

TOWN MASTER PLAN

Town of Sheffield, Massachusetts



Part 1 of 2: Master Plan, Maps & Glossary

Adopted June 2005
Town of Sheffield Planning Board

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Public Forums

Community Visioning Workshop 1 (November 23, 2002)
Community Visioning Workshop 2 (January 28, 2003)
Master Plan Joint Subcommittee Workshop (February 10, 2003)
Sheffield Student Workshop (January 8, 2003)
Sheffield Business & Economic Development Forum (April 7, 2003)
Sheffield Farmers Forum (July 21, 2003)
Sheffield Town Officials & Other Leaders Working Sessions (June 3 & 10, 2004)
Community-wide Information and Feedback Session (June 18, 2004)

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1. A VISION FOR SHEFFIELD

Sheffield's Master Plan identifies past trends, inventories current conditions, and describes a unified vision for the future of our Town. This document represents two years of work by a broad cross-section of the community. The plan serves as a guide to assist the Town in ensuring balanced growth and change over the next 10 years; guiding the protection of its small-town and rural character and unique natural resources while maintaining or improving the overall quality of life for all residents. Unplanned development and sprawl would rob the town of the endearing and livable qualities that make it a place people want to live. Coordinated, sustainable growth will enhance these qualities to secure a vital future for Sheffield.

1. The Vision

Nestled between the Taconic Range on the New York state border and the hills of the Berkshire Plateau, Sheffield, Massachusetts with its long history as a New England farming community, is a diverse, small, rural town of about 3,000 full-time residents clustered primarily in two village centers dating to the Colonial era. Sheffield's deep agricultural and historic roots remain evident in outlying farms and residences; some of them built more than 200 years ago. Lying in a broad floodplain of the Housatonic River, Sheffield is blessed with abundant and unique natural resources, from forest to field to fen. Its landscape is integral to the town's quality of life and much of its economy, including farming, service-oriented small businesses, retailing and tourism.

Sheffield's natural beauty, rural setting, historic character and proximity to major cities make it an extremely desirable place to live for both full and part-time residents. Nationally, Sheffield is known as a Mecca for antiques-hunters and for its rural landscape. Unlike many towns in the Berkshires, steady growth during much of the 20th century helped make Sheffield one of the fastest growing communities in the County, particularly between 1990 and 2000. While there is a trend of small communities becoming suburbs to larger nearby towns, such as Great Barrington, Sheffield does not want to become a bedroom community.

The loss of valuable agricultural lands and open spaces combined with increasing traffic and building development with the resultant demand for local government services prompted the Town to create a plan to guide future growth and protect vital natural and cultural resources. With a rich cultural tradition and a friendly small-town atmosphere, Sheffield wishes to grow through a pro-active approach that balances the unique qualities that embody the Town's identity with its economic, housing, transportation, recreational and educational needs. Sheffield is committed to working in partnership with local residents, community groups and other parties to fulfill this vision for the future.

The Town of Sheffield envisions itself in 2014 as a community where...

- The rural beauty and character are maintained and enhanced and the town's agricultural heritage is promoted and kept vital.

- Unique and special natural resources, including lakes, streams, ponds, wetlands, wildlife habitats and corridors, open spaces, hillsides, ridgelines and scenic vistas are protected through wise stewardship, which encourages the creation of compatible recreational and economic opportunities such as ecotourism.
- Historic and cultural buildings and landscapes are preserved and enhanced in a setting where housing and business development are attractively sited following a traditional New England pattern of villages and farmhouse clusters. Sheffield Center and Ashley Falls Village serve a mix of uses including acting as the primary community gathering places, within residential neighborhoods, in turn surrounded by rural landscapes.
- Housing is available in a wide range of types and different price ranges to ensure that Sheffield can meet the diverse needs and lifestyles of local residents.
- Existing compatible businesses, economic opportunities and entrepreneurial development are available, supported and encouraged.
- Current technologies are available to businesses and residents and energy efficient practices are promoted and embraced.
- Essential municipal facilities and services, such as schools and a broad transportation network, are provided at the highest quality affordable to all members of the local community.

2. How the plan was developed

A master plan is a document that serves multiple community needs. According to State laws that address the requirements and guidelines for preparing such a plan, a master plan's primary purpose is to serve Town boards and organizations, including the Selectmen and the Planning Board, which officially adopts the Plan, as a framework to guide development within the town. To fulfill this role as a planning tool, a master plan should be based on a wide range of social, economic, environmental and land use information.

A master plan, however, is not a static listing of facts and figures. It should reflect the changing needs and circumstances of the community, and be periodically updated. It should reflect the wishes, desires and aspirations of the community and its members about growth and development. Specific strategies that address growth issues and their impact on the town are integrated into a long-term land use plan that can guide development and changes over the next 10 years and help the community become what it wants to be.

A master plan also serves as the guide for land-use regulations. It can bolster applications for local and state grants for various community projects, and guide private decision-making on new development and business growth. The Master Plan also identifies issues that require further investigation, planning or design, and provides a framework of specific actions needed to accomplish community goals and projects.

A master plan can also help people learn more about their community, both as a resource document and through the process of public involvement in its creation.

The Board of Selectmen voted to accept two state grants for the creation of a town-wide master plan. A Master Plan Steering Committee was assembled by the Board of Selectmen and the plan-creation process begun in the spring of 2002. A request-for-proposal was developed, and the planning and consulting firm of Dufresne-Henry of Boston was hired to facilitate the plan's creation.

Maps

An extensive set of maps was developed using a geographic information system (GIS or electronic mapping) as an important tool and element of the master plan project. This series of maps illustrate Sheffield's natural resources and environmental constraints, existing land uses and property boundaries, historic and cultural amenities, housing and population distribution, business locations, and the local road network and other utilities. It is an important visual and quantitative tool for planning the community's future and for gathering information from and sharing that information with the community.

Even with professional and technical support, much of the work on the plan was done by volunteers from the community. The plan represents the work of many residents, both those who live here year-round and those who live here part-time, business owners, community groups, conservation organizations, and public officials.

3. Community Involvement

The Master Plan Steering Committee was assembled by the Board of Selectmen to provide a broad cross section of local residents and opinions. The Committee included representatives from the Board of Selectmen, Planning Board, Conservation Commission, town officials and department heads, and local residents.

Under the guidance of the Steering Committee, a comprehensive public participation program was developed and implemented. This program contained three broad elements: a town-wide survey of resident opinions concerning key issues in Sheffield; public workshops; and subcommittees to focus on key elements of community development in Sheffield.

Community Survey.

The survey results served as a foundation for the work of the steering committee and subcommittees in shaping goals, strategies and actions for managing growth in Sheffield.

In the fall of 2002, a community-wide survey was sent to all households in Sheffield. Questions solicited opinions regarding town services, the local economy, growth and development, natural resources, recreation, housing, traffic and transportation, and other present and future concerns. (The survey questionnaire and the survey results report are included in Appendix 2).

A total of 1,845 surveys were successfully mailed, with participation encouraged through announcements and articles in area newspapers, public bulletins posted around town, and public meetings and workshops. A total of 293 surveys were returned, for a 16% response rate – an excellent response from the community.

Surveys were sorted by region and residency. The distribution and return rates were as follows:

Sheffield Community Survey Results by Group					
Group	Total Distribution	No. of Responses	Response Rate within subgroup (%)	Percent of Total Responses	Total Responses (rounded to nearest 10)
Sheffield Center Residents	228	36	16%	12%	Primary home owners 80%-
Ashley Falls Residents	151	16	11	8%	
Rural-Area Residents	1,276	177	14%	60%	
Second-Home Owners	190	58	31%	10%	20%
Other	NA	6	NA		
Total	1,845	293	16%		

Business Survey.

A questionnaire on the state of business in Sheffield was mailed to over 250 members of the business community using a combination of the Master Plan business list and the town list of personal property. The committee received over 63 responses, (25%) including some of Sheffield's largest employers. We tabulated and analyzed:

- Responses in total and
- "Large employers" as a special subset because certain needs could be seen more clearly.

Not all respondents were employers. Some came from attendees of the Business Forum, which was held in Dewey Hall in the spring of 2003, and others were sole proprietorships.

The purpose of the questionnaire was to give the Economic Development subcommittee input from the business community in order to formulate meaningful recommendations. All work was done and paid for by volunteers.

Public Workshops.

The Steering Committee and subcommittees coordinated a series of workshops for Sheffield residents to identify and discuss issues facing the community, and to identify desired future actions:

- Community Visioning Workshop 1 (November 23, 2002)
- Community Visioning Workshop 2 (January 28, 2003)
- Master Plan Joint Subcommittee Workshop (February 10, 2003)
- Sheffield Student Workshop (January 8, 2003)
- Sheffield Business & Economic Development Forum (April 7, 2003)
- Sheffield Farmers Forum (July 21, 2003)
- Public Official and Civic Organization Working Sessions (June 3 & 10, 2004)
- Culminating Public Forum (June 18, 2004)

The visioning workshops facilitated a public discussion of Sheffield's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats (SWOT). Participants were asked, "what do you think might happen in Sheffield", not just "what would you like to see happen." Such workshops help educate the community about the existing conditions and forces that shape the community, and they identify points on which residents agree or disagree, helping to build a common framework through listening and dialogue.

An estimated 100 residents participated in the initial visioning workshops, and as a result some 50 people signed up to work on various subcommittees. A workshop for the subcommittee participants helped them identify town conditions and trends and review community survey results and preliminary goals.

To gain insights from key citizen groups, the Steering Committee facilitated workshops with local high school students, business owners, and farmers. A full report on all public workshops and forums is included in Appendix 3.

Other participation efforts included:

- Special presentations to the Board of Selectmen and Planning Board and to various other local and regional organizations.
- An open house and exhibit at the Sheffield Fair in September 2003 showing maps and interim reports and providing residents the opportunity to ask questions of subcommittee members about the information, and share their own thoughts and vision for the Town.
- The Sheffield Master Plan Website was developed and housed on the Dufresne-Henry website to keep people informed on the progress of the plan, upcoming meetings, and on ways to get involved.
- Master Plan Resource Desks were created at Town Hall and Bushnell Sage Memorial Library including sections of the master plan, maps, sample plans and documents from other communities, and other publications of interest.

Master Plan Subcommittees.

The Steering Committee established four subcommittees to ensure that the plan was grounded in the community, as follows:

- Housing
- Transportation and Public Facilities & Services
- Economic Development
- Open Space/Recreation/Land Use

Each of these subcommittees held numerous meetings over a nine-month period from April to December, 2003 to review and draft sections of the master plan, conduct additional research, hold public forums, interview key stakeholders and solution providers, and formulate goals, actions and strategies. An additional survey of 275 businesses was conducted by the Economic Development Subcommittee, and the Farmers Forum was sponsored jointly by the Economic Development and Open Spaces, Recreation and Land Use Subcommittees.

4. Organization of the Plan

The plan is divided into three general sections:

- A Vision for Sheffield
- Current Trends and Conditions for key aspects of Town life, each with a set of recommendations for action
- The Community Action Plan & Recommended Next Steps to Maintain Momentum

A Vision for Sheffield. This summarizes how townspeople see our community now, and what we would like Sheffield to be in the future. The *Town Master Plan*'s inventory, analyses, and action recommendations are all geared to work from the present toward the community's desired future.

Current Trends and Conditions. This section's reports assess and document current demographics and housing; economic conditions; natural, agricultural, open space, recreational and historic and cultural resources, transportation issues; and public services and facilities in Sheffield. The land use section is a traditional master-plan element synthesizing that data to present future land-use scenarios, potential development impacts, and growth management ideas.

Each of these reports contains the most up-to-date data available, along with recent independent studies and reports. Each ends with a plan of goals, strategies, and action steps. Those interested in more in-depth information can refer to additional reports in the Appendices to the Plan.

The Community Action Plan & Next Steps to Maintain Momentum. This section ties together the ideas and recommendations developed in the previous reports. It lays out specific goals, strategies and actions for enhancing and managing future growth in housing, economic opportunities, resource protection, historic preservation, transportation improvements, and improvement of municipal facilities and services. The Action Plan ends with a set of recommendations regarding how to move from this planning effort into an on-going, proactive action effort.

2. WHO WE ARE & HOW WE LIVE

Demographic Trends & Housing Conditions

1. Background

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

2. Summary of Findings

Current Housing Conditions¹

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

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

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

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

KEY FACTS ABOUT SHEFFIELD POPULATION AND HOUSING

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

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

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

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

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

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

3. Local and Regional Population Trends³

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

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

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

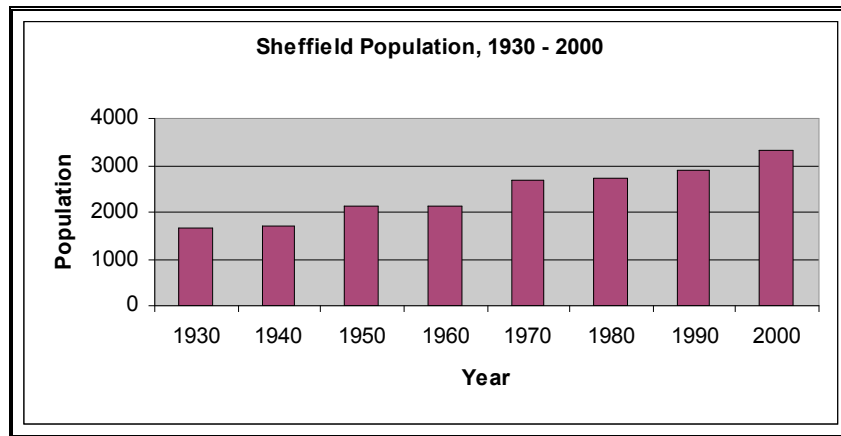
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Source: U.S. Census

Geographic Population Distribution

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

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

Source: U.S. Census

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

Because of Sheffield's relatively large land mass

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

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

Age Distribution

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

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

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

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

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

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

Racial and Ethnic Composition

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

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

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

Native Place of Birth

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

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

Source: U.S. Census

Educational Attainment

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

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

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

Source: U.S. Census

Household Income

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

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

Source: U.S. Census

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

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

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

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

Seasonal Population

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

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

4. Sheffield’s Housing Stock

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

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

Source: U.S. Census

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

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

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

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

Source: U.S. Census

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

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

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

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

Source: U.S. Census

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

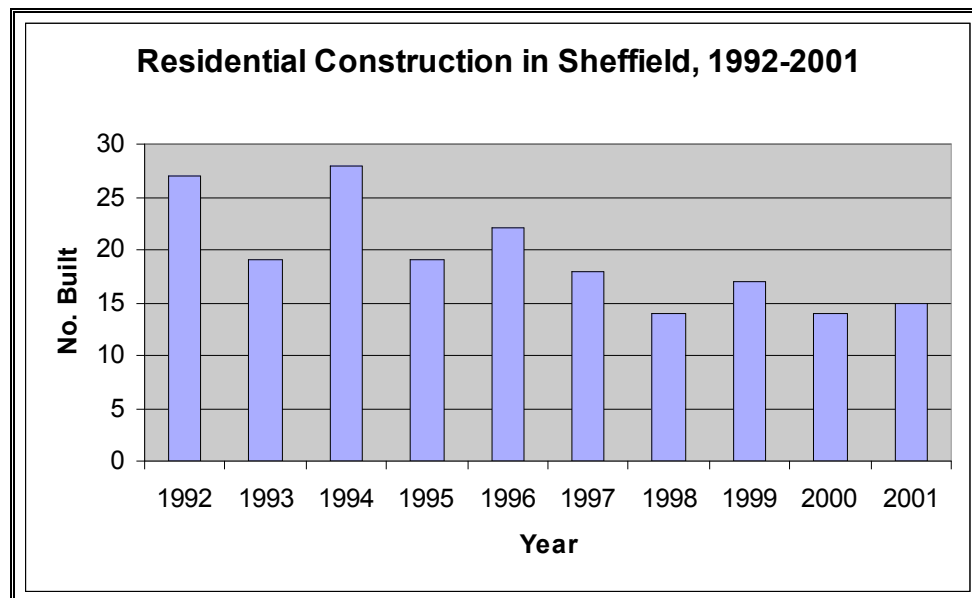
The majority of homes in Sheffield are heated with oil, which has increased slightly since 1990. While the use of propane has also increased, the use of electricity and wood have declined as a primary source of heating fuel. Comparatively, Berkshire County residents use less oil (approximately 50%) as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

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

Source: U.S. Census

5. Recent Housing Development

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



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

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

Source: Sheffield Assessors Office

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Source: Sheffield Assessors Office

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

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

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

Source: Housing for Everyone Final Report, May 2002

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

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

6. Home Sales & Cost Trends

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

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

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

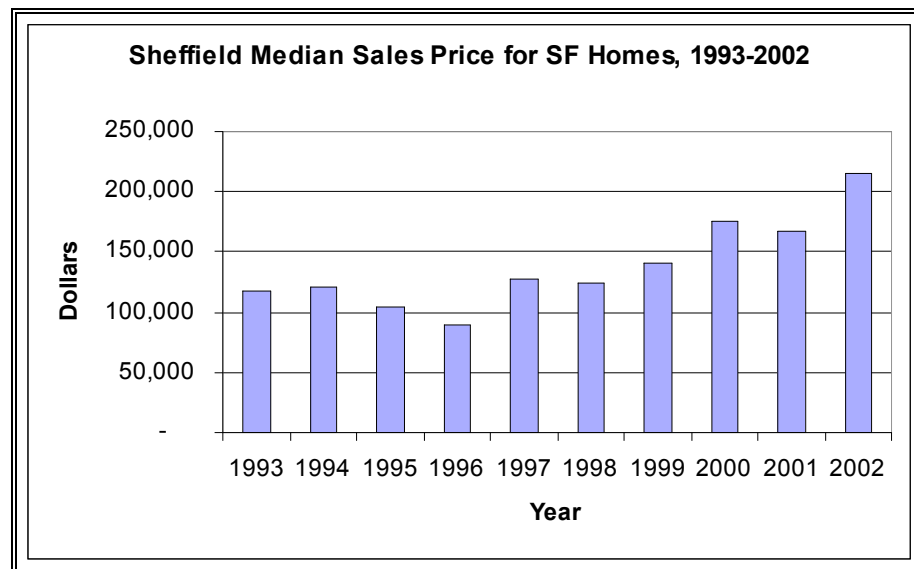
Source: U.S. Census

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

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

Source: the Warren Group

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



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

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

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

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

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

7. Home and Rental Vacancy Rates & Costs

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

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

8. Housing Cost Burden⁶

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

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

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

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

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

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

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

Source: U.S. Census

9. Housing Affordability Gap

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

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

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

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

10. Anticipated Housing Needs

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

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

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

Common Definition of Affordable Housing

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Source: Mass. Dept. of Housing & Community Development

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

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

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

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

Anticipated Housing Needs

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

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

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

11. Housing Assistance Programs

Rehabilitation Programs:

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

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

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

Tax Relief Programs:

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

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

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

Regional Housing Organizations:

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

Private Funding Opportunity

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

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

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

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

HOUSING ACTION PLAN

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

Overall Goal

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

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

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

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

Housing Objectives

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

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

Housing Recommendations

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

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

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

a. Appoint a Housing Partnership Committee.

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

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

b. Establish housing ownership and management entities.

Some possible options are the following:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

a. Identify properties for affordable housing opportunities.

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

b. Evaluate an Accessory Apartment Amnesty Program.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

d. Encourage “life cycle” housing in Sheffield.

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

e. Use quality site development and construction practices.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

b. Consider a demolition delay ordinance.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

f. Prepare for Chapter 40B Comprehensive Permits

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

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

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

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

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

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

i. Consider alternative housing accommodations for the elderly.

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

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

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

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

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

a. Rehabilitation Programs.

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

b. Tax Relief Programs.

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

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

c. Regional Housing Organizations.

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

d. Private Funding Opportunity.

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

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

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

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

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

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

b. Consider an Open Space Residential By-law.

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

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

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

d. Encourage the use of common driveways where appropriate.

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

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

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

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

3. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

1. Background

To understand Sheffield's economic base, public input was sought through community workshops, public surveys, and the work of the Economic Development Sub-committee. The direct participation by local stakeholders not only resulted in an economic profile of the community but a realistic evaluation of Sheffield's economic strengths and weaknesses. Various data sources were used to create a profile, which illustrates the potential for and constraints to future economic growth in Sheffield.

In developing a plan for Sheffield's future economic development the broader notion of community development should be a strong underlying theme. Community development relates to Sheffield's well being and the quality of life of its residents as well as fundamental business retention and expansion goals. Economic development does not have to be at odds with other community goals. Attributes such as open space, agricultural lands, community character, or significant natural resources can and do enhance the Town's desire to increase income, employment, and fiscal strength, so should be supported by economic development not have economic development occur at the expense of these essential attributes. For this reason, the overall goal of this section is to identify economic growth opportunities in keeping with community character and quality of life in Sheffield.

Overall, the Sheffield economy has been steadily rising over the past 10 years as measured by total annual payroll (up 76% since 1991), by the number of business establishments (45% increase), and by total employment (37% increase). Since 1990, the average total growth in the trade and service sectors in the South Route 7 Corridor Subregion has been nearly 14%. Sheffield has accounted for a significant amount of this growth ranking 2nd only to Lee in percent increase in the Subregion. There has also been a steady resurgence of agriculture and related industries and the antiques and tourism-related industries remain strong.

2. Overview of Economic Issues

Facts: General Socio-Economic Statistics

<u>Characteristic</u>	<u>Sheffield</u>	<u>National</u>
Total Population, 2000	3,335	272,928,770
Total Housing Units, 2000	1,634	NA
Number of Households	1,358	102,437,178
Median HH Income, 1999	\$45,082	\$39,994
HH Income Under \$50K	19.4%	62.3%
HH Income \$50-\$100K	28.4%	28.4%
HH Income Over \$100K	13.8%	9.3%
Average Home Value	\$153,600	\$111,667
Average Rent	\$565	\$414

Source: Census 2000

South Berkshire's scenic beauty, equal proximity between Boston and New York City, and cultural opportunities define the area's attraction for visitors and second homeowners. These same qualities maintain a high quality of life for year-round residents, but also make it a challenging place for them to live and work. An overview of key local and regional economic trends follows:

- Overall, Sheffield's collection of businesses is well balanced for a small rural community with a broad distribution of employment in several sectors including agriculture, manufacturing and tourism related businesses and services.
- Sheffield's unemployment rate has consistently been lower than the state over the past 15 years, and in 2001 the town reached a 13-year low of only 2% unemployment.
- While some traditional sources of employment such as manufacturing have been steadily declining in Berkshire County and the State as well, others like agriculture and tourism have changed or moved with the times and continue to be an integral part of the economy.
- In most South County communities, including Sheffield, the economic base is small and comprised mostly of lower-wage service jobs.
- Economic development is a primary concern in Berkshire County as the loss in population and employers (although not in Sheffield) over several decades has resulted in a diminished regional workforce.
- The cost of housing regionally, somewhat driven by the strong second home demand, has climbed markedly, adding to the recent influx of year-round labor force.
- Sheffield was the only community in the South Berkshire Subregion where the ratio of jobs per establishment declined during the 1990s meaning that the average business in Sheffield is getting smaller (this likely reflects the number of people who are self-employed).
- Employers in the South County housing market pay the least competitive wages in Berkshire County.
- As of January 2003, a total of 188 employers were identified in Sheffield,¹ 158 private for-profit and non-profit businesses and 30 non-consumer services (i.e. organizations, private schools, government services, and religious institutions).
- Between 1992 and 2001, Sheffield residents employed in the trade sector increase by 28% and those in the service sector increased by over 73%.

¹ The Sheffield Business Inventory was obtained in September 2002 from InfoUSA, an online market analysis service, and reviewed for accuracy by the Sheffield Assessors Office in January, 2003.

- The median sales price for single-family homes has risen sharply in the last 5 years from \$124,750 in 1998 to \$212,000 in 2002 (an increase of 70%).
- The Rural District comprises the vast majority of land in Sheffield (94%) and contains the highest number of businesses of the 4 zoning districts in Town.
- Local residents were asked “what type of businesses would you like to see encouraged or discouraged in town?” and the highest responses were: Eating Establishments (89%), Agricultural Businesses (88%), Home Businesses (85%), and Professional and Personal Services (80%).

3. Guiding Principles for Economic Enhancement

In evaluating local and regional economic conditions, many new ideas were generated for Sheffield’s economic development. In order to formulate and carry out effective economic enhancement strategies the following guiding principles are recommended for Sheffield which were grouped under the following guiding principles to formalize and implement effective economic enhancement strategies 1) Provide business representation and support cottage industries; 2) Enhance town identity; 3) Update Business Park criteria; 4) Upgrade technology and reduce energy use; 5) Update zoning and bylaws; 6) Support agriculture and forestry industries; and 7) Develop tourism:

- Local economic development efforts should focus on maintaining/enhancing Sheffield’s diverse economy, its rural character and increasing wage levels for local residents
- Ensure that land use regulations and policies effectuate the type and location of business development desired by the community and supportable by the local market.
- Identify and seek out economic development programs aimed at balancing the desire to lessen the residential burden for local services while providing new incentives for targeted business investment and expansion.
- Plan for infrastructure improvements needed to support existing and attract new businesses to targeted areas.
- Involve local business leaders in developing and implementing marketing and business development programs; networking and coordinating among existing businesses; and working in partnership with town government and the community.
- Initiate programs for business retention, expansion and recruitment strategies which target employment opportunities for local residents at the same time, creating training opportunities to increase the skill levels of its labor force
- Build off Berkshire County’s reputation as “the nation’s premier cultural resort” in support of the many Sheffield businesses oriented toward visitors.
- Expand the local economy through eco-tourism opportunities, which has potential but which require an organized planning, marketing and infrastructure enhancement effort.

4. Regional Economic Trends

Sheffield’s business composition and labor force is closely tied to the regional economy. In fact, according to the 2000 Census an estimated two-thirds of the local workforce is employed at business establishments outside of Sheffield. The community is particularly tied to a 7-town region of South Berkshire County referred to in this section as the **South Route 7 Corridor Subregion**.² This area

² A fuller description of this Subregion and its socio-demographic trends are provided in Section 2.1: Who We Are and How We Live of the Master Plan.

is comprised of the towns located directly or in close proximity to the Route 7 Corridor including Lenox, Lee, Stockbridge, West Stockbridge, Great Barrington, Egremont, and Sheffield. Additionally, Canaan and other points to the south provide employment opportunities to Sheffield residents. The economic lifeblood of the Subregion is Route 7 itself, which serves as the primary north-south gateway into the Berkshires for residents and visitors. However, in Sheffield the highest number of businesses in any of zoning areas are in the broad rural zone, likely cottage industries and home-based businesses and the self-employed that might not be so evident in the Census, indicating a broad economic base and perhaps one of the reasons for Sheffield's 2% unemployment rate.

Size of Employment Base in South Rt. 7 Corridor Subregion, 2000 ³					
Community	Total Establishments	Total Employment	Statewide Wage Rank in Est.	% Service Jobs	Ave. Jobs Per Establishment
Egremont	48	280	337	34.3%	5.8
G. Barrington	462	4,632	259	37.2%	10.0
Lee	277	3,507	171	23.0%	12.7
Lenox	282	3,650	276	52.0%	12.9
Sheffield	120	1,221	187	24.1%	10.2
Stockbridge	108	1,316	265	66.3%	12.2
W. Stockbridge	60	277	295	19.5%	4.6
Total & Avg.	1,357	14,883	256	0	9.8

Source: Mass. Dept. of Employment & Training

Employment Base

South County's employment base is comprised mainly of private-sector workers (including private schools). During the 1990s, the total number of establishments in the Subregion grew by over 30% while the employment base grew by 17%. Sheffield was

the only community in the Subregion where the ratio of jobs per establishment declined during the 1990's indicating a trend in small business development⁴, which may be somewhat attributable to self-employment and the high number of home-based businesses and cottage industries. The increasing number of smaller businesses, both locally and regionally, is consistent with a developing trend in the northeast United States where people are finding less employment opportunities in larger corporations and are electing to work for smaller businesses or to start new home-based businesses. Even so, Sheffield still has more jobs per establishment than the subregional average. (See chart on next page.)

³ The "Total Establishments" figure is an estimate from the Massachusetts Department of Employment & Training. This figure is significantly less than town estimates and marketing firm estimates used later in this report. Town data is considered to be the most accurate and should be in terms estimating the number and type of local businesses. (State information is used for consistency in regional comparisons only).

⁴ It must be pointed out that one factor that may lead to an underestimate of local jobs is the difficulty in obtaining accurate self-employment data, which may be a substantial component of the local and regional economy.

South Rt. 7 Subregion Employment and Housing Units, 1990-2000				
Town	1990		2000	
	Employment	Total Housing Units	Employment	Total Housing Units
Egremont	334	801	280	866
G. Barrington	4,035	3,168	4,632	3,352
Lee	2,946	2,675	3,507	2,927
Lenox	3,504	2,410	3,650	2,713
Sheffield	1,007	1,502	1,221	1,634
Stockbridge	1,322	1,551	1,316	1,571
W. Stockbridge	316	722	277	769
Total & Ave.	13,464	12,829	14,883	13,832

Source: Mass. Dept. of Employment & Training

Wages – Sheffield is also above the curve in a comparison of average wages, having the second highest in the Subregion. However, throughout the Subregion, including in Sheffield, the growing cost of housing has outpaced growth in wages. While business and jobs have expanded over the past 10 years in the seven-town area, wages remain generally flat compared with other areas of the State, including other resort areas. It is not surprising that wages in Berkshire County are lower than the statewide median given the rural character of the region and distance from major economic centers. However, the majority of communities fall well below the first quartile of the State's wage hierarchy. Additionally, employers in the high-cost South County housing market pay the least competitive wages, although Sheffield is very close to the whole county average and well above the Subregion average. This statistic reinforces local and regional concerns that economic development strategies must include measures to expand affordable housing opportunities⁵.

Wages and Composition of Employment Base, 2000					
Town/County	Average Wage	Services Employment	Trade Employment	Total	% Services and Trade
Massachusetts	\$ 40,127	1,104,390	728,442	3,165,520	57.9%
Berkshire Area	\$ 29,579	21,933	15,283	61,595	60.4%
S. Rt. 7 Corridor Area					
Egremont	\$ 16,303	96	100	280	70.0%
Great Barrington	\$ 25,557	1,722	1,668	4,632	73.2%
Lee	\$ 29,403	806	1,187	3,507	56.8%
Lenox	\$ 24,414	1,898	858	3,650	75.5%
Sheffield	\$ 28,511	294	154	1,221	36.7%
Stockbridge	\$ 25,285	873	129	1,316	76.1%
W. Stockbridge	\$ 22,591	54	85	277	50.2%
Total	\$ 24,581	5,743	4,181	14,883	66.7%

Source: Mass. Dept. of Employment & Training

5. Housing for Everyone: Housing Needs, Barriers & Opportunities in South-Central Towns of Berkshire County. Community Opportunities Group, December 2002

While lower wages in South County are attributable to the prevalence of part-time or seasonal employment, an additional factor may also be the composition of the employment base. In other regions of the State, public sector jobs have driven up wage levels whereas most Berkshire County communities have low public sector employment and limited local municipal staff. Part-time employees and volunteers handle much of the public sector work in Sheffield.

