and are not constricted by narrow culverts or “perched” culverts which fragment aquatic habitat.

Public Survey Results

The public survey that was distributed to support the master plan asked several transportation related questions. Survey respondents listed Depot St., Wells Rd., and Sand Mill Rd. as most important to improve. Moreover, respondents said that public transportation and road maintenance were the most important transportation issues in town.

Just under half of survey respondents (49%) that the condition of town roads was *satisfactory*, while another 42% said they were *poor*. Just over half (53%) of survey respondents said that public transportation in the community was *satisfactory*. When asked about the condition of sidewalks in the community, 57% of respondents said that they were *satisfactory*. When asked about public transportation services for the elderly and disabled, 45% of respondents said that they had *no opinion*, while 33% said they were *satisfactory*.

In response to improving or expanding town services, 41% of respondents said they *wished to keep public transportation the same*, while 28% said they wished to *expand the service* and another 28% said they *did not know* if the service should be expanded. When asked about public transportation for the elderly and disabled, 36% were in favor of *keeping existing services the same*, while another 37% said they *did not know* if service should be expanded or not. However, 66% of respondents were in favor of *improving the condition of town roads*.

KEY TRANSPORTATION ISSUES

General Road and Bridge Maintenance

Cheshire residents were generally in favor of increased road maintenance, and the Highway Dept. acknowledged repair and maintenance needs for all town roadways. The town should develop a repaving and maintenance plan that will prioritize these efforts. The town should also provide preventive maintenance for bridges and monitor all bridge inspections to remain aware of needs for this critical infrastructure.

Participation in the Regional Transportation Planning Process

Cheshire should take full advantage of federal highway funding by examining needs for federal aid eligible roadways and funding design and engineering to reconstruct these roadways.

TRANSPORTATION GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND ACTIONS

Goal 1: Provide a Complete and Well-Maintained Transportation System that Safely Accommodates Vehicles, Pedestrians and Cyclists

Cheshire will provide a complete and well-maintained transportation system accommodating multiple user types. The town will accomplish this by collaborating at the regional level, planning for its roadway needs, and working toward improved non-motorized transportation and public transit.

Objective: Collaborate Regionally to Address Existing and Future Transportation Needs

The town will advocate for its transportation needs and collaborate with other communities as part of the regional transportation planning process.

Action: Collaborate with local, regional, and statewide partners to assess needs, evaluate funding opportunities, and construct projects that improve multi-modal transportation in and around Cheshire.
Action: Participate in all TAC (Transportation Advisory Committee) and MPO (Metropolitan Planning Organization) meetings, and engage in the regional transportation planning process.

Objective: Plan For and Address Existing and Future Roadway Needs

The town will integrate roadway needs into town-wide CIP, while exploring long-term projects for roadways eligible for federal funding. The town will also ensure continued investment in its highway department staff and local sources of funding to help address transportation projects.

Action: Develop a repaving and maintenance plan for all roadways within Cheshire that incorporated preventive measures as well as needed repairs. Integrate needs into a town-wide Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).

Action: Assess needs for federal-aid eligible roadways and invest in preliminary design and engineering for future reconstruction.

Action: Ensure training and professional development opportunities for Highway Dept. staff and leadership.

Action: Ensure Highway Dept. and town officials are aware of updates and revisions to the MassDOT Bridge Inspection Handbook. Ensure town officials are aware of and monitor all bridge inspections within the community.

Action: Ensure future culvert and bridge replacement projects protect environmental interests through, for instance, compliance with state wildlife passage standards. Ensure culverts are adequately sized to anticipate increases in precipitation associated with climate change.

Action: Maintain a strong working relationship with staff at MassDOT District 1.

Action: Identify and implement low-cost beautification options to add value to town transportation projects, such as landscaping.

Action: Continue investment in the town stabilization

fund and regularly utilize it to address transportation needs.

Action: Complete an inventory of town culverts and their maintenance needs.

Objective: Improve Nonmotorized Transportation and Transit Within Cheshire

The town will continue its work to address non-motorized transportation through continued participation in the MassDOT Complete Streets program. Moreover, the community will study options to improve public transportation, improve walking and biking, and slow traffic in key areas to make roadways safer.

Action: Continue participation in the MassDOT Complete Streets program. Develop a Tier 2 prioritization plan for future Complete Streets related improvements and apply for funding to implement these projects.

Action: Ensure annual road projects are reviewed for compliance with the town Complete Streets policy.

Action: Coordinate with surrounding communities on regional shared-use path projects.

Action: Design and implement a town wayfinding system.

Action: Maintain strong working relationship with staff at Berkshire Regional Transit Authority (BRTA).

Action: Study and implement options to make COA van service more flexible and convenient for seniors.

Action: Seek out ways to slow traffic down in key areas as way to improve traffic safety.

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CHAPTER 8: LAND USE

VISION

Cheshire's active village center provides space for residences, business, and civic life—nestled in rural, agricultural, and scenic surroundings. Appropriate regulation supports these uses and the town's economic development, recreation, and conservation goals.

TRENDS AND CONDITIONS

Location and Context

*For a map of Cheshire and surrounding towns see **Map 1—Regional Context** in Appendix A.*

The Town of Cheshire is around 27.53 mi² or 17,619 acres in size. The town is located in the northern half of Berkshire County, the westernmost county of Massachusetts. Cheshire is bordered to the east by the towns of Savoy and Windsor, to the south by Dalton, to the west by New Ashford and Lanesborough and to the north by Adams. The town is located more or less centrally between the two largest munici-palities in Berkshire County, the cities of Pittsfield and North Adams.

Land Use

State Aerial Photography Analysis

The state, via the University of Massachusetts Amherst's Resource Mapping—Land Information Systems Lab in the Department of Natural Resources Conservation, conducted an aerial photography analysis of land use in 1971, 1985, and 1999 (see **Table 8.1**). While the data is fairly dated at this point, the analysis still presents the best picture of the development footprint of Cheshire and how it changed over that 28 year period.

It is important to note that a similar land use inventory was conducted by the state in 2005. However, a change in methodology makes comparison of the 2005 data with the 1971-1999 data statistically impossible. Prior to 2005, land use data was derived manually, from analysis of aerial photography. After 2005, these processes became automated.

LAND USE AT A GLANCE

Current Land Uses
Cheshire is mostly forested, with remaining land used primarily for residences or agriculture.

Land Use Change
During the 70s, 80s and 90s, agricultural land use declined, while residential land use increased.

Cheshire Village
Cheshire Village is a residential, business, and civic center for the town. There are significant differences in the age and income of Cheshire Village residents compared to the rest of the town.

Table 8.1 - Land Use in Cheshire, MA 1971-1999						
Source: MassGIS Land Use 1971-1999						
	1971		1985		1999	
	Acres	%	Acres	%	Acres	%
Agriculture	3631.72	20.63%	3501.73	19.89%	3141.11	17.84%
Commercial	29.03	0.16%	29.03	0.16%	39.59	0.22%
Forest	11611.88	65.95%	11462.36	65.10%	11689.82	66.40%
Industrial	10.76	0.06%	15.83	0.09%	15.83	0.09%
Institutional	61.63	0.35%	90.03	0.51%	66.37	0.38%
Mining/Waste Disposal	102.82	0.58%	107.28	0.61%	69.11	0.39%
Recreation	30.10	0.17%	30.10	0.17%	30.10	0.17%
Residential	895.85	5.09%	1118.99	6.36%	1288.48	7.32%
Transportation	0.00	0.00%	9.35	0.05%	9.35	0.05%
Vacant	536.70	3.05%	545.78	3.10%	555.67	3.16%
Water	407.09	2.31%	407.09	2.31%	412.15	2.34%
Wetland	288.44	1.64%	288.44	1.64%	288.44	1.64%
Total	17606.01	100.00%	17606.01	100.00%	17606.01	100.00%

Additionally, the state began to integrate existing data sets into its analysis. Land use from 1971-1999 as well as the 2005 analysis have been included in this report. However, these data sets should not be compared in such a way to determine land use trends between 1999-2005. For example, 1999 land use data indicates 288 acres of wetland, while 2005 data indicates 323 acres of wetland. In reality, those additional wetland acres always existed within Cheshire, but were previously classified as agriculture, vacant, or forest land. In 2005, wetland extents determined from on-the-ground field work were integrated into land use data. Previously, wetland extents were mapped from aerial photography, which made the determination of wetland areas, particularly forested ones, difficult.

Land Use Change 1971-1999

*For a table of land use change from 1971 to 1999, see **Table 8.1**.*

Between 1971 and 1999, residential acreage increased the most in Cheshire. Residential acreage increased by 393 acres, from 895 acres in 1971 to 1288 acres in 1999. Concurrently, the land devoted to agriculture decreased in town by 490 acres, from 3631 acres in 1971 to 3141 acres in 1999.

Other categories that saw increases during this 28 year time period include commercial acreage, forest land, industrial and institutional lands, vacant land, land used for transportation, as well as water. Other land use categories that decreased during this time period include mining and waste disposal land use, which decreased by approximately 70 acres.

Current Land Use (2005)

*For a table of current land use, based on 2005 data, see **Table 8.2**.*

*For a map of current land use, see **Map 4—Current Land Use**.*

The most recent land use data from 2005 for the Town of Cheshire reveals no major differences from the big

picture of land use created by data from 1971 and 1999. While available land use data from 2005 should not be compared with earlier data to determine trends, it does provide the most recent "snapshot" of land use within Cheshire. Cheshire is mostly forested, with over 70% of the town classified as forest land. Beyond forest land, agricultural and residential lands have the most acreage in the community, occupying around 12% and 7% of land in the town respectively.

Most agricultural acreage in Cheshire is located in the eastern portion of town, although there are smaller clusters of agricultural land on West Mountain Rd., Outlook Ave., Route 8, as well as Ingalls and Brough roads.

Developed land in Cheshire is located primarily along the Route 8 corridor and in Cheshire Village centered around Church St.

Existing Zoning

*For a map of current zoning districts, please see **Map 5—Zoning** in Appendix A.*

Cheshire has three zoning districts, an Agricultural Residential district (A-R), a Residential district (R-1) and a Business (B) district. Minimum lot size and frontage requirements as well as other dimensional requirements in each zoning district are shown in **Table 8.3**.

Floodplain Overlay District

The purpose of the floodplain overlay district is to preserve public health and safety, protect the town water supply and its recharge areas, and provide for natural flood storage to protect people against flood inundation.

Table 8.2 - 2005 Land Use in Cheshire, MA

Source: MassGIS Land Use 2005

	2005	
	Acres	%
Agriculture	2184.58	12.41%
Commercial	46.50	0.26%
Forest	12428.21	70.60%
Industrial	26.61	0.15%
Institutional*	49.06	0.28%
Mining/Waste Disposal	84.43	0.48%
Recreation	31.16	0.18%
Residential	1247.92	7.09%
Transportation	7.36	0.04%
Vacant**	709.67	4.03%
Water	464.58	2.64%
Wetland***	323.06	1.84%
Total	17603.13	100.00%

*Institutional category includes town owned facilities and cemeteries.
**Vacant category includes abandoned agriculture, areas like power lines and areas of no vegetation, as well as brushland and successional environments not dense enough to be classified as forest.
***Wetland category includes both forested and non-forested wetlands.

Water Supply Protection District

The purpose of the water supply protection district is "to promote the health, safety, and welfare of the community by protecting, conserving, and maintaining the quality and safe yield of the town's public water supply resources from detrimental land uses and activities."

Table 8.3 - Zoning in Cheshire, MA

Source: Town of Cheshire 2016

Zone	Description	Minimum Lot Size	Minimum Frontage	Maximum Building Coverage	Stories
R-1	Residential	60,000 sq ft	200	25	3
A-R	Agricultural-Residential	60,000 sq ft	200	20	3
B	Business	60,000 sq ft	200	25	3

The location of the water supply protection district corresponds with the Zone I and II areas that are further explained in Chapter 4—Infrastructure. Zone I and II protection areas are approved by the Mass. Dept. of Environmental Protection (DEP). Zone I areas consist of areas around existing drinking water wellheads where certain uses, such as landfills, dumping, or removal of soil, are restricted. Zone II areas consist of the primary recharge area for the aquifer. In Cheshire, this area includes much of the village and roughly lies between North St., Wells Rd., and Harbor Rd. Extension.

Wireless Telecommunication Facilities

The purpose of special regulations surrounding wireless telecommunication facilities is "to mitigate the impacts of towers and wireless telecommunication facilities in order to preserve the character and appearance of the town; to protect the scenic, historic, environmental, natural, and man-made resources of the town; and to protect property values, while providing for the responsible use of wireless technologies."

This section of the bylaw establishes standards for the siting of wireless telecommunication towers. Wireless telecommunication facilities may be located in any zoning district through a special permit granted by the Cheshire Planning Board.

Wind Energy Facilities

The Cheshire Zoning bylaw regulates both large and small wind energy facilities. As outlined in the large wind energy section of the town bylaw, the purpose is "to encourage the responsible development of the town's wind energy resources by providing standards for the design, placement, construction, monitoring, modification and removal of large wind energy facilities that address public health and safety, minimize impacts on scenic, natural and historic resources of the town and provide adequate financial assurances for decommissioning."

The wind energy section of the bylaw establishes standards for the siting of these facilities. Large wind energy facilities are permitted in the Agricultural Residential District and small wind energy facilities in any zoning district through a special permit granted by the Planning Board.

Table 8.4 - Development Trend in Cheshire, MA

Source: Cheshire Town Assessor 2012

Year Built	# of buildings
Pre-1900	237
1901-1950	198
1951-1975	417
Post 1975	493

Solar Photovoltaic Installations

The purpose of the solar photovoltaic portion of the town bylaw is to "provide a permitting process for solar photovoltaic installations so that they may be utilized in a cost-effective, efficient, and timely manner to increase the use of distributed generation; to integrate these installations into the community in a manner that minimizes their impacts on the character of neighborhoods, on property values, and on the scenic, historic, and environmental resources of the town; and to protect health and safety, while allowing solar photovoltaic technologies to be utilized."

Large scale solar photovoltaic installations are permitted in any zoning district through a special permit granted by the Planning Board. Small scale solar photovoltaic installations are allowed as a primary use or as an accessory use in all zoning districts.

Development Trends

*For a map of buildings in Cheshire by construction date, see **Map 6—Development Trend** in Appendix A.*

*For a table of the number of buildings categorized by construction date, see **Table 8.4**.*

Available data from the Town Assessor showing the construction date of buildings allows for a picture of development trends to emerge, but does not capture earlier structures that may have existed on a given parcel and been replaced. This data is based on the assessor's 2012 information.

Most of the earliest buildings constructed in Cheshire are clustered in Cheshire Village; however, many of the town's oldest structures are also spread through much of the town. Assessor's data shows 237 structures built prior to 1900. Between 1900 and 1950, 198 buildings were constructed. Many of these are found in Cheshire Village; however, they also include development along many of the town's existing roadways. During this period, development along the western shore of Cheshire Lake began.

Between 1950 and 1975, development in Cheshire accelerated, with 417 buildings constructed in this 25 year period. Much of this development occurred outside the Cheshire Village area. Development during this period includes structures built along existing roadways. There are also significant subdivision clusters in the Pine Valley Mobile Home Park on Wells Rd., and the intersection of Route 116 and Sand Mill Rd. Subdivisions are also found on Richardson St. and Meadowview Dr., on Daniels Terrace, at the Cheshire Hills subdivision, and near Crest Dr. and Arnold Ct.

After 1975 and until the most recent data of 2012, 493 buildings were constructed in Cheshire. The vast majority of these structures were constructed outside the Cheshire Village area. Notable areas of development include the Cheshire Hills subdivision, near the intersection of Curran and West Mountain Road, along the western shore of Cheshire Lake, and along Outlook Ave. and Stafford Hill Rd.

Cheshire CDP

A CDP, or Census Designated Place, is a population concentration identified by the US Census Bureau for statistical purposes. CDPs are often villages or neighborhoods within a larger municipality that have been identified by the Census and statistics relating to them are prepared separately, allowing for comparison with the larger community. In Cheshire, the population concentration in the village center—as compared to more dispersed settlement outside the village area—has led this area to be defined as a CDP.