Jobs-to-Housing Ratio - The seven-town Subregion has an inter-local employment base with a ratio of jobs to year-round housing units of 1.3 (i.e. there are 1.3 jobs for every year-round home within the Subregion). Economists consider a 1.5+ jobs-to-homes ratio to be optimal but the Subregion is reasonably adequate given its tourist orientation, rural nature and changing economy. Sheffield's jobs-to-homes ratio is less than the regional average and about ½ of neighboring Great Barrington, which is a regional employment center and has a significant amount of lower wage service and trade jobs. In fact, for towns employing more than 1,000 people, Sheffield has a lowest ratio of jobs to housing (0.859) than any other. This ratio grew slightly during the 1990s. While the ratio could be an indicator as to how the lack of lower cost housing may be impacting Sheffield's labor force it is likely also indicative of the strong and growing self-employment economy.

The jobs-to-housing ratio may also be influenced by the rise in average age of the Sheffield population from 34 to 41 years old over the past 20 years as more residents are reaching retirement age in town. (See *Section 2: "Who We Are and How We Live"* for demographic indicators). This change requires an examination as to why the young labor force is declining and what business demands are emerging. In light of the fact that Sheffield's population has grown 22% over the past 20 years and is expected to continue to grow at an even higher rate (25% from 1990-2010), Sheffield should consider how its changing needs would influence the business community and visa versa.

Employment, Labor Force and Housing Indicators, 2000					
Town/County	Jobs in Location	Total Labor Force	Ratio Jobs: Labor Force	Yr. Round Housing Units	Ratio Jobs: Housing
Massachusetts	3,165,520	3,277,908	0.966	252,818	1.252
Berkshire Area	61,595	65,411	0.942	60,046	1.026
S. Rt. 7 Corridor Area					
Egremont	280	744	0.376	624	0.449
Great Barrington	4,632	4,137	1.120	3,116	1.487
Lee	3,507	2,872	1.221	2,542	1.38
Lenox	3,650	2,341	1.559	2,354	1.551
Sheffield	1,221	1,684	0.725	1,422	0.859
Stockbridge	1,316	999	1.317	1,066	1.235
W. Stockbridge	277	814	0.340	632	0.438
Total	14,883	13,591	1.095	11,756	1.266

Source: Mass. Dept. of Employment & Training

Subregion Jobs-to-Labor Ratio - Compared to Berkshire County and the State as a whole, the South County Subregion appears to have a slightly higher jobs-to-labor ratio. Compared to the County as a whole, the region's jobs-to-labor ratio implies a better balance between employment and place of residence – or more opportunities to work locally or within a small “commuter-shed”⁶. However, this area also has a substantial amount of lower-wage, part-time or seasonally dependant jobs suggesting that a job-to-labor ratio of 1.1 (which may be considered positive) may actually be indicative of a part-time economy where people must work more than one job to make a living. Multiple jobs are very common. It may also indicate that jobs are difficult to fill within the labor market, or a gap between local wages and the cost of living in the community.

5. **Sheffield's Economic Base**

Business Inventory & Characteristics⁷ - As of January 2003, a total of 188 employers were identified in Sheffield including 158 private for-profit and non-profit businesses and 30 non-consumer services (i.e. organizations, private schools, government services, and religious institutions). A full inventory of Sheffield businesses is included in Appendix 5. As the table below indicates, the largest number of Sheffield businesses fall into the retail and services categories, which also provides the highest number of local jobs. The largest number of jobs in Sheffield is in the public administration category with 198 employed in 2003. In all, the public sector accounts for nearly 23% of all jobs in town primarily through the South Berkshire Regional School District and town government services.

□ *Please see Map # 12:
‘Town of Sheffield
Economic Development Inventory’
behind the MAPS tab.*

For-Profit Businesses - Retail trade businesses have the highest sales volume in Sheffield with over \$25 million in sales in 2002. Wholesale trade and manufacturing businesses also represent a significant portion of the local economy with over \$22 million and \$13 million in sales volume, respectively. However, as is the trend in the rest of the country, manufacturing is expected to taper off somewhat as this industry sector as a whole continues to decline, consolidate, and relocate, often out of the country. Sheffield, having a higher component of manufacturing jobs than neighboring towns, could experience greater impact if this occurs. A mitigating factor is that the vast majority of those working at the largest manufacturing employer do not live in Sheffield.

The typical Sheffield business is small and owner-operated. On average, local businesses employ just over 5 people and two of the key business sectors – retail trade and services – average even less.

⁶ See Appendix 1: Glossary of Terms

⁷ The Sheffield Business Inventory was obtained in September 2002 from InfoUSA, an online market analysis service, and reviewed for accuracy by the Sheffield Assessors Office in April 2003. Town records indicate there are approximately 117 additional businesses registered with the Town, which may include small cottage industries, home occupations, self-employed workers, those with business mailing addresses in town, and new businesses.

This may be a factor in future economic strategy as the vast majority of these businesses are located along Route 7 and utilize much of the commercially-zoned land in the corridor. However, small businesses have been emerging as cottage industries throughout town, most notably in the rural zones, and are a concern to residents who wish to maintain their neighborhoods as fully residential. Current regulations allow for this transition as long as businesses create a physical façade that conforms to residential housing. However, more consideration should be given to increased traffic, noise, lights, facades and the potential impact on the environment, and parameters for those be included in the regulations as well to maximize compatibility. Agricultural, forestry and antiques-related businesses are also important in these areas.

Most of the larger employers in the South County Subregion are located in Great Barrington, Lenox and Lee. The two largest employers are Canyon Ranch of the Berkshires in Lenox and Fairview Hospital in Great Barrington. In Sheffield the largest employers are Sheffield Plastics, Inc., although very few Sheffield residents work there, Mt. Everett Regional School District, and Berkshire School.

Size of Private Businesses in Sheffield		
Square Feet	Number	% of Total
0-2,499	72	44%
2,500-9,999	62	40%
10,000-39,999	22	14%
40,000+	3	2%

As is expected in a local economy with a high percentage of retail trade and service businesses, the average size of private businesses (in terms of square footage) in Sheffield is quite small. In fact, of the 158 private business establishments in town, 134 (or 84%) are less than 10,000 square feet. Only 3 industries in town exceed 40,000 square feet in floor space. This is an important

consideration for establishing dimensional zoning requirements on commercial and industrially zoned land such as minimum lot sizes, frontage, and setbacks. Generally, minimum lot sizes and frontage requirements in Sheffield General Business (GB) and Commercial (C) districts tend to be larger than necessary for the average business operation. At the same time, few regulations prevent large business lots from emerging in rural districts.

Retail trade, construction and service industries have been growing in Sheffield and are expected to continue to grow over the next 10 years. The total number of agricultural operations had declined slowly, but in recent years has begun to grow again and employment has increased steadily as a result of a new diversity in the field such as tree farmers, organic growers, and landscaping suppliers. Agricultural businesses represent 7% of local businesses and 9% of local employment and remain a very important part of the Sheffield economy with growing potential.

Private Businesses on the Route 7 Corridor		
Route 7	No. of Bus.	% of Total
Main Street	18	11%
N. Main Street	35	22%
S. Main Street	18	11%
Sheffield Plain Rd.	9	6%
Subtotal	80	50%

Sheffield's primary business corridor is along Route 7 but the entire rural landscape supports the economy through tourism, agriculture and second-home development. As illustrated on the Sheffield Business Inventory & Economic Opportunities Map, the major concentrations of businesses in town are located either directly on Route 7 or within ½ mile of the

roadway with many of the smaller home-based and cottage industries sprinkled throughout the rural district. This is consistent with the community's growing retail and service sectors, which are reliant on this major regional highway for traffic volumes and visibility and the proliferation of home-based businesses. Much of the retail trade sector is tourist-oriented and people visiting the Berkshires for vacations or weekend retreats heavily travel the Route 7 corridor.

Along the Route 7 corridor, the highest concentration of business are dispersed between the Great Barrington border at the North end of town and Silver Street with the highest percentage of businesses located in the Town Center. Access on the southern half of the corridor is controlled by the State and is largely undeveloped and undevelopable. However, much of this land is in agricultural use and serves as a rural gateway for tourists heading to the Berkshires. It is a critical part of the local economy as well as the regional economy.

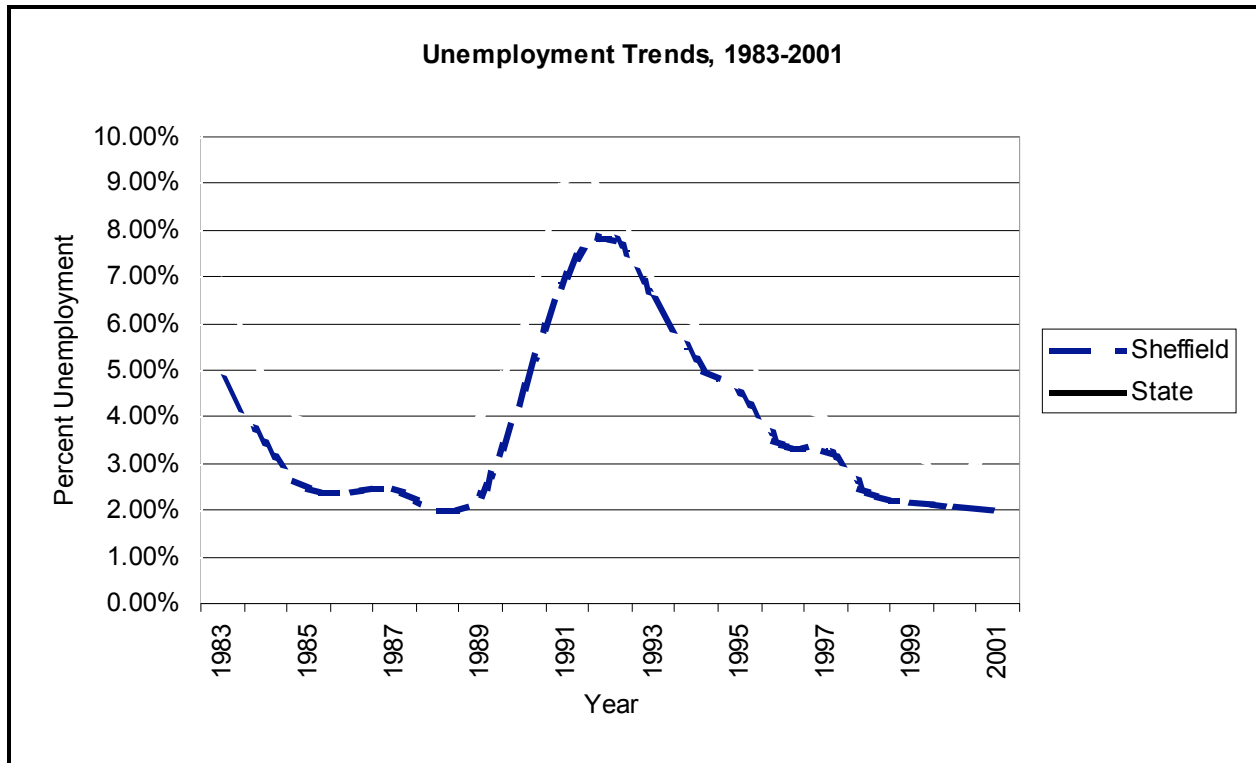
Overall, Sheffield's inventory of businesses is well balanced for a small rural community with a broad distribution of employment in several sectors including agriculture, tourism-related and some manufacturing. However, business growth over the past 10 years has not kept pace with residential growth. This is reflected in the tax base, which shows marginal increase in commercial and industrial property values. (Residents have cited "high taxes" as an area of concern in the community survey although they are not high in comparison to surrounding communities.)

Non-Profit Sector - Sheffield has become a significant center of non-profit organizations, which provide employment as well as promote cultural and ecological tourism. Besides eight churches and a large private preparatory school, Berkshire School, these include:

- Landmark Volunteers, a national organization headquartered in Sheffield, attracting high school students to nationwide summer volunteer programs
- Bartholomew's Cobble and Colonel Ashley House, (Berkshire Center of a state-wide organization, Trustees of the Reservations)
- The Nature Conservancy (Berkshire Center of a large international organization) which employs a staff as well as volunteers from other geographies
- Sheffield Land Trust, a driving force for land and farm protection, sponsors numerous programs.
- Sweet Water Trust, a wilderness conservation foundation.
- Barrington Stage, a once seasonal theatre organization, performs at the Consolati Performing Arts Center at Mt. Everett High School, has expanded to year-round programs in town although their primary season remains the summer.
- Berkshire Choral Festival draws in over eleven hundred choristers each summer for five separate performances along with roughly 4000 concert goers, headquartered in Sheffield, with additional international performances after the Sheffield season.
- Sheffield Art League, a southern Berkshires organization whose art shows are based in Sheffield all summer long
- Sheffield Historical Society which owns several buildings open for tourism and sponsors lectures
- Sheffield Friendly Union, which owns and operates Dewey Hall, sponsors lectures and community events and has housed the Sheffield Senior Center for many years. The Hall is available for rent for additional activities.

In addition, many other organizations including the New York City Bicyclists Association and other bicycling groups, Appalachian Mountain Club, and informal hiking groups flock to Sheffield for eco-tourism. Sheffield can benefit from filling the needs of those who come for eco-tourism pursuits. However there are voids that need to be filled to fully capture the opportunities. These include public restroom facilities (there are none, not even at gas stations), public transportation, additional high quality restaurants, town brochures and coordinated programs.

The Labor Force - Over the past 20 years, Sheffield's labor force has declined and then steadily risen as the local and regional economy has changed and adjusted over time. From a high of 1,741 people in the labor force in 1984, this number dropped to 1,552 in 1990. During the same period of time, there was a national recession, and regional manufacturers that employed many Sheffield residents were rapidly scaling back or closing altogether. The drop in the labor force was coupled with a rise in unemployment, peaking in 1991 and 1992 with levels over 7%.



Labor force & Unemployment Trends in Sheffield; 1990-2001					
Year	Labor force	Employ- ment	Unemploy- ment	Unemploy- ment	Statewide
				Rate	Rate
1990	1,552	1,480	72	4.60%	6.00%
1991	1,555	1,446	109	7.00%	9.10%
1992	1,573	1,451	122	7.80%	8.60%
1993	1,655	1,547	108	6.50%	6.90%
1994	1,668	1,582	86	5.20%	6.00%
1995	1,671	1,596	75	4.50%	5.40%
1996	1,687	1,630	57	3.40%	4.30%
1997	1,740	1,683	57	3.30%	4.00%
1998	1,717	1,676	41	2.40%	3.30%
1999	1,698	1,661	37	2.20%	3.20%
2000	1,640	1,605	35	2.10%	2.60%
2001	1,712	1,678	34	2.00%	3.70%

*Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Division of Employment and Training
(Local Area Statistics)*

Since 1990 Sheffield's labor force has rebounded and steadily grown. With a full two-thirds of the 2000 population over the age of 16 (1,789) included, the Town's labor force exceeds the county and state levels as a percentage. Unemployment levels in Sheffield have also dropped significantly since 1991. While Sheffield's unemployment rate has consistently been lower than the state over the past 15 years, in 2001 the town reached a 13-year low of only 2% unemployment.

Employment by Business Sector

Overall, the Sheffield economy has been steadily rising over the past 10 years as measured by total annual payroll (up 76% since 1991), by the number of business establishments (45% increase), and by total employment (37% increase). However, a number of the individual business sectors have changed significantly as regional and national trends have affected Sheffield.

While government services, TCPU (transportation, communication, and public utilities), and FIRE (finance, insurance and real estate) have grown slowly and steadily over the past 15 years, the service and trade sectors have risen rapidly. Between 1992 and 2001, Sheffield residents employed in the trade sector increased by 28% and those in the service sector increased by over 73%.

In 1985 manufacturing industries employed the most Sheffield residents followed by government services. In 2001, manufacturing was still a significant employer with job numbers slightly above the 1985 levels. However, this sector has been declining over the past 5 years while, at the same time, the service sector has become Sheffield's largest employer. (See chart on next page.)

Trends in Employment and Wages in Sheffield, 1985-2001												
Year	Total Annual Payroll	Average Annual Wage	Establishments	Total Employment	Agriculture Forestry Fishing	Govt.	Const.	Manu.	TCPU	Trade	FIRE	Services
1985	13,784,900	14,854	83	928	Confidential	223	96	241	40	119	Conf.	185
1986	14,593,100	16,433	88	888	Confidential	199	99	218	41	119	Conf.	201
1987	16,104,200	17,409	97	925	Confidential	196	112	209	50	132	Conf.	205
1988	18,838,801	19,145	108	984	16	207	124	222	53	146	4	204
1989	20,690,740	20,265	110	1,021	29	Conf.	132	217	51	171	Conf.	212
1990	21,660,232	21,510	110	1,007	34	Conf.	114	240	52	136	Conf.	202
1991	21,797,951	22,589	102	965	30	Conf.	98	234	46	114	Conf.	199
1992	22,778,883	24,003	94	949	27	Conf.	77	243	41	132	16	192
1993			97	973	24	Conf.	65	268	44	134	15	197

	23,332,503	23,980										
1994	25,247,188	23,999	103	1,052	24	Conf.	72	289	48	142	14	223
1995	26,149,581	24,577	105	1,064	27	Conf.	73	280	46	152	Conf.	236
1996	28,248,443	24,867	118	1,136	33	Conf.	72	287	51	162	16	247
1997	31,056,648	25,709	118	1,208	47	Conf.	80	309	Conf.	145	16	265
1998	34,515,755	28,361	119	1,217	50	250	80	305	57	163	17	294
1999	34,812,126	28,511	120	1,221	57	239	101	300	57	154	19	294
2000	38,930,584	30,630	130	1271	64	58	117	297	50	183	15	300
2001	40,166,798	30,898	136	1300	69	248	145	272	49	169	15	333

Commonwealth of Massachusetts Division of Employment and Training; TCPU = Transportation, Communication and Public Utilities; FIRE = Finance, Insurance and Real Estate; Conf = data suppressed due to confidentiality; Note: Changes in industry definitions occurred in 1988, so data prior to that year are not strictly comparable to the more recent data.

As in the rest of the country, some traditional sources of employment such as manufacturing have been steadily declining in Berkshire County and the State. Conversely, residential growth, particularly in the South County Region, has spurred significant employment opportunities in the construction, retail trade, and service sectors. In Sheffield there has also been a steady resurgence of agriculture and related industries and the antiques and tourism related industries remain strong. Since 1990, the average total growth in the trade and service sectors in the South Route 7 Corridor Subregion has been nearly 14%. Sheffield has accounted for a significant amount of this growth ranking 2nd only to Lee in percent increase in the Subregion.

Employment Change in South Rt. 7 Corridor Communities ⁸					
	Total Employment			% Change	
Town/County	1990	1999	% Change	Trade Employment	Service Employment
Massachusetts	2,929,475	3,165,520	8.1%	4.1%	26.9%
Berkshire Area	61,023	61,595	0.9%	4.0%	13.9%
South Rt.7 Corridor Area					
Egremont	334	280	-16.2%	-11.5%	-22.0%
Great Barrington	4,035	4,632	14.8%	23.5%	4.6%
Lee	2,946	3,507	19.0%	39.6%	51.5%
Lenox	3,504	3,650	4.2%	-4.5%	3.7%
Sheffield	1,007	1,221	21.3%	13.2%	45.5%
Stockbridge	1,322	1,316	-0.5%	-37.7%	43.3%
W. Stockbridge	316	277	-12.3%	-27.4%	-43.8%
Total	13,464	14,883	10.5%	13.9%	13.9%

⁸ Since the late 1990s, the number of government jobs attributed to Berkshire County increased by 672 in one year – 1996-1997, when the reporting change went into effect.

Employment in the construction industry has also risen steadily in Sheffield over the past 10 years to an all-time high in 2001. This sector dropped off substantially in the early 1990s as the recession took hold and fewer homes were built. Since then, first and second home development has increased rapidly and the local construction industry has followed. It is also interesting to note that a direct result of the fast-paced residential development has been a surge in the number of small lawn care, landscaping, and other home service enterprises.

6. Real Estate Trends

Commercial & Industrial Property Values - Taxable commercial and industrial property value has gained little over the past 10 years in Sheffield due primarily to limited construction in these areas. The most common types of commercial and industrial building stock in Sheffield are warehousing, distribution facilities, and smaller and older retail establishments. These properties do not typically appreciate at a very high rate, and are not expected to increase the local tax base.

Residential Property Values & Home Sales - Unlike commercial and industrial property, residential property values have risen steadily since the early 1990s. Much of the residential development in Sheffield is categorized as second home development with generally lesser demands for municipal facilities and services. While second home development has buffered the overall burden from residential development over the past 10 years, without an appreciable increase in commercial and industrial property values, the effect on the overall municipal tax rate has not been significant and it continues to rise. Additionally, more second homes are being converted into full-time residences as more part-time residents reach retirement age or are able to conduct their business from Sheffield due to technological advances and telecommuting. This trend may also place more demand on local services.

The median sales price for homes in Sheffield has increased significantly over the past 10 years. Adding all residential property together (single family and multi-family), the median sales price has doubled from \$85,000 to \$170,000. The vast majority of homes sold over the past 5 years in Sheffield have been single-family homes. The median sales price for single-family homes has also risen sharply in the last 5 years from \$124,750 in 1998 to \$212,000 in 2002 (an increase of 70%).

There are at least two significant relationships between businesses and residents relative to real estate: (1) In the community survey, respondents noted that “high taxes” were what they “liked least” about living in Sheffield. It is important for residents to understand that high taxes are partly a result of having such a small business base with which to share municipal costs and of the increased residential development, which typically costs the town more in services than it pays in taxes. They will need to make trade-offs about whether to encourage businesses (although not all businesses provide significant tax base so careful analysis of what to encourage should be done) or to continue to shoulder the tax base; (2) Businesses indicate being hampered in recruiting personnel by the high cost of housing.

7. Economic Opportunities by Zoning District

Commercial & Industrial Properties by Zoning District					
Zoning District	Total Acreage	Percent of Total Land	Existing Bus.*	% of Total Businesses	Ratio of Acres to Businesses
Rural	28,178	94%	61	38%	462
Commercial	537	2%	37	23%	15
General Business	827	2%	12	7%	69
Village Center	760	2%	52	32%	15

* Based on interpretation of Sheffield GIS Maps and review by the Assessors Office

Sheffield is divided into four (4) zoning districts:

- Commercial (C)
- Rural (R)
- General Business (GB)
- Village Center (VC).

Approximately 2,124 acres of land are zoned for commercial and industrial uses (or 6% of all lands in Town). A fair amount of land remains available in Sheffield to accommodate future development between the Commercial, General Business, and Village Center Zoning Districts. Most of this land is centered on Route 7 and within a ¼ mile of the highway except for the Sheffield Business Park. There are also substantial opportunities for infill development and redevelopment in the C, GB and VC Districts, and small home-based businesses in various parts of Town, primarily in the Rural District where numerous cottage and home-based businesses already exist.

Rural District - The Rural District comprises the vast majority of land in Sheffield (94%) and contains the highest number of businesses of the 4 zoning districts in Town. Several types of business including many traditional commercial and industrial uses are allowed by right or special permit. A number of well-established Sheffield businesses are located in the Rural District. Examples such as farms, sand and gravel operations, small distribution centers, manufacturing, landscaping and nursery operations and in-home businesses are scattered throughout Town.

While some existing commercial and industrial uses may not be compatible with newer residential development, they are grandfathered and permitted to continue as they are. However, non-residential uses permitted by right and special permit in the Rural District should be carefully

reviewed to prevent potential negative impacts on the surrounding areas in terms of traffic, noise, lighting, pollution, aesthetic impacts, and property values. Upwards limits might be established in terms of noise, light, traffic, etc. as standing guidelines for the Town. As noted above, 38% of Sheffield's businesses are located in the Rural District (a predominately residential zone), which is more than in each of the Commercial, Village Center and General Business Districts.

The Rural District is well positioned for economic development in terms of agricultural businesses, low key home-based businesses, and discrete recreational and ecotourism businesses, all of which could play a major role in the Town's future economy. The residential areas along the Housatonic River and Taconic Ridge offer many opportunities for passive recreational uses such as canoeing, camping, fishing, hiking, mountain biking, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling and a variety of other activities that would expand and diversify the local economy.

There are also few areas within the Rural District that may provide opportunities for small-scale commercial development serving the surrounding neighborhood area. Providing basic services (i.e. food and other necessities) would be a convenience to residents and possibly reduce the number of vehicle trips and length of travel for everyday needs. There is potential for these small nodes along Route 41 and in the Ashley Falls Village Area.

Node Development

Nodes are small scale mixed use districts that provide basic services and conveniences to the surrounding neighborhood such as a small grocery, restaurant, pharmacy, or cleaning service.

A significant economic opportunity in the Rural District exists for home-based occupations. There is a growing national trend in "work at home" and small in-home businesses. Sheffield has home occupation regulations permitting small scale and discrete in-home businesses. Home businesses provide an important opportunity for small entrepreneurs and should be encouraged. They can often serve as business incubators for small growing operations that eventually may relocate to established commercial and industrial

districts without a great deal of recruitment effort by the community. Home-based businesses also keep local and talented business people in the community.

General Business District - The four (4) General Business Districts (GB) comprise 827 acres (or 2% of the land in town) and are dispersed along or in close proximity of Route 7. In all, only 12 businesses (including agricultural operations) were identified in this zoning district. Two sections are located in the northern part of Sheffield: on the west side of Route 7 between Lime Kiln Road and South Egremont Road; and east of Route 7 between the Housatonic River, Kellogg Road and Boardman Street. There are only 9 businesses located in these two areas and several development constraints are present including wetlands, valuable farmlands and the close proximity of the railroad tracks parallel to Route 7 on the west side.

Another area zoned GB is located just south of the Town Center on the east side of Route 7 and bordered by the Housatonic River. While this area constitutes the largest section of the GB District, several constraints exist including the floodplain along the Housatonic River, wetlands, and a large percentage of lands located in the Water Supply Protection District. Most of this land is also actively farmed, which is probably the best long-term economic use of the area.

The **Sheffield Business Park** is included in the GB District and located in the southeast section of town between East Stahl Road and Hewins Street. The Park was previously a working farm and enrolled in the Chapter 61 Program. The Town created the Park in 1994 when it exercised its “right of first refusal” and bought the property, which had been planned for a residential subdivision. The Town subsequently received a Public Works Economic Development (PWED) grant from the State to construct the roadway and install utilities.

The Sheffield Business Park was subdivided into 5 parcels each just over 4 acres. The original intention of the Town was to provide an opportunity for light manufacturing and other clean industries that would add to the tax base, create employment opportunities for local residents and be compatible with the surrounding residential neighborhood. The buildout projections for the park were anticipated at 30 years with the first tenant perhaps in 7-10 years, since it was more important to have the “right” first tenant to set the tone for the Business Park than to quickly get just any tenant. The Town is still looking for that right tenant, although a number of inquiries have been made over the years by various businesses, and changes in the business and economic climate since the Park was initiated, create a need to update some of the criteria to recognize the full potential of this resource. Some of the potential constraints to attracting light industry and manufacturing are as follows:

Update and revise the criteria used to consider and accept tenants for the Business Park, to bring in jobs and tax revenues. Changes in the business and economic climate since the Business Park was created nearly 10 years ago (recognizing the local constraints to attracting light industry and clean manufacturing, in addition to the national trend of such jobs moving overseas), create a need to update some of the criteria to recognize the full potential of this resource..

- Manufacturing and related industries have been declining in Sheffield, the region and the nation with much of the industry moving overseas.
- Sheffield has a relatively small labor market to support manufacturing and only 2% unemployment, so many prospective businesses would have to bring/relocate their workforce with them.
- Sheffield housing prices have been rising dramatically over the past 5 years making it more difficult for those employed by manufacturing industries to find affordable housing locally.
- The lack of public water and sewer services sharply narrows the types of businesses that can locate in the Park
- The minimum lot size of 4 acres is fairly restrictive and may be more than necessary or desired by smaller businesses.
- The remote location is less desirable for industries that rely on good access to major highways such as the Massachusetts Turnpike and railroad service and other business parks closer to the Turnpike and railroad are still looking for tenants and will draw them first.
- Several other cities and towns in Berkshire County have a surplus of existing Town land and buildings targeted locally and by the state for economic development. Most also have an advantage over Sheffield in attracting manufacturing and light industry in terms of labor force, housing prices, infrastructure, and highway access.

The Town should reexamine the long-term goals for the Sheffield Business Park. It may be that the land is better suited to attract smaller businesses in growing local industry sectors such as services and construction, or to support growth sectors such as agriculture, retail and tourism. For example, there are several types of businesses located on Route 7 that are not reliant on traffic and visibility for businesses. Some examples include construction, wholesale landscaping, agricultural processing,

warehousing and distribution, automobile repair and services, and storage facilities. If these types of business were to relocate into the Sheffield Business Park, lands on Route 7 could be reused for growing business sectors such as retail and services. Any plans to expand the types of uses in the Park, however, must consider the needs of surrounding residential areas in terms of traffic, landscaping, screening, and other potential impacts. In concert with plans for the Business Park, Sheffield should plan for low-cost housing to attract potential employees in order to increase the attractiveness of the Park. The Town also needs to keep the Park attractive to maintain the appeal to a diverse group of high-quality businesses.

Commercial District – The Commercial District is located along Route 7 in three locations including the northern boundary between the town line and Lime Kiln Road; the area south of Sheffield-Egremont Road and north of Cook Road; and on the west side of Route 7 south of Root Lane to Rannapo Road. There are generally scattered commercial developments in this district between open spaces, wetland areas, farm fields, and the existing tree line.

Existing development in the area consists primarily of agriculture, landscaping businesses, storage facilities contractor yards, auto service and repair, light industrial uses, and storage operations. There are retail establishments mostly in the middle and southern areas of the district. While the district permits a variety of retail, service and light industrial uses, there is a lack of consistency in the types of development existing and desired in the district.

While there are a number of undeveloped or underdeveloped parcels in the Commercial district, the lack of utilities, existing wetland and floodplain issues, and limited depth on the west side due to the proximity of the rail line limit development opportunities. Under the existing scenario, this area is likely to grow as a low-density, mixed-use area with limited retail, auto services, storage, and light industrial uses. However, its best potential may be for low-density, well landscaped/screened light industrial (i.e. distribution) and medium-density residential uses that require limited utilities, protect the corridor's natural resources, enhance the existing tree line, and preserve farmlands.

Village Center District - The Village Center District (VC) is located in two (2) areas of Town, the Town Center in the central portion of the Route 7 corridor and Ashley Falls Village Area. In total, there are approximately 760 acres of land between these two portions of the district.

The Town Center portion of the VC includes lands along Route 7 from Cook Road to approximately 1,000 feet south of Root Lane. It is bordered to the east by the Housatonic River and to the west by Hubbard Brook, Schenob Brook, the north side of Berkshire School Road, east side of Salisbury Road and north side of Root Lane. The heart of the district is the Town Center, which includes a number of well-preserved historic buildings around Main Street. This portion of the VC district includes a variety of residential, commercial, religious and public uses. At the beginning of 2003, there were approximately 52 businesses of which most are in the service or retail (including restaurants) category. These are mostly small shops, restaurants, antique stores and other limited commercial uses.

The speed of traffic along Main Street is a concern in the district as this portion of Route 7 is generally wide and flat as it bisects the Town Center. However, the high traffic volumes provide excellent exposure to local businesses and with high quality signage (both public and private) as well as visibility, business operators may be able to take better advantage of passing motorists if speeds were reduced.

Several public improvements have been made to the Town Center over the past 10 years including new street trees, sidewalks, public parking, landscaping, rehabilitation of historic buildings and pedestrian amenities (the town has completed the first part of a town green enhancement project, but is waiting for the remaining funds from the state). However, of critical importance in the near future is enhancing pedestrian safety at crosswalks and improving the pedestrian connection between businesses across Route 7, the Sheffield Public Library and public schools located on Berkshire School Road.

There is limited space for future development in the VC District. The lack of public sewerage in Town is also a limiting factor in terms of business expansion in the VC District. However, infill development opportunities exist along the street frontage of Main Street, Maple Avenue, Berkshire School Road and Root Lane. In the Ashley Falls Village Center there are also infill and reuse opportunities for existing building along East Main Street, Railroad Street and School Street. The best development and redevelopment potential for both village centers is to expand small retail, restaurant, and service type uses that accommodate both resident needs and tourist desires.

Expanding Land Area for Economic Development - Increasing the amount of commercial-industrial land in Sheffield may not generate significant additional tax revenue. The Sheffield Industrial Park was established in 1994 and remains entirely vacant. The trend in local business growth is in second home and tourist-related industries, primarily located along or in close proximity to Route 7. It may be more beneficial to focus economic development efforts on enhancing this corridor through recycling, reusing and infill development on existing land and buildings.

An area of opportunity could also be in providing more transportation facilities to and from the various parts of Sheffield and Ashley Falls. Train stops, such as expanding the Berkshire Scenic Railroad, or mini-bus stops might provide synergies between tourist and shopping locales.

Additionally, small cottage and home-based businesses are an important and growing segment of the local economy. Providing incentives for these types of businesses would reduce the consumption of land, enhance the value of existing commercial-industrial properties, and increase the tax base. This strategy would also complement the Town's interest in expanding eco-tourism business in the community, which is reliant on Sheffield's vast natural resources, farms, rural character and developing visitor amenities.

8. Local Preferences for Business Development

The Community-wide Survey conducted by the Master Plan Steering Committee in the fall of 2002 included responses on local economic issues, shopping habits, business development suggestions, and geographic preferences for new development and redevelopment.

When asked "*Which type of businesses do you currently use in Sheffield and/or elsewhere?*",

about 53% of the businesses listed below were used by respondents outside of Sheffield, and only 17% were used both in Sheffield and in other locations as can be expected in a rural community of

Sheffield's size. As shown in the table below, the most frequented location by respondents for business services outside Sheffield was by far Great Barrington:

Type of Business Used	In Sheffield	%	Elsewhere	%	Both	%
a. General Retail	7	3%	229	92%	14	5%
b. Financial Service	136	52%	75	29%	52	20%
c. Automobile Services	150	63%	62	26%	25	11%
d. Food and Eating Est.	45	17%	126	49%	87	34%
e. House/Home Improvement	34	19%	125	68%	24	13%
f. Tourist Related	17	20%	59	71%	7	9%
g. Agricultural	88	54%	41	25%	34	21%
h. Pro and Personal	30	15%	134	66%	38	19%
i. Other Merchandise or Services	13	12%	70	64%	26	24%
Total	520	30%	921	53%	307	17%

Local residents were asked “*What type of businesses would you like to see encouraged or discouraged in town?*”,

and the highest responses were: Eating Establishments (89%), Agricultural Businesses (88%), Home Businesses (85%), and Professional and Personal Services (80%). Of the 12 businesses categories listed in the responses, a narrow majority of respondents identified 4 that should be discouraged including: Gravel Removal (83%), Industrial (63%), Manufacturing (53%), and House & Home Improvement Businesses (51%).

Type of Business	Encourage	%	Discourage	%	Total
a. General Retail	111	60%	73	40%	184
b. Financial Service	95	62%	59	38%	154
c. Automobile Services	94	53%	82	47%	176
d. Food and Eating Establishments	179	89%	23	11%	202
e. House/Home Improvement	70	49%	74	51%	144
f. Tourist Related	107	63%	62	37%	169
g. Agricultural	154	88%	22	12%	176
h. Professional & Personal Services	128	80%	32	20%	160
i. Home Business	141	85%	24	15%	165
j. Manufacturing	89	47%	99	53%	188
k. Industrial	69	37%	119	63%	188
l. Gravel Removal	29	17%	142	83%	171
Total	1,266	61%	811	39%	2077

In terms of the specific placement of different types of businesses in Sheffield, residents identified the Town Center as the best location for most types of businesses including: General Retail, Financial Services, Automotive Services, Food and Eating Establishments, Home Improvement Businesses, and Tourist Related Businesses. Agricultural uses were recommended to be allowed anywhere in town as were home businesses. (However, in subsequent public forums, individuals were concerned with home businesses expanding to the size where trucks and traffic may create problems but are then “grandfathered.”). Industrial and manufacturing businesses were recommended for placement in the Sheffield Business Park.

Townpeople were asked *“What other types of businesses, if any, would you like to see encouraged or discouraged?”*

The most common businesses supported by residents were restaurants, “nothing”, grocery stores, manufacturing, and community/outdoor activity. Those most commonly discouraged by respondents were antiques, retail outlets, and large franchise businesses.

9. Existing Support for Economic Development

Public Infrastructure - The limited public water system (Sheffield Water Company) and lack of public sewer in Sheffield constrain the types of economic development that are viable. The Rural District, Sheffield Business Park, and large portions of Route 7 are reliant on private on-site septic and water systems. This significantly limits the location and density of commercial and industrial development.

While the community survey indicates support for building up businesses in the Town Center, Ashley Falls Village, and Sheffield Business Park, it may be difficult without the availability of public sewer. Even in the Rural District where home occupations are encouraged, it may be difficult to accommodate certain types of uses because of limited sewage capacity. Alternatives to public sewers that have been used in other rural communities include soils-based zoning, smaller communal septic systems, and package treatment plants. These treatment systems (which are further described in Appendix 1: Glossary of Terms) could be explored for potential applications in Sheffield.

Transportation – The location of Route 7 in Sheffield and the proximity to other major highways (the Massachusetts Turnpike is approximately 20 miles north of Town) provide some economic opportunity for commercial, light industrial, and distribution type businesses. However, the speed of traffic and several potentially dangerous intersections in Town is a concern of the community and needs to be addressed. There is currently no regular transit service in Sheffield but taxi service is available through companies in Great Barrington. There is no passenger rail service in Town to support the tourist trade in town and only limited freight service. Regionally, the largest commercial airport is the Bradley International Airport in Hartford, Connecticut, about an hour from Sheffield and Albany International Airport, about an hour and a quarter.

Organizational Support – There are a number of local and regional organizations that support Sheffield business development in various ways. The Sheffield Industrial Development Commission was established in the early 1990s to support the development of the Sheffield Business Park. Along with the Town Administration, the Commission’s primary role is assisting local businesses to expand, attracting new industry, seeking supporting grants and other incentives, creating new job opportunities, expanding the tax base, and generally guiding commercial and industrial growth to appropriate areas.

Many Sheffield businesses are members of the Southern Berkshire Chamber of Commerce located in Great Barrington. This non-profit organization includes members from 8 communities in South County as well as portions of northwest Connecticut and eastern New York State. The Chamber’s primary purpose is to promote the Southern Berkshire Area, to provide information for existing and prospective businesses about economic opportunities in the region, and to facilitate networking and “business to business” development within the region.

The Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) provides social-economic data, mapping, and grant assistance to all communities in Berkshire County. BRPC is also responsible for developing the regional economic development plan and guiding its implementation. They have assisted many communities in the region, including Sheffield, in preparing for economic development and obtaining grant funding for various related activities. Other regional organizations that can offer economic development assistance to Sheffield are the Berkshire Chamber of Commerce in Pittsfield and the Berkshire Council for Growth, which is dedicated to the recruitment of skilled labor, job retention, expansion of existing businesses, and new business development in the region.

The Sheffield Association, which was created in 2001, assists local residents and businesses through promotion and events. The Sheffield Times provides a vehicle by which businesses can advertise to customers and be profiled. The September Sheffield in Celebration Week highlights businesses through two village fairs on consecutive weekends whereby farmers, crafts people, local businesses and organizations can market their products and services. The Farmers Market, created by a Farmers Market Association was established in 2001 and is held on Fridays in Town Center. The market offers a venue through which the agricultural community can reach its customers directly.

While existing local and regional economic development organizations can provide Sheffield with a variety of assistance, the local business community should consider creating an organization that could specifically and most effectively address the needs of Sheffield. The Economic Development Sub-Committee held the Sheffield Business Forum in April 2003, where a need surfaced for creating a business association. The purpose would be to learn from each other, thereby increasing efficiency and exploring cooperative ventures. Such efforts might be extensions or jointly sponsored programs of existing organizations such as the South Berkshire Chamber of Commerce or the Sheffield Association, or, possibly a new organization.

Given existing economic conditions, trends, and resident preferences, there appear to be opportunities and support for expanding agriculture, eco-tourism, and small retail and service sector businesses in Town. However, making it happen will require a sustained effort driven by the private sector in partnership with the community.

Economic Development Action Plan

Overall Goal

To identify economic growth opportunities in keeping with community character and quality of life in Sheffield.

Economic Development Objectives

- 1. Ensure that the community and town boards are involved in the economic development process.**
- 2. Guide economic development toward targeted locations where it is most appropriate and desired.**
- 3. Foster cooperation between the public sector and business communities.**

The benefits of a successful economic development program go well beyond those who own property or businesses. Economic success is felt throughout the entire community in terms of: new employment, shopping and cultural opportunities; improved property values and an increased tax base; preservation of historic buildings and heritage; and general financial stability.

Economic Development Recommendations

The following economic development strategies and actions are based on the overall goals, the business inventory, survey and analysis; the hard work of the Steering Committee and Economic Development Subcommittee, and extensive public input.

Recommendation 1. Establish an advocacy group for Sheffield's Business Community.

Quickly form a Committee made up of both public and private sector representatives. The Selectmen might do this with the South Berkshire Chamber of Commerce, or perhaps begin with the Business Park Committee as a base and expand. It will be essential to include farms and forest industries. It is recommended that a vehicle be established to advocate for Sheffield's business community: both small and large, for profit and not-for-profit. See more discussion below in the Agricultural and Tourism sections.

- a. Promote Sheffield and Ashley Falls businesses.**
- b. Assist businesses to understand and comply with town regulations.**
- c. Increase communication between town officials and businesses.**

- d. Create a forum for businesses to share ideas and resources and develop cooperative programs.
- e. Support interaction between local youths and the business community, especially for mentoring, training and employment.

Recommendation 2. Enhance town identity by developing its Village Centers

Sheffield's location on Rte 7, a major north-south interstate highway, has tacitly encouraged people to speed through the town and business development has spread out away from the village centers. Yet Sheffield has a great deal to offer and needs to make changes in order to redevelop its sense of community and identity and revitalize those centers.

- a. With residents, business owners and property owners review and enhance the existing plan for Sheffield Center; evaluate an updated Ashley Falls Village Center Plan and a Neighborhood Enhancement Plan for the Clayton area.
- b. Encourage a "Historical New England Town" aesthetic in architecture, landscaping and signage.
- c. Create a plan to improve traffic flow and parking on Main Street.
- d. Redesign the town green to improve spaces for gatherings, recreations and walking.
- e. Promote the sale and consumption of locally produced or grown products in local stores.
- f. Create a town bulletin board, brochure and website.
- g. Explore alternative sewage treatment systems.
- h. Create a beautification committee.

Recommendation 3. Support local industries.

- a. Redefine by-laws to govern business in residential neighborhoods.
- b. Support home based businesses, which are appropriate to their neighborhoods by providing incubator and mentoring services.

- c. Promote a ‘Sheffield’ brand.
- d. Establish a centralized, year-round agricultural and crafts market for local products.
- e. Support, without devaluing abutting properties, cottage industries by creating suitable guidelines.

Recommendation 4. Support agriculture and forestry.

This is a top priority because these industries are responsible for the vast majority of Sheffield’s landscape & the stewardship of our land; Action: Create Agricultural Commission (include farm and forest land); When: Immediate & Ongoing: Work with Dept. of Agriculture.

- a. Encourage the development of businesses which process, market and distribute local agricultural or forestry products.
- b. Promote the ‘branding’ and purchasing of such products.
- c. Support best management practices, organic farming and environmentally sensitive forestry methods through technical training and education.
- d. Encourage the use of Chapter 61, 61A and 61B designations.
- e. Encourage the town to exercise its options on Chapter land.
- f. Encourage ‘Right to Farm’ by-laws, including seasonal signage.
- g. Explore state tax relief on farm animals and equipment.

Recommendation 5. Welcome tourism.

It is recommended that growth in the tourism industry be directed so as to maintain the historic and rural character of Sheffield. Current major players in Sheffield’s tourism industry include cultural, recreational and historical enterprises (i.e. Berkshire Choral Festival, Barrington Stage, the Appalachian Trail, Bartholomew’s Cobble, the Sheffield Historical Society, etc.) and its famous antiques businesses. In turn, these enable other local businesses, such as bed and breakfasts, restaurants and other accommodations to attract more visitors. On a larger scale, these businesses have nurtured the landscaping and building trades sectors as new homes are built and Sheffield’s old homes are given new life through renovation and re-use in the form of antiques stores and historical

sites. These activities are important to Sheffield employment and to its retention of history and beauty.

Also recommended is further development of eco-tourism and agri-tourism businesses such as hiking, biking, canoeing, bird-watching, farm and history and garden tours. Likewise, further development and diversity of outdoor recreational facilities and programs in Sheffield would make the town increasingly desirable as a destination. This should be very feasible since Sheffield already has several nationally recognized natural environments within its borders, as well as nationally recognized historical sites.

- a. Develop a campaign to attract and welcome tourists.**
- b. Provide visitor services in the town center including bathroom and telephone facilities, maps and brochures.**
- c. Enhance access to and promotion of recreational facilities with improved signs, parking areas for hiking trails and upgraded canoe launches to the Housatonic River.**
- d. Explore public and private funding to achieve these objectives.**

Recommendation 6. Review all By-Laws.

- a. Hire an outside specialist to review and update Sheffield's zoning and town by-laws to ensure they are consistent and supportive of town goals.**
- b. Examine and update by-laws for consistency with the findings, goals and objectives of the Master Plan.**
- c. Evaluate separate residential districts within the current rural district.**

Poll the town as to its desire to create a separate Residential District or consider areas within the Rural District with more parameters to limit conflicts between residential uses and business uses. Currently, the Rural District permits retail businesses, public utility facilities, country clubs, commercial kennels, commercial greenhouses, commercial radio and television towers, nursing and related facilities. (In some ways, it is easier to establish a business in the Rural District than in the Commercial and General Business District. The Rural District has had more business growth than any other area.)

Recommendation 7. Review Business Park criteria.

- a. Review criteria to consider and accept tenants for the Business Park.**

Changes in the business and economic climate since the Business Park was created nearly 10 years ago have made the initial criteria out-dated. For example, the 4-acre minimum lot size limits small business use of the Business Park.

- b. Consider local and regional agriculturally related activities.**
- c. Consider broadening the type of businesses that would be allowed to purchase space.**
- d. Consider allowing a developer to own, build and manage appropriate spaces and rent to smaller businesses.**

Recommendation 8. Upgrade technology and reduce energy use.

Improve Sheffield's technological infrastructure and reduce energy use. These changes would enhance opportunities for Sheffield's current businesses and make the town more attractive to businesses considering relocating to Sheffield.

- a. Pursue high-speed Internet and cellular telephone access.**
- b. Identify ways to reduce energy use throughout the town.**
- c. Investigate funding to bury power and telephone lines.**
- d. Investigate alternative energy sources for private or public use.**

4. NATURAL RESOURCES, OPEN SPACE, RECREATIONAL & AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES ["NORA"]

1. Natural Resources¹

Surface Water Resources

Sheffield has approximately 818 acres of surface water, which represents about 2.6% of the total area of the community. Protecting surface water quality and adjacent areas of sensitive lands is very important to the community. Map 4 identifies major drainage basins and surface waters in Sheffield.

Housatonic River - The most significant water body in Sheffield is the Housatonic River. All surface and ground waters in Sheffield are in the Housatonic watershed. The Mahican Indians migrated east over the mountains and called the area "Hooestennuc", or "The Place Beyond the Mountains." The Housatonic is the largest river in Berkshire County, with its headwaters in Richmond, Lanesboro and Hinsdale. The River drains almost 2/3 of the county eventually flowing into the Long Island Sound to the south. In Sheffield, the meandering river has changed course several times in recent history leaving behind small oxbows that can be seen on aerial photography. The River is the central channel for a glacial water body (Lake Housatonic), which was formed 12,000 years ago by a natural dam at the Great Falls of the Housatonic in Falls Village, Connecticut. The silts deposits in this ancient lake, along with the annual spring replenishment of soils and nutrients at flood time, make the fields surrounding the river some of the best agricultural resources in Massachusetts. The Housatonic River, as it passes through Sheffield, is also one of the most important scenic assets in the region.

This portion of the river has been designated a **State Scenic River** by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management (DEM).

The Housatonic has a long history of industrial use, particularly in northern Berkshire County, and PCB levels are high enough to prevent the consumption of fish. Much of the contaminants are contained in river silts and held behind dams north of Sheffield (i.e. Lenox and Lee). Sheffield needs to work with other communities and river-based organizations to ensure that these dams are properly maintained so that silts are not washed downstream when the water level rises.

Konkapot River - Named for a local Indian, Sachem, and the Konkapot River is the second largest river in Sheffield. The Konkapot rises in the hills of Monterey and drains much of New Marlboro. Only its last 2 miles are in Sheffield as it returns from a brief dip into Connecticut and flows through Ashley Falls to the Housatonic. It is primarily surrounded by agricultural fields and provides some of the best trout fishing in the region. Five different mills were located on the Konkapot in Ashley Falls, including the first fulling mill in the United States.

¹ Information from the 1987 *Sheffield Open Space and Recreation Plan* was incorporated in the Natural Resource Inventory.

Schenob Brook - With its origin in the Twin Lakes region of Salisbury, Connecticut, the Schenob Brook is the longest tributary in Sheffield at over 14 miles. The watershed drains the Mt. Washington Plateau into the largely level valley where the brook flows northerly through the extensive wetlands of the Dry Brook Swamp, Barnum Street Swamp and the Guinea Swamp. These alkaline wetlands hold tremendous varieties of flora and fauna, including one of the largest concentrations of rare and threatened species in the region, giving rise to conservation efforts by many state and non-profit organizations, such as the Massachusetts Natural Heritage Program and The Nature Conservancy, which have been involved in protective programs and projects in this wetland area for a number of years.

Ironworks Brook - The Ironworks Brook is a fast moving, steep-dropping, trout stream, which flows approximately 8 miles from the hills surrounding Threemile Pond in northeast Sheffield to the Housatonic River in the middle of town. The Massachusetts Division of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) owns Threemile Pond and the immediate surrounds as a wildlife management, and there is new focus at DFW on this corridor.

Hubbard Brook - The northwest portion of town is drained by this southeasterly flowing brook. About 5 miles long, it has been impounded to form Mill Pond off Bow Wow Road.

Willard Brook - Waters from the Berkshire Trout Farm Pond flow northerly through considerable wetlands to Hubbard Brook above Mill Pond. About 4 miles long, it flows through Faun Lake and Combes Pond and drains Spurr Lake and Harmon Marsh Pond as well.

Soda Spring Creek - This tributary to Ironworks Brook drains the eastern slope of June Mountain and parallels Waters Farm Road for half of its 3.5 miles. Soda Springs Creek is a small, fast-moving mountain stream. The Sheffield Water Company takes water from a nearby well and the watershed surrounding the well is partially protected through ownership and land use regulations. The Sheffield Soda Springs Company sold “Berkshire Sodium Water” from this source as a health remedy during the late 1800s.

□ *Please see Map # 4:
‘Town of Sheffield
Watersheds’
behind the MAPS tab.*

Open Waters

Mill Pond (Gilligan’s Pond) - Located near Sheffield Center on Hubbard Brook, this privately-owned 108-acre impoundment was historically used for power by local mills. As a Great Pond, it has limited public access (from Miller Avenue and Cook Road), and only experiences moderate recreational use. The pond is developed only on the western shoreline primarily with first and second-homes. Mill Pond has good wildlife value and serves as a staging area for waterfowl in migration.

Threemile Pond - This 168 acre impoundment is owned by DFW and is the largest pond in Sheffield. Located in the northeast uplands of Town, there are a few private homes on the eastern and western shores. DFW manages this resource for public access and wildlife habitat. The swamp at the upper end has been used by Great Blue heron as a rookery.

Berkshire Trout Pond – This 13-acre impoundment, once used as a private trout hatchery, is now an area of year-round and second-home development. The pond is the third largest body of water in Sheffield. There is no longer public access to this scenic resource.

Spurr Pond - This small (10+ acre) private pond is located in west-central Sheffield off Undermountain Road. It is in the Willard Brook drainage system and there is no public access.

Davis Pond - Davis Pond is a 6-acre waterbody and may be Sheffield's only true bog. This type of northern boggy habitat is uncommon in the Berkshires.

Other open water resources in Sheffield include Harmon Marsh Pond (8 acres), South Faun Lake (18 acres), Faun Lake (6 acres) and Combes Pond (10+ acres). All of these surface waters are located in the Willard Brook drainage area and all are privately held. All offer important wildlife habitat and several have scenic vistas from public roadways as well as potential for greater recreational use.

Wetlands

There is an extensive network of wetlands in Sheffield. Most of the wetlands are located in the western portion of town along Housatonic River, Hubbard Brook, Willard Brook, Dry Brook and Schenob Brook. Map 5: Wetlands & Floodplains below illustrates this extensive wetlands system².

Wetlands, as determined by soils types, vegetation, wildlife habitat, topography, and other criteria, significantly influence land use patterns in Sheffield. In all, wetlands cover approximately 429 acres or 1.4% of the town's total land area based on an interpretation of the State's geographic information system.

□ *Please see Map # 5:
'Town of Sheffield
Flood Hazard Areas & Wetlands'
behind the MAPS tab.*

Wetlands are a significant natural resource in that they provide important plant and wildlife habitat, filter surface waters, have distinct scenic qualities, and buffer certain types of land uses that may impair water quality. The Schenob Brook wetland complex is identified as one of the most unique unspoiled ecosystems in the world. The Housatonic River with its looped backwaters, flood plains and adjacent marshes, also provides significant wetland resources in Sheffield. Community land use

² There are 3 major sources of wetland information used for the Sheffield Wetland Inventory: USGS Maps, wetland characteristics of Hydric Soils identified in the Soil Survey of Berkshire County, and the National Wetlands Inventory.

and open space planning must recognize and ensure that these resources are well protected from potentially detrimental uses.

Floodplains

There are extensive floodplain areas in Sheffield. The wide valley and gentle terrain provide large areas for surface waters to spread out. In total, approximately 6,112 acres (or 20% of the land base) are included in the 100-Year Flood Hazard Area as determined by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Most floodplain areas in Sheffield are located along the banks of the Housatonic River. In the northern section of town, the Housatonic floodplain is quite wide extending across Route 7 to the west. There are also large 100-Year Flood Hazard Areas along the Soda Springs Creek, Hubbard Brook, Willard Brook, Dry Brook, Schenob Brook and around the Barnum Street Swamp.

Floodplains provide the best agricultural lands in the community. They are also an important resource for plant and wildlife habitat, passive recreational uses, and flood control.

Ground Water

In Sheffield, different geologic materials form aquifers of varying importance. The crystal lime rock of the eastern uplands provides very poor aquifers in general as they have relatively little porosity. However, wells of low capacity can often be developed due to the presence of fractures or faults. The same situation applies to the schistose rocks of the Taconic Range on the west. Limestones, dolomites and quartzites of the valley can be excellent aquifers where they are highly fractured or penetrated by water from the surface.

□ *Please see Map # 16:
‘Town of Sheffield
Ground Water Resources’
behind the MAPS tab.*

Thick masses of unconsolidated material form the best potential aquifers. Many of them have layers that given them a high porosity and thus a large capacity. Recharge areas (those regions where water can enter the aquifer) for these aquifers tend to be on the sides of the valley so that the elevation of recharge is considerably higher than the valley floor. Based on these characteristics, there may be several areas in Sheffield where higher yield artesian wells could be developed.³

³ Ralph F. Norvitch, “Groundwater Favorability Map”

The term “**ground water**” means water occupying all voids in a geological stratum. If the voids in this stratum are interconnected in such a manner that ground water can flow through the stratum, then the stratum is termed an “**aquifer.**” An aquifer may be one of two kinds: If freely connected to the surface throughout its length, it is an unconfined aquifer and the water table constitutes its upper surface. If the aquifer is separated from the surface by an impermeable stratum, then it is termed a confined aquifer. It is in such aquifers that artesian wells can be developed.

Groundwater protection is a concern shared by most people in the community. A large majority of residents in Sheffield rely on private wells as the only source of domestic water supply. The Sheffield Water Company supplies about 500 residents in Sheffield Center with domestic water from groundwater sources. The Company’s supply wells are located off Maple Avenue, Water Farm Road, and Route 7. The delineated primary recharge area (i.e. Zone II) for these wells covers a large area of Sheffield and extends into Great Barrington including the Route 7 corridor. The variation in land use controls and potential

contamination sources, particularly along the highway, need to be carefully evaluated to ensure protection of both community and private groundwater supplies.

2. Terrestrial Resources

Topography

Sheffield is a large valley hemmed in on the west by the steep Taconic Mountains, the rough hilly terrain of East Mountain in the northeast, and low hills along the eastern edge. The steeper slopes and higher elevations of the east and west fringes of Sheffield and the wide lower valley of the Housatonic River are illustrated on the Map 7: Sheffield Topography below. The highest points in Sheffield are Race Mountain (2,365) along the Mt. Washington town line, Mt. Patterson (2,050) and Mt. Bushnell (1,834). The lowest point is 648 feet on the Housatonic River in Ashley Falls at the Connecticut State Line.

Route 41 forms the divide on the west side of town between the steep mountains to the west and the Housatonic River valley to the east. The steepest slopes in Sheffield parallel this corridor as the terrain rises quickly from the roadway to the west. There are also steep hillsides forming a protective ridge around the northern end of Threemile Pond along Brush Hill Road. Steep slopes along the west side of West Road form a visual terminus from Route 7. June Mountain between Boardman Street and Soda Spring Creek creates a visual terminus on the northern section of Route 7 to the east with the steeper slopes abutting Soda Creek.

□ *Please see Map # 7:
‘Town of Sheffield
Topography’
behind the MAPS tab.*

The valley itself, making up the majority of land in Sheffield, shows an uneven topography. Although generally level, ranging from 650 to 700 feet above sea level, the terrain is broken by numerous eskers and drumlins that reach about 850 feet above sea level.

Slopes of 15% or greater are designated as steep terrain on the Sheffield Topography Map. Moderately sloping terrain ranges from 8% to 15%. Steep slope areas are found primarily on the eastern and western borders. These lands are likely to have shallow, unstable soils with high erosion potential, high surface water runoff rates and low percolation rates. These factors can impose major limitations on the use of these lands. However, there are popular locations in Sheffield for ATV and hiking trails.

Bedrock Geology

Sheffield is underlain by four major metamorphic rock types including: Gneiss, Schist, Quartz, and Carbonate. 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 have been eroded by glaciers and weathering, and are located primarily in lower elevations.

Surficial Geology

Surficial deposits are primarily glacial in origin, and composed of sorted (stratified) and unsorted silts, sands and gravels. The major soil types found in Sheffield are grouped into six associations. These associations represent soils of similar limitations.

Soil types found in Sheffield and their general location and properties are noted in the table below.

Soils are described according to several characteristics, each having different qualities for agriculture, construction, or other uses of the land. Among these characteristics are: location, depth to bedrock, structure, depth to water table, periodic flooding, permeability, natural fertility, acidity, and other values. In this way, soils influence the suitability of different areas for various land use purposes. For example:

- 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; and
- Floodplain soils are generally very fertile and are often best for agriculture.

Throughout the town, soil types and drainage conditions vary widely within a short distance. Scattered areas of deep, well-drained soil suitable for agriculture, housing and commerce are fairly common, and generally located along existing roads. These areas are separated by other soil types that, because of bedrock, poor drainage or steep slopes are better suited for agriculture, recreation, forestry and wildlife uses. (See chart on next page.)

Sheffield Soil Types, Descriptions & General Locations		
Soil Associations	Descriptions	Location in Town
Lyman-Peru-Marlow-Berkshire	The Lyman soils are well drained and shallow (10-20" to bedrock). Peru soils are moderately well-drained loam underlain by hardpan at 18-30". Marlow soils are well-drained loamy soil underlain by hardpan at 20-30". Berkshire soils are well-drained, loamy, glacial tills. These are steep, shallow, well-drained soils.	This assoc. occupies approx. 15% of the town in the June Mt. Region.
Pittsfield, -Amenia,-Kendaia	Pittsfield soils are well-drained formed in loamy calcareous glacial till. Amenia soils are similar, but moderately well-drained and underlain by hardpan at about 2 ft. Kendaia soils are poorly drained, formed in calcareous glacial till underlain by hardpan at 18-24".	These steep soils are on the east side and form about 10% of the town.
Hinckley-Windsor-Merrimac	These soils are excessively drained and developed in thick deposits of sand and gravel.	They occupy about 10% of Sheffield in the Ashley Falls region.
Hadley-Winooski-Limerick	Hadley soils are well-drained, formed in thick silt along major streams subject to rare flooding. Winooski are similar, but moderately well-drained and occasionally flooded. Limerick soils are poorly drained and subject to frequent flooding.	These occupy 40% of the town in the Housatonic River Valley.
Amenia-Stockbridge-Pittsfield	Stockbridge soils are well-drained and formed in calcareous glacial till with hardpan at 30". This complex is similar to the Pittsfield-Amenia-Kendaia Assoc. described earlier.	It covers about 25% of western Sheffield.
Nassau-Bernardstorm-Dutchess	These soils are extremely stony outcroppings on slopes of from 3% to 35%. Bedrock is usually 20" from surface. The well-drained soils have hardpan within 30" of the surface. Hardpans restrict downward movement of water and septic tank sewage. Steep slopes and bedrock make excavating for housing difficult and expensive.	These soils cover Sheffield's western most border, along the mountain ridges.

Vegetation

Sheffield has great diversity of vegetative species. Bartholomew Cobble alone has a species list of over 800. This variety is an important natural asset and plays a major role in Sheffield's noted quality of life, making it attractive both to residents and tourists alike. Importantly, with 60 rare plant species on the state's "Endangered, Threatened, and Special Concern" list, Sheffield ranks as one of the top towns in Massachusetts. It is imperative that the town protects its irreplaceable native rarities.