The extents of the CDP can be seen in **Figure 8.1**. The CDP encompasses much of Church, Depot, Richmond,

Figure 8.1—Cheshire CDP Extents

Prospect, and Dean streets, among others. It also extends west of Route 8 and includes the Kitchen Brook Trailer Park. As Census statistics for the CDP area are generated separately from the rest of the town, this allows for comparisons between the CDP and the remainder of Cheshire. One important statistic to consider is income. Based on US Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) income data for FY2016, and derived from the 2006-2010 Census ACS, the Cheshire CDP has the highest percentage of low- to moderate-income individuals in the state. Of the 605 estimated individuals in the CDP area, 455, or 75%, have low to moderate income. Low income thresholds for these data are defined as 50% of median income for the area, and moderate income is defined as 80% of median income. In comparison, if you consider the entire town of Cheshire (including both the CDP and surrounding areas), only 43% of residents are classified as having low to moderate income.

Based on the 2009-2014 Census ACS, there are other important distinctions in population between the CDP and the rest of the community. ACS data shows that

the median age of a CDP resident is 29. However, when looking at the entire town, the median age of a resident is 47. The ACS data estimates that nearly 75% of the population of the CDP area (571 as of the 2009-2014 ACS) is under the age of 44, and 40% are aged 19 or younger. If only the area outside of the CDP is considered, 60% of the population is aged 45 or older.

As for housing characteristics, most housing within the CDP area (as with the rest of the town) is of the 1-unit detached type. The vast majority of the town's mobile home housing is located outside of the CDP area, in the Pine Valley Mobile Home Park on Dublin Rd. However, 56.9% of the estimated 218 housing units in the CDP area were constructed in 1939 or earlier, meaning they are nearly 80 years old or more. In comparison, only 12.5% of units outside the CDP were constructed in 1939 or earlier. Household size is also greater in the CDP. For owner-occupied housing units, occupancy was 3.55 individuals, whereas in looking at the entire town, average occupancy was 2.43 individuals. Moreover, there is a higher percentage of renter-occupied units in the CDP area than in the surrounding town.

Overall, these data point to substantial differences between the Cheshire CDP area and the surrounding town. These data indicate a primarily younger populace with lower income. These residents have larger households, and live in much older housing than the rest of Cheshire. Older housing stock may imply a range of potential challenges, including structural deficiencies, code compliance, other health and safety issues, or the need for energy efficiency and weatherization upgrades.

Future Development Potential

Future development potential in Cheshire is largely constrained, except as part of possible subdivision of larger lots within the A-R District. Within the business district located near the center of Cheshire, there is almost no remaining buildable land that is not already developed. There are three parcels that are large enough for subdivision between Route 8 and the lake/ Ashuwillticook Trail and one lot that is not large enough for subdivision, but is vacant and mostly unconstrained.

In addition to these areas, there is a lot that could be subdivided and developed near the gas station along Route 8. There is currently a house on the lot, but it is large enough to be subdivided and commercial developed, should the owner choose to do so.

There are a few other business districts scattered around town. The southernmost district area contains Green Acres Plaza. This lot is large enough to be subdivided, but would require redevelopment of the existing plaza to relocate the existing building.

Another business district area is located off of Hutchinson Lane. There are two lots near the corner of Hutchinson and Wilshire that have some current development, but could be further subdivided.

While this brief assessment considers only remaining undeveloped or underutilized lands, larger redevelopment projects of existing business and commercial uses are a possibility, but would require significantly more investment on the part of a potential developer.

As for residential development potential, there are about a dozen parcels that are not developed on the west side of Cheshire Lake. Almost all development potential in town is in the Agricultural-Residential (A-R) zone, with only a couple of isolated parcels in the other zones. The A-R zone provides the best opportunity for subdivision and Approval Not Required (ANR) subdivisions as it tends to contain larger lots.

In general, the developable areas are:

- East of Hutchinson development and Ingalls Rd.
- Between Lanesboro Rd. and West Mountain Rd.
- The Cheshire Harbor area in the northern part of town, which includes Fred Mason Rd. and parts of Outlook Ave.
- Wells Road area, from the town line to just south of East Harbor/Jenks Rd.
- Stewart White Rd.
- Sand Mill Road/Windsor Rd. /Stafford Hill Rd. area.
-

It should be noted that all of these areas have steep slopes as well as numerous streams/wetlands that will make any future development more difficult and costly.

Public Survey Results

The public survey asked several questions about land use and development. Respondents were asked to select statements that described their feelings regarding housing development in Cheshire. 34% of respondents selected "*development in the community is good for the economy, we should do everything we can to encourage it."* Another 31% of respondents selected a response that said *"this community is growing at an appropriate rate, we should keep it at the same rate it has been at."* Another 20% of respondents were unsure.

Another question asked respondents to rate the current level of control over several uses or resources including residential development, environmental resources, and commercial development. Responses were generally split between "*controls are at the right level"* and "*don't know/need more information.*"

KEY LAND USE ISSUES

Reinvigorating and Reactivating Cheshire Village Center

Cheshire's village center is home to residences, businesses, town hall, and other aspects of civic life. The area has many low- to moderate-income residents according to the latest ACS information. The town should explore ways to reactivate this area, expand housing opportunities for residents allow for business growth, and provide a space for civic engagement.

Protecting Rural Character

Cheshire Village is surrounded by scenic and rural areas beneath the Commonwealth's highest peak—Mt. Greylock. The town should explore mechanisms to protect its rural character and small-town look and feel. The town should explore an updated and strengthened sign bylaw, enhanced commercial design requirements, as well as other land use protections, such as the Berkshire Scenic Mountain Act.

LAND USE STRATEGIES AND RESOURCES

Berkshire Scenic Mountain Act

Where Would the Act Apply?

The Scenic Mountain Act is applied to predefined areas as selected by the town. At a minimum or default level, the act applies to areas over 1,800 feet in elevation. However, the town can tailor this to select the appropriate areas and elevation as it relates to watershed protection for the town.

How Does It Work?

The town designates a scenic mountains area, creating site design and development criteria that will apply to that area. These areas include upland areas that serve as watersheds for surface water bodies and also viewshed areas. The act enables the town to regulate such things as grading and tree removal to reduce the impact of runoff on surface waters.

What Does This Tool Accomplish?

This tool protects specific water resources of the town as well as views of the surrounding mountains and rural character.

LAND USE GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND ACTIONS

Goal 1: Reinvigorate Cheshire Village

Cheshire will reinvigorate its village center, by reexamining existing zoning for the area.

Objective: Ensure Zoning Requirements are Consistent with the Existing On-the-Ground Development or Conditions

Cheshire will evaluate the possibility of a separate zoning district around the village center to encourage creation of a vibrant commercial and residential center for the community.

Action: Evaluate the appropriateness of a separate zoning district encompassing the village center. Pursue if appropriate.

Goal 2: Advance Economic Opportunities in Town

Cheshire will evaluate the potential of expanding the business district in the community.

Objective: Expand Business Potential in the Community

Cheshire will evaluate the potential of expanding the business district in the community to encourage business growth and development.

Action: Evaluate the appropriateness of expansion of the business district within Town. Pursue if appropriate.

Goal 3: Maintain the Town's Rural Landscape and Small Town Character

Cheshire will strengthen safeguards to maintain the town's rural landscape and small town character that residents cherish.

Objective: Strengthen Safeguards to Protect Rural Character and Environments

Cheshire will evaluate the appropriateness of several safeguards to protect rural character and the environment, including design standards for commercial development, and an expanded Sign Bylaw. Moreover, the community will examine potential zoning changes to areas near Cheshire Lake, possible adoption of the Scenic Mountain Act, and strive toward compliance with EPA stormwater regulations.

Action: Develop design standards and a more comprehensive review process for future commercial development.

Action: Update the town's sign bylaw.

Action: Evaluate the appropriateness of separate dimensional requirements or a separate zoning district for residential development near Cheshire Lake. Pursue if appropriate.

Action: Evaluate the appropriateness of adopting the Berkshire Scenic Mountain Act to preserve ridgetops and minimize negative impacts on steep slopes. Pursue if appropriate.

Action: Collaborate regionally and coordinate with MassDOT to ensure compliance with the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) NPDES (National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System) MS4 (Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems) Permit.

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CHAPTER 9: NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Cheshire's abundant water resources, agricultural lands, wetlands, rare species and wildlife habitat, and other natural resources are cherished, actively used, and adequately protected by state and local regulations. Moreover, its rich historic and cultural resources—derived from the town's natural heritage—are recognized, preserved, and readily accessed.

TRENDS AND CONDITIONS

Topography and Landscape

Adapted from the 1991 Cheshire Open Space and Recreation Plan.

The topography of Cheshire is defined by two mountain ranges separated by the south to north flow of the Hoosic River. The rugged western borders touch the Mt. Greylock Reservation, with elevations of over 2580 feet above sea level at Rounds Rock, and traverse the steep ravines made by Kitchen Brook and Bassett Brook. To the east, amid open country and rolling hills (Woodchuck Hill, elevation 2168 feet, and Stafford Hill, elevation 1580 feet), spectacular views of Mt. Greylock and much of Cheshire Lake may be had. The Hoosic River flows north about 3.5 miles to the town line of Adams, with an overall drop of 34 feet. Along its fairly even descent, the river has formed floodplains and marshes, rich in diverse plant life and habitats rarely encountered in northern Berkshire County.

Soils and Geology

Adapted from the 1991 Cheshire Open Space and Recreation Plan.

Bedrock Geology

The Town of Cheshire is underlain with schists, quartzites, and gneisses in the upland, while the low lying valley is underlain with carbonate rock. These layers of metamorphic rock were formed as continental shelf deposits, which have been intensively deformed, folded, and thrust-faulted in two separate mountain building episodes. The more weather resistant rocks are found cropping out at higher elevations. The less resistant limestones have

NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES AT A GLANCE

Topography and Landscape
Cheshire's landscape is defined by two mountain ranges separated by the Hoosic River.

Cheshire Lake
Cheshire Lake is a shallow lake and the town's largest body of water. The lake is comprised of three bays separated by causeways.

Endangered Species
Over the years, 34 endangered, threatened, or special concern species have been spotted in Cheshire.

Cultural and Historic Resources
The state's database of historic buildings and areas lists over 150 separate historic resources in the community.

Additional tables related to natural and cultural resources may be found in Appendix C.

been eroded by glaciers and weathering, and are immediately apparent to visitors of Cheshire in the abandoned mines which operated in the area until the late 1960s.

The following is a brief description of the various rock types:

Gneissic Rocks-Hinsdale Gneiss
These rocks are found along the border with Dalton (southeast) and include quartzite gneiss, granite-biotite epidote schists, and quartz feldspar pegmatite. The outcroppings are underlain with Cheshire quartzite.

Schistose Rocks-Walloomsac Formation
These rocks form the steep western walls of the valley and consist of schistose marble and a quartz mica schist, which is black to dark gray.

Quartzite Rocks-Dalton Formation
Cheshire quartzite underlies most of the eastern section of town and is a pure white quartzite which weathers to yellow. It is generally about 800 feet thick and is highly resistant to weathering. As the softer dolomite bedrock has eroded away, particularly along fault lines below North Mountain, massive steep slopes of this quartzite have been exposed.

Carbonate Rocks
Kitchen Brook dolomite and Clarendon Springs dolomite, deposits of less resistant limestone, and some marble dolomite dominate the valley floor. Soils derived from these rocks are responsible in part for the rich diversity of the floodplain flora along the Hoosic River, east of Town Crest. These rocks are prone to excessive featuring and solution porosity and consequently are valuable as potential aquifers.

Surficial Geology

Much of the bedrock in the valley is overlain with glacial deposits of unconsolidated sediments. The higher elevations in Cheshire are covered with varying thicknesses (0-50 feet) of glacial till, a yellow-brown layer of sandy clay, pebbles and boulders. Towards Cheshire Lake and along the Hoosic River, however, the deposits of stratified sands and gravels range from 0-250 feet thick, some of which are overlain with recent deposits of flood plain and swamp sediments. The lake bed itself consists of about 250 feet of fine grained clays, deposited by glacial meltwater during the last ice age. The glacial lake was dammed at the southern end by ice contact deposits of gravels and sand just north of the intersection of Swamp Road and Route 8. These stratified deposits prevented a southerly flow and caused the drainage of the valley to flow north. The ice contact deposits merit attention because the most productive wells are found within the unconsolidated deposits, particularly where these layers of sand and gravel overlie limestone bedrock which recharges the gravel through upward leakage. These areas are almost all within the present residential areas of Cheshire or have great potential for being developed because of the proximity to Cheshire Lake and Route 8. Future planning in Cheshire should proceed with utmost caution to avoid threats of contamination to this abundant groundwater supply.

Soils

*For a map of general soil conditions, see **Map 7—Soils and Geologic Features** in Appendix A.*

Soil is the layer of mineral and organic material that covers the bedrock on the earth's crust and the surficial deposits. Soil characteristics depend upon the hardness and composition of the parent material as well as the shape of the land, the age of the soil, the content of the decomposing matter, and the climate. Generally, soils of higher elevations are thin and stony. Alluvial soils (deposits transported by streams) are often composed of particles which are sorted according to size, and many of these soils are fertile. Soils are described by several characteristics, each having different implications for agriculture, construction and other uses of the land. Some characteristics are: location, depth to bedrock, structure, depth to water, periodic flooding, permeability, natural fertility, and acidity, among other values. In these ways, soils influence which areas are suitable for specific uses. Thin soils on steep slopes erode easily and are not good for septic systems.

Wetland soils are important sponges which absorb water during heavy rains. Flood plain soils are generally very fertile and may be best used for agriculture.

In general terms, the soil associations in Cheshire are characteristic of most mountain valleys in New England, but specific sites must be confirmed with data from the U. S. Soil Conservation Service office in Pittsfield. The following presents a brief description of the major soil groups found in Cheshire.

Lyman-Peru-Marlow-Berkshire Association
These soils are usually located on hilly to steep slopes and are very rocky, strongly acidic, and shallow to bedrock. They may also include extremely stony, deep, well-drained soils with hardpan. Generally these soils are found from Hoosac Valley High School south along the eastern side of the town, including Stafford Hill, the Cobbles and Woodchuck Hill, as well as the western section of town bordering the Mt. Greylock Reservation.

Amenia-Stockbridge-Pittsfield
These soils include stony and non-stony, well-drained soils which are calcareous and may or may not have hardpan. They are generally located in a band below Cole Mt. and extending south through the Kitchen Brook and Pettibone Brook regions.

Copake-Winooski-Hero
These soils are basically level, moderately well-drained, calcareous, loamy, and gravelly soils on terraces and silty soils on floodplains. They can be found along the Hoosic River and around Cheshire Lake on both east and west banks.

Pittsfield-Amenia-Kendaia
These soils include those which are stony and non-stony, both well and poorly drained, calcareous, loamy soils without hardpans. The eastern floodplain of the Hoosic and ground rising on the Stafford Wildlife Management Area of Mt. Amos contains such soils.

Westminster-Marlow-Peru-Dark Subsoil
These soils are mostly hilly, rocky, shallow to bedrock which range from non-stony to extremely stony well-drained loamy soils with hardpans. Generally they can be found along the Savoy and Windsor town lines, from the headwaters of Dry Brook to those of McDonald Brook and South Brook.

Soils and Development Patterns

A majority of Cheshire is characterized by soils and slopes which severely limit activities which require on-lot septage disposal. There are, however, many specific locations within general areas of severe septic limitations where percolation may be acceptable. As is often the case, however, the areas of best drainage, (where one could most easily develop lots for housing from a waste disposal point of view), are also those areas most important to protect and shield from development and pollution. These are the aquifers around Cheshire Lake, where glacial gravel and sand allow not only rapid downward movement of septage, but also rapid upward movement of excellent water supplies.

In addition, many of the most easily developed areas of town are classified as prime farmland. So defined because of their characteristic soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields of crops economically; these soils include Amenia silt loam, Copake fine sandy loam, some Hero loam, and some Pittsfield loam. Their importance as a local and national resource cannot be overstressed as these exceptional lands can be farmed continuously without degrading the environment. They can produce the most food with the least energy expended and will respond very well to fertilizer and chemical applications with the least amount of leaching.