Forest Lands - Like a number of other communities in the Berkshires, Sheffield's forested lands are expanding as woodlands cleared in the 19th century for agriculture, logging and charcoal-making grow again in a process known as succession. Lands that have been cutover in Sheffield soon regenerate with woodland species such as aspens, birches, hemlock, and other species somewhat tolerant of shade. This pattern of re-growth is apparent when viewing orthophotos taken of the town in the 1940s compared to those taken 1999.

Sizable tracts of forested land are found extensively in the hilly terrains of Sheffield. The north-central area of town has the most extensive upland woodlands. The first plants to establish themselves in these regions (the so-called pioneer species) include goldenrods, asters, bedstraws, sumac and dogwood, followed by eastern red cedar or white pine, and northern or gray birch depending on soil characteristics.

Over time and without major disturbances, a mature or climax forest develops. In Sheffield, the most common species are northern hardwoods such as beech, maple, oak, ash, and birch.

Additionally, the wooded slopes of the Berkshire Taconic Plateau along the western border with Mt. Washington are part of one of the largest, healthiest and most diverse forest blocks in the Lower New England ecoregion, which stretches from Maine to Virginia. Because this is a “transition zone”, there is an unusual abundance of natural communities and biodiversity including species that are typically considered more northern or southern species that occur here at the edges of their boundaries. This biodiversity is further enhanced by the calcareous bedrock that supports additional rare natural communities including scrub oak and pitch pine as well as high quality common natural areas.

Wetland Vegetation - Sheffield has shrub swamps, tree swamps, wet meadows, and floodplain wetlands and forests. Much of the wooded level lands next to the swamps either have a high water table or poor internal drainage. Some common species include sycamore, black willow, black ash, birch, box elder, and silver maple.

In addition, the southwestern part of Sheffield support some of the highest quality calcarious wetlands in the world. The alkaline nature of these wetlands allow species that don’t survive in the normally acidic wetlands in the area to thrive. When combined with the exceptionally clean water flowing down from the forest on the Berkshire Taconic Plateau, these calcium-rich wetlands support a wide variety of high quality common wetland communities and species, but also one of the highest concentrations of rare and endangered species in Massachusetts, leading The Nature Conservancy to name this area as one of its Last Great Places.

3. Wildlife Species & Habitat

A significant amount of Sheffield is identified by the State as important habitat for various species of wildlife as illustrated on Map 8. The State breaks down potential wildlife habitat into three basic designations⁴:

- Core Habitat Area: Most viable habitats for rare species and natural communities in Massachusetts.

⁴ Core Habitat and SNLA were developed by scientists through the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP). This data is intended for conservation planning purposes only. It should not be used for regulatory purposes. Priority Areas of Rare Species habitats and exemplary natural communities are not equivalent to “Significant Habitat” areas as designated under Mass. Endangered Species Act. These areas are not protected by the Act but the rare species that inhabit them are protected by law.

- Supporting Natural Landscapes Area (SNLA): Areas buffering and connecting Core Habitat Areas, and large naturally vegetated areas that are relatively free from the impact of roads and other development.
- Priority Areas of Rare Species Habitat & Exemplary Natural Communities: Estimated habitats of state-listed rare species and state-protected rare wildlife.

A variety of wildlife habitats exist along the banks of the Housatonic River, Schenob Brook as well as the numerous brooks and streams connecting to them. These surface waters, with extensive wetland systems, somewhat limit development and preserve habitat. The Housatonic River and Schenob Brook corridors provide the longest stretches of undisturbed habitat in Sheffield. The Housatonic River serves as an important guide for migratory birds and large flocks and wide varieties can be seen in town depending on the season.

The Massachusetts Natural Heritage Program has identified a total of 91 rare plant and animal species in Sheffield - 60 plant and 31 animal.⁵ Seventy (70) of these species have been observed in Sheffield in the past 25 years and 17 of them in the last 5 years.⁶ Thirty-four (34) of the plant species are considered endangered while 22 others were classified as threatened.

Rare Species in Sheffield		
Category	Total Species Identified	Observed in Last 5 years
Fish	3	1
Amphibians	3	1
Reptiles	3	1
Birds	9	2
Mammals	1	0
Snails	1	0
Mussels	2	2
Crustaceans	7	0
Insects	2	0
Vascular Plant	60	10
Total	91	17

Source: MA Natural Heritage Program, March 2003

Of the 60 rare animal species listed in Sheffield the following have been observed in the past 25 years: Longnose Sucker, Bridle Shiner, Jefferson Salamander, Spring Salamander, Four-toed Salamander, Spotted Turtle, Wood Turtle, Eastern Box Turtle, Bog Turtle, American Bittern, Common Moorhen, Bald Eagle, Least Bittern, Riverbank Looping Snail, Triangle Floater, Creeper Mussel, and the Northern Spring Amphipod.

Of the 60 rare animal species population inhabiting Sheffield, 9 are listed as being “endangered” and protected under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act. Four (4) of these endangered animals

have been seen in the last 25 years. The federally listed bald eagle uses Sheffield during spring and fall migrations, and has been seen as recently as 1999.⁷

⁵ Massachusetts Natural Heritage Program, Rare Species Inventory, March 1, 2003; Website – www.state.ma.us/dfwele/dfw/nhesp/nhesp.htm

⁶ The Mass. Natural Heritage Program maintained a category of ‘Most Recent Observed’ rare species, which indicates that the species was most recently observed within the past 25 years. However, many rare species are difficult to detect even though they are present, and Natural Heritage does not conduct methodical species surveys in each town on a consistent basis. Therefore, the fact that the ‘Most Recent Observed’ for a species may be several years old should not lead to the interpretation that the species no longer occurs in a town.

⁷ Only those rare species records that are less than 25 years old are used in Natural Heritage project review associated with the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act Regulations (310 CMR 10.00) and the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act Regulations (321 CMR 10.00).

Sheffield's great variety of plant life and terrains has led to an especially rich diversity of wildlife. Ample open spaces, excellent edge terrain (boundaries between habitat types) and responsible land management have led to healthy populations of many species. Protecting significant wildlife habitat is essential to maintaining the town and State's biodiversity.

□ *Please see Map # 8:
'Town of Sheffield
Natural Resources: Important Habitats'
behind the MAPS tab.*

4. Environmental Issues & Concerns

On-site Sewage Disposal⁸

With no public sewer system, Sheffield property owners rely on on-site septic systems for sewage treatment in all homes and businesses in the community. Generally, these systems do not pose environmental problems if properly placed and maintained. However, there are isolated areas within the community where poorly drained soils and/or high water table conditions potentially affect subsurface wastewater treatment.

Where on-site septic disposal limitations have been identified, the rate of eutrophication in surrounding surface waters and the water quality of groundwater sources should be carefully monitored. The town can be divided into the following 4 quadrants for the purpose of general septic system suitability analysis based on soil characteristics:

Northeast - This area has steep to moderate slopes, with one large wetland area and several smaller ones. Soils are ledgy along the ridges of the hills and very stony on the steep slopes. Moderate slopes tend to be stony except where land has previously been cleared. The soils are rated moderately severe to severe for on-lot sewage disposal and few houses have been built there. There is very little prime agricultural soil there and a relatively small amount of land is being farmed.

Northwest - This section is generally flat except for the far western slopes. Many of the soils are prime agricultural soils and are being farmed. Housing has not taken much of the prime farmland, because building has occurred mostly along narrow strips on the edges of the few roads there.

Along the far western slopes of town, soils are shallow due to bedrock, and occur on moderate to severe slopes. They often have hardpans and are stony. These all have severe limitations for building and thus little building has occurred.

Southeast - Here the land is mostly flat and heavily farmed with a great amount of prime agricultural soil. It also has some very wet, poorly drained soils. Heavy home building has occurred

⁸ U.S.C.S., "General Soil Limitations for On-Lot Sewage Disposal" from in Berkshire Non-Designated 208 Area Water Quality Management Planning, Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (1980)

in this area over the past 20 years and potential impacts on surrounding surface waters should be closely examined.

Southwest - This area is made up of steep mountains on the very edge of town, with very marshy and wet soils below. There are also areas of rolling, well to poorly drained soils, which have moderately severe limitations for on-site sewage disposal.

Water Resource Protection

The Housatonic River and Schenob Brook serve as important habitats not only for fish and other aquatic species, but also for insects, birds, amphibians, reptiles, and mammals that utilize the surface waters, riverbanks, marshes, floodplain forest, and associated uplands. Protecting water quality, stream flow and the vegetative communities in these corridors and their tributaries should involve continuing conservation effort, monitoring existing potential contamination sources, and controlling potential detrimental land uses in adjacent areas.

Eutrophication

Sedimentation and eutrophication are becoming increasingly evident in some of Sheffield's water bodies. Potential causes such as failing septic systems, agricultural fertilizers, siltation from area erosion, increased drainage water temperatures from impervious surfaces, and invasive aquatic vegetation need to be monitored and should be included in the town's long-range planning.

Area of Critical Environmental Concern

Definition of ACEC

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) are places in Massachusetts that receive special recognition because of the quality, uniqueness, and significance of their natural and cultural resources. These areas are identified at the community level and are reviewed and designated by the state's Secretary of Environmental Affairs. ACEC designation creates a framework for local and regional stewardship of these resources.

The Schenob Brook drainage basin has been designated by the State as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). This area contains approximately 13,750 acres in Sheffield and Mount Washington including 2,250 acres of wetlands. According to DEM this ACEC, with its associated wetlands, comprises one of the most significant natural communities in the State. It contains the largest continuous calcareous seepage swamps and the finest examples of calcareous fens in the southern New England. It also serves as habitat to over 90 state-listed rare and endangered species.

Water Supply

As noted in the section on Groundwater, the people of Sheffield obtain their water supply from either the Sheffield Water Company or from individual wells. As the Town contemplates future growth, the respective limitations of both sources should be considered.

The Sheffield Water Company is privately owned and serves about 500 households in and around the village center. Although new well sites are being considered, no new extensions to the water

mains are planned. A recent study identified over 60 potential contamination sources to the company's Maple Avenue and Pike Road wells, including the Town Highway Garage.⁹

Elsewhere in Sheffield, ground water supplies for private wells vary widely. Many private wells are subject to the same potential contamination sources as the Sheffield Water Company. The Town and water company must carefully monitor potential sources of point and non-point pollution in aquifer recharge zones.

Air Quality

Sheffield is part of a regional Air Quality Attainment Area. There are several measures that local residents should take to benefit the quality of air locally and regionally:

- Conserve electrical energy
- Utilize alternative power sources when feasible
- Reduce use of fossil fuels for heating, cooling, transportation and manufacturing
- Plant, preserve and maintain trees
- Buy locally and reduce automobile trips
- Choose environmentally safe building materials for new or remodeled structures

Climate Change¹⁰.

Mounting evidence and research indicates that global warming, or the more accurately termed "climate change" is in fact, occurring. The rapid increase in greenhouse gas emissions from human activity has causing the temperature on earth to rise substantially

Some scientific research suggests that the Berkshires may have a climate similar to New Jersey's by 2050 and similar to North Carolina's by 2100, however, this does not just mean a warmer climate but would also be accompanied by numerous environmental and economic impacts. Potential impacts of climate change on Sheffield and the region may include the following:

- Impacts on weather:
 - Extreme and erratic weather patterns bring strong storms, periods of drought and increased precipitation.
 - In the 1990s, insurance companies paid out nearly four times the amount they did in the 1980s due to weather-related natural disasters.
- Impacts on tourism:
 - Maple, Beech, and Birch trees will migrate northwards taking with them the maple syrup industry and the red and orange foliage (12 species of trees are currently suffering from climate change in the Berkshires).
 - Inconsistent snow cover will send skiers farther north.
 - Warming of water temperature will make it difficult for Trout and other cold water fish to survive.
- Impacts on farming:
 - Increase in pests will cause a change in farming methods and crop production.
- Impacts on health:

⁹ Sheffield Water Company Water Supply Study, Tighe & Bond, December 2000

¹⁰ Report by Laura Grunfeld submitted to the Economic Development Subcommittee, July 13, 2003.

- Warmer temperatures have already begun to support the proliferation of diseases such as Lyme Disease, West Nile virus, and Equine Encephalitis.
- Increased smog, acid rain, and allergens are aggravating and causing respiratory problems such as asthma, bronchitis and allergies. Associated health costs have escalated.
- Impacts on water supply:
 - Erratic precipitation patterns have and will continue to negatively affect drinking water supplies.

5. Open Space & Recreation Resources

Local, state, federal and private non-profit organizations have initiated a focused effort to conserve valuable resource areas in Sheffield. Integral to this effort is the updated Open Space & Recreation Plan (OPRP), which seeks to provide direction for the community through the inventory of lands in recreation and open space use, management responsibilities, and future enhancements and expansion associated with recommendations contained herein. This Chapter updates and adapts the 1987 *Open Space & Recreation Plan* to fit the context of the overall Master Plan. Together with *Section 5: Our Cultural and Historic Resources*, this section constitutes the new Sheffield Open Space & Recreation Plan.

Open Space & Recreation Definitions

For purposes of classifying the current use of these various sites, the following definitions have been adopted:

- **Conservation lands** are those sites permanently protected in their natural state as wildlife habitat, vegetative buffer zones, open and forested areas of ecological or agricultural value and scenic beauty, and water supply recharge areas. Conservation land is often in proximity to major wetlands, rivers or water that could allow limited forms of passive recreation (e.g. hiking, fishing, and bird watching). They may also be part of corridors for wildlife habitat or farmland.
- **Active recreation lands** are often improved by facilities such as swings and ball fields or otherwise attracting widespread use (e.g. skate board park).
- **Passive recreation lands** include those selected conservation lands set aside for low-impact non-intrusive public use.
- **Agricultural lands** are those currently or formerly used for crop cultivation or the raising of livestock, and soils that are desirable to protect for organic or conventional agriculture.
- **Forestry lands** are sites currently preserved or managed for cutting and harvesting.
- **Other Public Lands** is principally used for town or state-related governmental activities such as schools, fire stations or prisons, as well as some vacant parcels that do not currently serve conservation or recreational purposes.

The natural and agricultural setting of Sheffield has long been complemented by efforts to preserve and enhance a variety of public and private lands within the community. However, a sustained cooperative effort between public and private entities is essential to continue to carry out effective conservation programs and to manage the potential impacts of development.

Primary issues are fragmentation from increasing unplanned development, invasive species and the emerging regional demand on open space and recreational resource areas for passive recreational use such as hiking, biking, boating and skiing. These are concerns due to the potential impacts these activities have upon the resources and existing infrastructure and the Town's resource capabilities. However, with careful planning and good stewardship, the increasing interest in Sheffield could become an economic benefit to local business development. It is essential that local land use policies, as

well as those of the state and regional agencies, balance and manage the demand on resources with economic development and the desire to maintain Sheffield's rural character. This section of the plan in addition to *Section 9: The Action Plan* addresses the location, demand, and approaches needed to properly protect open space and recreational resources in the community.

6. Protected Open Space & Recreational Lands

Between federal, state, municipal, non-profit conservation organizations, and private property owners, there is a significant amount and variety of open spaces in Sheffield providing habitat, agricultural uses, scenic views, as well as active and passive recreational opportunities, although compared to many communities in Berkshire County, Sheffield has a fairly low percentage of protected openspace. The following inventory enumerates the acreage of land in Sheffield, which is presently afforded some protection from residential, commercial or industrial development. The Sheffield Conservation, Open Space & Recreation Map below illustrates the location, ownership and general use of these lands.

Regional Comparison of Protected Lands

Sheffield has the 3rd largest land base in Berkshire County with just over 31,000 acres. In 2000 an estimated 5,226 acres were identified as protected open space, either by conservation restriction or ownership. This amounts to 16.8% of Sheffield's total land base.

By comparison, Sheffield ranks 17th in the acreage of protected open space and just 27th in percentage of land protected out of 32 municipalities in Berkshire County. However, Sheffield has the largest amount of private deed restricted land and 2nd highest amount of non-profit owned conservation land in Berkshire County. This is attributable to the hard work and commitment to resource protection by several non-profit conservation organizations in the community.

South County has the smallest percentage of permanently protected open space at 22.9%. In the seven-town Route 7 Corridor Subregion¹¹ the percentage of protected open space is slightly less at 21.7%. In this subregion, Sheffield has the largest land base and the most acres of protected open space. However, in terms of percentage of lands in protected open space, even in the Subregion Sheffield trails Great Barrington, Lenox and Lee.

Primary Use of Protected Properties

Primary Use of Protected Lands in Sheffield, 2003						
Primary Use	Federal	State	Town	Private Non-Profit	Private	Total
Recreation	968		118		27	1114
Recreation & Cons.		486		49		535
Conservation		1217	58	2204	1322	4801
Agriculture				40	1042	1082
Unknown					39	39

In 2003, there are approximately 7,476 acres of publicly and privately protected open space in Sheffield, and about 2,916 acres (or 39%) are accessible to public access.¹² The majority of protected lands in Sheffield are primarily used for conservation purposes and most are held

¹¹ This Subregion includes the towns along or in close proximity of the Route 7 Corridor including Lee, Lenox, Great Barrington, Egremont, Sheffield, Stockbridge, and West Stockbridge.

¹² Based on an interpretation of the Sheffield GIS Maps, MassGIS, and Assessors Office records.

by non-profit organizations such as The Nature Conservancy, Massachusetts Audubon Society, Sheffield Land Trust, and Berkshire Resource Council. Most recreational lands in Sheffield are owned and operated by state and federal agencies such as DEM, DFW, and the National Park Services, which operates the Appalachian Trail.

Acreage of Protected Open Space in Berkshire County by Municipality, 2000										
Community	Total Acreage	Deed Restricted			Ownership				**Protected	
		APR	CR	Total	U.S.	State	Municipal	Nonprofit	Acres	Percent
Adams	14,657	561	234	795		4,256	743		4,999	34.1%
Alford	7,375			-			4		4	0.1%
Becket	30,581			-	93	3,837	774	1,289	5,993	19.6%
Cheshire	17,599	542		542	362	4,532	748	16	5,658	32.1%
Clarksburg	8,191			-		3,261	123	25	3,409	41.6%
Dalton	14,003	345		345	808	1,564	629	999	4,000	28.6%
Egremont	12,077	137	35	172		1,313	214	423	1,950	16.1%
Florida	15,755			-		5,071	435	191	5,697	32.6%
Great Barrington	29,299	828	15	843	201	7,080	713	1,314	9,308	31.8%
Hancock	22,866	389	131	520		7,515	296	529	8,340	36.5%
Hinsdale	13,872			-	427	1,713	2,311		4,462	32.2%
Lanesborough	18,917			-		2,463	96	1,156	3,715	19.6%
Lee	17,282	129		129	220	2,479	1,267	219	4,185	24.2%
Lenox	13,871		66	66		1,121	1,876	1,641	4,638	33.4%
Monterey	17,512	179	111	290	12	4,550	61	1,722	6,345	36.2%
Mount Washington	14,319			-		7,124	63	852	8,039	56.1%
New Ashford	8,617			-		3,262	5		3,267	37.9%
New Marlborough	30,642	268	1,139	1,407	102	3,605	19	1,975	5,701	18.6%
North Adams	13,205			-	20	1,993	1,779	64	3,856	29.2%
Otis	34,358		31	31	4,554		427	555	5,536	22.7%
Peru	16,646			-		5,980	1,029	417	7,423	44.6%
Pittsfield	27,166			-	22	2,233	2,155	956	5,366	19.8%
Richmond	12,175		327	327		255	208	312	775	6.4%
Sandisfield	33,890		206	206		6,305	299	470	4,047	20.9%
Savoy	23,037		48	48		13,602	79		13,681	59.4%
Sheffield	31,086	1,002	574	1,576	959	1,570	299	2,398	5,226	16.8%
Stockbridge	15,149	83	282	365		171	924	1,156	2,251	14.9%
Tyringham	12,063	62	457	519	1,432	417	14	811	2,674	22.2%
Washington	24,802		145	145		12,152	6,706		18,858	76.0%
West Stockbridge	11,933			-		313	405	62	780	6.5%
Williamstown	29,992	332	403	735		6,202	1,463	1,468	9,133	30.5%
Windsor	22,500	14	137	151		4,581	733	3,203	8,517	38%
County	605,437	4,871	4,341	9,212	4,658	125,074	26,905	24,223	180,860	29.9%
North	131,053	1,435	685	2,120	382	42,179	5,375	1,764	49,700	37.9%
Central	234,681	877	806	1,683	1,570	45,893	18,088	10,721	76,272	32.5%
South	239,703	2,559	2,850	5,409	2,706	37,002	3,442	11,738	54,888	22.9%
Pittsfield MSA	164,691	1,660	909	2,569	1,839	20,787	10,968	6,544	40,049	24.3%

**Land Protected through Conservation Restrictions or Ownership; Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

Change in Protected Lands

Change in Acres of Protected Open Space in Sheffield, 1994-2003			
Ownership	1994	2002	Change in Acres
Federal	898.62	963.28	64.66
State	1,083.24	1,546.48	463.24
Town	153.50	85.14	(68.36)
Private Organizations	811.98	2,270.33	1,458.35
TOTAL	2,947.34	4,806.41	1,859.07

Source: Town of Sheffield Annual Reports

Over the past 10 years Sheffield has added approximately 1,859 acres of protected open space. Since 1994, several private conservation organizations such as The Nature Conservancy, Sheffield Land Trust, As well as the State Division of Fish and Wildlife have added significant resource areas to the list of protected lands. Significant and continuing local efforts to protect natural resources and expand recreational opportunities are a natural extension of the 1987 Open Space & Recreation Plan.

State and Federal Lands

There are approximately 2,671 acres in Sheffield that are owned by the State and Federal government that currently serve recreation needs and conservation purposes. Federal lands include the Appalachian Trail Corridor in the northern section of Sheffield. These lands amount to approximately 968 acres and are used for passive recreation and conservation purposes by people from around the world. The Appalachian Trail passes through the Berkshires on its route from Maine to Georgia and is one of the most popular recreation attractions in the region. In Sheffield, the trail enters town at East Mountain State Forest, heading west across June Mountain and the Housatonic Valley into Egremont and then dipping back into Sheffield north of Mt. Everett State Reservation.

The State owns and manages a number of properties in Sheffield for conservation, wildlife and recreation purposes amounting to approximately 1,702 acres.

State Owned Lands in Sheffield				
Type	Size (acres)	Management	Primary Uses	Recreational Opportunities
East Mt. State Forest	168.2	Mass. DEM*	Conservation and Passive Recreation	Hiking, hunting, snowmobiling, XCskiing
Three Mile Pond Wildlife Management Area	1065.7	Mass. DF&W**	Conservation and Passive Recreation	Wildlife area with public access for hiking, hunting, fishing, boating
Dolomite Ledge Non- Game Area	151.2	Mass. DF&W	Conservation and Passive Recreation	Hiking
Mt. Everett State Reservation	78.9	Mass. DEM	Conservation and Passive Recreation	Hiking, hunting, XCskiing
Race Brook State Reservation	238.6	Mass. DEM	Conservation and Passive Recreation	Hiking, hunting, XCskiing
Roadside Rest Areas (4)	3.5	Mass Highway	Conservation and Passive Recreation	Picnicking, limited boat access

* Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management; ** Massachusetts Department of Fish & Wildlife

□ *Please see Map # 10:
‘Town of Sheffield
Open Space’
behind the MAPS tab.*

Town Land

The Town of Sheffield has approximately 257 acres of municipally owned lands between the Town Park, Town Forest, Barnard Memorial Park, cemeteries, the school district, and other public lands¹³. Of these properties, approximately 58 acres would be classified as conservation lands and 118 acres in passive and active recreational uses.¹⁴ Sheffield has an average amount of municipally owned lands compared to other Berkshire County communities, ranking 14th out of 32¹⁵.

Private Non-Profit Lands

There are approximately 2,293 acres in Sheffield owned by private non-profit conservation organizations. Whereas the state is the primary conservation land holder in other municipalities in Berkshire County, Sheffield has more protected lands owned by non-profit organizations.

Open Space Owned and Managed by Non-Profit Organizations		
Organization	Total Acres	Primary Uses
Appalachian Trail Conference	49.2	Conservation & Recreation
Berkshire Natural Resources Council	15.4	Conservation
Mass. Audubon Society	247	Conservation
Sheffield Land Trust	275.4	Conservation
Sheffield Land Trust	39.8	Agriculture
The Nature Conservancy	1,433.8	Conservation
Trustees of Reservations	284	Conservation

The purpose of privately protected open space is to preserve valuable natural and wildlife, agricultural and scenic resources. Where appropriate, some public access is permitted for passive recreational activities. Other areas are restricted due to the sensitive nature of the ecosystems on the properties, such as around Schenob Brook and Black Rock, or because they are working farms.

A number of conservation corridors and blocks link and protect resources in the Schenob Brook Drainage Basin. A significant amount of private non-profit conservation lands are located in the

¹³ This acreage does not include all the acres listed as town-owned properties in the Town Assessor’s office. The difference lies in railroad right-of-ways, historic properties, many small lots owned by the Town for the Fire Company, landfill-transfer station, and other small parcels.

¹⁴ The acreage of town lands in conservation and recreational use is based on interpretation of Conservation, Open Space & Recreation Land Map.

¹⁵ Precise numbers of Town-owned acreage vary in this section due to differing dates of data sources.

ACEC in the southwest portion of town. The largest parcel is 494 acres owned by The Nature Conservancy along Schenob Brook including the Simon Tract, Buckner Tract and McMennamin Tract. There are also a number of conservation tracts along the Taconic Range on the west side of Undermountain Road.

Private Conservation Restrictions and APR Lands

There are approximately 2,336 acres of privately protected land in Sheffield. The majority of these properties are farms protected under the Massachusetts Agricultural Protection Restriction Program (APR). The APR program purchases development rights on farmland to permanently protect them while maintaining family ownership of the land. There are 11 APRs in Sheffield totaling 1,540 acres.

Adding up all conservation restricted and APR properties, Sheffield has more privately protected conservation lands than any other community in Berkshire County. Most do not include public access. However, the Botsford conservation restriction is used for access to the Appalachian Trail. (See chart on next page.)

Privately Protected Lands in Sheffield, 2003			
Property Name	Conservation Method	Acres	Primary Use
Bangs	APR	58.25	Agricultural
Rood/Coon (Bennett)*	APR	319	Agricultural
TNC/Bartholomew (Turner)	APR	123.7	Agricultural
Cavalier (Aragi)	APR	96	Agricultural
Chapin (Allen)	APR	153	Agricultural
Pekrul (Douglas)	APR	139	Agricultural
Howden (Howden and Prouty)	APR	12	Agricultural
MLCT/Bluebird Hill (Kelly)**	APR	310	Agricultural
Ziegler/Corn Crib (Ziegler)	APR	27	Agricultural
MA Audubon/LeGeyt (LeGeyt)	APR	160	Agricultural
MA. Audubon/Treiber (LeGeyt)	APR	142	Agricultural
TNC/Smith & Buckner	SLT CR	154	Conservation
Halper	SLT CR	4	Conservation
Saunders	SLT CR	94	Conservation
Myers	SLT CR co-held with BNRC	20	Conservation
TNC/McMennamin	SLT CR co-held with BNRC	28	Conservation
Moskowitz (Chase)	SLT CR co-held with BNRC	34	Conservation
Dixon	SLT CR co-held with BNRC	3	Conservation
Reich, West	SLT CR co-held with BNRC	16	Agricultural
Cader/Reich, West	SLT CR co-held with BNRC	6	Agricultural
Larkin (Thomas/Haynes)	SLT CR co-held with BNRC	10	Recreational
Elsbach (Thomas/Haynes)	SLT CR co-held with BNRC	42	Recreational
Buckner	SLT CR co-held with TNC	100	Conservation
Elsbach	SLT CR co-held with TNC	28	Conservation
Sears/Wood	SLT Deed Restriction	7	Conservation
Lanier	SLT ownership	17	Conservation
Rob's Landing	SLT ownership	30	Conservation
Robins/June Mt.	SLT ownership	143	Conservation
Route 7	SLT ownership	12	Conservation
Schlesinger	SLT ownership	120	Conservation
Gregory	TNC CR	40.8	Conservation
Oleen	TNC CR	99.3	Conservation
Palumbo	TNC CR	22.1	Conservation
Stumo	BNRC CR	180.4	Conservation
Botsford	NPS easement	27.2	Recreational
Chrisman	TNC CR	38.9	Unknown use

Source: Sheffield Assessors Office.

*(Name of farmer for APRs and of original landowner for non-APRs); **Partially in New Marlborough

ATC = Appalachian Trail Conference (formally Trust for Appalachian Trail Lands)

BNRC = Berkshire Natural Resource Council (formally Berkshire County Land Trust & Conservation Fund

CR = Conservation Restriction; TNC = The Nature Conservancy; SLT = Sheffield Land Trust;

NPS = National Park Service

Private Agricultural Lands

Sheffield has the highest concentration of active farms in the county with a broad range of farming operations including one of the largest private dairies in the State. Dairying continues to play an important role in town, especially as it relates to open space, but major crops are corn (silage) and hay, vegetables, produce, flowers, sod, with other lands in pasturage.

Sheffield boasts a high percentage of land in actual agricultural use compared to other Berkshire County towns. There are approximately 4,086 acres of active agricultural land in Sheffield (over 13% of the total land area of town) of which the vast majority are privately owned by local farmers. The majority of local farms are located along the Housatonic River on river bottom land, which lies roughly between Route 7 and 7A to the west and Boardman Road/Hewins Road/Shunpike Road to the east. Over 2,800 acres or 70% of all agricultural lands in Town are located in this region. However, there is another significant agricultural zone running from Route 7 west all the way to the fields on the slopes of the Taconic mountains on the west side of Route 41, following Lime Kiln Road, Bow Wow Road, Curtiss Road, Sheffield/Egremont Road, and the length of Route 41.

About 2,531 acres of local farmland is located on prime agricultural soils. This exceptional land when properly managed can be farmed continuously or nearly continuously without degrading the environment. It responds very well to organic and non-organic fertilizer and other chemical applications with limited loss of residues by leaching or erosion. It is the most responsive to management and requires the least investment for maintaining productivity.¹⁶ In addition to these excellent existing fields, much of Sheffield's formerly farmed land is now in forest or pasture, but it could still be made available for crops.

In 2003, a total of 34 farming operations were identified in Sheffield, including 4 dairies. All of these farms, while privately owned, contribute to the Town's scenic character, economy, and overall quality of life. While the acceleration of development over the past 20 years has resulted in fewer acres in agricultural use, the type of farming operations are more diverse with a variety of small niche market farms and nurseries.

7. Undeveloped and Unprotected Lands

Some private land in Sheffield is temporarily protected from development under the State's Chapter 61, A and B tax assessment laws. The purpose of this law is to provide local tax relief on active farming, forestry and recreational and wildlife properties assessing them based on the current use rather than "highest and best use". The Forest Tax Law, M.G.L. 61, has proved to be a popular means of reducing the tax load on some landowners. Approximately 2,503 acres are listed under the program in Sheffield.

Chapter 61A, the Farmland Assessment Act, also encourages owners of large lots to maintain the rural, open quality of the Town through the reductions of assessment on land kept in agricultural uses. Approximately 7,114 acres are currently listed under this program, although only about 3,444 acres are presently in agricultural production.

¹⁶ Natural Resource Conservation Service Soil Survey

Chapter 61B allows landowners who oversee land with wildlife habitat and recreational potential to enjoy a reduction of assessment on land. At present, 681 acres are listed under the Recreation Land Taxation Act.

Lands Listed in Chapter 61,A,B and APR			
Program	Total Acres (1)	On Prime Agri. Soils (2)	
		Acres	%
Chapter 61/Forestry	2,503.0	261.6	10%
Chapter 61A/Agriculture	7,114.2	2,088.2	29%
Chapter 61B/Recreation	680.7	36.3	5%
APR	1,804.1	253.3	14%

- (1) Sheffield Assessors Records; (2) Interpretation of
(2) Sheffield GIS Maps

Based on an interpretation of the Sheffield GIS Maps, there are approximately 4,086 acres of active farmlands in Sheffield. Of these, about 2,210 are not protected under agricultural preservation or conservation restrictions, or temporarily under Chapter 61A. Additionally, about half of Sheffield's prime agricultural soils, mostly located in the northwest section of Town, are not in agricultural use.

While most local farmers participate under the Chapter 61A program, none of the lands are permanently protected. The program lessens the property tax burden on existing farmlands as long as said lands serve an agricultural purpose. Withdrawal from the program requires the owner to pay the difference in taxes otherwise due over the previous years that the property was in the program. Also, the Town is offered first option to purchase the land, which could be key to achieving community objectives for maintaining agricultural use, protecting open space protection, providing affordable housing, and historic preservation.

Despite its current use, most existing open space in Sheffield is not permanently protected by conservation restrictions, APR's or conservation ownership. There will undoubtedly be land-use change on many agricultural, forestry, and other open space parcels as the Town continues to grow.

A recently community build-out study by the State also indicated the potential for significantly more development over the next 20 years. While Sheffield's build-out projections are widely believed to be overstated, there will be considerably more growth and continuing housing development which, without proper planning will significantly change the rural character of the community.

Zoning regulations and market demands in the South Berkshire Subregion promote new development that has almost exclusively consisted of large single-family homes over the past 10 years. In nearly all of these communities (including Sheffield), the average lot size for new homes has significantly exceeded the average lot size of older residences¹⁷. Large lot single-family home development can unnecessarily use lands valuable for agriculture, open space and recreation purposes.

It is important for the Town to identify and catalogue priority parcels of agricultural, cultural, archaeological, historical, scenic and natural significance as a baseline to operate from. It is also important to investigate and develop methodologies for permanently protecting – including a proper maintenance or management program – these finite resources that provide a visual narrative of the history, culture and quality of life of Sheffield residents. These methods could include conservation ownership, conservation restrictions and APRs to keep properties in family ownership.

¹⁷ Southern Berkshires Region Housing for Everybody Study; For an assessment of lots sizes for new homes in Sheffield see Section 2.1: Who We Are & How We Live.

□ *Please see Map # 11:
‘Town of Sheffield
Agricultural Resources’
behind the MAPS tab.*

8. Unique Landscape Characteristics

Scenic Landscapes were identified by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management (DEM) as part of an inventory in 1981. Roughly half of the land (approximately 15,342 acres) in Sheffield falls under this designation as illustrated on Sheffield Scenic Lands Map. A long scenic corridor extends along the Housatonic River north to south in Sheffield. Also, a significant portion of the south central portion of town and the western boundary along the Mt. Washington ridgeline and agricultural lands to the east fall under the scenic landscapes designation.

The greatest concentration of pristine lands, some private and some public, are found on the mountains (further away from public view) and along major rivers and water bodies. Expansive wetlands and forests predominate such remote areas. These resources are appreciated by sportsmen and those engaged in such passive recreational activities as canoeing and hiking. The natural beauty of Sheffield draws tourism to the area, which is an important base for local businesses.

Topographic Features

[Please see Map #7 ‘Town of Sheffield Topography’ referenced earlier in this section and behind the MAPS tab.]

The Taconic Range - The highest areas in Sheffield are Mt. Patterson (2,050) and Mt. Bushnell (1,834) in the Taconic Mountain Range. (At 2,365 feet, Race Mt. is the highest visible peak and located in Mount Washington). The Taconic Range is also part of one of the largest unbroken forest blocks from Maine to Virginia. The Appalachian Trail follows the ridgeline of these peaks and is used extensively by both “through” and day hikers. There are exceptional views to the east along the Appalachian Trail as it passes the ledges just below the Race Mountain summit.

Black Rock – Located above Berkshire School at an elevation of 1,500 feet, this rocky cliff and talus slope dominates views from portions of Undermountain Road. This area is owned and managed by The Nature Conservancy.

June Mountain Area (Elevation 1,206 feet) – This area is located in north-central part of Sheffield along the Taconic Range has an extensive upland woodlands. Most lands are privately owned but some conservation had been done in the area, including the Appalachian Trail corridor which links to East Mountain State Forest, town owned land, and land owned by the Berkshire Natural Resources Council and Sheffield Land Trust. This is a valuable timber and wildlife area.

Miles Mountain (Hurlburt's Hill, Elevation 1,034 feet) - The summit of Hurlburt's Hill offers panoramic views up the Housatonic River Valley. The area is owned and maintained by The Trustees of Reservations as part of Bartholomew's Cobble Reservation, which has an extensive trail network and is a very popular picnicking spot.

Little Johnny's Mountain (910 feet) and Bear's Den (840 feet) - These two hills border the Town Park and Town Forest. Geological outcroppings make this area visually interesting. The Boy Scouts have developed several informal trails over the years in this area that are popular with local residents.

Waterfalls and Gorges

Race Brook - This state-owned recreation area consists of a trail leading up to the Appalachian Trail following Race Brook. The steep-sided gorge contains three 75' waterfalls in succession with attractive pools and vistas across the Housatonic River Valley to the eastern highlands. The entire 1.56 mile corridor has been designated a State Scenic River in the "scenic natural landscape" category. Day hiking, back-packing and picnicking are very popular.

Dry Brook – Dry Brook parallels Race Brook to the north. Coming down off Mt. Everett, it drops through a steep narrow gorge before it joins with Race Brook and enters the shrub swamp-filled valley. From the area of the swamp, the majestic views of the steep sided mountains to the west are special attractions. This brook's 2.7 mile-long corridor also shares designation as a State Scenic River with Race Brook in the "scenic natural landscape" category.

Bear Rock Falls - The outflow from Plantain Pond on Mt. Washington drops over high falls on the town line. These falls can be seen from many locations in town and a popular hiking trail leads up to and beyond the Falls.

Sage's Ravine – Located on the Connecticut/Massachusetts border in southwest Sheffield, this steep ravine and brook includes a 70' waterfall. Popular spur trails rise to the Appalachian Trail on the ridgeline above.

Geologic Features

Bartholomew's Cobble - Outcrops of marble and quartzite alongside the Housatonic River are home to over 800 species of plants and 17 endangered or threatened species. A National Natural Landmark, the Cobble is owned and maintained by the Trustee of Reservations, but is open to the public for nature study, hiking and picnicking.

Ashley Quarry - The Ashley Falls Marble Company and the Southern Berkshire Marble Company operated at this quarry from 1876 to 1916 and sold high quality stone throughout the region. The quarries are no longer in operation and are now part of private home sites.

□ *Please see Map # 9:
‘Town of Sheffield
Scenic Landscapes’
behind the MAPS tab.*

Riverways

Riverways offer some of the most scenic settings within Sheffield. The 7-mile stretch along the Housatonic River brings one past a variety of terrain illustrating the community’s heritage from old industrial sites, farmlands, and more rural and natural surroundings. The Housatonic also provides passive recreational opportunities such as hiking, fishing and canoeing, although fish should not be eaten due to possible PCB bio-accumulation in the fish from upriver. There are 4 canoe access points in Sheffield and public parking is available at the State Rest Areas and the Covered Bridge. Currently, there is no formal trail system along the river.

Over the years, a number of organizations, including the Housatonic River Initiative, Housatonic Valley Association, Housatonic River Restoration, Sheffield Land Trust and The Trustees of Reservations, have been involved in stewardship programs to educate the public about water resources and to remove debris from the rivers through organized voluntary efforts. A “Stream Team” has been organized in Sheffield to collect debris along the river banks, monitor water quality, and advocate for the proper maintenance and cleaning of upstream dams to control pollution and siltation of the river in Sheffield. This has fostered a growing appreciation and awareness of this beautiful natural setting and its potential for passive recreation opportunities.

Scenic Roads

The character of streets bordering many of Sheffield’s scenic lands often enhances the public’s appreciation of them. Curvilinear layouts, relatively modest widths, non-paved surfaces, and the blending in with the general topography typify many of the collector streets within Sheffield.

Sheffield Scenic Roads*		
Response	Total Responses	%
Route 41	50	10.0%
Hewins Street	47	9.4%
Boardman Street	36	7.2%
Barnum Street	34	6.8%
Route 7	23	4.6%
Salisbury Road	20	4.0%
All Dirt Roads	20	4.0%
Cooper Hill Road	19	3.6%
Egremont-Sheffield Road	18	3.6%
All Roads	17	3.6%

As identified in the Community Survey but not officially designated by Town Meeting

According to the Community-wide Survey many roads in Sheffield were identified as scenic. In addition to those listed in the table to the side, Lime Kiln, Giberson, Bow Wow, Bull Hill, Weatogue, Curtiss, Foley, Guilder Hollow, Kelsey, Rannapo, Rebellion, Valley View, and Veely were also identified as having scenic value. However, only Weatogue road has been officially designated a scenic road by the town under Chapter 40, Section 15C of the Massachusetts General Laws, which would require alterations to the roadway, adjacent trees and stone walls to receive prior consent from the Planning Board.

9. Active and Passive Recreational Opportunities

Both active and passive recreational opportunities are important to Sheffield residents. The community has an abundance of passive recreational resources for hiking, biking, canoeing, fishing, and hunting. The Appalachian Trail and state parks/conservation areas provide for a number of these opportunities, but many passive recreational activities also take place on private lands. Some privately held lands also provide some public access. For example, the Drury Trail, managed by The Nature Conservancy on the Drury Preserve, is open to the public from dawn to dusk and is accessible from Barnum Street. Likewise, Bartholomew's Cobble, owned by The Trustees of Reservations off Weatogue Road, has a network of public trails and is also open from dawn to dusk; and the Sheffield Land Trust is in the process of improving the trail- access to its property off of Route 41 and its properties off of Boardman Street which are also open to the public.

There are not as many active recreation facilities and organized sports (such as baseball, football, basketball, golf, and soccer) in town. Sheffield, being a small community, has relatively few athletic facilities. The Town Park includes two small ball fields, a playground, and pavilion (which can double as an ice skating rink in the winter). Other public ball fields (baseball, soccer, and football) as well as indoor activities are available at the Mt. Everett Regional School facilities on Berkshire School Road. The Berkshire School, on Route 41, provides ice skating facilities to the public on Sundays in the winter months. There are, however, no public swimming facilities. (See chart on next page.)

Active & Passive Recreation Opportunities in Sheffield	
Activity	Locations and Remarks
Swimming	No public swimming facilities; several small ponds, lakes, rivers and streams offer private swimming opportunities.
Picnicking	Designated public areas in state conservation areas, parks, and rest areas; Town Park
Bicycling	
On-Road	No formal road bike routes but many popular local roads such as Rt.7, Rt.. 7A, Rt.. 41, Salisbury Rd., Berkshire School Rd.
Off-Road	No formal public bike trails but several privately owned properties for use by mountain bikes
Boating	
Non-Motorized	Canoeing is popular along the Housatonic River and there are 4 designated access points in Sheffield, also 3-Mile Pond
Motorized	There are no public boat launch facilities
Horseback Riding	No formal public bridle trails but many dirt roads and private trails offer horseback riding
Ice Skating	Town Park during winter months; on several local ponds; Berkshire School offers public skating on Sundays in the wintertime
Cross Country Skiing	Designated public trails in state conservation areas, AT, Town Park; by permission on private& conservation properties.
Playgrounds	Town Park and Mt. Everett Regional School
Hunting	Designated game areas on state lands; on private lands with permission
ATV/Dirt Bike Trials	No formal public trails but several privately owned properties used for ATVs & dirt bikes
Sledding	Town Park; Several popular locations on private property
Camping	The are no formal campgrounds in Sheffield
Fishing	Popular on local streams, rivers and ponds; public access is available on 3-Mile Pond
Golfing	No golf courses located in Sheffield; however there are two public courses in adjoining Egremont & Great Barrington.
Hiking	Extensive trail systems on AT, state lands, and private lands; limited public trails and links from residential areas to the Center of Sheffield.
Running/Walking	Limited sidewalk system and walking trails; running track located at Mt. Everett Regional School and Berkshire School (private)
Snowmobile Trails	The Southern Berkshires Snowdusters Club has network of trails with permission from private property owners; no formal public trails.
Tennis	Outdoor tennis courts located at Mt. Everett Regional School, Town Park and Berkshire School (private)
Basketball	Indoor and outdoor courts located at Mt. Everett Regional School, Town Park and Berkshire School (private)
Ball fields	
Baseball	Located at Mt. Everett Regional School (2) and Berkshire School (private)
Little League	Located at Town Park (2); and Town Cemetery (1)
Softball	Located at Mt. Everett Regional School (2)
Soccer	Located at Mt. Everett Regional School (2) and Berkshire School (2 private)
Football	Located at Mt. Everett Regional School and Berkshire School (private)
Other field sports	Located at Mt. Everett Regional School and Berkshire School (private)

Expanding recreational opportunities is an important concern to Sheffield residents according to the community-wide surveys and public meetings. When asked “What priority would you set for future recreational facilities?” respondents identified a number of activities. The highest priorities tended to be for additional passive recreational amenities such as bicycling, hiking and walking trails. In terms of active recreation, creating public swimming areas was the highest priority.

RECREATIONAL FACILITY PRIORITIES	HIGH		MED.		LOW		NONE	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
A. SWIMMING AREAS	110	45%	62	25%	41	16%	36	14%
B. PICNIC AREAS	69	30%	87	37%	59	25%	18	8%
C. BICYCLING TRAILS	131	52%	72	29%	31	12%	17	7%
D. CANOE/BOAT LAUNCH	92	40%	71	31%	46	20%	21	9%
E. HORSEBACK RIDING	41	19%	62	28%	87	40%	28	13%
F. ICE SKATING AREAS	83	35%	96	41%	42	18%	16	6%
G. CROSS-COUNTRY SKI TRAILS	97	40%	86	34%	46	19%	16	7%
H. PLAYGROUNDS	77	35%	81	37%	43	20%	16	8%
I. HUNTING AREAS	24	13%	32	17%	80	42%	54	28%
J. ATV TRAILS	15	7%	22	10%	49	22%	132	61%
K. SLEDDING/TOBOGGANING	52	23%	101	45%	46	20%	27	12%
L. CAMPING	44	20%	76	35%	62	28%	38	17%
M. FISHING	75	33%	86	38%	49	21%	18	8%
N. GOLFING	32	14%	32	14%	77	35%	81	37%
O. HIKING	132	56%	68	29%	24	10%	12	5%
P. RUNNING & WALKING TRAILS	137	56%	75	31%	24	10%	8	3%
Q. SNOWMOBILING	15	7%	26	12%	64	29%	116	52%
R. TENNIS	46	21%	79	36%	75	33%	22	10%
S. BALLFIELDS	51	23%	93	43%	57	26%	17	8%
T. OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	9	39%	4	17%	4	17%	6	26%

10. Maintaining Sheffield’s Rural Character

In spite of pressure for residential growth, Sheffield has been able to retain much of its openness and rural character. While some key acquisitions and conservation restrictions have been placed on valuable natural, agricultural and scenic resources by various organizations in Sheffield over the past 10 years, it is primarily good luck and the relatively healthy agriculture economy that has maintained this character.

Sheffield’s rural character is one of the most important assets in the community. However, the potential is large for a substantial turnover of land ownership over the 10-year period of this Plan, including some families with large land holdings that have maintained Sheffield’s landscape. The Town will need to make a concerted effort to ensure that the community retains the rural character, which is so important to the local economy and overall quality of life.

The Open Space/Recreation/Land Use Subcommittee identified six keys to maintaining and preserving Sheffield's rural character. Particular natural and cultural features that are a major focus include:

- Open and farmed fields
- Woodlands uninterrupted by structures or roads
- Undeveloped wooded ridge lines and mountainsides
- Scenic and dirt roads
- Water and wetlands
- Encouraging careful site design to preserve rural character, maintaining traditional development patterns identified through density, scale, and architectural styles in different parts of the community.

NATURAL RESOURCE, OPEN SPACE, RECREATION & AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES ACTION PLAN (NORA)

Sheffield's beauty, heritage, rural character, quality of life and economy are all inextricably tied to its natural resources, open space, recreational and agricultural resources. So is the health of its residents. The farmland, forests, wildlife habitat and recreation areas are important not only for their own purposes, but also for the foundation that they provide for all the related services and the tourism economy, not to mention being a source of fresh, healthy local food and providing areas for the community to exercise.

Overall Goal

Maintain Sheffield's rural character and unspoiled natural and agricultural resources, and preserve, promote and enhance the town's recreational resources.

Keys Aspects of Sheffield's Rural Character

- Open fields.
- Farmed fields.
- Uninterrupted woodlands.
- Undeveloped ridgelines and mountain sides.
- Scenic and dirt roads.
- Water and wetlands.
- Careful site design.
- Nature preserves.

Recommendation 1. Protect significant areas from adverse development.

Resource protection specifically involves lands whose character or qualities significantly promote various open space interests of the community. Very often, conservation of certain physical features or categories of land serve more than one of these interests.

- Through the coordination of organizations such as Sheffield Land Trust, The Nature Conservancy, The Trustees of the Reservation and town government, prioritize areas for preservation.**
- Encourage land owners to secure conservation restrictions on significant lands, along rivers and wildlife or ridgeline corridors.**

- c. **Encourage the use of Chapter 61, 61A and 61B programs and agricultural preservation restrictions.**
- d. **Encourage ‘Smart Growth’ by considering amendments to the zoning by-laws.**
- e. **Partner with conservation organizations to supplement local efforts to protect, manage or acquire priority or other significant areas for preservation.**

Recommendation 2: Protect agricultural and forest lands.

Sheffield is the largest farming community in Berkshire County with a strong farming base and skilled farmers. The landscape maintained by the farms is also at the heart of the rural character that supports the region’s critical tourism economy. Securing Sheffield’s agricultural lands and landscape means not only protecting the land but also supporting the farmers and farming as a business to keep agriculture a viable economy. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has made preservation of farmland a priority and Sheffield is in an ideal position to take advantage of this focus and associated resources. (See attached summary of Farmers Forum for details).

- a. **Encourage, educate and promote participation in Chapter 61, 61A and 61B programs.**

The State’s Chapter 61, 61A and 61B current use taxation programs encourage landowners to keep their land in Forestry, Agriculture and Recreation and Wildlife Habitat respectively, because of the positive economic, aesthetic, ecological and quality of life benefits such lands provide. These programs offer significant reduction in property taxes.

- b. **Encourage the town to exercise or assign its right of first refusal under these programs.**

In return the town receives the right of first refusal to match any legitimate and official offer on the land that would take it out of that use. Encouraging the use of these programs helps secure the agricultural land base since people are not forced to sell the land to avoid paying taxes that they cannot afford. If they do sell it, the town has the opportunity to purchase the land or assign its right to a qualified non-profit to do the same. With many farmers greatly dependent on rented or leased land, both features are essential to the future of farming.

- c. **Encourage, educate and promote participation in the Agricultural Preservation Restriction Program.**

The Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources administers the Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) Program, which purchases the development right on farms and farmland. Owners still retain possession of the property and continue to use it for agricultural purposes, while accessing the equity in the land and realizing most of the economic gain that is usually only realized by selling the land. APRs require a local contribution to the purchase price. The Town could facilitate or work with local conservation organizations to facilitate the use of the Program and purchase of APRs.

d. Promote the use of agricultural restrictions.

An agricultural restriction could be purchased by the town and/or conservation organizations, or such restrictions could be donated or sold at less than market value to such entities. This could be used in addition to APRs.

e. Promote the principles of ‘Smart Growth’.

Sustainable development that discourages land fragmentation and “sprawl”. Building is directed to population centers, marginal land or edges of fields or nestled in the forest and clustered so as not to fragment the agricultural land. The surrounding land can be preserved, allowing farmers to continue their agricultural activities. “Smart Growth” is ecologically and fiscally beneficial to towns and to maintaining community character.

f. Promote through education of Town boards and property owners the value of agriculture and open space to the town.

The Town could directly contact owners of farmland regarding available options to preserve their lands and livelihoods. Publicly promoting agricultural activities through such means as publications, brochures, school programs and farmers markets could also be carried out; the importance and realities of agriculture noted as a part of the town and as a business. The community must find ways to help support these agricultural endeavors to help keep them economically viable, thereby continuing the numerous benefits of the open land. The Conservation Commission and other Town boards and commissions could ensure that owners of large tracts of farmland are well informed about mechanisms to protect land from avoidable suburbanization.

- Support and promote Right-to-Farm laws and concepts.
- Conduct an agricultural assessment and other processes from *Preserving Rural Character Through Agriculture: A Resource Kit for Planners* – New Hampshire Coalition for Sustainable Agriculture
- Work with the Dept. of Agricultural Resources to establish an Agricultural Commission
- Work with interested farmers and assist them in filing forms

- Suggest methods of maintaining “buffer zones” between farm activities and suburban, residential activities in order to protect the farmer from “nuisance” complaints and issues.
- Make available materials on lease agreements for land owners and farmers so that good soil stewardship is ensured.

This could include information on various conservation options and tools available to residents; about the net fiscal benefit that farmland and conservation land provides to the town; and answering questions associated with preserving land as open space. (See additional information from the Farmers Forum).

Recommendation 3. Promote and expand recreational opportunities, management and facilities, especially on town lands and other public ‘open spaces’.

It would be ideal to create a system of linked recreational parcels and trails. We could encourage the Town Park Committee, Conservation Commission and local conservation organizations to work together to that end. Volunteer Town Park Committee or Conservation Commission likely have limited time to devote to establishing a sustainable recreational system, so local conservation organizations could help in the creation and management of recreational opportunities on appropriate parcels of existing town-owned and other private land. Massachusetts’ strong landowner liability protection laws, make the inclusion of significant private land feasible.

a. Enhance public facilities and services.

Provide adequate services (e.g. parking areas, restrooms, bike racks, canoe access, lighting, etc.) to optimize public use of recreational areas including child safe enclosures (similar to that at the Family Center in Gt. Barrington) and, where possible, accommodating those with disabilities (universal access). These recreational areas could be publicized via signage, brochures, etc.

b. Establish inter-board policies.

The Selectmen could work with the Conservation Commission, Town Park Committee and Highway Department to establish formal policies clarifying the relationships and responsibilities of the various offices, boards, commissions and committees in managing municipal and recreational properties.

c. Encourage volunteer assistance.

Efforts could be coordinated with local conservation and public service organizations, snowmobile club, Boy and Girl Scouts, businesses and volunteers in supporting the creation and maintenance of public open spaces, riverways, trails and other recreational and natural resources.

d. Improve access and linkages.

Upgrade pedestrian, and where appropriate, vehicular access to and within recreational facilities and conservation lands. Provide linkages between protected open spaces and trails connecting recreational sites. Utilizing the Center of Sheffield as an example, some potential links might include the:

- Town Park
- Town Forest
- Covered Bridge
- Mt. Everett and Undermountain Elementary Schools
- Mill Pond (clarify status of Mill Pond access off Bow Wow Rd.)
- Barnard Memorial Park

e. Consider creating a recreation committee.

This committee could oversee the enhancement of existing and development of new recreational opportunities in Sheffield. Special consideration could be given to multi-use trails, which are suitable for year-round uses. Also consider a child friendly fenced in area at the Town Park (i.e. the Family Center in Gt. Barrington).

f. Encourage trail development in population centers and as connectors to existing trails.

Trails to the June Mountain property or in the Bear Rock Falls area using the old Town road access from Route 41 are both potential connectors to the Appalachian Trail and some of the old logging roads around the school and town forest are in close proximity to thickly settled neighborhoods.

g. Consider producing a Sheffield Recreation Handbook.

The Conservation Commission could work with local organizations and businesses to produce a Recreation Handbook listing public recreation opportunities on public and private lands as a resource for area residents and as a tool to promote eco-tourism.

h. Evaluate a public swimming area(s).

The town could evaluate creating a Swimming Area Committee to evaluate natural beach swimming opportunities. The Committee could explore available locations, costs, funding programs and liability issues. Possible sites could include Three Mile Pond (owned by the State) and Mill and Trout Ponds (privately owned) as well as others.

i. Evaluate canoe launch sites to include parking and coordinate regional river access points.

The Town could evaluate enhancing existing canoe access sites and identify key new locations in the long stretches where none are available. Some consideration could be given to providing access and, where appropriate, restroom facilities, parking, picnic areas and attractive signage that would encourage tourism along the Housatonic River as well. Once it has been finalized, resources from the Upper Housatonic National Heritage Area could be useful here. Canoe and kayak use could be facilitated through user-friendly parking and water access points. Coordinating river access on a regional basis could help maximize convenience and utilization.

Recommendation 4. Maintain, enhance and preserve scenic roads, both paved and unpaved.

Massachusetts encourages towns to designate local ways and roads as scenic roads (using local, state or federal designations as appropriate). The goal is to preserve the scenic and rural character of these roads by limiting the removal or disruption of trees, stonewalls and other significant characteristics within their right-of-ways.

The character of scenic roads is often derived from how well their width, surface and grade fits with the existing terrain and community. Historically, trees were planted and stonewalls were erected along these roads. They readily distinguish these byways without visually detaching the roadways from the surrounding landscape.

In anticipation of rapid growth conditions, the narrow, curved, tree-canopied character of these roads can be destroyed by efforts to “upgrade” in order to accommodate a greater anticipated volume of vehicular traffic at greater speeds. By preserving roads of notable visual and historic character, they can act as an extension of open spaces while maintaining their functional purpose as access ways. This form of linkage between open spaces can be readily implemented with little or no cost to the community. These roads also encourage a different level of development and lower travel speeds.

- a. Consider design standards for reconstruction of public ways that complement the surrounding rural character.**
- b. Minimize detrimental impacts of public works projects.**
- c. Consider designating scenic roads.**
- d. Minimize street signs that detract from scenic roads.**
- e. Work with local tree groups to inventory, maintain and replace Sheffield’s heritage trees.**

f. Work with Berkshire Bike Path Council on routes and designations.

Recommendation 5: Protect ecological resources.

Sheffield is blessed with an unusual variety and abundance of high quality natural communities and rare ecological resources. Limited fragmentation of the land, unbroken forest blocks and mountain sides, high-quality water resources, limestone geology and functional family farms have helped to create and maintain a landscape that has drawn a host of conservation organizations to work in Sheffield. Visitors travel from all over the world to see the spring ephemerals at Bartholomew's Cobble and The Nature Conservancy named the Schenob Brook area as one of its "Last Great Places".

a. Ensure by-laws protect town aquifers.

In conjunction with the Board of Selectmen, the Conservation Commission and Planning Board could review and amend existing bylaws as needed to ensure effective provisions are made for:

- Regulating underground storage tanks and disposal of hazardous wastes
- Limiting the percentage of impervious surfaces allowed in areas of groundwater recharge.
- Providing for effective storm water management.

b. Consider an ecological assessment of town land.

The Conservation Commission could commission an assessment of all Town lands to determine what, if any, critical resources they support. Appropriate uses for each parcel could be determined – recreational, educational, timber management, natural area, open space or resale (the latter not on conservation land, but tax-title land that is not ecologically, scenically or recreationally important). Partnership with local conservation organizations could increase the resources available to the town.

c. Protect critical habitat areas in land use change decisions.

The Conservation Commission could obtain and circulate data from the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program and other agencies so that all Town board and committees will be aware of areas of rare and threatened species to insure that this information is considered before any land-use changes are considered. The Commission could take advantage of resources available through and to local conservation organizations to help the Commission oversee the updating of such data by means of lists and maps to assist in decision-making by Town boards and committees and education of the public.

Recommendation 6. Protect scenic vistas, mountainsides and ridgelines.

In 1975 Sheffield adopted the Berkshire Scenic Mountain Act and designated the Conservation Commission to carry out the provisions of the statute. This state law is unique to Berkshire County, created because the legislature recognized the value of the county's unspoiled mountains. It enables the Town to guide development activities that may alter or damage certain mountainous regions of the community, conditioning certain land use activities. Each town defines its own specific parameters, but Sheffield can benefit from the work that other Berkshire County towns have done in creating their regulations. This tool can be an important means of guiding growth to preserve scenic mountain sides, ridges and their natural resources which are vital to Sheffield's quality of life, identity, tourist economy and water quality. Boundaries and specific regulations are incorporated into the zoning bylaws. Other non-regulatory means of protecting this vital resource are also available.

- a. Update the Scenic Mountain Act process begun in 1975.**
- b. Encourage landowners to enroll in Chapter 61, 61A and 61B programs to help minimize the need and likelihood of conversion of this land.**
- c. Work with local conservation organizations to identify priority sites for conservation.**

Recommendation 7. Adopt the Community Preservation Act or create a similar mechanism to provide an ongoing source of funds to help implement recommendations in NORA.

In 2000, the Massachusetts legislature passed state-wide enabling legislation allowing Towns to create, through Town Meeting, a Community Preservation Fund, overseen by a Community Preservation Committee that can be used for Affordable Housing, Open Space protection and Historic Preservation. The Commonwealth even has a source of matching funds, from Registry fees. The mechanism is a real estate tax surcharge. A low income exemption is usually included. Prior to the enabling legislation, some communities created their own "land bank" funds by making a home-rule petition to the legislature that utilized a real estate transfer fee as the funding mechanism. This might also be an option for Sheffield.

5. CULTURAL & HISTORIC RESOURCES

1. Summary & Key Facts

Sheffield, in the heart of the Housatonic River Valley of the southern Berkshires, was incorporated in 1733. It is the oldest town in Berkshire County, with Ashley Falls being the original village settlement in the township.

The interval between the Taconic range on the west and the Berkshire barrier on the east was originally occupied by a group of Indians belonging to the Mahican tribe. In 1724, for three barrels of cider, thirty quarts of rum and 460 pounds, the Indians conveyed a tract of their land to a group of Hampshire County residents, who divided this tract into two townships, each seven miles square.

The present town of Sheffield was a large part of the lower Housatonic township. The first white settler was Matthew Noble of Westfield, who arrived along in the fall in 1725 to begin the first settlement in the Berkshires. In January 1733 the second town meeting voted to hire a preacher and to build a meetinghouse. On June 22 of that year the town was incorporated.

—Lillian E. Preiss,
quoted in the 1987 Sheffield Open Space and Recreation Plan

Thus began Sheffield's rich rural history, which included drafting of the Sheffield Declaration at Colonel John Ashley's house and Shay's Rebellion, a farmer's revolt against heavy taxes fought near the Egremont line four years after the Revolutionary War.