These prime farmlands occur in areas along the west and, to some degree, east shores of Cheshire Lake, as well as along Windsor, Notch, and West Mountain Roads. Most of the prime farmland, however, extends from Cheshire Lake north along Route 8 and encompasses the Village of Cheshire and Town Crest Village. In total there are around 3200 acres of mapped prime agricultural soils in Cheshire, or around 18% of all land in town.

Ecoregions and Forest Resources

Ecoregions are areas with similar climate, geology, and topography. Massachusetts is part of two large ecoregions, the Northeastern Highlands and the Northeastern Coastal Zone. These two ecoregions can be further divided into 13 subregions. The Town of Cheshire is located near the boundary of three of these subregions. As mapped, and for the purposes of display and simplification, ecoregions are generally shown with distinct boundaries. However "on the ground," they rarely have abrupt, delineated edges, and rather transition gradually into each other. As Cheshire is located near the intersection of three of these subregions, it likely has some characteristics of each.

Taconic Mountains

This subregion is dominated by Mt. Greylock, the highest point in the Commonwealth, and is the primary breeding location for several birds in the state. The forest of the Taconic Mountain subregion is mainly northern hardwood (Maple-Beech-Birch) with some Spruce and Fir at higher elevations.

Berkshire Highlands/Southern Green Mountains

This subregion has a relatively high elevation for Massachusetts, ranging from 1,000 to 2,500 feet or more, and is covered primarily with Spruce-Fir and northern hardwood forest types. This area is often referred to as the Berkshire Highlands and is an extension of the Green Mountains which originate in Vermont.

Western New England Marble Valleys/ Berkshire Valley/Housatonic and Hoosic Valley

This region is characterized by suburban and semiurban communities, agriculture, and both transition (Oak-Hickory) and northern hardwood forests, depending upon the latitude and elevation. The region is noted for its scenic and pastoral qualities.

Water Resources

*For mapped watershed boundaries, water bodies, and floodplains, refer to **Map 9—Water Resources.***

Table 9.1- Water Resources in Cheshire, MA

Source: Mass. GIS MassDEP List of Integrated Waters, 2012

Water Body	Acres	Impairment Status
Cheshire (Hoosic) Lake	582.74	Eurasian Water Milfoil, Non-Native Aquatic Plants, Aquatic Plants, Nutrient/Eutrophication Biological Indicators, Turbidity, Excess Algal Growth
Bassett Reservoir	0.96	
Gore (Lost, Cheshire) Pond		
Streams and Tributaries	**Miles**	**Impairment Status**
Kitchen Brook	21.26	
Thunder Brook	6.38	
Pettibone Brook	6.97	
Penniman Brook	3.49	
Hoosic River	8.07	Alteration in stream-side or littoral vegetative covers, physical substrate habitat alterations, ambient bioassays - Chronic aquatic toxicity, fecal coliform, temperature
Dry Brook	24.77	
McDonald Brook	9.94	
South Brook	11.08	
Collins Brook	3.72	
Gore Brook	4.04	

Table 9.2 - Wetland Resources in Cheshire, MA

Source: Mass. GIS MassDEP Wetlands, 2012

Wetland Type	Acres	% of wetlands
Deep Marsh	48.72	7.0%
Shallow Marsh Meadow Or Fen	73.84	10.6%
Shrub Swamp	214.21	30.7%
Wooded Swamp Coniferous	25.21	3.6%
Wooded Swamp Deciduous	284.45	40.8%
Wooded Swamp Mixed Trees	50.41	7.2%
Total	696.86	100.0% (3.9% of all land within Cheshire)

Table 9.3 - Threatened, Endangered and Special Concern Species Sighted in Cheshire, MA				
Source: Source: Mass DFG -Town Species Viewer, 2016				
Type	Species Name	Common Name	Status	Most Recent Sighting
Amphibian	Ambystoma jeffersonianum	Jefferson Salamander	SC	2013
Bird	Ammodramus henslowii	Henslow's Sparrow	E	Historic
Vascular Plant	Asplenium montanum	Mountain Spleenwort	E	1930
Vascular Plant	Blephilia hirsuta	Hairy Wood-mint	E	2007
Vascular Plant	Carex alopecoidea	Foxtail Sedge	T	1983
Vascular Plant	Carex baileyi	Bailey's Sedge	T	1999
Vascular Plant	Carex schweinitzii	Schweinitz's Sedge	E	2009
Vascular Plant	Carex trichocarpa	Hairy-fruited Sedge	SC	2009
Fish	Catostomus catostomus	Longnose Sucker	SC	2002
Vascular Plant	Eleocharis intermedia	Intermediate Spike-sedge	T	1986
Dragonfly/Damselfly	Enallagma carunculatum	Tule Bluet	SC	1973
Vascular Plant	Equisetum scirpoides	Dwarf Scouring-rush	SC	1916
Vascular Plant	Eragrostis frankii	Frank's Lovegrass	SC	1999
Vascular Plant	Eriophorum gracile	Slender Cottongrass	T	1911
Butterfly/Moth	Erora laeta	Early Hairstreak	T	1993
Bird	Falco peregrinus	Peregrine Falcon	E	1903
Vascular Plant	Galium boreale	Northern Bedstraw	E	2008
Vascular Plant	Galium labradoricum	Labrador Bedstraw	T	1921
Bird	Gallinula chloropus	Common Moorhen	SC	Historic
Reptile	Glyptemys insculpta	Wood Turtle	SC	2007
Bird	Haliaeetus leucocephalus	Bald Eagle	T	1976
Vascular Plant	Hydrophyllum canadense	Broad Waterleaf	E	1912
Vascular Plant	Milium effusum	Woodland Millet	T	2007
Vascular Plant	Moehringia macrophylla	Large-leaved Sandwort	E	2014
Mammal	Myotis lucifugus	Little Brown Myotis	E	2013
Mammal	Myotis septentrionalis	Northern Long-eared Bat	E	2001
Fish	Notropis bifrenatus	Bridle Shiner	SC	1981
Vascular Plant	Ophioglossum pusillum	Adder's-tongue Fern	T	1912
Bird	Oporornis philadelphia	Mourning Warbler	SC	2007
Bird	Podilymbus podiceps	Pied-billed Grebe	E	1900
Vascular Plant	Ranunculus pensylvanicus	Bristly Buttercup	SC	1915
Vascular Plant	Sisyrinchium mucronatum	Slender Blue-eyed Grass	E	1911
Vascular Plant	Solidago macrophylla	Large-leaved Goldenrod	T	2010
Vascular Plant	Symphyotrichum prenanthoides	Crooked-stem Aster	SC	2014
E=Endangered, T= Threatened, SC=Special Concern				

*For a list of all waterbodies, streams and tributaries along with impairment status, refer to **Table 9.1**.*

Watersheds

Cheshire is located, almost entirely, in the Hoosic River Watershed, and is moreover found at the headwaters of this river. The Hoosic River Watershed begins immediately south of the town, near the border of Pittsfield and Lanesborough (around the vicinity of the Berkshire Mall) and flows northwesterly through the towns of Cheshire, Adams, North Adams, and Williamstown. It then travels through Pownal, in southern Vermont, and enters Rensselaer County, New York. In New York State, the river passes through several towns before flowing into the Hudson River, where it flows south to the Atlantic Ocean near New York City.

Surface Waters

US EPA 303(d) List of Impaired Waters

The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) lists impaired waterways on its 303(d) list as part of the Clean Water Act. States must identify waters within their boundaries where current water quality standards are not being met and submit these to the EPA. For each waterbody on the list, the state is required to identify the pollutant causing impairment (if known) and develop a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL).

A TMDL is essentially a "pollution budget" that describes the maximum amount of pollutant a waterbody can receive while still meeting water quality standards. The TMDL serves as a planning tool and starting point for restoration and water quality protection projects that will eventually improve the quality of the waterbody. Once listed on the 303 (d) list, a waterbody remains on the list until a TMDL has been identified and the EPA approves it. It is then removed from the list, and the EPA tracks progress on measures intended to improve water quality.

In Cheshire, both the Hoosic River and Cheshire Lake are listed on the 303(d) as being impaired.

Rivers and Streams

Hoosic River

The Hoosic River is a 76 mile long tributary of the Hudson River. Around eight of these miles flow through Cheshire on the way to the Hudson River.

As mentioned previously, the Hoosic River, specifically the segment from the northern end of Cheshire Lake to the Adams Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP), is listed as an impaired waterway. Reasons for impairment are listed as alteration in stream-side or littoral vegetative covers, physical substrate habitat alterations, ambient bioassays which showed chronic aquatic toxicity, fecal coliform, and water temperature.

The first three reasons for impairment are not caused by pollutants, and so a TMDL is not required for these. However, addressing them may be part of larger strategies to improve water quality in the Hoosic River. Causes for the remaining impairment types were not identified.

Lakes and Ponds

Cheshire Lake/Reservoir or Hoosic Lake/Reservoir

Cheshire Lake is a manmade lake created for industrial purposes in the late 1800s. The lake is nearly 600 acres in size and is divided into three basins by two causeways. The south basin is fairly shallow, with depth of only a few feet in places. The middle basin has a maximum depth of around six feet and the north basin is nine feet at its deepest.

According to the EPA, the lake is listed as being impaired due to "Eurasian Water Milfoil (Myriophyllum spicatum), non-native aquatic plants, aquatic plants, nutrient/eutrophication, and biological indicators such as turbidity and excess algal growth." Weeds that have noted to cause issues in the lake include Vallisnaria americana , also known as "eelgrass" or "tape grass," Eurasian Water Milfoil (Myriophyllum spicatum), and Curly Leaf Pond Weed (Potamogeton crispus).

Cheshire Lake is one of a handful of waterbodies in the region where a special district has been formed to help

address management issues. For Cheshire Lake, this is the Hoosic Lake Recreation and Preservation District. Districts such as the one surrounding the lake are formed through a special act of the Massachusetts state legislature. They are entities independent of the municipality which have their own governance structure, bylaws, and can levy taxes on those within the district. In the case of Cheshire Lake, the district taxes residents who live along the shoreline. The district also helps to manage the lake and splits the costs of weed and vegetation management (through herbicide application) with the town. In 2016, the town and the district coordinated an application of herbicide to control weed growth and used a mechanical harvester to remove excess vegetation from the lake (Bush 2016).

Wetlands

Wetlands are defined as areas where water covers the soil or is present at or near the surface of the soil all or some of the year, including the growing season. Wetlands perform important functions for both humans and wildlife. They are the most productive ecosystems on the planet, measured by the amount of biomass or living biological tissue they help to produce. Wetlands serve as habitat for a wide variety of plant and animal species and often function as critical nursery and breeding areas.

Wetlands also provide functions for humans. The benefits to humans provided by wetlands and other natural environments are sometimes referred to as "ecosystem services." Valuable ecosystem services provided by wetlands include water purification, flood storage and control, and shoreline stabilization. Water speed and flow is greatly reduced in a wetland compared to the open water of a stream or river. This causes suspended sediments to fall out of the water column, thus enhancing downstream water quality. Wetlands also help to remove harmful pollutants, as well as nutrient pollution from water resources. During flooding, wetlands act as a "sponge" that helps to absorb excess water. Wetlands also help to reduce erosion by acting as a buffer that helps to protect the shorelines of rivers, lakes, and other bodies of water.

In Cheshire, there are several types of wetlands, outlined in **Table 9.2**. The most common type are wooded deciduous swamps and shrub swamps. The least common are wooded coniferous swamps. Most wetlands in Cheshire are located in a large complex surrounding the Hoosic River between Route 8 and Wells Rd. Other wetlands are scattered throughout the floor of the valley, along the edge of Cheshire Lake, and near Stafford Hill.

Vernal Pools

*For certified and potential vernal pool locations, please refer to **Map 11—Vegetation, Fisheries and Wildlife*** in Appendix A.

Vernal pools are a unique type of wetland and wildlife habitat, and are sometimes referred to as autumnal or ephemeral pools, or temporary woodland ponds. Vernal pools are shallow depressions that are seasonally flooded with water. They can vary greatly in size. During summer months, vernal pools are usually dry. However, spring snow melt and rain transform these areas into rich wildlife habitat. Vernal pools are protected by the Wetlands Protection Act. State law requires that vernal pools must be certified prior to gaining protected status and must be located within the resource (buffer) area of a documented wetland, meaning that isolated vernal pools, regardless of certification, have few protections. Towns wishing to extend WPA protections to vernal pools should consider implementing a local wetland bylaw.

Vernal pools are certified by the state Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP). Certification involves the documentation of the potential vernal pool's physical characteristics, including the lack of a permanently flowing outlet for water and evidence that the pool dries out during the year. Additionally, certification involves the documentation of wildlife species that commonly use vernal pools. While the NHESP uses aerial photography to help identify vernal pools, they also rely extensively on reporting of potential vernal pools from citizens and landowners.

Due to the fact that vernal pools dry partially or completely during the summer months, fish are prevented from permanently establishing themselves there. This makes vernal pools important breeding habitat for amphibian and invertebrate species that would otherwise face extensive predation from fish species. Species that rely on vernal pools for breeding habitat include amphibians (frogs, salamanders and toads), reptiles (turtles and snakes), as well as some invertebrate species, like dragonflies or fairy shrimp (NHESP 2015).

Within Cheshire, there are 10 certified vernal pools, and another 21 areas that have been identified as potential vernal pools, but have not been certified as such.

Rare Species and Wildlife Habitat

Endangered, threatened, and special concern species are protected by the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act (MESA). Endangered species are defined as "any species of plant or animal in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range." Threatened species are defined as "species of plant or animal likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future." Special concern species are defined as any species that "have suffered a decline that could threaten the species if allowed to continue unchecked or that occurs in such small numbers or with such a restricted distribution or specialized habitat requirements that it could easily become threatened." Under the MESA legislation, listed species are protected from any "taking," a broad term which seeks to prevent the killing, collecting, harassment of, or the destruction of the habitat of listed species, among other things.

In Cheshire, 34 endangered, threatened, or special concern species have been sighted, with two of these sightings occurring in historical records. For a list of these sightings, please refer to **Table 9.3**.

BioMap2

*For locations of BioMap2 components and natural communities, please refer to **Map 11—Vegetation, Fisheries and Wildlife**.*

BioMap2 is a statewide mapping project that combines 30 years of rare species and natural community data from the NHESP with wildlife species and habitat assessments that were conducted as part of the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife's 2005 State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP). Additionally, BioMap2 data integrates the Nature Conservancy's assessment of large, connected, and intact ecosystems across the state.

BioMap2 has two primary components, Core Habitat and Critical Natural Landscape. Core Habitat includes "areas that are critical for the long term persistence of rare species and other species of conservation concern." According to BioMap2, Core Habitat areas are located on the steep mountain ridges east and west of the town's central valley, and surrounding the Hoosic River and the large complex that surrounds it in the center of town. Other areas of Core Habitat are found in narrow fingers around several small streams and waterways in town including Pettibone and Kitchen Brook west of Route 8, as well as McDonald and Dry Brooks east of Route 8.

Critical Natural Landscape identifies large contiguous landscape blocks that have been minimally impacted by development. The BioMap2 report for the Town of Cheshire notes that "if protected, these areas will provide habitat for wide-ranging native species, support intact ecological processes, maintain connectivity among habitats, and enhance ecological resilience to natural and anthropogenic disturbances in a rapidly changing world." Critical Natural Landscape often includes crucial upland habitat that supports the long term integrity of core habitat areas. In Cheshire, Critical Natural Landscape is found surrounding and buffering core habitat areas outlined above.

Bird Sighting Data

E-Bird is a database for bird sightings that was created as a joint project between the Cornell University Laboratory of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society. Users can submit bird sighting data from around the world. Common areas for bird watching are listed as sighting "hot spots," and allow multiple users to organize their sightings geographically and to

create multi-year records of bird sightings for a given area.

Within Cheshire, there are several identified hot spots, including Ayr Hill Farm (43 species sighted), the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail (55 species sighted), Stafford Hill WMA (97 species sighted), and at five locations on Cheshire Lake (between 43 to 128 species sighted in these areas).

Priority and Exemplary Natural Communities

Natural communities are "assemblages of species that occur together in space and time. These groups of plants and animals are found in recurring patterns that can be classified and described by their dominant physical and biological features."

Natural communities may be restricted or widespread in their distribution throughout Massachusetts. NHESP gives conservation priority to types of natural communities that have limited distribution in the state and to those with restricted global distribution. These are referred to as "priority natural communities." Within Cheshire, there are several types of priority natural communities that have been identified.

Priority Natural Communities

Rich, Mesic Forest Community
Rich Mesic Forest Communities are found at elevations below 2,400 ft. and are usually located on east or southeast facing slopes. Rich refers to the richness of nutrients found in these communities and mesic refers to the moderate moisture regime. Soils are generally deep, and fallen leaves and other debris are usually incorporated into the soil quickly.
In Massachusetts, this community is designated as "S3," meaning it is vulnerable to extirpation in the state due to a restricted range, relatively few occurrences (often 80 or fewer), limited acreage, recent and widespread declines, or other factors.

In Cheshire, this community is located in two areas west of Outlook Ave. near the Appalachian Trail along the steep slopes that lead toward the summit of Mt. Greylock.

Calcareous Rocky Summit/Rock Outcrop Community
Calcareous rocky summit communities form on open calcareous ridge tops on low hills in the Western New England Marble Valleys. These environments are typically very dry, and are generally open in condition, which is formed as trees fall and uproot themselves in the shallow soils found at these locations.

In Massachusetts, this community is designated as "S2." This means that it is imperiled and that due to rarity (typically 6-20 occurrences), its restricted range, few remaining acres, or other factors it is very vulnerable to extirpation from the state.

Calcareous Talus Forest/Woodland
Calcareous Talus Forest communities form on loose rocky slopes (talus) below calcareous cliffs or rock outcrops. The soil between the talus is usually moist and loamy. Trees are usually found established on lower slopes near the base of the talus.

In Cheshire, this community, along with the "calcareous rocky summit" type are found at Rounds Rock, a rocky outcrop south of the summit of Mt. Greylock. This area is located near the town's boundary with New Ashford and Lanesborough.

Cultural Resources

History of the Community

Cheshire was first settled in 1766 and incorporated in 1793. It is named after Cheshire County in England. The valley town was founded by Baptists from Rhode Island, the first settlers in the region who were not from the established Puritan Church.

The land that makes up what is now Cheshire was known as Township 6 and was later divided into portions of the towns of Savoy, Adams, Lanesborough, and Cheshire. The township was six square miles and was originally granted by the General Court of the Province of Massachusetts to "the heirs of Captain Samuel Gallop for their services and sufferings in an expedition to Canada" in what was known as King William's War of 1688-97. After several sales and resales, early settlers Cook and Bennet bought the

Figure 9.1 The Cheshire Cheese memorial is located on Church St. It commemorates the creation of a mammoth wheel of cheese which celebrated the presidential victory of Thomas Jefferson in 1800.

"New Providence" portion that would become the Town of Cheshire.

The early colonists were primarily descendants of those who followed Roger Williams to Rhode Island to practice their Baptist religion freely. One of the group's leaders was Colonel Joab Stafford, who built his house on Stafford Hill and led the men of Cheshire into battle during the Revolutionary War. Troops from Cheshire distinguished themselves at the Battle of Bennington in 1777.

An early historical note of wide renown is the Cheshire Cheese. Cheshire was the only Berkshire town that favored Jefferson in the election of 1800. When Jefferson won the election, the town looked to show their support for the new president. Because the town specialized in dairy production and cheese making (like the original Cheshire in England), they decided to send a gift to the president of a Cheshire Cheese that used milk from each farmer in town. The resulting cheese was 4 feet in diameter, 18 inches thick and weighed over 1,200 Lbs. The cheese was inscribed with Jefferson's motto: "Rebellion to tyrants is obedience to God." It was transported on a horse-drawn sled to Washington, D.C. President Jefferson responded to the town with a personal letter of thanks. Today the cheese is commemorated by a memorial located along Church St. (**Figure 9.1**).

Industry in the early town included forges, mills, and tanneries. High quality sand beds in the area led to the creation of the Cheshire Crown Glass Company in the early 1800s. The calcareous (calcium containing bedrock) found in the area led to the creation of lime kilns and eventually the US Gypsum Company, which operated in Cheshire on the western shore of Cheshire Lake until 1960.

The town's proximity to North Adams and Pittsfield made it a bedroom community for many of the workers at manufacturing facilities that developed during the early half of the 20th century.

For a more detailed history of the Town of Cheshire, please contact the Cheshire Historical Commission.

Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System (MACRIS) Database

*For a listing of records in the MACRIS database, please refer to **Table C2** in Appendix C.*

*For a map of locations of inventory item records in the MACRIS database, please refer to **Map 12– Historic Resources**.*

MACRIS is a statewide database of historic and cultural resources maintained by the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC). MACRIS records for the Town of Cheshire show 178 individual historic inventory items in several categories including areas, buildings, burial grounds, objects, and structures. It is important to note that while many historic buildings and other resources are scattered throughout town, the majority are clustered within the Cheshire Village area, particularly Church, Depot, and South streets.

Several historic resources in the MACRIS database have also been recognized as part of the National

Figure 9.2 The Stafford Hill Memorial is a monument to Joab Stafford, a military hero and town founder. The memorial can be found on Stafford Hill Rd.

Register of Historic Places, which is administered by the National Park Service.

Farnam's Village Historic District
Farnam's Village Historic District is a nationally recognized historic district located centered around the intersection of Farnam's Causeway Rd., Old Cheshire Rd., and Lanesborough Rd.

The MHC's historic inventory form details this site stating:

The limestone mining village of Farnam's is located in the foothills of Mount Greylock on the west side of Hoosic Lake, or Cheshire Reservoir. The landscape is known as an upland karst valley and contains a system of caves and limestone deposits. The village consists of twenty primary buildings laid out around the cross-roads of Lanesborough, Quarry, and Farnam's roads. It is an area which contains in a mountainous woodland setting a limestone quarry, originally connected to a limestone processing mill by a railway and tunnel; limestone crusher, workers' housing, office building, stockroom, carpentry shop, and a small network of mining roads. Buildings and mining structures in the area date largely between 1900 and 1930.

Old Church-yard Cemetery
Also known as the Jenks Rd. or Stafford Hill Cemetery, this area can be found adjacent to 918 Jenks Rd. The cemetery was the burial ground for the original settlers of Cheshire (first known as New Providence) and site of the first Baptist Church in the region. There are around 70 headstones in the cemetery, dating from 1785 to 1848.

Cheshire Town Hall
Cheshire Town Hall is a recent addition to the National Register of Historic Places. The building was constructed in 1898 and was designed by architect

Emory Ellsworth. Ellsworth was a graduate of the University of Massachusetts (then Massachusetts Agricultural College) who went on to design several buildings for the University as well other public structures in Western Mass. The structure, a 2 1/2 story cruciform-shaped building, is listed as being in the early Georgian revival style.

Hall's Tavern
Hall's Tavern was constructed in 1804 and is listed as being of the 18th century Federal style construction. The building is located along Route 8 on the left side of the road just north of the intersection of Church St. According to the historical inventory record for the building, British soldiers during the War of 1812 were held as prisoners here, and the building was a secret meeting place for the Masonic Lodge.

Stafford Hill Memorial (Figure 9.2)
As described in Chapter 10, the Stafford Hill Memorial is both a memorial to and the final resting place of Joab Stafford. Stafford was one the original settlers of Cheshire and a military hero of the American Revolutionary War and specifically, the Battle of Bennington. The stone tower that marks the site is a replica of an original stone tower from Newport, RI, Stafford's home prior to settling Cheshire. The memorial tower and Stafford's crypt were constructed in 1927.

Cemeteries
There are several town-owned cemeteries in Cheshire. Town cemeteries are found on Route 8 (near Wells Park) and on West Mountain Rd., Jenks Rd., Sand Mill Rd., and Ingalls Rd.

Public Survey Results
For survey results that touch upon natural and cultural resources, please refer to Chapter 10—Open Space and Recreation.

KEY NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES ISSUES

Cheshire Lake
The town should continue to coordinate with the Cheshire Lake Association on lake management issues, such as invasive species that threaten water quality, ecological integrity, and recreation. The town should collaborate with the Cheshire Lake Association and the state in the long term to update a lake management plan that will help address water quality and recreation on the lake.

Continuing Historical Commission Work
The Historical Commission has spearheaded efforts to recognize, protect, and educate about historic and cultural resources in the community. It should continue its good work and develop plans for a possible National Historic Register District in the village center area.

NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND ACTIONS

Goal 1: Natural Resources Are Protected, Promoted, and Well-Managed
The town will protect, promote, and manage its natural resources. The town will accomplish this by updating plans for Cheshire Lake and continuing to coordinate with the state and the Cheshire Lake Assoc. on important management issues. The town will also take measures to protect soils, forest, and other natural environments by encouraging use of best management practices. Finally, the town will develop a future plan to manage and improve town owned recreation areas.

Objective: Continue to Protect and Manage Cheshire Lake as a Recreation Destination and Important Water Resource
The town will continue to coordinate with the state and the Cheshire Lake Association on important lake management issues. The town will also collaborate to update

management plans for the lake that will address water quality and recreation.

Action : Continue to coordinate with the state and the Cheshire Lake Association on lake management issues.

Action: Continue to fund weed removal and eradication measures.

Action: Seek grant funding and coordinate with the state, surrounding communities, and the Cheshire Lake Association to develop an updated lake management plan focused on improving recreation and water quality in the lake.

Objective: Protect Soils, Forests, and Other Natural Environments

The town will protect soils, forests, and other natural environments by encouraging farms and landowners to adopt best management practices. The town will also encourage the state and others to host events and inform residents and visitors about the natural environments found in Cheshire. Finally, the town will seek grant funding to preserve biodiversity and address invasive species.

Action: Encourage farmers to adopt best management practices.

Action: Coordinate with the state and other organizations to hosts events and inform residents and visitors about natural resources and the environment in Cheshire.

Action: Install signage indicating Cheshire is a Right-to-Farm Community at major gateways to the town, such as Route 8 and Route 116.

Action: Educate landowners that have land protected by Chapter 61 about forest management techniques, best practices, and other issues.

Action: Seek grant funding to preserve biodiversity and address invasive species.

Goal 2: Historic Resources Are Protected and Promoted

The town will protect and promote its historic and cultural resources through several ongoing efforts, as well as state and national programs.

Objective: Continue to Cultivate and Promote Historic Resources in Cheshire

The town will cultivate and promote historic resources in the community through continuing efforts to recognize historic buildings and structures and areas in the community. The town will also explore options to preserve and reuse historic buildings and promote use of the Mass. Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit.

Action: Continue to identify and nominate historic buildings and resources for state and national recognition

Action: Investigate and educate about development of a National Historic Register District in Cheshire (for recognition purposes only, with no restrictions on development). Investigate formation of a cultural district in town (as recognized by the Mass. Cultural Council).

Action: Continue to recognize historic buildings and their owners through the ongoing plaque program.

Action: Promote use of the Mass. Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit.

Action: Explore options to preserve and reuse historic buildings.

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CHAPTER 10: OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION

Cheshire is a recreation destination in the Berkshires, centrally located between the cities of North Adams and Pittsfield, and affording easy access to all the region has to offer. Cheshire Lake, the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail, the Appalachian Trail, Cheshire Cobbles, and thousands of acres of state reservation and wildlife management area provide outdoor enjoyment for all.

TRENDS AND CONDITIONS

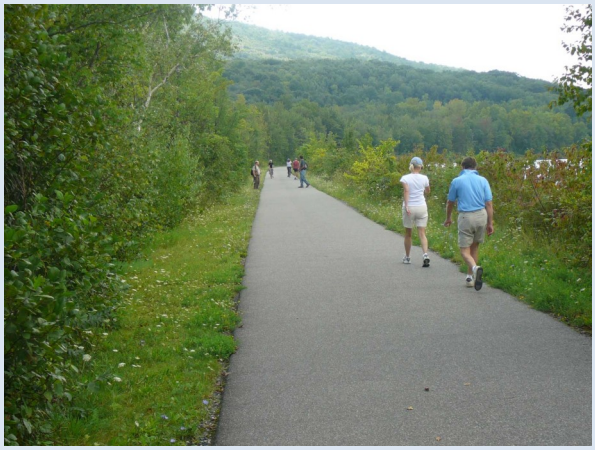
Open Space

Open space is defined as land that has not been developed for residential, commercial, or industrial uses and includes publicly and privately owned land. Open space often has particular interest to conservation or recreation and can include:

1. Land which contributes to the public water supply
2. Forests, fields, and agricultural lands
3. Wetlands
4. Rivers, streams, and lakes
5. Parks, cemeteries, athletic fields, and other recreation lands
6. Wildlife corridors or animal habitats
7. Land which preserves scenic views or town character

Open space is sometimes protected from future development. In Cheshire, land is protected in a variety of ways and with varying degrees of protection. Conservation, recreation, and agricultural lands in the Town of Cheshire are protected by several entities, including the town itself, the Town of Adams, the federal government, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and private landowners. Regionally, land trusts are another type of owner that protect land for conservation, recreation, and agricultural purposes. However, there are no land trust owned lands within Cheshire.

Land is considered under permanent protection if it is owned by the state or a local land trust. It may also be permanently protected if the land is subject to a conservation restriction, such as those held by land trusts. Within the Town of Cheshire, many privately-owned properties are considered to be under



OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION AT A GLANCE

Open Space and Protected Lands
Just over half of all land in Cheshire is protected from development in some way. Much of this is found in state reservation and two large Wildlife Management Areas.

Recreation Areas
Major recreation areas in Cheshire include the Appalachian Trail, the Ashuwillticook Trail, Cheshire Lake, and thousands of acres of publicly accessible state lands.

Town Recreation Areas
Cheshire manages several town recreation areas with additional cultural significance. These include town cemeteries, monuments, and the Stafford Memorial.

Additional tables related to open space and recreation may be found in Appendix C.

Table 10.1 - Summary of Protected Land in Cheshire, MA			
Source: Mass. GIS Open Space 2016			
Organization	Acreage	% Protected Land (8,957.69 acres)	% of all land (17,610.64 acres)
Federal	309.76	3.5%	1.8%
State	4807.45	53.7%	27.3%
Municipal	924.79	10.3%	5.3%
Town of Cheshire	878.18	9.8%	5.0%
Town of Adams	46.61	0.5%	0.3%
Private	808.93	9.0%	4.6%
Subtotal	6850.93	76.5%	38.9%
Chapter 61 Properties	2886.46	32.2%	16.4%
Subtotal	9737.39	108.7%	55.3%
Overlapping properties (privately-owned lands that are permanently protected and in Chapter 61)	779.7	8.7%	4.4%
Total	8957.69	100.0%	50.9%

permanent protection due to agricultural preservation restrictions held by the Mass. Dept. of Agricultural Resources.

Protected Open Space

*For a map of protected open space areas in Cheshire see **Map 11—Lands of Conservation and Recreation Interest** in Appendix C.*

*For a table that summarizes protected open space areas in Cheshire, see **Table 10.1**.*

*For a complete listing of all protected open space parcels in Cheshire, see **Table C3 in Appendix C.***

In Cheshire, nearly 9,000 acres of land are protected in some way. This amounts to just over half of all acreage in the town (see **Table 10.1**).

Federally-Owned Lands
Protected federal lands in Cheshire include over 300 acres that surround the Appalachian Trail corridor as it makes its way through the town. These lands are held by the National Park Service.

Commonwealth of Massachusetts Owned Lands
The Commonwealth of Massachusetts owns and manages around 4800 acres in Cheshire. Much of this land is part of the Mt. Greylock Reservation, the state's largest holding. The Commonwealth also owns and maintains the Ashuwilltocook Rail Trail, several islands in, and a boat launch area for Cheshire Lake, and the Chalet and Stafford Hill Wildlife Management Areas (WMA).