The history of Sheffield in many ways epitomizes the small New England town experience that has remained so powerful in the nation's imagination. The town saw decades of rich agricultural production and participated in early water-powered industrialization, with paper, saw, marble, grist mills, built throughout the town, particularly on Mill Pond and at the falls in Ashley Falls. Marble and limestone were quarried, trees harvested for charcoal and processed into lime in kilns like those on Lime Kiln Road. Two covered bridges were built to span the Housatonic and provide access to town for farms in the eastern portion of Sheffield. Sheffield became a commercial center for these early industries.

In the years leading up to the Civil War, Sheffield was a station on the Underground Railway. After the war, new railroads made the countryside accessible to city dwellers and Sheffield, with other towns in western Massachusetts and northwestern Connecticut, became a fashionable summer resort area. Large inns/hotels in town catered to travelers and spas built near springs on the east side of town offered health cures, including the so-called Soda Spring Farm on Home Road. A lecture hall (Dewey Hall) was built in the town center to provide improving amusement for the populace.

Sheffield’s population clustered around the town center, the village of Ashley Falls, and other clusters around the Bow Wow and Clayton Road areas.

In the mid 1800s Sheffield was one of the first communities to embrace the spreading “Good Village” movement, which included planting a double row of elms along the main street, trees that succumbed to disease in the 1930s. Sheffield’s Great Elm, the tree that had stood for hundreds of years at the corner of Main and Silver Streets, whose picture is on the town seal, perished too.

Throughout Sheffield’s 270-year history, the community has maintained much of its rich historical character and agricultural heritage.

Building on the Chautauqua heritage of Dewey Hall, Sheffield has increasingly become a locus for cultural activities, including a nationally recognized choral festival, a respected summerstock theater company, art league and a landscape (both natural and agricultural) and antiques industry that draw people from around the world and the Mark Dewey Research Center which has a growing clientele.

Key facts in Sheffield history	
Matthew Noble House built	1726
Incorporated	1733
Col. Ashley House built	1735
Parish Church built	1760
Sheffield Declaration	1773
Dan Raymond House	1774
Stone Store built	1834
Dewey Hall built	1887
Berkshire School founded	1907

2. Historic Resources

The concentration of historic buildings, mills, cemeteries, and public spaces is particularly noticeable in the two villages of Sheffield Center and Ashley Falls and in the area north of Sheffield Center called Sheffield Plain. Both villages are designated on the State Historic Register. Sheffield Center and the Sheffield Plain are also listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Map 3 illustrates these historic districts as well as other important historic and cultural sites throughout Sheffield.

Sheffield Center Historic District — This historic district was entered on the National Register in 1989. It roughly follows Route 7 (Main Street) from north of Miller Avenue to south of Root Lane. It also includes a portion of Maple Avenue. There are approximately [] acres and 109 buildings in the district. This district is the traditional center of Sheffield and is the location of many of the first homes, religious institutions and public buildings in the community. The Old Parish Church (1760), Dewey Hall (1887), The Stone Store (1834) and the Dan Raymond House (1774) and adjacent historic complex are among

those open to the public. While the character of the village has changed over the years, it still serves as the central community gathering place, and many of its historic and cultural attributes are still present.

Sheffield Plain Historic District — This historic district was added to the National Register in 1988. It roughly covers one-half mile along Route 7 from north of Cook Road to one-half mile south. The district encompasses approximately 270 acres and 23 buildings. The district includes the Matthew Noble House, the oldest house in Sheffield. Historically, this area was principally agricultural, but it also included various businesses, including a stagecoach stop and inn, a clock and watch-maker's shop, stone store, cider mill and a tannery.

Ashley Falls Historic District — This district was included on the State Register in 1989. It is centered on the village green and extends out to include approximately 678 acres of land, with 60 homes, two churches, the last one-room school house in the township (now closed) and the oldest grist mill. The district includes the Colonel John Ashley House (1735) on Cooper Hill Road, the oldest home in Ashley Falls, listed on the National Register individually in 1975. The Colonel John Ashley House is owned by The Trustees of Reservations and is open to the public. The Ashley Falls Historical District has adopted preservation guidelines. It is the only one of the Historic Districts to do so.

The Sheffield Historical Commission inventoried 200 existing buildings, primarily private homes, built between 1735 and 1875, and is planning to update that inventory through 1900 for a total of 326 buildings. The architectural styles most represented are Greek Revival, Georgian and Federal. The main building (1904) of the Option Institute is an excellent example of the Arts and Crafts shingle style. The Old Turnpike Inn off Clayton Rd. in Ashley Falls is also individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Age distribution of Sheffield's historical buildings

Time frame built	Number of Units
1730-1749	11
1750-1799	39
1800- 1849	102
1850-1900	174

Source: Sheffield Historical Commission and Sheffield Historical Society

Sheffield Historical Society. The Sheffield Historical Society was organized in 1972 by a group of residents who sought to preserve the story of the oldest town in Berkshire County. It is a volunteer driven, nonprofit corporation, actively involved in local historical research that also offers a variety of educational programs for every age group. The Society's goal is to stimulate interest in local history and to interpret the town's past. It collects and preserves records and materials relevant to the town, which includes the hamlets of Sheffield and Ashley Falls, exhibits them and makes them available for exhibits, research and educational programs. It maintains several historic structures. The 1774 Dan Raymond House is both a period museum and houses the Society's main office. Other buildings on the campus are the 1820 Parker Hall Law Office; a 19th century Carriage

House that contains an exhibit of agricultural and related tools; an 1876 brick Learning Center which was an early Sheffield greenhouse; an unusual early 19th century double chamber Greek Revival Smokehouse; the early 19th century Hatter's Shop which now contains the collection of the Mark Dewey Research Center; and a circa 1834 commercial building, known locally as the Old Stone Store, which has undergone restoration to serve as a museum, community information center and artifact storage area. The campus is located in the heart of the Sheffield Center Historic District at 159-161 Main Street.

Colonel John Ashley House. Located on Cooper Hill Road in Ashley Falls, the house was acquired in 1972 by The Trustees of Reservations and is adjacent to their Bartholomew's Cobble property. The house itself has a rich history. In 1735, at the age of twenty-five, Colonel John Ashley built this house for his Dutch bride, Hannah Hogeboom. The Ashley House was the center of social, economic, and political life in south Berkshire County in the eighteenth century. The famous Sheffield Declaration, a petition against British tyranny and a manifesto for individual rights, was drafted in the upstairs study of the house and published in 1773. The cause for abolishing slavery in America was strengthened in the celebrated 1781 Massachusetts state court battle that freed the Ashleys' slave, Elizabeth Freeman (nicknamed "Mumbet") under the new state constitution. The house was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1975, and exemplifies early 18th century architecture. House furnishings and items date from the 18th and early 19th centuries. Guided tours are offered during the summer season.

Several publications about Mumbet are available for purchase at the house and from The Trustees of Reservations offices and more information is available on her from PBS's *Africans in America* at www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part2/2p39.html or from Mumbet.com as well as publications: *Mumbet: Folklore and Fact* by Arthur Zilversmit- article in Berkshire History, Spring 1971, Vol. I, No. 1; *The Ashleys - A Pioneer Berkshire Family* by Arthur C. Chase- booklet published for the Colonel Ashley House; *Sheffield, Frontier Town* by Lillian E. Preiss in conjunction with the Sheffield Historical Society; and *Elizabeth Mumbet Freeman: Unsung Heroine and the Bill of Rights*.

Cemeteries

Sheffield's historic cemeteries, both public and private, are distributed throughout town and have had much written about them. The Sheffield Historical Society has thorough documentation on each.

Benefits of Sheffield's Historic Nature

The everyday experience of history in Sheffield, prompted by our older buildings, village centers and rural settings, is one of the most important reasons many people live in the community. It is also one of Sheffield's greatest economic assets. Tourism has been one of Sheffield's most consistent economic contributors since the arrival of the railroad in the 1840's. However, as the community grows and changes, the tangible evidence of our history is threatened. The impact of high-speed highway traffic, utility and infrastructure changes (such as electrical wires, road materials and road widths), incompatible architecture, fragmented land uses, and other issues need to be carefully evaluated and addressed through effective land use planning.

3. Cultural Resources

Sheffield is fortunate in having numerous cultural resources, including those listed below and those more difficult to quantify, in the antiques industry and the landscape and rural heritage that provide support and a foundation for the cultural institutions, encouraging visitors to stay and explore the area.

CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS AND RESOURCES

Barrington Stage Company. Founded in 1995, BSC is a nonprofit professional theater company located in the center of Sheffield. BSC produces work from repertory, develops new plays and musicals, and looks for ways to bring new audiences into the theater. It offers programs for aspiring drama students and puts on a Youth Theater production, in addition to its Main Stage and Stage II productions. During its summer season, BSC is in residence at the Consolati Performing Arts Center on the Southern Berkshire Regional School District campus, with two stages, classrooms, rehearsal space, concession and gift shops. Off-season productions are at BSC's Studio Space in the center of Sheffield. The year-round staff of seven swells to as many as 100 in the summer and in 2003, its Main Stage productions were seen by more than 17,000 people. BSC is a major regional theater and heavily markets its work bringing busloads of theater-goers to Sheffield and the region during the season contributing significantly to the local economy.

Berkshire Choral Festival. Founded in 1982 by John Hoyt Stoke, a New York City and Sheffield resident, the BCF is a nonprofit educational organization, which each summer brings together 1,600 choristers from the United States and around the world for a singing week in which they rehearse and perform the great choral masterpieces in choruses that number 225. The singers rehearse five hours every day to prepare for concerts with the Springfield Symphony, leading soloists and the most distinguished choral conductors. The choristers also attend classes in a variety of musical subjects taught by a professional staff. Five of those weeks take place on the campus of Berkshire School, the other weeks occur in Canterbury, England and Salzburg, Austria. In their off-time choristers explore the local attractions, adding to Sheffield's and the area's economy. BCF also heavily markets its work and with over 6,000 alumni in 2003 and an average of 4,000 people attending concerts each year, contributes significantly to the local economy.

Sheffield Art League. SAL is a regional art league with a number of annual shows held at Dewey Hall in Sheffield, with outreach and education programs for local and regional artists and students.

Berkshire School. Founded in 1907, this private preparatory school is also home to the Berkshire Choral Festival in the summer time and the skating rink and other facilities are a resource for the community.

Cultural Venues

There are a number of cultural venues in Sheffield, many serving multiple roles. Some of those venues include: Dewey Hall, a historic 1887 stone building in the Center of Sheffield which is owned and operated by the Sheffield Friendly Union, and hosts the Sheffield Art League summer art shows, the Sheffield Senior Center, numerous community events and is

available for rental by organizations and the public; the Consolati Performing Arts Center, the auditorium at the Southern Berkshire Regional School District Campus on Berkshire School Road, used by the Barrington Stage Company for its performances during the summer season and by the Town for its Annual Town Meetings; the Sheffield Grange on Route 7, just north of the center of Sheffield, owned and operated by the Sheffield Grange which holds its meeting there, in addition to renting the building out for monthly contra dances, for the Berkshire Children's Chorus, regular church meetings and community events; the Old Parish Church, whose rooms are used for the monthly Sheffield Historical Society meetings and community events; Tango Argentino has in recent years used space at Christ Church Episcopal for its lessons and dances.

Other Cultural Activities

Many town and regional organizations hold events throughout the year. The Sheffield Association and other groups sponsor an annual "Sheffield in Celebration" the weekend or two following Labor Day, featuring traditional fairs on the Green in Sheffield and Ashley Falls. The Ashley Falls Village Improvement Society began sponsoring the Ashley Falls Fair in the mid-1990s and the Sheffield Association, the Celebration in 2000. Old Parish Church holds an annual quilt show and Christ Church has an annual fair.

□ *Please see Map # 3:
'Town of Sheffield
Cultural & Historical Resources'
behind the MAPS tab.*

CULTURAL & HISTORIC RESOURCES ACTION PLAN

The purpose of this plan is to present a vision for Sheffield's historic and cultural resources that reflects the wishes of the community as accurately as possible, and to outline various strategies for achieving that vision.

Overall Goal

Enhance and preserve the historic resources and landscape essential to Sheffield's character and economy. Develop Sheffield as a cultural center, raising visitors' and the community awareness of these resources.

Sheffield's history and its cultural attractions and institutions are an integral part of the fabric of the community and Sheffield's and the region's economy. As the oldest town in the county, with many historical firsts, Sheffield has a wealth of resources well worth protecting, and its proximity to major metropolitan areas of New York and Boston provide a built-in audience for historic and cultural attractions. Resources range from historic buildings, landscapes and a leading regional genealogy research facility to regional theaters, world-renowned choral festival and an antiques industry that draws people from all over the world.

Recommendation 1. Preserve and promote Sheffield's cultural & historic heritage, landscape and attractions.

- a. Inventory and catalog Sheffield's Heritage Landscapes and establish priorities for preservation of historical homes, landscapes and sites.**
- b. Establish a historic/architectural sign program to identify historic resources and create a historic/architectural 'trail' that enhances connections between historic/architectural places and settings throughout the township.**
- c. Establish a historic/architectural 'walking tour' in the town centers.**
- d. Enhance the covered bridge experience by connecting it to the town, beautifying the picnic area and improving river access.**

- e. Consider design guidelines and performance standards for new buildings and related improvements in historic and culturally significant areas such as Sheffield Center and Sheffield Plain historic districts.
- f. Consider a demolition delay by-law to provide time for the preservation or relocation of historic resources.
- g. Secure wherever possible public access to scenic areas and historic sites.
- h. Work with local schools to increase awareness of scenic areas and historic resources.
- i. Consider creating a brochure of historic and cultural attractions for use locally and for visitors.
- j. Work with Sheffield's cultural groups to promote Sheffield as a cultural destination.
- k. Consider creating a web page to promote Sheffield's historic and cultural attractions.
- l. Consider establishing a Historic District for the Sheffield Village Center and Sheffield Plain areas.

Recommendation 2. Pursue funding for the enhancement and acquisition of significant cultural and historic resources.

Effectively protecting, managing and marketing historic and cultural resources will require funding for the purchase of properties or easements or creation of promotional materials. The fiscal constraints and limited resources of town government do not currently provide a viable opportunity for preserving other than the most significant resources nor for creating a comprehensive marketing strategy. The town, historical, conservation and cultural organizations must work cooperatively and be resourceful to leverage additional funding sources.

- a. Continue to seek historical preservation grants.

- b. Work with private conservation and historic preservation groups to acquire historic properties and conservation and historic preservation restrictions.**
- c. Explore partnerships with the Berkshire Visitor's Bureau, Southern Berkshire Chamber of Commerce and Berkshire Chamber of Commerce to fund promotional planning and materials.**
- d. Explore economic development funding through the Southern Berkshire Community Development Corporation.**
- e. Explore partnerships with the Massachusetts Cultural Council and Historic Massachusetts for private or government grant funding.**
- f. Consider adopting the Community Preservation Act and/or a transfer tax program to generate funds to protect historic and open space resources.**
- g. Explore resources available through the Upper Housatonic National Heritage Area.**

6. TRANSPORTATION & CIRCULATION¹

1. Background

The Town of Sheffield's transportation network is an important factor influencing the community's development patterns, community character and overall quality of life. The purpose of transportation planning, and this section of the Master Plan, is to proactively address transportation issues brought on by residential and commercial growth in the community, recognizing their dual role as travel lanes and an essential part of the landscape and character of the community.

The primary focus of the transportation assessment is to identify important local and regional issues and opportunities to enhance and diversify the transportation network through expansion, maintenance, land use regulations and policy. The first section of this chapter defines the existing transportation network. Trends and statistics are evaluated regarding local and state roads (traffic volumes, travel patterns, safety), housing distribution and roadway conditions, and alternative travel opportunities.

The goal is for Sheffield residents and visitors to have a safe, well-defined transportation and circulation network, with supporting facilities and services, which provides transportation opportunities for all people, and preserves and enhances our villages and the scenic roads and corridors that help define the rural character of our community. Therefore analysis and recommendations may vary in different areas in town and by neighborhood.

In order to obtain data and information for this chapter, several sources were used including from the Massachusetts Highway Department (MHD), Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC), and the Town of Sheffield Police Department and Highway Department. Additionally, previous studies and reports on Sheffield transportation projects and issues were used for this assessment. Additionally, through public workshops, interviews with local and regional officials, and the assistance of the Master Plan Steering Committee (MPSC) and Transportation-Facilities-Services (TFS) Subcommittee, major transportation issues affecting Sheffield's existing and future quality of life, and capacity to accommodate new development were identified.

From the issues identified, an analysis was made of existing transportation systems, planned projects, general roadway conditions, existing and future traffic capacity trends, potential alternative transportation modes, and local design requirements in terms of meeting the community's goals for transportation and circulation. In addition, a subregional traffic study was conducted at selected intersections along Route 7, which have been identified as the most problematic intersections within Town. These intersections included Berkshire School Road, Silver Street, Maple Avenue, and Clayton Road.

Section 9.0 Community Action Plan & Implementation Schedule lays out planned transportation improvements, which are also illustrated on the Transportation & Circulation Improvement Plan, in

¹ Several technical terms are used in this report which are defined in Appendix 1: Glossary of Terms

context with the analysis and recommendations from the other sections of the Plan. Identified projects and actions are based on community priorities as identified in the public workshops, community surveys, and through the MPSC and TFS Subcommittee input. Recommended actions address local road improvement and maintenance programs, land use policy and regulations, and define potential future implications of transportation issues and planned improvements in Sheffield.

2. Summary of Findings

Sheffield Transportation Facts	
Town Roads	78 roads totaling approximately 85 miles
State & Federal Routes	Route 7 totaling 8.4 miles
	Routes 7A and 41 totaling 9 miles
Private Roads	41 roadways
Nearest Interstate Exit Distance	I-90 (Exit 2, Approximately 20 miles)
Railroad	Housatonic Railroad
Public Transportation	Paratransit Service provided by COA
Nearest Regional Airport	Great Barrington and Pittsfield, MA
Nearest Commercial Airport	Bradley International, Hartford, CT
Distance	Approximately 47 miles

How people and goods move from one place to another is a fundamental issue that needs to be addressed when planning and managing growth in Sheffield. As the community continues to attract new commercial and residential development, and existing business expands, adequate transportation infrastructure and services must be provided. The following points summarize the transportation issues and conclusions presented within this section of the

Master Plan. Additionally, various implications (particularly regarding future land use policy) associated with Sheffield's transportation trends are discussed.

- Sheffield has a limited amount of state highway mileage between Routes 7, 7A, and 41. However, Route 7 serves as the southern gateway to the Berkshire region and is a critical interstate highway linking large areas of northern and southern New England. Consequently a significant amount of interstate and inter-regional traffic flows through the community on a daily basis.
- Beyond the regional highway system, other forms of regional transportation such as air and rail have not been a major factor in moving people or goods in and out of the Sheffield Region. Rail has, however, been important for freight and commercial ventures (i.e. plastics, fertilizers, etc.) .
- Sheffield's road network is comprised of state and local arterials, collectors, and minor roads. In all, there are approximately 100 miles of roads in the community, and the town has added very little public roadway miles over the last 10 years. The vast majority of these are local roads subject to regular maintenance by the town. The local road system is made up primarily of sub-collectors and residential access roads.
- Sheffield has a significant amount of locally maintained public roadways in comparison to the 7-town South Route 7 Corridor and the average mileage in all Berkshire County communities.
- About one-third of local roads are non-paved (such as dirt or oil & stone surfaced roads). A number of issues need to be weighed when changes or improvements are considered to

these roadways, such as short and long-term costs and benefits, existing and projected traffic volumes, emergency access, environmental and aesthetic value and impacts and maintaining neighborhood character and safety.

- Improved parking capacity and efficiency in the center of Sheffield continues to be an issue that needs to be addressed. There is an existing design for increasing parking that has been on the State TIP list for a number of years (the first part of the project was the sidewalks and lighting), but is still awaiting funding as enhancement projects have not been prioritized in recent years. The town may be able to take advantage of the delay in funding to address a renewed interest in creating a larger functional green and slowing traffic and improving flow through town (see also Facilities and Services and Economic Development sections).
- Local public transportation is very limited in Sheffield with taxi service based in Great Barrington, private interstate bus service, and independent human service programs. Like many rural communities, Sheffield has difficulty in justifying and sustaining regular fixed-route public transportation.
- The only sidewalk network in Sheffield occurs in the Town Center. This sidewalk, running along the west side of Route 7, poses several safety issues and can be difficult to navigate. Walking is a key function in the village areas and sidewalk maintenance and enhancements should be made accordingly.
- There are several informal bicycle routes identified and used in Sheffield including the Route 7 corridor. However, with the speed of vehicle traffic and turning movements, this corridor is not friendly for bike riders.
- There are a multitude of trails and paths in Sheffield serving a variety of users including walkers, hikers, mountain bikers, cross-country skiing, and snowmobiling. Much of this network is informal and privately owned with no legal agreements for continued use.
- Between 1991 and 1999, 674 accidents were recorded on Sheffield roads, and about one-third of all accidents occurred on Route 7. On an annual basis accidents have declined slightly over the last 5 years.
- Four Route 7 intersections were identified as major safety concerns: Maple Avenue, Berkshire School Road, Silver Street, and Clayton Road. A common characteristic among each intersection is the high approaching speeds of vehicles on Route 7 and inefficient intersection design (the “y” islands). Recommended improvements have been developed for each of these intersections.
- Route 7 is the major arterial in Sheffield. In order to improve the efficiency, capacity, safety, aesthetics, and economic opportunities on the corridor, several upgrades and improvements are being considered. These include measures such improving and coordinating private curb-cuts and upgrading intersections with poor safety or LOS (level of service) records. Improving sidewalks, bicycle networks, and streetscape enhancements are also an important undertaking.
- Sheffield’s road design standards are mixed. For new roads (as specified in the Town’s subdivision regulations) they are well thought out to ensure that such new roads and

intersections are safe and well constructed, and, generally, consistent with the rural character of the community. However, there may be some opportunity to narrow requirements slightly based on lower projected traffic volumes and to ensure consistency with the community's desire to remain rural and neighborhood character. And enforcement of standards (such as driveways and culverts) could help the Highway Department avoid added maintenance time and cost. Standards for existing roads might be considered.

Sheffield's transportation planning principles should not necessarily be based on maximizing roadway LOS which amounts to vehicles operating at or above a given average speed. Rather, on keeping traffic flowing smoothly within the community, minimizing potential problems at certain intersections, and maintaining the rural character of neighborhoods, the community and the local roadway network. Slow and steady should be the goal rather than high LOS and speed, which detract from the sense of community. Additionally, alternative means of transportation should be further developed in Sheffield to fully address local and regional needs.

3. Sheffield Commuting Patterns

Sheffield residents and workers rely heavily on their automobiles for daily needs and employment opportunities. A large percentage (81.3%) of Sheffield residents commute to work by car, and most of them drive alone. The number of commuters is also growing as the rate went from 74% in 1990 to 81% in 2000. The percentage of residents in Sheffield that commute to work exceeds both the Berkshire County and State averages.

Sheffield Commuting Patterns, 1990 and 2000						
Commute to Work	Sheffield				County	State
	1990	%	2000	% in 2000		
Workers 16 years and over	1,392	100%	1721	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Drove alone	1,035	74.4%	1400	81.3%	79.2%	73.8%
In carpools	66	4.7%	81	4.7%	9.7%	9.0%
Using public transportation	12	0.9%	28	1.6%	1.5%	8.7%
Using other means	25	1.8%	47	2.3%	5.3%	4.3%
Residents Working in Community	595	42.7%	574	33.4%	N/A	N/A
Residents Commuting Elsewhere	797	57.3%	1,147	66.6%	N/A	N/A
Walked or worked at home	254	18.2%	39	2.7%	0.8%	1.0%
Work at home	148	10.6%	126	7.3%	3.6%	3.1%
Mean Travel Time to Work (Minutes)	N/A	N/A	22.6	N/A	19.2	27

The high percentage of residents that commute is attributable to a combination of factors: a fairly limited employment base; a high percentage of jobs in selected business sectors (primarily tourist-related), and the relatively low wages in Sheffield compared to other places in the region. Additionally, the availability of public transportation is very limited in town and throughout the region, particularly in the South Berkshire County area.

On average, the Sheffield commuter is driving over 22 minutes to get to work. Being one of the more rural areas of Berkshire County, travel time to work is longer for Sheffield than other Berkshire County residents on average.

4. The Existing Transportation Network

In conjunction with local and state officials, the following inventory of the existing transportation network has been assembled. Problem areas have also been identified with the assistance of local officials and the Master Plan Steering Committee based on capacity issues, intersection geometry, accident data, and surface conditions to the extent that this information is available.

Regional Transportation Network

Highways - The regional highway network is comprised of federal (interstate), state and local roadways as defined by the Massachusetts Highway Department (MSD). In Sheffield, the highway classification system can be divided into two broad categories – state highways and municipal highways. State highways are those controlled and maintained by the MHD and local highways are controlled and maintained by the Town. Routes 7 and 41 in Sheffield are maintained by the State as part of the federal-aid primary system.

The Route 7 corridor is a critical link in the highway systems of the Berkshire Region, Southern Vermont and Western Connecticut. A substantial amount of inter-regional traffic moves through Sheffield along this corridor to points north and south. It is also the major connector to Interstate 90 (the Massachusetts Turnpike), which carries interstate traffic from east to west through the region.

Airports and Air Service – The nearest major commercial airports are Bradley International Airport located in Hartford, Connecticut about 47 miles from Sheffield and Albany International Airport, in Albany, New York about 65 miles from Sheffield. Other smaller regional airports are located in Great Barrington and Pittsfield. The Great Barrington Airport is a general aviation facility located approximately 8 miles from the Sheffield Town Center. It has a 2,579 by 50 foot asphalt runway. The Pittsfield Airport is also a general aviation facility located approximately 26 miles from the Sheffield Town Center.

Air travel at present is a relatively minor economic factor and means of access to the region. However, continued and planned expansions at the Pittsfield Airport could significantly improve access to the Berkshire Region.

Railroads – Regionally, North Adams and Pittsfield are the major points of entry for rail freight in western Massachusetts. The Housatonic Railroad runs north-south through Sheffield and generally parallels Route 7 and 7A. This line served as a primary freight hauler for regional businesses until the mid-1980s. The railroad is still active in this regard, and the line in Sheffield is a public delivery line. It is a major transportation factor for a number of Sheffield businesses, particularly those for whom the amount of utilization necessary to justify costs makes it feasible. Many local as well as regional businesses have replaced rail use with trucking which is less expensive and more efficient for smaller business needs. It will be important in the future for Sheffield and the Housatonic Railroad to work together regarding railroad corridor usage and permitting. There are some areas where the tracks limit uses and others where they do not. Another issue to address is railroad crossings where the crossing lights often go off when a train is not coming through, and the

potential safety risk this can pose with drivers who get habituated to disregarding the lights (i.e. the Silver Street crossing).

There is no passenger rail service directly to Sheffield, but during the peak summer tourism months (June-Labor Day) Metro-North railroad out of New York City, runs a bus from its northernmost terminus in Wassaie, NY (45 minutes south of Sheffield) to Great Barrington on the weekends. The possibility of adding a stop on the bus in Sheffield could be explored.

Discussions have taken place in Sheffield regarding the future use of rail corridors in town. There have also been regional efforts to reactivate the line as a visitor attraction to the Berkshires.

The main issue is whether railroad transportation may become an economically viable transportation means again or whether the corridors can be put to more immediate uses such as for trails or communication infrastructure (i.e. DSL), and what effect passenger service would have on population and land use pressures in Sheffield. A policy to preserve the corridor for existing and future transportation use while allowing interim recreational uses should be considered by the Town.

Buses

The Peter Pan/Bonanza Bus line has two buses on their New York City to Williamstown and Albany line that run through Sheffield each day on a flag-down basis. Departures from Sheffield are mid-morning (currently 11:30am) and early evening (currently 5:30pm), and arrivals in Sheffield are mid-afternoon (currently 1:30pm) and mid-evening (currently 7:30pm). Connections can be made for east/west buses, including to Boston. Local cultural organizations, such as Barrington Stage Company, bring in bus-loads of people for their shows, and some thought to providing for such tours might be considered.

Public Transportation – The Berkshire Regional Transit Authority (BRTA) was created in 1974 and currently provides 22 communities from Great Barrington to Williamstown with fixed route bus service. There is no fixed route bus service within Sheffield but the Sheffield Council on Aging and Senior Center helps support Southern Berkshire Elderly Transportation, provided by Gt. Barrington and operated by the Gt. Barrington Senior Center (which can provide records of Sheffield usage). Para-transit services are provided to the elderly and disabled who cannot use fixed route bus service (using private taxi, lift-equipped vans, and chair-car vendors). There is also limited taxi service provided in Sheffield by private companies located in Great Barrington and Canaan. Transportation is available on demand and service is provided on a 24-hour-a-day basis.

Like many rural communities, Sheffield has not been able to demonstrate the feasibility of fixed route bus service given the population base, wide distribution of homes, and general independence of commuters. Additionally, BRTA ridership declined significantly during the 1990s as manufacturing jobs throughout the region declined, and ridership has only begun to level off the past few years.

Trucking – Route 7 is a major corridor for truck-based distribution in and out of the region. Most Sheffield businesses use trucks to bring their raw materials or products into the area, to distribute goods locally, and to ship products out to markets in New England and beyond. There are several trucking and distribution companies located in the region that service the transportation needs of Sheffield businesses.

Local Transportation Network

Roadways - The regional highway system consists of major local arterials serving Sheffield residents. Roads can be broadly organized into 3 categories: arterials, major collector roads, and minor collector roads.

Arterial roads move large volumes of traffic with limited access points. In Sheffield, Route 7 is the only arterial road. This is the primary north-south access road for local and regional traffic. The corridor is approximately 8.4 miles long and there is limited access between the Route 7A intersection and the Connecticut state line.

Collector roads are dual function roads. The primary purpose is to feed traffic from local roads onto arterials, and the secondary and subordinate purpose is to access adjacent land and uses. Route 7A, Route 41, Maple Avenue/County Road, and South Egremont Road can be classified as major collector roads even though they have a significant number of private curb cuts.

Minor (or local) collector roads comprise the remainder of roads in Sheffield. The primary function of local roads is to provide access to the most land uses. These roads are generally smaller than major collector roads.

□ *Please see Map # 14:
‘Town of Sheffield
Transportation System’
behind the MAPS tab.*

The table below is an inventory of the local roadway network in Sheffield as of 2003. In all there are just over 100 miles of public roadway in town. There are 73 roads in Sheffield that are regularly maintained by the town and approximately 41 privately maintained roads. While a number of new private roads have been added over the past 10 years, the town has added very few public road miles.