Municipally-Owned Lands (Towns of Cheshire and Adams)
Cheshire owns several hundred acres of watershed land in the western portion of town along the slopes of Mt. Greylock that formerly contributed to water quality and quantity in its now unused reservoir. The town has conducted several timber harvests on this property, and continues to plan for future cuttings to generate revenue. The town has also explored siting of wind energy turbines on these lands as well as sale of the property to the state. Other Town of Cheshire holdings of importance to its water system include the land that surrounds its water supply wells.

Properties owned by the town of Cheshire include its cemeteries, town parks, and recreation lands, like the Stafford Hill Memorial.

The Town of Adams also owns around 46 acres of land in Cheshire. These lands surround its water supply wells which are located in the town.

Privately-Owned Lands
Several landowners in Cheshire have protected

their properties and farms through Agricultural Preservation Restrictions (APR). This program pays farmers the difference between the fair market value and the agricultural value of their land in exchange for the permanent restriction of future development or any use that will reduce the agricultural viability of the land. The APR program helps to maintain the active use of farms, protects important agricultural soils, and provides a monetary benefit and alternative to farmers selling their land for future development.

Chapter 61, 61A, and 61B Lands

*For a complete listing of all parcels enrolled in Chapter 61 in Cheshire, see **Table C4** in Appendix C.*

Chapter 61 is a state program that allows private landowners to manage their properties for forestry (Chapter 61), agricultural (Chapter 61A), or recreational purposes (Chapter 61B) in exchange for reduced property taxes. Chapter 61 is sometimes referred to as the "current use" program, as the value of properties enrolled in it are assessed based on their current use (forestry, agriculture, or recreation) rather than their development potential, which is used in the calculation of municipal property tax assessments.

Parcels in the program for the purposes of forestry must be at least 10 acres in size and must have an approved 10-year management plan in place. Parcels enrolled in Chapter 61A or 61B must be at least five acres in size. Once enrolled in Chapter 61, the town where the property is located acquires a right of first refusal should the land be put up for sale. This right of first refusal can also be assigned by the town to a land trust or state agency.

Chapter 61 lands are not considered permanently protected, as landowners can remove their property from the program at any time. However, there are monetary penalties associated with sale of properties enrolled in Chapter 61 for purposes other than forestry, agriculture or recreation, as well as any changes in land use while enrolled.

For more information on Chapter 61 programs, consult a local forester or the town assessor. Chapter 61 properties are privately owned and should be considered off limits to public access without the landowner's permission.

There are nearly 2800 acres of land in Cheshire protected through Chapter 61. Most of these parcels are enrolled in Chapter 61A, meaning they are protected for agricultural purposes.

Unique Features

*For a map of some unique town features and areas designated as DCR Scenic Landscape, see **Map 8—Unique Features** in Appendix C.*

Cheshire has many unique features. Much of the town has been designated as a scenic landscape by the Mass. Dept. of Conservation and Recreation (DCR).

Recreation

There are several recreation areas in the Town of Cheshire, which are owned and managed by different public entities.

Town-Owned Recreation Areas

Stafford Hill Memorial

The Stafford Hill Memorial is a stone monument to Joab Stafford, one of the original settlers of Cheshire, and hero of the Battle of Bennington during the American Revolutionary War. The memorial itself is a replica of an original stone tower in Newport, Rhode Island. The replica was erected in Cheshire by the Sons of the American Revolution in 1927. This memorial was chosen as Stafford was born in Rhode Island before making his way to western Massachusetts.

The original stone tower in Newport is a controversial artifact of early American colonization and is believed to have been built in the mid-17th century as a windmill. However, the lack of historical records regarding its origins have led several historians to attribute its construction to the Vikings, Chinese, or Portuguese mariners, or even medieval Templar knights who landed in Rhode Island hundreds of years before other European settlers.

Town Cemeteries
The Town of Cheshire owns and maintains several cemeteries. While cemeteries are not traditionally thought of as recreation areas, they are often used for passive recreation purposes like walking. For more on town cemeteries, please refer to Chapter 9—Natural and Cultural Resources.

Farnam's Road Park Area
On Farnam's Road is a causeway that crosses Cheshire Lake. Much of the causeway is owned by the town and contains a small park and parking area. While owned by the town, the park area is maintained by State Dept. of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). The park contains benches, picnic tables, fishing piers, and restroom facilities. South of the main area of the park is a small unpaved boat launch that provides access to the middle basin of the lake. The park is adjacent to the Ashuwilltocook Rail Trail.

Town Watershed Lands
For information about the Cheshire drinking water supply system, refer to ***Chapter 4—Infrastructure****.*

The Town of Cheshire owns 857 acres of watershed protection land that helps to maintain and preserve the water quality in its former reservoir, the Kitchen Brook Reservoir. This reservoir is currently unused by the town, but could provide an emergency backup water supply if necessary. Cheshire's watershed lands are located west of Route 8 and Outlook Avenue and abut DCR's Mt. Greylock Reservation. The Greylock Reservation is the state's largest land holdings and is home to its highest peak.

Much of the area around the town's watershed lands have been designated by the state as "Outstanding Resource Waters" or ORW. ORW protection is outlined under the Massachusetts Surface Water Quality Standards, 314 CMR 4.00 (WQS). According to 314 CMR 4.04(3): "Certain waters are designated for protection under this provision in 314 CMR 4.06. These waters include Class A Public Water Supplies (314 CMR 4.06(1)(d)1.) and their tributaries, certain wetlands as specified in 314 CMR 4.06(2) and other waters as determined by the Department based on their outstanding socio-economic, recreational, ecological and/or aesthetic values. The quality of these waters shall be protected and maintained." These additional protections include provisions calling for the removal of existing discharges into ORWs as well as restrictions on creation of additional discharges.

The town periodically harvests timber from this watershed land to generate revenue. Between 2001 and 2008, three planned harvests generated revenues of $122,627 to the town . The town is currently working with forester Lincoln Fish of Bay State Forestry Service to create a cutting plan paid through a grant of $7500. The cutting plan will be submitted in early 2017 and will propose a timber harvest on a parcel in the watershed land that has not been cut in 50 years. The Cheshire Water Dept. expects this harvest to generate substantial revenues.

The Cheshire Water Dept. has also explored other revenue generating projects on the town's watershed land. Recently, the Cheshire Water Dept., along with engineers Tighe and Bond, prepared a study looking at the possibility of siting wind turbines on the property to generate electricity. Overall, the feasibility study found that potential wind turbines on the site would be favorable due its topography. The study proposed the installation of a small portable tower at the site that would measure wind currents over a year-long period to further determine the feasibility of wind power at the location. However, the portable tower was not installed due to disagreements over the use of the watershed land between the Water Dept./Water Commission and the Select Board.

The future of Cheshire's watershed land has been a source of contention in town. The Water Dept. wishes the land to remain an asset of the town. However, the Select Board has voted to sell off portions of watershed land, primarily to pay off the remaining damages resulting from the Krutiak lawsuit described in Chapter 4—Infrastructure. Recently, a town meeting warrant article called for watershed land to be sold to the state; however, the town voted against this measure.

State-Owned Recreation Areas

Ashuwilltocook Rail Trail

The name "Ashuwilltocook" is derived from the Native American word for the Hoosic River and means "the pleasant river between the hills" or "pleasant in-between river." The trail is a 10'-wide universally accessible multi-use path that begins near the entrance of the Berkshire Mall off Route 8 in Lanesborough and travels over 11 miles north where it terminates in the center of the Town of Adams. The trail was constructed in the early 2000s along the abandoned Boston and Maine rail bed.

In Cheshire, the trail passes along the eastern shore of Cheshire Lake, where it has spectacular views of the shoreline and hills beyond. Access to the rail trail in Cheshire is found on Farnam's Rd., Route 8 (near the northern end of Cheshire Lake), and Railroad St (see **Figure 10.1**).

The Rail Trail is currently maintained by the Mass. Dept. of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). The trail has an outdated management plan that was developed when the trail first opened (DCR 2016).

Mt. Greylock Reservation

The Mt. Greylock Reservation is a large state holding maintained by DCR that surrounds Mt. Greylock, the state's highest peak. Access to this area from Cheshire is found at the Appalachian Trail trailhead on Outlook Ave. Major access roads, parking, and other trailheads are found in the nearby towns of Adams, Williams-town, and Lanesborough, as well as in the City of North Adams.

Chalet Wildlife Management Area (WMA)

WMAs are managed by the Mass. Dept. of Fish and Game (DFG). These areas are open to hunting, fishing, trapping, and a variety of other outdoor activities. Chalet WMA is a large holding that stretches across the towns of Dalton, Cheshire, Lanesborough and Windsor.

The Mass. DFG lists several access points to Chalet WMA within Cheshire including along Route 8 (between Allied Waste Services and Bedard Bros. automobile dealership), and on Windsor, Notch, and Gulf roads.

Most of the Chalet WMA is part of the Chalet forest reserve. Forest reserves are portions of state land holdings that will not be commercially harvested for timber, or other forest products, in order to capture elements of biodiversity not found on other harvested sites (EOEEA 2016).

Stafford Hill Wildlife Management Area

Stafford Hill is another WMA located in Cheshire. It is spread throughout Cheshire in several large disconnected parcels. Mass. DFG lists two access points along Stafford Hill Rd. in Cheshire. Portions of this WMA are also part of the Chalet forest reserve.

Cheshire Lake/Reservoir or Hoosic Lake/Reservoir

Cheshire Lake or Reservoir (also known as Hoosic Lake or Reservoir) is a manmade lake created for industrial purposes in the late 1800s. The lake is a popular boating and fishing destination. It is divided into three basins by causeways at Farnam's Rd. and Nobody's Rd. Informal boat access is provided at these causeway locations. There is a large state-owned paved boat launch along Route 8 at the northern end of the lake that provides access for larger boats.

State Management Plans

Currently DCR is updating the management plans for the areas it maintains. These plans are divided into two types: resource management plans and forest resource management plans. As might be inferred, forest resource management plans include details on how forests will be managed and the intended results of this management. The resource management plans for state lands include details on how specific uses will be accommodated and recommendations for areas that have more intensive recreational uses. As of fall 2016, none of the management plans for state recreation areas in Cheshire have been updated, or are listed as underway by DCR (DCR Resource Management 2016).

Forest Resource Management plans for the Northern

Figure 10.1 The Ashuwillticook Rail Trail is a popular shared-use path that passes through Cheshire Village and travels between Lanesborough and Adams.

Berkshire District, which includes the Mt. Greylock Reservation, are available. All portions of the Greylock Reserve in Cheshire are listed as being under active management, meaning they will be thinned periodically to promote tree growth, or are listed as forest reserves—meaning they are largely set aside from active forestry and managed only by natural processes.

Federally-Owned Recreation Areas

Appalachian Trail

The Appalachian Trail is the longest hiking-only footpath in the world. It stretches over 2000 miles along the east coast from Springer Mountain in Georgia to Mt. Katahdin in Maine. The trail was completed in the 1930s and is used by hikers for short day-hikes, longer multi-day hikes, or by "thru-hikers" who complete the trail in a single journey of several months. In Cheshire, the trail is managed by the National Park Service in cooperation with the Appalachian Trail Conservancy.

The Appalachian Trail crosses into Berkshire County from Connecticut and moves northward where it leaves the county in Clarksburg and enters Vermont. In Cheshire, the Appalachian Trail crosses into the town from Dalton on North Mountain, and descends toward Cheshire Village from the Cobbles. As the trail passes through Cheshire Village, it travels along Furnace Hill Rd., Main St./Church St. and School St. From here the trail moves northwesterly, crossing Route 8 and Outlook Ave. as it makes its way up steep slopes towards Mt. Greylock.

Cheshire is one of a handful of communities in the Berkshires where the Appalachian Trail travels along town-owned roadways and passes in close proximity to the village center. Some towns and cities along the Appalachian Trail have pursued designation as "Appalachian Trail Communities." The program "recognizes communities that promote and protect the Appalachian Trail" and "serves to assist communities with sustainable economic development through tourism and outdoor recreation" (Appalachian Trail Conservancy 2016). In the Berkshires, Great Barrington is the only municipality currently listed as a trail community.

Public Survey Results

Respondents to the public survey thought it was important to conserve many different types of open space and historic resources in Cheshire. Each type of

open space or historic resource listed on the survey received a response of *important to conserve* at a rate above 59%. *Waterfront areas* were supported by the most respondents, with 89% stating it was *important to conserve* these areas. *Vernal pools* were supported by the least amount of respondents, with only 59% saying it was *important to conserve* these places.

Responses to an open-ended question regarding Cheshire's single greatest open space need were mixed. *Cheshire Lake* was mentioned by 13% of respondents and farmlands were mentioned by 16% of respondents. *Recreation space* (12%) and *drinking water needs* (11%), were mentioned by more than 10% of respondents to this open ended question.

Respondents to the public survey were ambivalent about their satisfaction with existing recreation areas in Cheshire, with 48% of respondents saying they were *neither satisfied nor dissatisfied* and another 38% responded that they were *satisfied*.

Public survey respondents said they would set a *high priority* for recreation facilities of several types, including running/walking trails, bike trails, hiking, playgrounds. These items received a response of *high priority* from more than 50% of respondents. Recreation facilities where 50% or more respondents said it was a *low priority* include golfing, skate-boarding, and tennis.

In response to an open-ended question regarding the town's single greatest recreation need, a variety of responses were provided. *Improvements to Cheshire Lake* were mentioned by about 15% of respondents, and include responses mentioning access improvements, better management, "cleaning" the lake, and others. A specific improvement—*the possibility of a town beach*, was mentioned by 16% of respondents. Other items identified by respondents including hiking/walking trails, and indoor recreation facilities.

The Ashuwilltocook Rail Trail was reported to be *regularly used* by 66% of respondents – the only facility where over 50% of respondents said this. Other areas that respondents said they used regularly were *Cheshire Lake* (39%), *Private land* (39%), *Farnam's Causeway* (37%), and *Mount Greylock State Reservation* (32%).

Areas that respondents said they *never used* include *fishing piers* (56%), *town watershed lands* (52%), *boat launch* (51%), and the *Hoosac Valley Middle and High School Athletic Fields* (49%).

Areas that respondents said they did not know about include the *Chalet WMA* (38%), *town watershed lands* (23%), and *Stafford Hill WMA* (12%).

KEY OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION ISSUES

Leveraging and Promoting Town Recreation Areas

Cheshire has many recreation areas, including Cheshire Lake, the Ashuwillticook Trail, Appalachian Trail, and thousands of acres of state land. The town should promote these areas and work closely with the state to advocate for improved amenities.

Open Space and Recreation Plan

An approved Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) would allow the town to access several state grant programs that could fund improvements on town owned recreation areas.

OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND ACTIONS

Goal 1: Cheshire is the Outdoor Playground of the Northern Berkshires

Cheshire will promote and develop amenities within the community to ensure it is a recreation destination for the northern Berkshire area.

Objective: Promote and Cultivate Recreation Destinations in the Community

Cheshire will collaborate with the state and others to promote and develop recreation areas and destinations within the community. The town will ensure its interests are represented as the state updates management plans for public lands within Cheshire.

Action: Promote the Appalachian Trail, Cheshire Lake, the Ashuwillticook Trail, and Mt. Greylock as recreation destinations in the community.

Action: Actively engage the state on the development of management plans for recreation areas throughout the community.

Action: Encourage dialogue between farms, community members, and the state, to explore creative uses and discuss other issues regarding state lands, such as grazing access, maintaining open land, community garden space, and trails.

Action: Coordinate with the state to promote less well-known recreation areas such as Stafford Hill WMA (Wildlife Management Area) and Chalet WMA.

Action: Coordinate with the state to improve signage at recreation destinations, as well as host educational events and other gatherings on state land to promote these areas both locally and regionally.

Action: Coordinate with the state and the Cheshire Lake Association to develop a plan for improved recreation, including a possible town beach, or improved facilities near the boat ramp.

Action: Seek recognition and designation as an "Appalachian Trail Community." Explore ways to better connect hikers with local businesses.

Action: Explore the creation of an indoor recreation facility.

Objective: Protect and Wisely Manage Town-Owned Lands and Recreation Areas

The town will manage its recreation areas by continuing to engage community groups and volunteers, and creating a long-term plan for improvements that will allow it to access state grant funding.

Action: Create an Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP), which will allow the town to access state grant funding for protected town lands. Create an action plan for the future of town watershed lands and recreation areas like the Stafford Hill Memorial, Town Hall Park, the Community Center, school playgrounds, and others.

Action: Continue to engage community groups and volunteers to address recreation needs on town lands.

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CHAPTER 11: VISION

INTRODUCTION

The vision statement is a concise description of the town's desired future. This may include both those qualities of the town that residents would like to keep and attributes the town would like to see included or changed in the future. The vision serves as the basis for the creation of goals and objectives in the plan for the town to pursue in the future. This chapter shows the individual vision statements that were developed by the Master Plan Committee for each element of the Master Plan.

VISION

Population and Demographics
Cheshire is a town where residents can live, grow, work and remain in the community for a lifetime. The town attracts and retains diverse residents and families through its superior schools, growing community of small businesses, and the overall quality of life.

Economy
Cheshire has a sustainable and vibrant local economy with a diverse range of businesses. Businesses, and the town which supports them, take great pride in the community and collaborate to make Cheshire a better place for all. These local attractions, combined with the town's natural beauty, assets, and recreational opportunities create a quality of life that is sought out by visitors, and where people want to live and raise their families.

Infrastructure
Cheshire creatively and proactively addresses, maintains, and upgrades its infrastructure; utilizing sustainable methods; meeting high standards; and making strategic and wise investments to keep pace with changes in the community.

Services
Cheshire provides high quality and fiscally sound services to its residents. These services are natural offshoots of its forward thinking and proactive outlook, its commitment to self-betterment, technology, best practices, and its close-knit community.

Housing
Cheshire will provide safe and affordable housing for all ages and incomes, creating a town where residents can live and grow for a lifetime.

Transportation
Cheshire will provide a well-maintained road network and transportation system, where residents of all ages and abilities can move safely and efficiently—whether by driving, biking, walking, or public transit.

Land Use
Cheshire's active village center provides space for residences, business, and civic life—nestled in rural, agricultural, and scenic surroundings. Appropriate regulation supports these uses and the town's economic development, recreation, and conservation goals.

Natural and Cultural Resources
Cheshire's abundant water resources, agricultural lands, wetlands, rare species and wildlife habitat, and other natural resources are cherished, actively used, and adequately protected by state and local regulations. Moreover, its rich historic and cultural resources—derived from the town's natural heritage—are recognized, preserved, and readily accessed.

Open Space and Recreation
Cheshire is a recreation destination in the Berkshires, centrally located between the cities of North Adams and Pittsfield, and affording easy access to all the region has to offer. Cheshire Lake, the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail, the Appalachian Trail, Cheshire Cobbles, and thousands of acres of state reservation and wildlife management area provide outdoor enjoyment for all.

CHAPTER 12: PROCESS

INTRODUCTION

The development of the Cheshire Master Plan utilized an open process. Several different strategies and components were utilized to engage the public about their needs and desires surrounding the future of Cheshire.

PLANNING PROCESS

Master Plan Survey

The Cheshire Master Plan Survey was available from March 14, 2016 to April 8, 2016. A total of 341 residents responded to the survey.

The survey was promoted through a full-page flyer posted throughout the Town of Cheshire, the Fire Department sign on Route 8, a newsletter for the Council on Aging, and an oversized postcard that was sent to every postal address in town, and through a full-page flyer that was mailed to all property owners who live out of town. The postcard was distributed using a service of the US Postal Service called Every Door Direct Mail, which is a cost-effective mechanism to deliver a mailing to every postal customer on a given route.

The postcards were brought to the Cheshire Post Office on Wednesday, March 16th, 2016, and were then distributed to the three carrier routes and all P.O. Box customers in Cheshire, totaling 1,561 addresses. The flyers for the 190 out-of-town property owners were mailed on the same day through the regular mail. In total, 1,751 mail pieces were sent, resulting in a 19.5% response rate.

The postcard and flyer succinctly explained the purpose of the survey and the target audience, and listed the four ways to access the survey: going to the town website and clicking the link to the survey; going directly to the web address for the survey; picking up a paper copy of the survey at one of several locations around town; or scanning the QR code on the postcard/flyer with a smartphone or tablet. Overall, 305 respondents took the survey electronically, and 36 responses were received via paper copy and manually

PLANNING PROCESS AT A GLANCE

Public Survey
341 residents responded to an opinion survey created at the beginning of the planning process.

Public Forums
Two public forums were held to gain input on the plan. The first was held to gather basic information for plan development. The second reviewed draft goals, objectives, and actions.

Committee Meetings
The Cheshire Master Plan Committee helped to guide plan development. Committee members met 22 times from January 2016 to May 2017.

Stakeholder Interviews
BRPC interviewed 27 town staff, board and committee members, business owners, and residents to get initial input on town issues and goals for the plan.

entered; it is unknown how many people used each of the three methods to access the electronic version of the survey. The results of the survey can be found in Appendix D.

Public Forums

Two public forums were held to seek input on the development of the plan. Both forums were held at the Cheshire Elementary School auditorium.

First Public Forum (January 2017)

The first public forum was held on January 26, 2017. It included a presentation on existing conditions and an open discussion about the town's future and what residents desired for the community.

Five poster boards were available for forum participants to provide "fill in the blank" responses to the following questions:

What is most important about living in Cheshire?
What I want to remain the same in Cheshire is…
What I want to change in Cheshire is…
How I would best protect and improve Cheshire is….
My big idea for Cheshire is….

Responses to these questions were collected (along with results of the discussion) and reviewed by the Master Plan Committee. Notes from the first public forum can be found in Appendix D.

Second Public Forum (April 2017)

The second public forum was held in April 26, 2017. The forum reviewed the draft Master Plan and its goals, actions and objectives. Participants were provided with the draft Action Plan (Chapter 13) and asked to submit written comments to BRPC staff by May 10, 2017. Participants were asked to identify the three areas of the plan they thought were most important by placing a sticker dot on poster boards displaying the goals and objectives of the plan.

Aspects of the plan that received four or more sticker dots included:
Cultivating town businesses and agricultural resources
Effectively promoting town businesses and assets
Evaluating sewer needs
Schools and education
Protecting and managing Cheshire Lake
Promoting and cultivating recreation destinations

Master Plan Committee Meetings

The Master Plan Committee included representation from various boards and committees, as well as residents and local business owners. The Master Plan Committee began meeting in January 2016 and concluded its meetings in May, 2017. In total, the committee met 22 times. Committee members reviewed and discussed draft materials prepared by BRPC at each meeting. For detailed minutes of each committee meeting, please contact the Town of Cheshire.

Committee Members

John Bianchi - Educator, Adams Cheshire School Committee, longtime resident

Robert Ciskowski – Select Board Member, lifelong resident

Deborah Dunlap –Town of Adams' Administrator's Asst., Business Owner

Eileen Quinn – Yoga & Meditation Teacher, Administrator & Community Coordinator

Jim Reynolds – Business Owner, longtime resident

Edmund St. John IV – School Committee Member, Attorney, lifelong resident

Atalanta Sunguroff – Farmer, Nature Educator, Herbalist, Business Owner, Organizer

Peter Traub – Planning Board, Council on Aging, Cultural Council

Eric Whitney – Farmer, Business Owner, lifelong resident

Note: Ed Bassi, Brian Bedard, Shannon Plumb, and

Tom Zappula also served as committee members. Due to scheduling conflicts, these committee members were unable to participate for the duration of plan development and resigned from the committee.

Stakeholder Interviews

During the summer and fall of 2016, BRPC conducted interviews with 27 town staff, residents, and board and committee members. Several others were contacted to participate, but could either be not reached or declined to be interviewed. Notes from stakeholder interviews can be found in **Appendix D**.

Individuals Participating in Stakeholder Interviews

Christine Emerson, Town Clerk
Carol Francesconi, Select Board Member
Paul Astorino, Select Board Member
Robert Ciskowski, Select Board Member
Mark Webber, Town Administrator
Rebecca Herzog, Tax Collector & Treasurer
Mickey Biagini, Board of Health
Francis Waterman, Water Commissioner
Rick Gurney, Water Commissioner
Mary Ellen Baker, Library Board of Trustees Chair
Bill Craig, Advisory Committee
Brian Cadra, Lion's Club
John Tremblay, Resident and Cheshire Community Association (CCA) founder
Heather Emerson, Library
Diane Hitter, Library
Amy Emerson-Inhelder, Library
Timothy Garner, Chief of Police
Peter LeFebvre, Highway Superintendent
Anna Farnham, Council on Aging
Joyce Fletcher, Resident
Peter Franz, Resident
Darlene Rodowitz, School Committee
Michele Whitney, Resident and Business Owner
Ray Fisher, Cheshire Lake Association
Becky Barnes, Mass. Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)
Bob Ballawander, Resident
Ron DeAngelis, Planning Board member

Listening Sessions

Cheshire Master Plan Committee members and BRPC staff conducted several listening sessions with groups in town. These listening sessions were an effort to engage various organizations in Cheshire and gain their perspective on the future of the town. In total, five listening sessions were held. Notes from listening sessions can be found in Appendix D.

Listening Sessions

Seniors and Council on Aging members (at the Cheshire Community Center)
Garden Club
Parent Teacher Group
Fire Department
Rod and Gun Club

CHAPTER 13: IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

This chapter describes the types of actions that will be needed to implement this plan, who will be responsible for taking action on each item, and the relative priority for timing of implementation. It also describes the procedure for amending and updating the plan over time.

Implementation Actions

This plan will be implemented primarily through five types of actions:

1. Day-to-Day Policy Decisions
2. Regulatory Changes
3. Plans and Programs
4. Regional Coordination
5. Collaborative Action

Each of these actions will likely involve more than one group or individual in the town and region. Specific responsibilities will be detailed for each action in the next sections of this chapter.

Day-to-Day Policy Decisions

The town administration, boards, commissions, and departments will be responsible for many of the day-to-day decisions that will cumulatively help implement this plan. Many of these decisions will be made by the Select Board in the form of policy creation, support, and task delegation.

Regulatory Changes

A number of significant recommendations of this plan are directly or indirectly related to the development of new regulations to govern growth and land use in the town. The Planning Board will be responsible for the initiation of the efforts to draft new bylaw language but it will take a united effort on the part of the town to conduct appropriate outreach to achieve a successful and appropriate bylaw product that meets the needs of the town.

Plans and Programs

The goals, policies, and actions of this plan impact other plans and programs of the town in a few ways. Future updates to other plans, such as the Open Space and Recreation Plan, will need to be in compliance with this plan. New programs called for in this plan will need to be systematically pursued and implemented by the responsible entity as resources allow—such as economic development activities and infrastructure planning and implementation.

Regional Governmental Coordination

In many cases, the implementation of this plan can and should involve other municipalities, the state, or the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission. The town will need to take the first step of starting a dialogue on items where collaborative planning or action is needed, or where technical assistance is needed or desired.

Collaborative Action

At a very basic level, successful implementation of this plan will require collaborative action outside of the realm of formal government. Residents, various pond and watershed associations, recreation groups, state agencies, local business owners, and others will need to actively engage in the implementation of this plan—through both direct action and through support and participation with town-led implementation actions. This plan works to achieve a shared vision of the town's future—achieving that will take a whole-town effort.

Who Will Implement the Plan?

This plan will be implemented through the collaborative and individual effort of a number of organizations, agencies, and individuals. The Action Plan identifies the parties that will likely be involved in the achievement of the corresponding action.

Actions were categorized based on several likely periods for implementation. Items listed as "ongoing" in the schedule are actions that the town is already in the process of implementing and will likely continue to work on in the future. Some actions are general; while some may not be immediately actionable, they could be crafted into a town policy that would help to ensure they are acted upon when the opportunity arises.

Finally, other actions are divided between three broad time periods: short-term (1-2 years), medium-term (2-4 years), and long-term (4+ years). Some actions, particularly those in the short term, may reoccur regularly or continuously after initial implementation. It will be up to the town to evaluate its successes and determine if these actions occur once, or are implemented regularly.

Some items on the action plan can be completed within this five-year period, while many others can not. It is recommended that the town reevaluate the Action Plan after this five-year period to reflect on its successes and review its priorities. The town will likely not choose to pursue a full update of the Master Plan at this point, but may revise the Action Plan to more effectively implement the plan.

Additionally, it should be noted that some items in the Action Plan are redundant. This was intentional, and attempts to make the plan actions supporting and reinforcing, and to emphasize the interdisciplinary nature of many of the items to be acted on by the town.

Recommendations for New Boards and Committees

The Master Plan recommends the creation of additional boards, committees, and other groups in town to help address items in the Master Plan.

Master Plan Implementation Committee

The Master Plan recommends creation of a Master Plan Implementation Committee that would help to guide and oversee implementation of the plans, goals, actions, and objectives. The Master Plan Implementation Committee will be responsible for tracking progress on the plan and keeping residents and others aware of implementation activities (both successful and unsuccessful). They will also be responsible for coordinating with town staff, board members, and volunteers to advance efforts and specific projects. In an effort to alleviate the burden of implementation activities on other boards and committees, this group will also be directly responsible for implementing some actions in the plan.

This group should include representation from various boards, committees, and town staff, if possible. It would also be prudent to ensure that members of the original Master Plan Committee serve on this group to ensure the intent of the plan is realized.

The committee should likely have 5-7 members. The committee would function as a "core group" of interested individuals who will then coordinate with others on implementation. Committee members might decide to take oversight of specific chapters or aspects of the plan (i.e., economy, transportation, etc.) to help divide up tasks.

The Select Board and Planning Board should collaborate to determine how to best organize this group.

Business Association

The plan recommends a Business Association that would take the lead on economic development tasks as well as pursue grant funding for the community. The Business Association would likely take the form of a private group of interested citizens that would coordinate and work closely with the town. Many of the actions that would fall to the Business Association can be found in Chapter 3—Economy, and are also listed in the Action Plan at the end of this chapter.

Housing Committee

A Housing Committee or similar organization is the final group that the plan recommends be created. This organization would likely take the form of an open public body appointed by the Select Board. The Housing Committee would be responsible for addressing many of the items found in Chapter 6—Housing. If this committee is to be formed, it is essential that interested individuals serve and are afforded access to relevant trainings and education to address this critical, but technically complicated issue.

School Building Reuse Committee

In the event that Cheshire Elementary is permanently closed, the town should appoint a building reuse committee to help determine future uses for the school facility.

UPDATING THE PLAN

A Master Plan looks far into the future and establishes a roadmap of goals, policies, and actions for the town to implement over time. In order for the plan to remain a relevant document, however, periodic updates will be necessary. Updates can occur in two general ways: plan amendments and a full plan update.

Plan Amendments

The town may, from time to time, encounter changing conditions, new laws or programs, or other circumstances that it wishes to reflect or respond to through the Master Plan document. The plan amendment process is fairly simple (see below) and allows the Planning Board to make small but important changes to the document over time to keep pace with changing circumstances.

Plan Update

Eventually, conditions will shift to a degree that a minor amendment is insufficient to achieve a document that provides meaningful and forward-thinking guidance to the town. At this time, typically 10-15 years from initial adoption of a new or fully updated plan, municipalities can go through a plan update process. At this time, the community initiates a full new planning process to rethink or reaffirm the vision and chart out new policy directions and carry forward any relevant directions from the prior document.

Amendment and Update Procedure

MGL 41 S81D (Appendix D) describes the practice and procedure for amending and updating an adopted Master Plan.

Vote:

An amendment of the master plan may be made through a formal majority vote of the Planning Board and recorded for public record.

Filing:

The Planning Board must supply a copy of the amended or updated plan to the Department of Housing and Community Development. In the case of an amendment, a good practice would be to include a cover memo highlighting the amendment that was made.

ACTION PLAN

The action plan details each implementation action contained in the prior chapters of the Master Plan, the proposed timing for the action to be taken, potential leadership, and other interested parties responsible for implementing the action. The "schedule" portion of these tables will be completed as implementation activities are organized.