Sheffield Public Roadway Network, 2003*						
PUBLIC ROADWAY	# of HH	Total Mileage	House-holds per mile	Estimated Res. Trips per ² Day	Primary Surface Type	Accidents 1990 - 1999
ALUM HILL RD	28	1.1	25.5	280	Paved	10
ASHLEY FALLS ROAD (RTE 7A)	28	3.1	9.0	280	Paved	13
BARNUM ST	19	4.0	4.8	190	Dirt/Paved	10
BEARS DEN RD	11	0.9	12.2	110	Oil & Stone	8
BERKSHIRE SCHOOL RD	39	2.5	15.6	390	Paved	62
BOARDMAN ST	37	3.8	9.7	370	Paved	11
BOW WOW RD	22	2.7	8.1	220	Paved	9
BRUSH HILL RD	2	2.4	0.8	20	Dirt	2
BULL HILL RD	2	0.8	2.5	20	Dirt	2
BUNCE RD	20	0.6	33.3	200	Oil & Stone	
BURCH STREET	0	0.3	0.0	0	Dirt	
CANAAN RD	12	0.2	60.0	120	Paved	
CEDAR ST	5	0.1	50.0	50	Dirt	
CLAYTON RD	55	2.0	27.5	550	Paved	28
COBBLE LANE	10	0.5	20.0	100	Paved	
COOK AVE.	0	0.1	0.0	0	Paved	
COOK RD	7	0.4	17.5	70	Oil & Stone	9
COOPER HILL RD	6	1.3	4.6	60	Paved	3
COTTAGE LANE	2	0.2	10.0	20	Paved	
COUNTY RD	43	3.7	11.6	430	Paved	13
COVERED BRIDGE LANE	0	0.7	0.0	0	Dirt	
CROSS ROAD	5	0.7	7.1	50	Paved	5
CURTISS RD	0	0.6	0.0	0	Dirt	2
DEPOT SQUARE	2	0.2	10.0	20	Paved	1
EAST MAIN ST	26	0.6	43.3	260	Paved/Oil & Stone	2
EAST ROAD	9	0.9	10.0	90	Dirt	
EAST STAHL RD	25	1.0	25.0	250	Paved	8
FOLEY RD	9	2.2	4.1	90	Dirt	2
FORD HILL RD	0	0.3	0.0	0	Dirt	1
FREDERIC LANE	3	0.3	10.0	30	Paved/Dirt	
GIBERSON ROAD	2	2.3	0.9	20	Dirt	3
GUILDER HOLLOW RD	2	0.5	4.0	20	Oil & Stone	1
HEWINS STREET EXT.	0	0.1	0.0	0	Paved	
HEWINS ST	51	3.7	13.8	510	Paved	21
HICKEY HILL RD	0	0.8	0.0	0	Paved	
HOME RD	40	4.0	10.0	400	Paved	14
HULETT HILL RD	14	1.4	10.0	140	Oil & Stone	
KELLOGG RD	7	0.6	11.7	70	Paved	5
KELSEY RD	6	1.2	5.0	60	Dirt	6
LAUREL LANE	4	0.1	40.0	40	Paved	
LEGEYT RD	4	1.1	3.6	40	Dirt	2
LIME KILN RD	9	2.5	3.6	90	Dirt/Paved	14
MAPLE AVENUE	15	0.9	16.7	150	Paved	10
MILLER AVENUE	18	0.8	22.5	180	Paved	8
MT WASHINGTON RD	1	0.7	1.42	10	Dirt	1
NANCY LANE	2	0.1	20.0	20	Paved	
OLD JOE RD	9	0.7	12.9	90	Oil & Stone	
OLD MILL POND RD	2	0.2	10.0	20	Dirt	2

² High Accident Intersection Report. Prepared by the MassHighway Safety Management Unit. 1999.

PARK LANE	16	0.2	80.0	160	Paved	
PIKE ROAD EAST	6	0.2	30.0	60	Paved	4
PIKE ROAD WEST	5	0.3	16.7	50	Oil & Stone	
PLYMOUTH LANE	10	0.2	50.0	100	Paved	
POLIKOFF RD	45	1.6	28.1	450	Oil & Stone	1
RAILROAD ST	6	0.3	20.0	60	Paved	1
RANNAPO RD	18	2.6	6.9	180	Paved	3
REBELLION RD	0	0.3	0.0	0	Oil & Stone	
RICHARD DRIVE	4	0.1	40.0	40	Paved	
ROOT LANE	22	0.5	44.0	220	Paved	10
ROTE HILL RD	8	1.3	6.2	80	Oil & Stone	1
ROUTE 7	111	8.4	13.2	1110	Paved	187
MAIN STREET	24			240	Paved	38
NORTH MAIN ST	21			210	Paved	3
SHEFFIELD PLAIN	18			180	Paved	
SOUTH MAIN ST	48			480	Paved	5
SALISBURY RD	63	3.2	19.7	630	Paved/Dirt	14
SCHOOL ST	4	0.2	20.0	40	Paved	
SHUNPIKE RD	19	1.3	14.6	190	Oil & Stone	6
SILVER ST	25	3.7	6.8	250	Paved	6
SOUTH EGREMONT RD	15	2.6	5.8	150	Paved	24
SPRING HOLLOW LANE	8	0.2	40.0	80	Paved	
SQUIRE LANE	5	0.1	50.0	50	Paved	
UNDERMOUNTAIN ROAD (RTE 41)	42	5.9	7.1	420	Paved	64
NORTH UNDERMOUNTAIN RD	7			70	Paved	3
SOUTH UNDERMOUNTAIN RD	35			350	Paved	2
UPPER BARNUM STREET	0	0.3	0.0	0	Dirt	
VALLEY VIEW RD	1	0.4	2.5	10	Oil & Stone	1
VEELEY ROAD	0	0.6	0.0	0	Dirt	
WATER FARM RD	3	2.2	1.4	30	Dirt	3
WEATOGUE RD	2	0.8	2.5	20	Dirt	
WEST ROAD	21	1.9	11.1	210	Paved/Dirt	5
WEST STAHL ROAD	5	0.7	7.1	50	Oil & Stone	
WOODBEEK RIDGE ROAD	0	0.2	0.0	0	Dirt	
TOTAL	1,337	100.20	17.0	13,370		669

* Information on Households by Roadway from the

2002 Sheffield Residents List

Approximate residential trips per day calculated based on a national average of 10 per household per day

In addition to public roads, Sheffield also has a significant number of private roads as shown in the Table below. In all, there are approximately 41 private roads in town serving 87 households.

Private Roads in Sheffield		
PRIVATE ROADWAY	Number of HH	Approx. Res. Trips per Day
ALDER PLACE	2	20
AMORY LANE	0	0
BAY LANE	2	20
BEECH ST	0	0
BIRCH MOUNTAIN LANE	4	40

BLAIR LANE	2	20
BRIDGE VIEW LANE	3	30
CACTUS ST	0	0
CHILDS LANE	4	40
DAVIS LANE	6	60
DEWEY COURT	11	110
DOGWOOD ST	0	0
ELM COURT	5	50
FARMVIEW RD	1	10
FIDDLEHEAD TRAIL	2	20
GALVIN FARM TRAIL	2	20
GINGER LANE	0	0
GLENNANA WAY	7	70
HEMLOCK AVE	0	0
HILLSIDE LANE	4	40
HULDAHS LANE	4	40
LILAC LAND	1	10
LINDEN TERRACE	0	0
NURSING HOME	1	10
OAK ST	3	30
PARSLEY LANE	2	20
PHEASANT LANE	1	10
PINE LANE	4	40
REDWOOD LANE	1	10
SHORT STREET	0	0
SODA SPRING CREEK DRIVE	3	30
SPRUCE STREET	0	0
SUMAC LANE	0	0
SYCAMORE TERRACE	2	20
THORNBUSH WAY	1	10
THYMELANE	1	10
TULIP LANE	0	0
WEIDER TERRACE	2	20
WELLS LANE	3	30
WILLIAM ST	0	0
WOODEDGE LANE	4	40
TOTAL	87	870

Compared with other municipalities in Berkshire County and the South Route 7 Corridor Subregion, Sheffield has a relatively high amount of public road mileage. For example, Sheffield has over 65% more public road miles than the average community in Berkshire County, and more public road mileage than Great Barrington – a town with over twice the population of Sheffield. Much of this can be explained by the geographic size of Sheffield (the second largest town in terms of land area in the County). This is illustrated in the table below by the relatively low “persons per mile of roadway” and “miles of roadway per square mile”.

South Route 7 Corridor Regional Public Roadway Comparison					
Municipality	2000 Pop.	Land SQ Miles	2001 Public Road Mileage	Persons per Mile of Roadway	Miles of Roadway per SQ Mile
SHEFFIELD	3,335	47.82	102.3	32.60	2.14
EGREMONT	1,345	18.77	43.64	30.82	2.32
WEST STOCKBRIDGE	1,416	18.34	43.91	32.25	2.39
GREAT BARRINGTON	7,527	45.45	96.02	78.39	2.11
LEE	5,985	26.51	70.89	84.43	2.67
LENOX	5,077	21.48	64.69	78.48	3.01
STOCKBRIDGE	2,276	22.84	55.58	40.95	2.43
SUBCOUNTY AVERAGE	3,852	28.74	68.15	53.99	2.44
COUNTY AVERAGE	4,480	29.03	61.90	72.37	2.13

Source: Mass. Dept. of Revenue

Roadway Surfaces - Of the 100 miles of roadway in Sheffield a significant amount is constructed of non-paved surfaces (34% are dirt or gravel). There are just under 66 miles of paved roadway in Sheffield of which the Town is responsible for the maintenance of 48.3 miles (the remainder falls under the jurisdiction of the State). The remaining 34.6 miles of local roadway is composed of either oil & stone (10.3 miles) or dirt (24.3 miles).

Unpaved roads that service less populated residential and agricultural areas are a major feature of the rural character of the community. However, as traffic increases as a result of residential development on some of these smaller roadways, more wear and tear occurs resulting in extended maintenance responsibilities. There is also a concern by local officials of emergency access as more seasonal and year-round homes are built on unpaved roads.

Public Roadway Surfaces in Sheffield, 2003			
Surface Type	Mileage	% of Road Mileage	Jurisdiction
Paved	65.7	66%	48.3 Town; 17.4 State
Oil & Stone	10.3	10%	Town
Dirt	24.3	24%	Town
TOTAL	100.3	100%	

Source: Mileage calculated from Sheffield GIS Maps

are given priority by the Mass Highway Department. The Town performs surface maintenance on as many linear feet of roadway as financially possible.

Currently the Town has no rating system in place to quantitatively evaluate road surfaces. The Town of Sheffield maintains approximately 83 miles of roadways each year depending on the Chapter 91 money available (The State's local road maintenance funding program). Under this program, the poorest quality roads serving the most traffic

Bridges - There are several small bridges within the Town of Sheffield and local officials have identified several as being in need of repair including the following:

- 3 Bridges over the Ironwork Brook located on County Road
- Dry Brook Bridge on Kelsey Road
- Schenob Brook Bridge located on Kelsey Road
- Konkapot River Bridge located on Ashley Falls Road

Only the Konkapot River Bridge is included on the regional Transportation Improvement Plan for rehabilitation in 2007.

Public Parking System – The Town manages public parking spaces in Sheffield Center and Ashley Falls Village. On-street parking provides the majority of public parking spaces in Ashley Falls Village while off-street parking is provided in Sheffield Center. These parking spaces serve a mix of businesses, residences, Town Hall, the Post Office, religious institutions and a number of other public and private establishments. While on-street parking is not technically permitted along Route 7, during special events and peak traffic hours, it is typically used for overflow parking. This poses a dangerous situation for those parking on the corridor as traffic flows through the Town Center at a fairly high speed.

Sidewalks & Pedestrian Access – The only sidewalk network in Sheffield is located in the Town Center. The sidewalk runs parallel to Main Street (Route 7) on the west side of the roadway between Miller Avenue and Berkshire School Road for a distance of approximately 2,278 linear feet. There are remnants of a sidewalk on the east side of Main Street between Miller Avenue and Cook Road. However, much of this surface is broken up and overgrown. This portion of the sidewalk network was apparently abandoned by the Town some time ago, and needs to be reclaimed and maintained. Research is needed to determine if the sidewalk is in the State's right of way.

There are 3 crosswalks in the Town Center that cross Route 7 which are painted green and outlined with white strips to alert motorists to pedestrian activity. However, crossing this busy road can be difficult due to high volumes, speed, and limited gaps in the traffic. While the posted speed limit through the Center is 35 mph, there are currently no other devices to indicate to the driver that they are approaching a densely populated village. Some potential traffic calming devices that may be appropriate for the Town Center could include welcome and directional signage, more street trees, signalization at Berkshire School Road, contrasting crosswalk materials and colors, and bulb-outs to narrow the lanes at cross-walk locations.

There is currently no sidewalk connection between Main Street and the Mt. Everett Regional High School located on Berkshire School Road. This segment has been identified as a high priority for expansion of the sidewalk and bicycle network by the Draft Regional Bicycling & Walking Transportation Plan assembled by the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission. This sidewalk is included as part of the Berkshire School Road project which was put out to bid through the Transportation Improvement Program in 2003 (for projected completion in 2004 or 2005).

Pedestrian movement within the two villages, and connections to public schools and the Town Park, are fundamental transportation improvements that can provide safe access for residents and may be a key to long-term viability. Street and intersection improvements where there is high pedestrian activity, such as at Maple Avenue, Miller Street, Depot Square, Cook Avenue, and Berkshire School Road, should incorporate safe and convenient pedestrian access in the design.

Bicycle Transportation – There are no designated bike routes in Sheffield, yet recreational biking is very popular throughout the community. The Regional Bicycle Plan (BRPC) rates the quality of existing roadways in Town for bike use as shown in the table below. There are no designated bike lanes along the Route 7 corridor yet this is one of the most popular bicycling routes in Sheffield. However, with the amount of vehicle traffic and turning movements, this corridor is not friendly for bike riders.

Bicycle Compatibility Index for Sheffield Roads		
Route	Level of Service Rating for Bicycling	Approx. Mileage
Home Road/Old Joe Road	Very High	4.7
Route 7	Moderately High	8.4
South Egremont Road	Moderately High	2.6
Undermountain Road (Route 41)	Moderately High	5.9
Ashley Falls Road (Route 7A)	Moderately High	3.1
Berkshire School Road	Moderately High	2.5
Maple Ave./County Road	Moderately Low	4.6
Silver Street/Cooper Hill Road	Moderately Low	2.0
Rannapo Road	Moderately Low	2.6
Clayton Road	Moderately Low	2.0
All Other Roads in Sheffield	Very Low	N/A

Source: Berkshire Regional Transportation Plan using the Bicycle Compatibility Index LOS Ratings from the Federal Highway Administration, 1998

A network of bicycle paths or lanes along major roads would greatly enhance rider safety and use. This network should include those roads ranked as “Very High” and “Moderately High” for bicycle compatibility in the table above. In order to facilitate this network, Sheffield will have to work closely with BRPC and MHD, which is responsible for State routes and design changes on most of these corridors. Additional information on bicycle and pedestrian pathways is provided in Section 2.3: Open Space & Recreation of this master plan.

Trails and Paths – There are a multitude of trails and paths in Sheffield serving a variety of uses including walking, hiking, mountain biking, cross-country skiing, all terrain vehicles and snowmobiling. Much of this network is informal and privately owned with no secured agreements for continued use.

The results of the Sheffield Community Survey indicate that passive recreational uses, primarily walking paths and trails, were highly desired by residents. As part of the master planning process, the town has been identifying potential corridors for various types of pathways. An important underlying theme in developing a local trail system is connecting key local cultural, social and natural attributes. Creating a trail plan in Sheffield should aim to accomplish several community goals such as providing an alternate means of transportation, new recreational amenities, and fulfilling economic opportunity for ecotourism. Some possible trail routes would connect Sheffield Center, Ashley Falls Village, Mt. Everett Regional School, Town Park, the AMC Trail and several access points along the Housatonic River. A more detailed analysis of potential trails and paths throughout Sheffield is included in *Section 4.0: Open Space & Recreation*.

5. Traffic Volumes & Circulation

The structure of Sheffield’s highway network requires local and regional travelers to share the major arterials in town to a large degree. Local traffic consists mainly of trips from residential areas in Sheffield, Sheffield Center, and Ashley Falls to surrounding towns for businesses and services concentrated in other communities. Commercial districts and regional schools in Sheffield are also drawing more short and long-range trips each year. The combination of local and inter-local trips

generates substantial turning movements, primarily along the Route 7 Corridor and at peak traffic hours.

Since 1990, increased residential development (year-round and seasonal), commercial development, and tourism in town and the region have led to increased traffic on Sheffield's roadways. Both the Massachusetts Highway Department (MHD) and the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) have conducted traffic counts in Sheffield over the past several years. The table above lists the Automatic Traffic Recorder (ATR) counts conducted by MHD since 1992 at various locations in Sheffield. These are 24-hour traffic volume counts conducted at established recorder stations along Sheffield's major collectors and arterials.

Not surprisingly, the busiest roadway in Sheffield is Route 7. However, as the state traffic counts show, the volumes of traffic vary significantly from one end of the corridor to the other. While traffic volumes at the Great Barrington town line are approaching 10,000 vehicles per day (VPD), the traffic drops to about 5,500 VPD on the south end at the Connecticut state line. This variation between the south and north ends of the corridor appears to indicate that a significant amount of the traffic on Route 7 originates in Sheffield and is headed North, which is consistent with local commuter data from the last Census and shopping preferences indicated in the community surveys.

The next busiest roadway in town is Berkshire School Road, which according to a 1995 traffic count by BRPC had over 3,400 vehicles per day. The road serves as the main connector between State Routes 7 and 41. It also provides access to the Sheffield public school system, Mt. Everett Regional High School, and the Berkshire School. Other local roads with daily traffic counts averaging over 1,000 are as follows:

Average Daily Traffic (ADT) recorded at various ATR stations in Sheffield by MHD												
STA	RTE / STREET	LOCATION	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
S001	Cook Rd.	East of North Main St.										480
S004	East Main St.	South of Ashley Falls Rd.										640
S008	Lime Kiln Rd.	West of West Road St.										540
S003	Rannapo Rd.	North of Copper Hill Rd.										440
S005	Root Ln.	West of South Main St.										1,100
1183	Rte. 7	0.8 km S. of G.B. T.L.				8,400	8,445	8,663	9,012	9,010		
1171	Rte. 7	At Connecticut S.L.	4,800							5,500		
1172	Rte. 7	South of Egremont Rd.	8,300		8,400							
S002	Rte. 41	At Egremont T.L.							1,500			
S001	Rte. 41	South of Kelsey Rd.							1,200			
S002	School St.	West of East Main St.										190
S006	Silver St.	West of South Main St.										460

- Route 41 – Approximately 1,200-1,500 per day
- Route 7A – Approximately 660 – 1,250 per day
- S. Egremont Rd. – Approximately 1,254 (BRPC count in 1995)
- Root Lane – Approximately 1,100 per day (MHD in 2001)

Traffic volumes in Sheffield have been increasing steadily over the past 10 years. On Route 7, traffic volumes on the north end of the corridor have been increasing by about 1.5% annually, and on the south end at about 2.4%. Increased growth rate of year-round and second home development in

the southern portion of Sheffield partially accounts for the higher traffic levels on this end of the corridor over the past 10 years.

Because of the nature of the Berkshires as a resort area, traffic volumes in Sheffield are unusual. Daily traffic counts resemble a more suburban than rural community. Business hours for area workers in visitor destinations create more midday and evening peaks in volumes than most comparably-sized communities with a higher percentage of year-round residents. Also unusual is that weekend traffic is likely to be higher than weekday traffic. Traffic volumes vary over the course of a year in Sheffield with peaks in the summer and fall when tourists flock to the Berkshires.

6. Sufficiency and Safety Issues

Roadway safety is determined by a number of factors such as road condition, traffic volume and speed, the number of access points and intersections, driver behavior, and vehicle condition. They all create the potential for accidents. Highway traffic accident data is used to identify hazardous situations and plan for necessary improvements.

Town of Sheffield Accident Reports, 1990-1999						
Year	Fatalities	Hit and Run	Injury Accident	Property Only	School Bus	Total
1990	2	1	27	57		87
1991	3	1	22	42		68
1992			19	63		82
1993	1		29	44		74
1994		1	22	39		62
1995	2	1	31	55	1	90
1996		2	25	52		79
1997		1	15	26		42
1998	1		11	20		32
1999	1		16	40	1	58
Total	10	7	217	438	2	674

Source: Mass. Highway Department

The MHD as part of the Statewide Traffic Data Collection Program records traffic accidents in Sheffield. Between 1990-1999, these records show that a total of 674 accidents took place in Sheffield. Over 300 alone were along the Route 7 corridor.

While the majority of accidents in Sheffield during the 1990s were minor in nature with only property damage reported, nearly one-third involved personal injuries. There were also 10 fatal accidents reported over the 10-year period. While supporting documentation is sketchy, it is assumed that more severe accidents (those involving injury and fatalities) are partially

attributable to high-speed traffic on Route 7 and local traffic entering the highway at several unsignalized intersections.

MHD has prepared a list of the top 1,000 **high accident locations** (HAL) throughout the state. The most current list (1999) compiles data from 1994, 1995, and 1996. An analysis of the data shows that there are no high accident locations in Sheffield based on a comparison of actual recorded accidents per million miles of driving to an expected critical rate.³ However, the 5 intersections in Sheffield with the highest number of recorded accidents are on Route 7:

- Berkshire School Rd
- Clayton Road
- Root Lane
- Hewins Street
- Maple Ave

³ High Accident Intersection Report. Prepared by the MassHighway Safety Management Unit. 1999.

As part of the traffic analysis for the Master Plan, four (4) Route 7 intersections were studied in greater detail including: Maple Avenue, Berkshire School Road, Silver Street, and Clayton Road: At these intersections 28 traffic accidents were recorded between 1990 and 1999:

- At Berkshire School Rd - 4 injuries and no fatalities
- At Clayton Road - 9 injuries and 2 fatalities
- At Silver Street - 6 injuries and 0 fatalities

There were another 67 traffic accidents at other intersections on Route 7, including:

- 9 at Root Lane (9 injuries)
- 7 at Hewins Road (6 injuries)
- 7 at Maple Street (4 injured in 1 accident)
- 6 at Egremont Road
- 4 at Route 7A
- 3 at Kellogg Road
- 3 at Lime Kiln Road
- 3 at Cook Road
- 3 at Pike Road

Another 52 traffic accidents were recorded at other defined locations on Route 7 in recurring instances including 4 at or close to the Village Green, 2 at Bradford's, and 2 at the Sunrise Diner.

It is difficult to determine the reasons for the fluctuation in recorded accidents since 1990. It appeared that as improvements were made to the State highway system accidents levels dropped accordingly. However, as more commercial development occurred along the Route 7 Corridor (resulting in more unprotected turning movements to and from the roadway), and daily trips grew with residential growth along collector roads that feed onto Route 7, potential traffic conflicts increased and accident levels rose.

7. Intersection Analysis

Local officials, the Community Survey respondents, and the MPSC have identified several intersections in Sheffield as problematic, as noted in the chart below.

Problem Intersections in Sheffield	
Intersection	General Assessment
Route 7 & Silver Street	Split Y-Intersection; Poor sight distance, high speeds on Rt. 7
Route 7 & Maple Avenue	Split Y-Intersection; Poor sight distance, high speeds on Rt. 7
Route 7 & Berkshire School Road	Split Y-Intersection; Poor sight distance, high speeds on Rt. 7
Route 7 & Clayton Road/School St.	High speeds on Route 7
Lime Kiln Rd. & S. Egremont Rd.	Poor visibility
Miller Ave. & Cook Rd.	Yield on Miller Ave. & Stop Sign on Cook Road are not logical
Ford Hill Road & County Road	Very steep grade
East Road/County Road/Hewins St.	Poor geometry and sight distance
Hewins St. & Rote Hill Rd.	Poor geometry and sight distance
Clayton Rd. & Polikoff Rd.	Poor geometry and sight distance
Route 7 & 7A	Poor signage, high speeds on Route 7
Route 7 & Miller Avenue	Poor sight distance, high speeds on Route 7

A subregional transportation study was conducted at selected intersections along Route 7, which have been identified as the most problematic intersections within Town. These intersections included Berkshire School Road, Silver Street, Maple Avenue, and Clayton Road⁴.

As part of the study various traffic engineering issues were investigated at the selected intersections in order to determine the safety and capacity of the existing conditions. This investigation included collecting available data such as traffic volumes, turning movements, accident records, and mapping existing conditions. This information was used to identify unsafe conditions, measure the need for certain improvements (traffic signals or auxiliary lanes), and estimate current and expected future average delay to motorists during peak periods.

Traffic volumes were counted in the field at the two locations of greatest concern to the Town: Berkshire School Road and Silver Street. These counts were performed on Tuesday October 8th, 2002, when 15-minute turning movement count data were tallied over a 12-hour period (7 am to 7 pm). Resulting data are presented in turning movement summary sheets in Appendix 5.

The results of the intersection analysis are discussed below and illustrated on the existing conditions maps.

Maple Avenue – Located in Sheffield Center just north of the Village Green and south of Macy's Corner (Miller Avenue), the intersection is currently a stop controlled with an island separating each direction of the side approach. Speed limit on Route 7 is 35 mph. Corner sight distance is limited to the south due to nearby on-street parking. Potential safety concerns identified were as follows:

- Triangle geometry (the split Y intersection) add to the potential for confusion to drivers
- Maintaining adequate and safe bus turning ability is necessary
- Corner sight distance to the south is limited especially when parking is used in front of the church.
- High speed approaches from Macy's Corner (north approach)

⁴ The full analysis of the selected intersections is included in Appendix 5

Berkshire School Road – This intersection is located just south of Sheffield Center and Village Green and adjacent to the Police Station. The intersection also has a split island but stop controlled at two locations on each side of the island, and a “y” that splits traffic prior to Route 7. This “y” creates a third, uncontrolled intersection. The speed limit on Route 7 in this area is 35 mph. The results of the analysis:

- Current traffic volumes meet the four (4) hour and peak hour signal warrants, and will meet the 8 hour warrant in design year if growth trends continue
- If signalized: one-lane approaches will be adequate initially, but LOS will deteriorate in the future (volume to capacity (v/c) ratio on North approach is 0.93 in PM peak hour)
- Adding a lane on the west approach or a left turn lane on the south approach does not appreciably improve LOS
- Adding a right turn lane on North approach brings overall LOS to B and the v/c ratio to 0.53 in the design year

Other general concerns include:

- Triangle geometry
- Excessive delay and backups on Berkshire School Road potentially reaching beyond the railroad tracks
- Truck turning movements and tracking
- Heavy truck traffic (7% recorded on Route 7 during peak hour counts)
- Aesthetics of a signal in Town Center
- The need for extended sidewalk and safe crosswalk
- Widening of Route 7 may be difficult due to the steep bank to the east

Silver Street – Approximately 1 mile south on Berkshire School Road in a narrow rural section of Route 7, this intersection has similar stop control and “y” intersection geometry. Sight distance here is limited to the north by vegetation inside the guardrail and a curve to the east. The speed limit on Route 7 at this location is 45 mph. The results of the analysis were:

- Sideline volumes are very low, and not close to levels warranting a traffic signal.
- Auxiliary Lane warrants were analyzed, with the following results:
 - NB left turn volume doesn’t meet the minimum threshold for consideration (5%)
 - SB right turn lane warrant is not met for 2003 but the warrant is met in 2023 (77 RT in PM peak, 12% of advancing volume)
- Performance analysis (using the Highway Capacity Manual methodology for unsignalized intersections) resulted in AM/PM Levels of Service (LOS) of C/C for the Silver St approach, in the 2023 design year

Other general concerns include:

- Triangle geometry and the potential for confusion to drivers
- Poor sight distance approaching from and looking towards the north, attributed to the guardrail and dense growth to the northeast
- Narrow shoulders and close guardrail make truck turning difficult

- Poor edge condition on Silver Street approach – particularly to the south near the culvert crossing under Silver Street
- Constraints due to this culvert and nearby stream to the south

Clayton Road – Located just north of the Town Line near Ashley Falls, this intersection is in a wide and open section of Route 7. Slip lanes for right turns off Route 7 are present. The speed limit on Route 7 is 45 mph. General concerns include:

- High speeds create potential for severe accidents for turning/crossing traffic
- Hard to judge speed due to lack of contrasting objects
- Corner sight distance on southwest corner
- Slip lane islands allow left turns for drivers that “overshoot” intersection

The analysis is of sufficient detail to enable the further development of detailed engineering plans for the intersections. For the purposes of the Master Plan, conceptual improvements at the 4 intersections were prepared that identify recommended transportation improvements relating to safety, access, congestion and environmental considerations. Preliminary cost estimates for the implementation of corrective actions were also prepared at Silver Street and Berkshire School Road.

8. Roadway Improvements & Maintenance

Many local roads were constructed long ago and predate design requirements made by the Town. In most cases, these narrower roads with non-paved surfaces work well, particularly where there is limited residential use and development potential. However, some roads have become more heavily used as collectors, and their narrow width and minimal base construction has required substantial improvements by the Town.

Recent Improvements

In addition to state-funded projects listed on the TIP, the Town evaluates the local road network on an annual basis to prioritize the need for maintenance, safety, and capacity improvements. In recent years the Highway Department has made improvements to several local roads:

Roadway Work Completed by the Sheffield Highway Dept., 1999-2002	
Road	Type of Work
Old Joe Road	Resurfacing
Hickey Hill Road	Resurfacing
East Road (section)	Re-opened with new gravel and drainage
Hewins Road	Bituminous concrete resurfacing on 5,800 feet
Spring Hollow Lane	Bituminous concrete resurfacing on 750 feet
Boardman Street	Bituminous concrete resurfacing on 2,500 feet
Polikoff Road	Sealing with liquid asphalt and stone
Bunce Road	Sealing with liquid asphalt and stone
Hulett Hill Road	Sealing with liquid asphalt and stone
Rote Hill Road	Surfacing with asphalt and stone
Lime Kiln Road (section)	Surfacing with asphalt and stone

Berkshire School Road (section)	Level course of bituminous concrete
Salisbury Road	Level course of bituminous concrete on 6,800 feet
County Road	Level course of bituminous concrete, box paving
Hickey Hill Road	Re-paved
Cross Road	Re-paved
Maple Avenue	Re-paved
Guilder Hollow Road	Oil & Stoned
Rote Hill Road	Oil & Stoned
Railroad Street	Oil & Stoned
Home Road	Box paving
Clayton Road	Box paving, bituminous concrete on 5,300 feet
Barnum Street	Box paving, bituminous concrete on 3,100 feet
Kellogg Road	Box paving

Source: Sheffield Annual Town Reports

Local road maintenance is an important issue in Sheffield. However, the Town does not have a formal road surface management program. Developing a comprehensive multi-year program (which could include routine maintenance strategies and long-term improvements) provides a rationale system for prioritizing necessary improvements. The Town can coordinate this program with the Capital Improvement Plan to ensure efficient distribution of costs over time.

Paved vs. Dirt/Gravel Roads

Dirt and gravel roads can have a wide range of serviceability. A well-graded road, with adequately drained base material and good roadside drainage can last indefinitely. However maintenance increases with vehicle volume, size & speed, severe weather, as well as a number of other factors. Paving roads may dramatically reduce the frequency of maintenance, but higher material costs must be weighed in a life-cycle cost-benefit analysis⁵.