ECONOMY		Suggested Leadership	Other Participants	Other Participants	Schedule
Goal 1: The Economy is Strong and Growing					
Objective: Cultivate Town Businesses and Agricultural Resources Through Collaboration, Encouraging Local Entrepreneurship, and Providing Incentives					
E1.1.1	Encourage formation of a local business group or association with the purpose of economic development and securing grants.	MPI	Vol		
E1.1.2	Explore feasibility of businesses to improve quality of life and attract visitors to the community, with priorities being a local general store or small grocery; outdoor recreation-based businesses; specialty food and other specialty businesses; breweries and wineries, pubs and improved night life; and seasonal businesses such as cafés or an ice cream shop.	Business	BOS		
E1.1.3	Coordinate with arts and cultural councils and other organizations, such as in North Adams and Pittsfield, for potential job connections.	Business	Admin		
E1.1.4	Reach out to owners of vacant or under-utilized buildings, particularly in Cheshire Village, to seek out opportunities for new or expanded business, such as professional services.	Business	BOS	ZBA	
E1.1.5	Encourage local farms and other businesses to join Berkshire Grown, 1Berkshires, and other Chamber of Commerce organizations.	Business	Farm		
E1.1.6	Encourage local farms and businesses to interact with schools and educate residents about their work and products.	Business	Farm		
E1.1.7	Encourage local farms to train and mentor young farmers. Encourage local farms to host educational events. Encourage local farms to provide land access (lease, etc.) to beginning farmers.	Farm	Vol		
E1.1.8	Establish a Farmer's Market in Cheshire.	Business	Farm	Vol	Ongoing
E1.1.9	Host business development workshops and trainings in town with a focus on existing entrepreneurs, retirees, and recent high school and college graduates.	Business	School		
E1.1.10	Review zoning and other regulations to determine changes that will promote business growth and expansion.	PB	BOS		
E1.1.11	Create a section of the town website with an easy-to-follow explanation of the town's development and permitting process.	Staff	PB	BOS	
E1.1.12	Explore implementing a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) agreement to attract business to Cheshire.	BOS	Admin		
E1.1.13	Collaborate regionally to advocate for faster broadband internet service as a way to promote economic growth.	Business	BOS	BRPC	

Parties Involved in Plan Implementation						Schedule	
AB	Advisory Board	**Cem.**	Cemetery Committee	**Library**	Library Assoc. and Staff	**Ongoing**	Actions already in progress by the town
Admin.	Town Administrator	**CLA**	Cheshire Lake Association	**MPI**	Proposed Master Plan Implementation Group	**Short-Term**	Projects to be implemented in the short-term (1-2 years)
All	All Boards, Committees, and Staff	**Con. Com.**	Conservation Commission	**PB**	Planning Board	**Medium-Term**	Projects to be implemented in the medium-term (2-4 years)
BOH	Board of Health	**Emer.**	Emergency Management Director	**Police, Fire, etc.**	Other Town Departments	**Long-Term**	Projects likely requiring 4 or more years for implementation
BOS	Board of Selectmen	**FARM**	Farm Commission	**RC**	Recreation Committee	**TW**	Tree Warden
BRPC	Berkshire Regional Planning Commission	**HC**	Historical Commission	**SBRC**	School Building Reuse Com.	**Vol.**	Volunteers (residents, local businesses, etc.)
Business	Proposed Business Assoc. or Group	**Highway**	Highway Department	**School**	School System / School Com.	**Water**	Water Dept.
CCA	Cheshire Community Assoc.	**Housing**	Proposed Housing Committee	**Staff**	Town Staff	**ZBA**	Zoning Board of Appeals

Objective: More Effectively Promote Town Business and Assets					
E1.2.1	Utilize the town website to better promote local business and town destinations.	Staff	Business		
E1.2.2	Engage the community to create a town logo for branding purposes.	Admin	BOS		
E1.2.3	Actively market and promote the quality of life, access to recreational opportunities and low tax rate as reasons to move to Cheshire, particularly for families, telecommuters, or those who work from home. Utilize a variety of media to disperse this message.	Business	BOS	Staff	
Goal 2: Community Connections and Overall Attractiveness of the Town are Enhanced to Draw New Residents and Visitors					
Objective: Enhance the Attractiveness and Scenic Quality of the Community					
E2.1.1	Create multi-level standards for business signage in town as a way to brand the community and enhance its small-town charm and feel.	Business	PB		
E2.1.2	Continue work to establish signs and improve landscaping at "gateways" to the community, such as along Route 8.	BOS			Ongoing
E2.1.3	Improve landscaping and aesthetics along Church St. and around all town properties.	Vol	Highway	BOS	
E2.1.4	Contact property owners to identify opportunities to improve building facades and landscaping around the community.	Housing			
E2.1.5	Seek grants to study and revitalize commercial and village areas in Cheshire.	Business	BOS		
E2.1.6	Identify ways to reduce litter in the community.	Vol	Highway	Police	
Objective: Create and Enhance Draws and Attractions in the Community					
E2.2.1	Continue to advocate for and coordinate regionally on Ashuwillticook Rail Trail Extension projects.	BOS	Admin		Ongoing
E2.2.2	Advocate for improved access and amenities on state-owned lands.	Rec	BOS	Admin	
E2.2.3	Promote and utilize local historic assets to draw people to the community. Promote use of the Mass. Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit.	HC			
Objective: Strengthen Community Connections					
E2.3.1	Explore potential changes to the Community Center, such as new programming or physical expansion, to better meet town needs and provide space for collaboration and entrepreneurship.	BOS	COA		
E2.3.2	Encourage hosting of events in Cheshire.	Vol	Rec		
E2.3.3	Continue to hold events such as the annual block party. Explore creation of an annual town fair or festival.	CCA	Vol	Business	
E2.3.4	Explore creation of a community garden somewhere in town.	MPI	Vol		

Parties Involved in Plan Implementation						**Schedule**	
AB	Advisory Board	**Cem.**	Cemetery Committee	**Library**	Library Assoc. and Staff	**Ongoing**	Actions already in progress by the town
Admin.	Town Administrator	**CLA**	Cheshire Lake Association	**MPI**	Proposed Master Plan Implementation Group	**Short-Term**	Projects to be implemented in the short-term (1-2 years)
All	All Boards, Committees, and Staff	**Con. Com.**	Conservation Commission	**PB**	Planning Board	**Medium-Term**	Projects to be implemented in the medium-term (2-4 years)
BOH	Board of Health	**Emer.**	Emergency Management Director	**Police, Fire, etc.**	Other Town Departments	**Long-Term**	Projects likely requiring 4 or more years for implementation
BOS	Board of Selectmen	**FARM**	Farm Commission	**RC**	Recreation Committee	**TW**	Tree Warden
BRPC	Berkshire Regional Planning Commission	**HC**	Historical Commission	**SBRC**	School Building Reuse Com.	**Vol.**	Volunteers (residents, local businesses, etc.)
Business	Proposed Business Assoc. or Group	**Highway**	Highway Department	**School**	School System / School Com.	**Water**	Water Dept.
CCA	Cheshire Community Assoc.	**Housing**	Proposed Housing Committee	**Staff**	Town Staff	**ZBA**	Zoning Board of Appeals

Objective: Ensure Cheshire is a Town for All					
E2.4.1	Host diversity and gender awareness training and events for town staff, schools, and residents.	BOS	School	Vol	
E2.4.2	Create a way to welcome new residents in Cheshire, such as a welcome packet or similar.	CCA	Staff	Vol	

Parties Involved in Plan Implementation						Schedule	
AB	Advisory Board	**Cem.**	Cemetery Committee	**Library**	Library Assoc. and Staff	**Ongoing**	Actions already in progress by the town
Admin.	Town Administrator	**CLA**	Cheshire Lake Association	**MPI**	Proposed Master Plan Implementation Group	**Short-Term**	Projects to be implemented in the short-term (1-2 years)
All	All Boards, Committees, and Staff	**Con. Com.**	Conservation Commission	**PB**	Planning Board	**Medium-Term**	Projects to be implemented in the medium-term (2-4 years)
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Business	Proposed Business Assoc. or Group	**Highway**	Highway Department	**School**	School System / School Com.	**Water**	Water Dept.
CCA	Cheshire Community Assoc.	**Housing**	Proposed Housing Committee	**Staff**	Town Staff	**ZBA**	Zoning Board of Appeals

INFRASTRUCTURE		Suggested Leadership	Other Participants	Other Participants	Schedule
Goal 1: Infrastructure Meets Changing Town Needs and Reduces Energy Costs					
Objective: Evaluate All Town Buildings and Facilities					
I1.1.1	Conduct a comprehensive needs assessment for repairs and upgrades to town buildings and facilities. Determine if repairs to existing structures will be cost-effective, or if new facilities are needed to meeting existing needs.	BOS	AB	Staff	
I1.1.2	Integrate recommendations into Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).	AB	BOS		
I1.1.3	Explore participation in the Mass. Green Communities Program to access grant funding for energy efficiency upgrades to town buildings.	Admin	BOS		
Objective: Continue to Maintain a Safe Supply of Drinking Water					
I1.2.1	Address potential threats to water quality by following the recommendations of the Source Water Assessment and Protection (SWAP) Report.	Water	BOS		
I1.2.2	Continue ongoing update of water system master plan. Integrate recommendations into Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).	Water	AB	BOS	Ongoing
I1.2.3	Include the Water Dept. in proposed staffing study. Determine what structure (existing department or independent water district) is most appropriate for the Water Dept.	BOS	Water	Admin	
Objective: Evaluate Sewer Needs					
I1.3.1	Conduct an initial feasibility study for a sewer system in Cheshire. Determine if sewer and wastewater treatment service could be provided by connection to existing systems in surrounding communities.	BOS	Water	Admin	
Objective: Proactively Study Opportunities for and Engage Residents about Upcoming Infrastructure Projects					
I1.4.1	During major road projects, determine if utility work, such as burying overhead infrastructure, can be included at a reasonable cost. Seek out other opportunities to combine infrastructure work.	Highway	BOS		
I1.4.2	Educate and engage residents about major infrastructure projects and associated costs.	BOS	Highway		
I1.4.3	Examine opportunities to implement renewable energy projects, such as a solar array, in town.	PB	Admin	BOS	

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SERVICES		Suggested Leadership	Other Participants	Other Participants	Schedule
Goal 1: Proactively Address Town Needs Through Public Engagement, Long-Term Planning, and Additional Sources of Funding					
Objective: Implement Recommendations of the Cheshire Master Plan					
S1.1.1	Appoint a Master Plan Implementation Committee.	PB	BOS	MPI	
S1.1.2	Assemble a pool of volunteers to help with Master Plan implementation.	MPI	PB		
S1.1.3	Regularly engage and update residents about implementation activities.	MPI	PB	Staff	
S1.1.4	Track progress on the Master Plan and update quarterly. Prepare an annual summary of Master Plan implementation activities to include in the annual report.	MPI	PB	Staff	
Objective: Review and Address Town Staffing, Budget, and Finances					
S1.2.1	Develop a municipal salary and staffing study that compares Cheshire to surrounding communities.	BOS	Admin	AB	
S1.2.2	Develop job descriptions and a system of performance review for all municipal staff. Ensure job descriptions include requirements for relevant trainings and certifications.	BOS	Admin		
S1.2.3	Explore shared services and staffing with surrounding communities, such as a human resources or community development position.	BOS	Admin		
S1.2.4	Examine expanding the role of the Town Administrator.	BOS	Admin		
S1.2.5	Develop a succession plan for all town department heads or chairpersons/"overlap" all new hires with employees retiring or leaving Cheshire.	BOS	Admin		
S1.2.6	Review compensation for board and committee members.	AB	BOS		
S1.2.7	Review benefits for town employees, elected and appointed officials, and board and committee members.	AB	BOS	Admin	
S1.2.8	Engage in comprehensive review of the town's "fixed costs" such as insurance or debt payments. Ensure cost saving alternatives are sought out.	AB	BOS	Admin	
S1.2.9	Implement/improve timesheet requirements for all employees.	BOS	Staff	Admin	
S1.2.10	Develop a long-range Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) that integrates all town departments, is revised yearly, and is open to public comment.	AB	BOS	Admin	
S1.2.11	Encourage local businesses to bid on town projects.	BOS	Admin	Admin	
S1.2.12	Hold regular staff meetings.	BOS	Staff	Admin	
S1.2.13	Ensure multiple staff members are trained and certified in state procurement law.	BOS	Staff	Admin	

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Objective: Seek Out Additional Sources of Revenue					
S1.3.1	Engage all departments and boards to aggressively identify and seek grant funding.	ALL	Admin		
S1.3.2	Ensure regular contributions to town stabilization funds.	AB	BOS		
S1.3.3	Investigate the adoption of the Community Preservation Act (CPA) by the town as a potential funding source for town projects.	Staff	BOS		
Objective: Develop a Town Climate that Encourages Public Engagement and Participation					
S1.4.1	Transition to a 5-member Select Board to better represent the needs of town residents.	BOS			
S1.4.2	Research and evaluate a system of term limits for town officials.	MPI			
S1.4.3	Survey town residents about changes to public meetings (including Annual Town Meeting) to increase attendance and voter participation.	MPI	AB	Staff	
S1.4.4	Develop and hold regular "All Boards" meetings with representatives from all town boards, committees, and commissions.	BOS	All	Admin	
S1.4.5	Implement regular short informational meetings regarding town meeting warrant articles and budget items, such as a "baby" town meeting.	Staff	BOS		
S1.4.6	Expand the internal budgeting process to engage more town staff.	BOS	AB	Admin	
S1.4.7	Ensure all public meetings are accurately recorded and accessible. Explore video recording of Select Board and other key meetings.	BOS	All		
S1.4.8	Create and implement a standardized format for all town meeting minutes.	BOS			
S1.4.9	Ensure a public comment component of all meetings of all boards and committees.	All	BOS		
S1.4.10	Continue to coordinate with community groups to hold events and gatherings in town.	BOS	Vol		Ongoing
S1.4.11	Organize drivers to provide transportation to town meeting and elections.	Vol	COA	BOS	
S1.4.12	Seek out ways to better engage and involve students in the planning and development of the town, by strengthening connections between schools, students and town activities.	BOS	School	MPI	
S1.4.13	Find ways to regularly appreciate residents for their contributions to our community.	BOS	MPI		
S1.4.14	Find ways to recognize contributions of town officials and staff for their work and contributions to the community.	BOS	MPI		

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Objective: Encourage More Active Communication and Transparency in Town					
S1.5.1	Develop or expand circulation of an informational newsletter in town, such as the "Cheshire Chatter"/Develop a town email list or email newsletter.	Vol	Staff	MPI	
S1.5.2	Ensure adequate notifications to the public around meetings, town events, emergencies.	All	Admin		
S1.5.3	Identify and implement improvements to the town website. Ensure regular and timely postings to the town website so that residents can access materials and remain aware of town activities.	Staff	BOS	Admin	
S1.5.4	Improve notification and public engagement around tree removal along town roads.	TW	BOS		

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Goal 2: Provide High Quality services to Maintain Quality of Life and Allow Residents to Age-in-Place					
Objective: Identify and Implement Improvements to the Town Library					
S2.1.1	Continue to provide high quality services through the public library.	Library	BOS	Vol	
S2.1.2	Include the library in a needs assessment for town buildings and facilities.	BOS	Library		Ongoing
S2.1.3	Continue to seek grant funding for the library.	Library	BOS	Admin	
Objective: Maintain Positive Working Relationships and Collaboration with Private Organizations in the Community					
S2.2.1	Continue to collaborate with local organizations on projects throughout town.	All	BOS	MPI	Ongoing
Objective: Continue to Provide High Quality Services to Seniors in Cheshire					
S2.3.1	Continue to seek grant funding for COA activities.	COA	BOS	Admin	Ongoing
S2.3.2	Explore opportunities to expand on-demand transportation for seniors, such as through reimbursement of volunteer drivers, particularly for medical appointments.	COA	Vol		
S2.3.3	Ensure Cheshire participates in regional "age friendly" planning efforts.	COA	BOS	Admin	
S2.3.4	Develop and maintain an active outreach program to ensure that older residents are aware of and encouraged to participate in activities.	COA	Vol		
S2.3.5	Explore feasibility of locating an urgent care facility or medical offices in town.	Business			
S2.3.6	Continue use of the library and Community Center to offer educational programming. Consider expanding offerings to include technology and computer-related programming.	Library	COA		

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SERVICES - SCHOOL SUBCHAPTER		Suggested Leadership	Other Participants	Other Participants	Schedule
Goal 1: District Schools Provide the Highest Quality of Education to All Students and Have a Level 1 Designation, While Remaining Cost-Effective and Affordable to Residents and Taxpayers					
Objective: Seek Out Ways to Effectively Manage School Costs Without Sacrificing Education Quality					
SA1.1.1	Review and determine the feasibility of recommendations of the Collins Center study of the ACRSD. Implement accordingly.	School			
SA1.1.2	Continue to participate in the regional Berkshire County Education Task Force.	School	BOS		
SA1.1.3	Seek out grants to supplement existing funding.	School	BOS	Admin	
SA1.1.4	Actively engage town officials and educate residents about the school budget process.	School			
Objective: Schools and Educational Services Provide Students with Programs and Instruction that Result in Student Success Evidenced in Data from Standardized Testing as Well as Success After Graduation. These Successful Quality Schools Attract Out-of-District "School-Choice" Students as Well as Families to Relocate to the Community					
SA1.2.1	Review compensation and other benefits to attract and retain effective teachers (e.g., salary, salary incentives, tax incentives as a Cheshire resident, free compactor use, discounts on other town fees).	BOS			
SA1.2.2	Review professional development and other training opportunities for teachers.	School			
SA1.2.3	Review school curriculum.	School			
SA1.2.4	Collaborate with local organizations to provide connections and opportunities for students before and after graduation.	School			
SA1.2.5	Survey parents about changes to school committee meetings (venue, time change, etc.) that would encourage more parent participation. Implement any findings.	School			
SA1.2.6	Strengthen links and programming between schools, students and town activities. Develop ways to better engage students and young people in town affairs and decision-making.	All	School	BOS	
SA1.2.7	Examine programming to brand district schools and create specialty niche programming (such as STEM, STEAM, the arts, etc.) that will attract new students to the district and prepare existing students for college and the workforce.	School			
SA1.2.8	Explore ways to strengthen connections and programming between district schools, local colleges and universities, and regional employers.	School			

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SERVICES - SCHOOL SUBCHAPTER		Suggested Leadership	Other Participants	Other Participants	Schedule
Objective: Advocate for Regional Changes that Will Help Support Local Schools					
SA1.3.1	Coordinate with other communities to advocate for changes to state school funding legislation, especially in regards to reimbursement for transportation.	BOS			
SA1.3.2	Explore ways to strengthen communication and relationships between Adams, Cheshire, and other surrounding communities around education, the school budget, and other issues.	BOS			
SA1.3.3	Collaborate with Adams on mutually agreeable changes to the school district agreement.	School			
Objective: Explore and Pursue All Possible Options to Allow Cheshire Elementary to Remain Open Until an Acceptable Longer Range Solution is Finalized					
SA1.4.1	Explore use of town funds, such as stabilization, free cash, or appropriated through town vote, to supplement existing school funding.	BOS			
SA1.4.2	Explore private funding to supplement existing school funding.	BOS			
SA1.4.3	Advocate for state funds to allow the elementary school to remain open.	BOS			
Objective: In the Event that Cheshire Elementary is Closed, Explore ways to Reuse the Building to Benefit the Town					
SA1.5.1	Form a School Building Reuse Committee (SBRC).	BOS			
SA1.5.2	Coordinate with school district officials to determine what building contents will be retained by the district and what will be retained by the town.	BOS			
SA1.5.3	Explore changes to the elementary school lease agreement with the school district. Change appropriate items.	BOS			
SA1.5.4	Examine cost sharing agreements with local organizations to use school facilities to provide for continued maintenance and use of the facility.	BOS			
SA1.5.5	Prepare a building reuse plan that examines potential uses of the elementary school building. Determine if the school facility could be used to address town needs, such as space for housing, municipal departments, local business, or community functions.	SBRC			
Objective: Engage in Long-Term Planning for the School District					
SA1.6.1	Examine potential of a single school district campus at Hoosac Valley Middle and High School that would provide education for all Elementary, Middle, and High School students in the district as well as for other surrounding communities.	School			
SA1.6.2	Explore reconfiguration of the school district with other towns.	School			

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HOUSING		Suggested Leadership	Other Participants	Other Participants	Schedule
Goal 1: Provide Housing for All Ages and Incomes					
Objective: Strengthen Town Resources to Address Local Housing Issues					
H1.1.1	Research and form a local housing organization, such as a committee to focus on Cheshire housing items. Ensure committee members have access to training and information sharing opportunities.	BOS	MPI		
H1.1.2	Form partnerships with local housing organizations, such as Habitat for Humanity, Community Land Trust of the Southern Berkshires, Berkshire Housing, Construct Inc., developers, and others	Housing			
H1.1.3	Form partnerships with local realtors, banks, and landlords to assess local housing needs.	Housing			
H1.1.4	Continue ongoing work to apply for CDBG funds. Utilize potential CDBG funds to rehabilitate existing housing for low- to moderate-income residents and plan and implement other projects throughout the community. Reapply for CDBG funds in subsequent years.	BOS	Admin	Housing	Ongoing
H1.1.5	Develop a comprehensive program to address poor quality properties that degrade the community.	Housing	Admin		
H1.1.6	Utilize volunteers to assess homes of seniors in Cheshire to address possible aging-in-place renovations or upgrades.	Housing	COA		
Objective: Increase Resident Awareness of Housing Programs and Incentives					
H1.2.1	Host a first time homebuyer's class in town and encourage renters, students, and young families to attend.	Housing			
H1.2.2	Research and advertise housing purchase and rehabilitation incentives and programs on the town website. Some examples of these include Federal Housing Administration (FHA) incentives, Veteran's Administration grants for disabled individuals, and others.	Housing	Staff		
Objective: Reduce Barriers to Housing Development					
H1.3.1	Review minimum lot size and setback requirements for residential use in the Residential zoning district to assess whether changes could promote housing development.	PB	Housing	BOS	
H1.3.2	Research and pursue adoption of an accessory dwelling unit (mother-in-law apartment) zoning bylaw	PB	Housing	BOS	
H1.3.3	Review zoning bylaws pertaining to multi-family dwellings in town. Consider allowing development (either new or conversion of existing structures) of 2-3 unit dwellings in the Business and Residential districts by right. If pursued, establish appropriate development standards (height, maximum lot coverage, screening, etc.) for multi-family dwellings.	PB	Housing	BOS	
H1.3.4	Research and evaluate the appropriateness of common driveway and rear lot development bylaws.	PB	Housing	BOS	
H1.3.5	Research and evaluate the appropriateness of an Open Space Residential Design bylaw.	PB	Housing	BOS	
H1.3.6	Research and evaluate the appropriateness of zoning changes to allow for Cohousing.	PB	Housing	BOS	

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Objective: Develop a Long-Term Strategy to Address Housing Within the Community					
H1.4.1	Develop a Housing Needs Assessment and Housing Action Plan.	Housing	BOS	BRPC	
H1.4.2	Examine options to address senior housing (including allowing for home health aides) and housing for young families.	Housing	BOS	COA	

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TRANSPORTATION		Suggested Leadership	Other Participants	Other Participants	Schedule
Goal 1: Provide a Complete and Well-maintained Transportation System that Safely Accommodates Vehicles, Pedestrians and Cyclists					
Objective: Collaborate Regionally to Address Existing and Future Transportation Needs					
T1.1.1	Collaborate with local, regional, and statewide partners to assess needs, evaluate funding opportunities, and construct projects that improve multimodal transportation in and around Cheshire.	Highway	BOS	BRPC	
T1.1.2	Participate in all TAC (Transportation Advisory Committee) and MPO (Metropolitan Planning Organization) meetings, and engage in the regional transportation planning process.	Highway	BOS		
Objective: Plan For and Address Existing and Future Roadway Needs					
T1.2.1	Develop a repaving and maintenance plan for all roadways within Cheshire that incorporated preventive measures as well as needed repairs. Integrate needs into a town wide Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).	Highway	BOS	AB	
T1.2.2	Assess needs for federal-aid eligible roadways and invest in preliminary design and engineering for future reconstruction.	Highway	BOS	Admin	
T1.2.3	Ensure training and professional development opportunities for Highway Dept. staff and leadership.	Highway	BOS	Admin	
T1.2.4	Ensure Highway Dept. and town officials are aware of updates and revisions to the MassDOT Bridge Inspection Handbook. Ensure town officials are aware of and monitor all bridge inspections within the community.	Highway	BOS	Admin	
T1.2.5	Ensure future culvert and bridge replacement projects protect environmental interests, through, for instance, compliance with state wildlife passage standards. Ensure culverts are adequately sized to anticipate increases in precipitation associated with climate change.	Highway	BOS	Admin	
T1.2.6	Maintain a strong working relationship with staff at MassDOT District 1.	Highway	BOS	Admin	
T1.2.7	Identify and implement low-cost beautification options to add value to town transportation projects, such as landscaping.	Highway	BOS	Admin	
T1.2.8	Continue investment in the town stabilization fund and regularly utilize it to address transportation needs.	Highway	BOS	AB	
T1.2.9	Complete an inventory of town culverts and their maintenance needs.	Highway	BOS		

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Objective: Improve Nonmotorized Transportation and Transit Within Cheshire					
T1.3.1	Continue participation in the MassDOT Complete Streets program. Develop a Tier 2 prioritization plan for future Complete Streets related improvements and apply for funding to implement these projects.	Admin	BOS	Highway	Ongoing
T1.3.2	Ensure annual road projects are reviewed for compliance with the town Complete Streets Policy.	Highway	BOS	Admin	
T1.3.3	Coordinate with surrounding communities on regional shared-use path projects.	BOS	Admin		
T1.3.4	Design and implement a town wayfinding system.	Vol	BOS	MPI	
T1.3.5	Maintain strong working relationship with staff at Berkshire Regional Transit Authority (BRTA).	Highway	BOS	Admin	
T1.3.6	Study and implement options to make COA van service more flexible and convenient for seniors.	COA	BOS		
T1.3.7	Seek out ways to slow traffic down in key areas as way to improve traffic safety.	Police	Highway		

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LAND USE		Suggested Leadership	Other Participants	Other Participants	Schedule
Goal 1: Reinvigorate Cheshire Village					
Objective: Ensure Zoning Requirements are Consistent with the Existing On-The-Ground Development or Condition					
L1.1.1	Evaluate the appropriateness of a separate zoning district encompassing the village center. Pursue if appropriate.	PB	BOS		
Goal 2: Advance Economic Opportunities in Town					
Objective: Expand Business Potential in the Community					
L2.1.1	Evaluate the appropriateness of expansion of the Business district within town. Pursue if appropriate.	PB	BOS	Business	
Goal 3: Maintain the Town's Rural Landscape and Small Town Character					
Objective: Strengthen Safeguards to Protect Rural Character and Environments					
L3.1.1	Develop design standards and a more comprehensive review process for future commercial development.	PB	BOS	Business	
L3.1.2	Update the town's sign bylaw.	PB	BOS		
L3.1.3	Evaluate the appropriateness of separate dimensional requirements or a separate zoning district for residential development near Cheshire Lake. Pursue if appropriate.	PB	BOS	CLA	
L3.1.4	Evaluate the appropriateness of adopting the Berkshire Scenic Mountain Act to preserve ridgetops and minimize negative impacts on steep slopes. Pursue if appropriate.	PB	BOS		
L3.1.5	Collaborate regionally and coordinate with MassDOT to ensure compliance with the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) NPDES (National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System) MS4 (Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems) Permit.	BOS	Admin	Highway	

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NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES		Suggested Leadership	Other Participants	Other Participants	Schedule
Goal 1: Natural Resources Are Protected, Promoted, and Well Managed					
Objective: Continue to Protect and Manage Cheshire Lake as a Recreation Destination and Important Water Resource					
N1.1.1	Continue to coordinate with the state and the Cheshire Lake Association on lake management issues.	CLA	BOS	Admin	
N1.1.2	Continue to fund weed removal and eradication measures.	CLA	BOS		
N1.1.3	Seek grant funding, and coordinate with the state, surrounding communities, and the Cheshire Lake Association to develop an updated lake management plan focused on improving recreation and water quality in the lake.	Con. Com.	CLA	Admin	
Objective: Protect Soils, Forests, and Other Natural Environments					
N1.2.1	Encourage farmers to adopt best management practices.	Farm	Con. Com.		
N1.2.2	Coordinate with the state and other organizations to hosts events and inform residents and visitors about natural resources and the environment in Cheshire.	Con. Com.	BOS	Admin	
N1.2.3	Install signage indicating Cheshire is a Right-to-Farm Community at major gateways to the town, such as Route 8 and Route 116.	Farm	Vol	Highway	
N1.2.4	Educate landowners that have land protected by Chapter 61 about forest management techniques, best practices, and other issues.	Con. Com.	Farm		
N1.2.5	Seek grant funding to preserve biodiversity and address invasive species.	Con. Com.	Admin		
N1.2.6	Continue participation in Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership activities.	BOS	Vol.		
Goal 2: Historic Resources Are Protected and Promoted					
Objective: Continue to Cultivate and Promote Historic Resources in Cheshire					
N1.3.1	Continue to identify and nominate historic buildings and resources for state and national recognition.	HC	BOS	Admin	
N1.3.2	Investigate and educate about development of a National Historic Register District in Cheshire (for recognition purposes only, with no restrictions on development). Investigate formation of a cultural district in town (as recognized by the Mass. Cultural Council).	HC	Vol	CCA	
N1.3.3	Continue to recognize historic buildings and their owners through the ongoing plaque program.	HC	BOS	Vol	Ongoing
N1.3.4	Promote use of the Mass. Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit.	HC	BOS		
N1.3.5	Explore options to preserve and reuse historic buildings.	HC	BOS		

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OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION		Suggested Leadership	Other Participants	Other Participants	Schedule
Goal 1: Cheshire is the Outdoor Playground of the Northern Berkshires					
Objective: Promote and Cultivate Recreation Destinations in the Community					
O1.1.1	Promote the Appalachian Trail, Cheshire Lake, the Ashuwillticook Trail, and Mt. Greylock as recreation destinations in the community.	Business	RC	BOS	
O1.1.2	Actively engage the state on the development of management plans for recreation areas throughout the community.	RC	Con. Com.	Admin	
O1.1.3	Encourage dialogue between farms, community members, and the state, to explore creative uses and discuss other issues regarding state lands, such as grazing access, maintaining open land, community garden space, and trails.	RC	Con. Com.	Admin	
O1.1.4	Coordinate with the state to promote less well-known recreation areas such as Stafford Hill WMA (Wildlife Management Area) and Chalet WMA.	RC	Con. Com.	Admin	
O1.1.5	Coordinate with the state to improve signage at recreation destinations, as well as host educational events and other gatherings on state land to promote these areas both locally and regionally.	RC	BOS	Admin	
O1.1.6	Coordinate with the state and the Cheshire Lake Association to develop a plan for improved recreation, including a possible town beach, or improved facilities near the boat ramp.	RC	CLA	Admin	
O1.1.7	Seek recognition and designation as an "Appalachian Trail Community." Explore ways to better connect hikers with local businesses.	RC	Admin	Business	
O1.1.8	Explore the creation of an indoor recreation facility.	RC	BOS		
Objective: Protect and Wisely Manage Town-Owned Lands and Recreation Areas					
O1.2.1	Create an Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP), which will allow the town to access state grant funding for protected town lands. Create an action plan for the future of town watershed lands and recreation areas like the Stafford Hill Memorial, Town Hall Park, the Community Center, school playgrounds, and others.	RC	BOS	Admin	
O1.2.2	Continue to engage community groups and volunteers to address recreation needs on town lands.	RC	BOS	CLA	Ongoing

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MASTER PLAN

2017

Town of Cheshire,
Massachusetts