Before considering paving a road all costs and benefits should be weighed. To keep these costs as low as possible every resource should be explored for ensuring that the best management and construction techniques are used. The decision to pave a dirt road needs to be made on a case-by-case basis, as many factors may be relevant. Factors to consider include:

- **Cost** – This may include many possible factors such as road construction & maintenance costs as well as user maintenance costs. For example - all other considerations being equal - a paved road might have the same cost-benefit, as a gravel road if re-grading is required 6-8 times a year⁶ although this may change if viewed over the long-term, with maintenance and repaving costs.
- **Traffic volume** – The relationship of volume and cost is clear from the perspective of wear and tear on materials. However, paved roads can lead to higher traffic volumes if speeds increase and shorter travel time result. Additional considerations include emergency access requirements, and plans/potential for future development and how paving may affect these

⁵ The Town of Phillipstown, MA completed a cost-benefit analysis of dirt roads in 1997. For more information see Appendix 1.

⁶ Assume equipment operating cost of \$150/hr., \$100/ton for asphalt.

entities. Generally, roads, which have reached a traffic level of 300-500 cars per day, can be candidates for paving.⁷

- **Aesthetics/Nuisance** – Tangible qualities to consider may include proximity to development and its relationship to dust, speed, noise, vibration, and the affects of periodic maintenance.
- **Steepness of grade** – A dirt road will wash-out more frequently and/or require more grading to compensate for, or avoid, such occurrences as the profile grade increases. The steeper the road grade, the less effective the cross slope is at getting the stormwater off the road, and runoff will tend to wash longitudinally.
- **Environmental** – Sediment and erosion concerns are higher on dirt roads, while oil and salt run-off are higher on oil & stone and paved roads, especially if the roads are near a sensitive aquatic resource.
- **Community Character** – For Sheffield, preserving the community’s rural character is an important consideration and many residents feel that unpaved roads exemplify this rural character and complement the natural scenic beauty that is so abundant throughout town.

Regional Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) Projects

The **Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP)** is a prioritized, multi-year program for the implementation of transportation improvement projects throughout the region. As such, it serves as a management tool to ensure the most effective use of limited funding for transportation improvements. It is also necessary for two other reasons. First the TIP is a requirement of the transportation planning process as most recently legislated by the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21). Secondly, a local transportation improvement is not eligible for Federal funding unless it is listed in the TIP. In recent years , movement of projects through the TIP list has been very slow.

In Berkshire County, the MPO consists of the State Executive Office of Transportation & Construction (EOTC), the Massachusetts Highway Department (MHD), the Berkshire Regional Transit Authority (BRTA), and the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC). The BRPC is responsible, under contract with MHD, for conducting the regional transportation planning process utilizing federal planning funds. The following projects are listed on the Region 1 FY2003-2007 TIP for the Town of Sheffield for funding:

⁷ Vermont Roads Program (LTAP)

Transportation Improvement Plan Priorities for Sheffield, 2003-2007									
I.D. No.	Facility	Description	Lead	Priority Rating	Year Ready	Bid Year	Funding Source	Estimated Cost	Remarks
602610	RT 7A Bridge S10-20	Bridge over Konkapot	MHD	46.4	2007	2007	Undetermined	\$ 1,242,000	75% Design
602884	Village Green	Beautification & Streetscape Project	Town	1.12	2000	2001	STP-E	\$ 520,000	100% Design, Under Review
601486	Berkshire School Rd	Resurface Rte. 7 to Reg. High School & SW	Town	.0125	2000	2002	STP	\$ 2,002,396	100% Design and Ready
602315	Route 7A	Resurface from Route 7 to CT. Line	MHD	0.24	2007	2007	Undetermined	\$ 1,500,000	24% after YR3
601485	County Road	Reconstruction	Town	0.048	2003	2007	Undetermined	\$ 1,300,000	<75%, No Further Activity
XXX00F	Route 7 Signing	Tourist Routing Improvements	MHD	NA	2003	2007	Undetermined	\$ 300,000	NA

Source: Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

Ready = # of years until ready to bid; Year = Year scheduled to bid

9. Transportation/Land Use Policy & Regulations

Zoning Bylaws

The Town of Sheffield has a small amount of commercially and industrially zoned land compared to similar size towns in New England. This is not surprising given the small population, cherished and protected rural character, and limited access along the southern portion of Route 7. However, as more commercial and residential development has occurred over the past 20 years, so has the concern over traffic congestion and safety.

In addition to potential new commercial development within the northern section of the Route 7 corridor, a program could be developed to provide incentives for infill and enhancement of certain properties in the Town Center and Ashley Falls Village areas. This would be in keeping with the community's wishes to prevent strip development along the corridor and control commercial development in residentially-oriented areas of the community.

Subdivision Roadway Design Standards

Sheffield's roadway design standards are included in the subdivision regulations and contain minimum roadway material requirements and design elements such as curbing, sidewalks and dimensions. Roadway standards are established to provide safe travel conditions. The stated purpose in the regulations is also to ensure that public roads are "compatible with existing streets, and to rationalize traffic patterns within new subdivisions".

Residential streets are classified according to their design, use (actual or intended), their relationship to other streets in the hierarchy and their residential character in the following categories:

- **Arterial Street:** A proposed or existing street servicing more than 120 dwelling units, or for non-residential subdivisions is to be used for major through traffic with a volume in excess

of 1200 vehicles in a representative 24 hour period, as determined by the most recent edition of Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE), Trip Generation.

- **Collector Street:** A proposed or existing street, which is to be used primarily for residential purposes, and servicing no more than 120 dwelling units. Or in the case of a non-residential subdivision is to be used for through traffic with a volume of not more than 1200 vehicles in a representative 24 hour period, as determined by the most recent edition of Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE), Trip Generation.
- **Industrial-Commercial Street:** A proposed or existing street, which, in the opinion of the Board, is to be used to provide local access to industrial-commercial enterprises.
- **Lane:** A proposed street, which, in the opinion of the Board, is to be used primarily for residential purposes and servicing no more than 10 dwelling units.
- **Minor Street:** A proposed or existing street which, in the opinion of the Board, is to be used primarily for residential purposes and servicing no more than 40 dwelling units.

Residential streets in each category are required to meet construction specifications as required in the regulations after inspection and analysis of the soil types, site contours and site considerations deemed necessary by the Planning Board to obtain the objectives of the town.

According to these classifications, nearly all existing roads in Sheffield, and all subdivision roads planned or built over the past 10 years fall into the “Lane” or “Minor Road” category.

The Subdivision Regulations contain the following dimensional requirements for new roadways:

Sheffield Roadway Requirements				
Classification	Defined Characteristics	Minimum Paved Width	Minimum R-O-W	Min. Pavement Thickness
Arterial Road	More than 120 D.U., 1,200 VPD	34 feet	75 feet	2 ½ inches
Collector Road	Up to 120 D.U., 1,200 VPD	30 feet	60 feet	2 inches
Ind.-Comm. Road	Access to Comm./Ind. Enterprises	N/A	N/A	3 inches
Minor Street	Up to 40 D.U.	22 feet	50 feet	2 inches
Lane	Up to 10 D.U.	18 feet	40 feet	1 ½ inches

Additional requirements for streets and sidewalks include:

- **Dead-end streets:** Must provide a turn-around having an outside roadway diameter of at least 100 feet unless otherwise specified by the Planning Board. The Board has the option of allowing an outside roadway diameter of up to 200 feet with the placement of a circular landscaped island with a minimum radius of 20 feet at the center of the turn-around.
- **Loop roads:** These roads may not be longer than 500 feet in length unless the non-loop portion is constructed as a two-lane divided arterial street with each lane having a paved width of not less than 17 feet and one-way traffic. A landscaped median strip of not less than 10 feet is also required with low maintenance street trees, shrubbery and grass. The non-loop portion of a loop road cannot less than 200 or more than 500 feet in length. These are more urban-type requirements for large-scale commercial and industrial developments, and would probably not fit the character of the community.

- **Pedestrian and Bicycle Paths:** Sidewalks may be required by the Planning Board and must be placed parallel to roadways on both sides of all arterial or collector streets or if the street is within one-half mile of any public school. Sidewalks are required on one side of a minor street. Sidewalk design must be varied in horizontal layout and location to enhance aesthetic value. When located within the street right of way, sidewalks must be located at or near the outside of the layout, when possible, to maximize pedestrian-vehicular separation. This separation may be achieved by either distance or plantings.

Public bicycle paths may be required by the Board to provide circulation or access to schools, recreational areas, retail facilities, transportation and community facilities, or where in the opinion of the Planning Board, bicycle travel in the streets would be dangerous. These paths may, or may not, be part of the normal sidewalk provisions. Bicycle paths must be designed with a minimum ten foot right of way, 4-6 feet paved width and a maximum gradient of 5% except for segments of less than 200 feet, where a maximum gradient of 10% is allowed.

Generally, the roadway, bicycle and pedestrian design requirements in the Subdivision Regulations are well thought out and consistent with community character and values. Comparing existing local roads, dimensional requirements for new road construction are similar.

While it's not unusual for new residential access roads (Minor Streets) in Sheffield to be built to a higher standard than the collector roads they feed into, in some cases, the width of these new streets may be unnecessary and could potentially diminish the rural character of the community. However, provisions are made in the regulations for width reductions, which are a part of an overall drainage plan to reduce the impervious surface in the subdivision and reduce runoff from the parcel. This is permitted if asked for by the applicant and plans for safety, parking, pedestrian circulation and other factors are deemed superior by the Planning Board to accommodate the requested reductions. However, the Planning Board should also be empowered to reduce the given standards if the same factors apply and it's deemed to be in the best interest of the community to reduce unnecessary road widths.

Scenic Road Designations

Except for Wheatogue Road, there are currently no scenic roads designated in Sheffield. In accordance with state law, a town road can be designated as a "scenic road" for the purpose of preserving its aesthetic attributes and rural character. Any repair, maintenance, reconstruction, or paving work done with respect thereto involving the cutting or removal of trees, or the tearing down or destruction of stone walls, can not be done without prior written consent of the Planning Board after a public hearing. According to the respondents to the Sheffield Community Survey, and the planning process, the most commonly identified road in Sheffield deemed as "scenic" were the following:

- Barnum Street
- Boardman Street
- Bow Wow Road
- Cooper Hill Road
- Giberson Road
- Guilder Hollow Road

- Hewins Street
- Lime Kiln Road
- Route 41 (ineligible for local designation, would need to be through state program)
- Route 7 (ineligible for local designation, would need to be through state program)
- Salisbury Road
- South Egremont Road
- Wheatogue Road (already designated)

Local Transportation Policy

Based on the assessment and analysis of transportation and circulation, the Town of Sheffield should adopt a multi-pronged policy approach to improving the transportation system in the community with specific emphasis on the following areas:

- Upgrades to the Route 7 corridor and key intersections;
- A formal local road maintenance and improvement program;
- A scenic roads program, and
- Creating new alternative transportation opportunities.

This comprehensive transportation policy and the following strategies & actions are intended to provide long-term policy direction to the Planning Board with respect to transportation and its relationship to land use planning.

□ *Please see Map # 20:
‘Town of Sheffield
Transportation Improvements’
behind the MAPS tab.*

TRANSPORTATION & CIRCULATION ACTION PLAN

The purpose of this section is to outline recommendations to meet Sheffield's future transportation & mobility needs.

Overall Goal

Sheffield residents and visitors use a safe, well-defined transportation and circulation network, with supporting facilities and services, which provides transportation opportunities for all people and preserves and enhances our villages and the scenic roads and corridors that help define the rural character of our community.

Transportation & Circulation Objectives

1. Provide safe roads, pathways and surroundings for all users.
2. Inform community members and visitors about our roads, recreational routes and walkways and their supporting facilities and services.
3. Create opportunities for social interaction within the community.
4. Promote, enhance or create alternate routes and modes of transportation.
5. Establish partnerships with other towns and organizations to achieve a safe, integrated circulation network.

Transportation & Circulation Recommendations

Recommendations are based on an analysis of the inventory and current conditions and trends found above, and the additional public review and work of the Steering Committee and Transportation Subcommittee.

Recommendation 1. Develop transportation plans to support village, neighborhood and rural character.

a. Set appropriate speeds for road conditions.

According to the *Plan* research, speed is the number one cause of most accidents/fatalities in Sheffield. Work with Mass Highway Department and Sheffield Highway Department to review and adjust road speeds, e.g., 25 mph in town/village centers, also move signs which increase speeds before an intersection to after the intersection (i.e. north of Berkshire School Rd to south of Berkshire School Rd. Same with Root Lane).

b. Upgrade Intersections

- Review, redesign, and reconstruct the most heavily used or ‘problem’ intersections to reflect future usage, including a variety of users, continuing the work done in the Plan.
- Heavy commercial local and thru trucks require wide turns, longer sight distances, etc

c. Review and modify current roadway design, where needed.

- Redesign the village approaches to slow traffic
- Review and redesign passing zones, Yield vs. Stop signs, Sight distances, etc.; Paint or repaint road lines, pedestrian walkways, and Town Hall ‘lane’
- Review and install new guardrails, where needed, of stone and wood (black locust) or biocomposites, not metal chain where possible to enhance character of area

d. Install consistent, visible signage.

- Work with Mass Highway and SHD to review appropriateness, placement, and consistency of road signs
- Design and install easily read signs of particular colors, shape, and possibly historical ‘bent’ to provide clarity of information about Town resources

e. Evaluate traffic calming measures.

- Work with Mass Highway Dept. and Sheffield Highway Dept. through the Footprint Roads Program and Flexibility in Highway Design to maintain appropriate or reduce required road widths within heavily populated areas, especially the Town Centers to enhance safety and historic and community character and reduce maintenance costs.
- Review and modify the Town by-laws governing the Town accepting roads to reflect design and building standards for roads and building requirements which promote or enhance the rural character of the Town and decrease construction and maintenance costs.
- Install traffic calming measures and devices, such as raised rumble strips, at the entrance to residential side streets and at crosswalks.
- Use dirt roads as traffic calming devices.

f. Evaluate a ‘Routing Plan’.

- Route interhighway traffic on feeder roads, not neighborhood or scenic roads (e.g., Berkshire School Rd., not Salisbury Rd or Lime Kiln Rd.)
- Erect ‘No Trucks’ signs on scenic roads and heavily residential roads (Salisbury Rd., Canaan-Clayton Rd., Cooper Hill Rd, Curtiss Rd., etc.) where there are viable alternatives and truck traffic presents a safety issue

g. Create a ‘Parking Plan’.

- Establish a parking ‘plan’ which moves people safely between parking areas and buildings
- Erect signs directing visitors and residents to parking [“P”]
- Consider an information kiosk at high visibility sites with maps that include parking areas and directional street traffic

- Promote landscaping areas directly related to size of parking areas to decrease heat, increase aesthetics, and direct traffic flow. (Example, planting islands with a minimum of 10ft in width, which visually break up the parking area into smaller increments.)
- Minimize impervious surface area to allow infiltration by stormwater, e.g.; install gravel parking spots adjacent to paved travel lane.
- Incorporate large tree grates around base of trees in ‘parking area’ to minimize compaction of tree roots and allow for infiltration of water. (e.g. minimum 60 sq ft).
- Site parking spaces and gathering places away from traffic wherever possible (e.g. by planting trees and using fencing) to decreasing noise and create more comfortable surroundings, etc.
- Create provisions for the “parking” of bicycles in locations separate from auto traffic and parking.
- Create design provisions for stormwater, e.g.; reuse to water landscaped areas
- Where possible, locate parking at the side or rear of structures and promote a front yard setback for parking and garages.
- To the extent possible, create shared ‘service roads’ & parking areas along the back of businesses. One service road for several businesses.
- Incorporate safe and convenient pedestrian access and universal access of excellent visual quality.
- Promote landscaped buffer strips between adjacent uses incorporating native grasses, shrubs, and trees, which highlight our natural heritage and make Sheffield distinct.
- Screen exposed storage areas, dumpsters, machinery, truck loading areas, services areas, etc., from the view of abutting properties and streets.
- Designate an area for a Car/Van Pool.

h. Review street & parking area lighting.

- Analyze lighting and its influence on safety, visual quality and maintaining dark night skies
 - Light pollution/fog
 - Temporary blindness of drivers/pedestrians
 - Area too dark or too light for users
- Seek grant money to install period lighting in Historic Districts
- Encourage lighting of trees and buildings that eliminates glare, improves safety, and creates ambience that does not negatively impact the community (e.g. light pollution).
- Encourage the feeling of “cross streets” (to counter-act the corridor effect of Route 7).
 - Paint road lines and edges to denote road ‘edges’ (no “cut” for road where Barrington Stage is, lack of “road” to Town Hall).
- Plant native trees and shrubs for visual cues to drivers and maintain a rural atmosphere
 - Work with Sheffield Tree Project to create an inventory of existing street trees and a shade tree plan with grant monies received from the MASS RELEAF program. (Note: Burlington VT has an excellent street tree inventory system.)
 - Apply for funding with National Tree Trust to get trees.
 - Ask for assistance from and hold a Spring celebration with the Arbor Day Foundation to plant new trees and teach citizens about trees.
 - Work with the garden club, Boy Scouts, or similar organization to maintain town landscaping cues and historic sites/rest stops.

- Ask area Professionals to perform pro bono services, conduct workshops, supervise volunteer days, donate materials & equipment, etc.
- Hang seasonal decorations from poles (e.g., corn stalks in fall, garlands in winter, Sheffield flags in summer).

i. Continue to enforce speed limits and drunk driving regulations; publicize enforcement results.

- Given that Sheffield's #1 traffic problem is speed and that the Town continues to be serious about remedying that (i.e. S. Egremont and how the heavy ticketing through the center of town keeps traffic slow.)

j. Encourage 'village-scale', pedestrian-based development rather than strip development.

- Promote shared driveways, service roads, and parking at the sides and backs of buildings, for businesses and residences.
- Promote 'mixed use' to encourage development in a more traditional style.
- Promote 'village' designs, which encourage shared sloped curb cuts or limit the number of curb cuts, have good visibility, acceptable distances from intersections, and 'fit' the character of the town.
- Consider design review for all (ANR) Approval-Not-Required Lots. Review should include sightlines, a maximum limit to drainage onto roadway after construction, curb cuts, etc.

k. Encourage foot traffic and biking to and in public gathering areas and retail development.

- Redesign and enlarge the village green so it may serve more functions and be a comfortable gathering place
- Consider benches and water fountains for public use, especially by older residents
- Upgrade or install sidewalks that are consistent with a traditional New England village, to define the village center and support rural character (i.e., like new sidewalks in town and not suburban)
- Consider a sidewalk from cemetery across from Root Lane where 'Historic Center' begins to the center of Town to encourage visitors/residents to walk (from business to business or into Town) and not use cars. This could be in conjunction with a pull-off at the cemetery
- Maintain walkways in the Village Green, especially after snowstorms, so pedestrians can safely cross between east and west sides of Rte 7 without walking in street

l. Analyze the viability of pull-offs for views as well as safety.

- Analyze the viability for a pull-off (e.g., cemeteries near Town Center)
 - Sightline & Drainage
 - Speed of on-coming traffic
 - Adequate slowing distance
 - Adequate signage to inform people of pull-off
 - ADA requirements – maintenance & materials
 - Bike areas

m. Create a Scenic Roads Program and seek 'Scenic Road' designations

where possible.

- National Scenic By-ways Program, provides federal funds for planning, designing and developing scenic byways programs and “transportation enhancement activities” such as conservation easements, tree planting, billboard removal, and to develop trails, greenways and bicycle paths.
- State Scenic Roads Program (Chapter 40, Section 15C).
- Town ‘Scenic’ Roads
 1. Maintain cultural features tied to our past such as stonewalls, old trees along roads, fences.
 2. Maintain dirt roads as recreational/tourist asset, as well as neighborhood asset
 3. Erect signage in areas with agricultural vehicle traffic.
- Apply to the Footprints Roads Program when undertaking ‘improvements’.

n. Highlight Historic Districts including the incorporation of ‘village’ visual cues.

- Such cues may include signage and lighting. (The following bullets were taken from draft Master Plan sub-recommendation i. which was folded into this sub-recommendation.)
- Encourage the feeling of “cross streets” (to counter-act the corridor effect of Route 7).
 - Paint road lines and edges to denote road ‘edges’ (no “cut” for road where Barrington Stage is, lack of “road” to Town Hall).
- Plant native trees and shrubs for visual cues to drivers and maintain a rural atmosphere
 - Work with Sheffield Tree Project to create an inventory of existing street trees and a shade tree plan with grant monies received from the MASS RELEAF program. (Note: Burlington VT has an excellent street tree inventory system.)
 - Apply for funding with National Tree Trust to get trees.
 - Ask for assistance from and hold a Spring celebration with the Arbor Day Foundation to plant new trees and teach citizens about trees.
 - Work with the garden club, Boy Scouts, or similar organization to maintain town landscaping cues and historic sites/rest stops.
 - Ask area Professionals to perform pro bono services, conduct workshops, supervise volunteer days, donate materials & equipment, etc.
- Hang seasonal decorations from poles (e.g., corn stalks in fall, garlands in winter, Sheffield flags in summer).

o. Consider adopting Project Integration Procedures.

- Refer to Smarter Land Use by Karl Kende for collaboratively designed projects, including the Trail Network.

p. Develop and adopt design parameters.

Such parameters may include:

- Burying utility lines to alleviate visual distractions and improve historic character.
- Encouraging that any new roads or road networks be placed along gently curving contours where possible to maintain natural grades, slow traffic, minimize construction costs, and enhance the aesthetic character so that the road ‘fits’ the land, this also provides for neighborhoods with slower traffic, that look like they fit the landscape and at the same time decreases investor costs, land disturbance, and erosion.

- For more than two buildings, design a ‘pass-through’ connection at the end of a subdivision to provide for future vehicle movement and decrease traffic congestion.
- For cul-de-sacs, design with either a maximum radius of 30 ft or a minimum radius of 60ft with a landscaped center island. The latter is preferred. The former has a turning radius for the most frequent users, cars, vans, small trucks, not fire trucks. Fire trucks would have to make one reverse direction to turn around. Such design decreases use of cul-de-sacs in new planning and increases the connection of a planned access road to existing roads so that traffic, including Town service providers, have an alternate means of access and road widths and pavement are decreased in neighborhoods.
- Consider a bylaw that requires pre-construction drainage volumes onto Town-maintained roads, especially at driveways, to be equal or less than post-construction drainage volumes. For example, new driveways off Upper Barnum St. now dump additional water volumes onto Barnum St., creating increased maintenance needs to a once stable, effectively drained Town road.
- Design criteria linked to safety, zoning and other regulations that support the village scale and uses and rural character, such as wooden guardrails made from locally grown hemlock, oak, etc.

q. Consider developing an Easy Reference Design Guide.

- This may be given to property owners and / or developers.

r. Evaluate roads in light of maintenance costs.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Create an institutional memory* and road management and maintenance program.

*Institutionalized memory is a written record of valuable department information and experiences which can be passed on in a standardized form to successive personnel, and used to assist in efficient and effective planning and budgeting. Especially important since the Highway Department is a significant part of Sheffield’s budget.

a. Establish a Roads Advisory Committee.

Such an advisory committee would benefit from broad representation including members of the Highway Department, the Tree Warden, Town Administrator, Police Chief, representatives of the Conservation Commission and Planning Board, and interested community members. This committee could increase the resources available to the SHD without having to increase costs through volunteer time and ideas. The committee’s responsibilities could include:

- Assist the Highway Department in establishing and setting criteria for a Roads Management Program including analyzing roads based on current and future use, social, financial, environmental, and cultural benefits and constraints.
- Make recommendations based on social, financial, environmental, and cultural analysis for short-term and long-term strategies and goals for a Roads Management Program.
- Review Roads Management Program seasonally and adjust recommendations as needed.

- Compile a resource list of people & organizations for exchange of information and expertise.
- Work with the SHD on formulating scenic road designations per earlier recommendations.
- Help create a written record which includes job descriptions, training needed, schedules, procedure manuals, resource lists, internal record keeping procedures, annual data, etc., and adjust as needed to reflect changes in Transportation System.
- Establish recording system for SHD work, and an effective, efficient mechanism to do yearly cost analysis (e.g., PDAs & EZ software for categorization and tracking of work).
- Establish a baseline of the roads by inventorying the usage, users, and types and conditions of town roads. Produce a map documenting this information.
- Using information from Sheffield Hwy Dept records and from other similar communities, estimate cost per mile of maintenance of various roads and kinds of roads.
- Develop categories of Town street design standards to insure function and character of roads, and use these standards in both subdivision and public street reconstruction. They should be context specific; flat vs. hills, village vs. outlying, etc., and explicit, and be the basis for acceptance as a 'Town' road. This could be done in conjunction with the Planning Board and Building Inspector so that if the Town ever needs to take over the care of the road, the town will not have undue maintenance costs and the road will 'fit' with the community character.

b. Identify and implement cost-saving measures for all aspects of the Highway Department.

Consider during the identification of such measures, the appropriateness of the following:

- Adopt the design recommendations and construction specifications from Design Guide for Rural Roads as a guideline for future road construction, upgrading, and maintenance. For example, reduce infill and slope requirements where possible.
- Create scheduled equipment maintenance program to reduce expensive repair and/or replacement costs.
- Develop a chart of anticipated road and machinery maintenance work with built-in contingency hours for emergencies and a detailed map of roads by work priority based on criteria such as amount of usage, types of vehicles, and adjacent land-use, etc. The latter might be a project for the Conway School of Landscape Design.
- Provide opportunities for SHD personnel to keep up-to-date on the most current techniques, materials, maintenance options, costs, equipment, etc.
- Coordinate the Roads Management Program and the Capital Improvement Plan.
- Enlist volunteers to install native short grass/wildflower/groundcover around shrubs in intersections & parking areas to reduce or eliminate mowing costs.
- Change infill & slope requirements where possible – By using cut & fill guidelines that ensure adequate runoff of water and minimizes infill needed on downhill side of road there will be fewer trees removed and fill purchased; decreasing costs and stabilizing soil.
- Reduce salt usage where possible which will save money, extend life of equipment, require less materials, and lower detrimental effect on environment.
- Explore alternative fuels and fuel cells (e.g., biodiesel).

RECOMMENDATION 3: Promote integrated alternatives to single-person automobile travel.

a. Consider creating a pedestrian and bicycle trail network.

Such a network would connect important sites, such as schools, Town Park, Town Hall, Senior Center, etc. (This mechanism would also provide funds for historic preservation and affordable housing projects.) The network could incorporate areas of high use/population and natural resources, for recreation and commuting, locally and regionally. This network would be safely accessible, interconnected, and serve residents and visitors of all ages, conditions, and interests.

- Encourage adoption of the Community Preservation Act for open space, affordable housing and historic preservation funds.
- Consider using Town-owned land as the ‘base’ for the Trail network.
 - A Stewardship/Management Plan of Town lands could help meet community goals. Funding for the Plan could come from the Forest Stewardship Program and from forestry cost-sharing.
- Investigate local, State, and Federal programs which fund recreation & transportation, such as the Forest Stewardship Program, Greenways, Blueways and Gateways grants, etc.).
- Develop partnerships with other organizations for support and expertise, such as Berkshire Bike Path Council, Conway School of Landscape Design, Housatonic Valley Association, Simons Rock, land trusts and conservation organizations, Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, sporting organizations/stores, etc.
- Incorporate safe routes for bicycling, walking, horseback riding, etc.
 - ‘Safe’ includes design of traveling area for physical safety and a comfortable, welcoming feeling to the user social safety.
 - Reuse trolley tracks, where possible.
 - In village centers, install bike lane(s) consistent with the adjacent to ‘main’ street with intervening grass swath to maintain village character and encourage pedestrian use.
- ☐ Enlist the help of landowners in the Stewardship & Chapter 61 programs.
- ☐ Provide incentives to landowners who allow access to their land, assisting the establishment of the transportation network.
- ☐ Once a trail has been established, neighborhood teams could monitor & care for each section.
- ☐ Encourage people to use and care for the trail. Usually, the more people; the fewer the problems.
- ☐ Encourage neighboring towns to connect their trails to Sheffield trails.

b. Consider dedicating a set percentage of the town’s funds for non-automobile improvements, such as sidewalks, bike paths and bike racks.

c. Encourage that new construction actively promote universal, pedestrian and bicycle access.

- d. Encourage businesses to promote alternatives to automobile usage, including various incentives for doing so.
- e. When road improvements are planned, ensure that there is no net loss of safety and convenience for pedestrians and bicyclists.
- f. Encourage design guidelines, which require pedestrian, bicycle and recreation easements within new subdivisions to create a circulation network within each neighborhood.
- g. Consider incentives for developers to connect adjacent neighborhoods.
- h. Encourage car/van pooling through ‘pooling’ sites.
- i. Explore the feasibility of expanding public transportation to Sheffield and Ashley Falls.
- j. Explore bus, taxi and van sharing within Sheffield and neighboring towns.
- k. Research ways to meet the transportation needs of seniors and others.
- l. Explore the increased use of the Housatonic Railroad for freight to help slow the influx of large trucks and cars passing through Sheffield.
- m. Investigate expansion of Berkshire Scenic Railroad routes to town.

7. COMMUNITY FACILITIES & SERVICES

1. Background

The following inventory of public facilities and services in Sheffield including location, general condition, capacity, and known capital needs is based on available local and state information. Annual town reports, the community-wide surveys, school district data, and other relevant plans and reports were reviewed for this section. Interviews were conducted with departments, boards, and service organizations currently providing public services to the community. An analysis was also conducted of the Town's tax base, tax rate, and municipal revenues/expenditures, and compared to similar communities around the state. From this inventory and analysis, future facility and service needs are projected over the next 5 years. The action plan that concludes this section results from this inventory and analysis, and community feedback and guidance during deliberations regarding the findings and recommendations of the Land Use component [see section 8. *Land Use*.]

2. Summary of Findings

Sheffield Municipal Facts	
2000 Population	2,956
2000 Population Over 65	420
Registered Voters	1,876
2003 School Enrollments	610
Public Road Miles, 2002	83
Avg. Single Family Home Value (FY04)	\$200,798
Avg. Single Family Tax Bill (FY04)	\$2,827
Tax Rate (FY04)	\$14.08
Residential Property Assessment Base	\$318,661,201
Commercial/Industrial Assessment Base	\$45,356,553
Operating Budget	\$ 5,328,331

Source: Massachusetts Municipal Association

- In 1989, the Town of Sheffield adopted and the state approved the Town Charter establishing a Board of Selectmen-Administrator form of government.
- The Sheffield Town Hall was built between 1839 and 1860. This historic facility houses offices for the Town Administrator, Treasurer /Collector, Town Clerk, and Inspectional Services, and currently meets the needs of Sheffield.

- The Sheffield Police Department currently has a full time Chief, 4 full-time officers supplemented by part-time staff. The ratio of officers to full-time residents is about 1:1,100 while standards recommend 2 to 2.5 officers/1,000 residents. In 2002, the department responded to over 2,000 calls, which has diminished slightly over the past several years due to proactive enforcement and increased staffing. The Department's primary concern is traffic safety and speed enforcement.
- The Voluntary Hose Company #1 officially became the Sheffield Fire Department in 1997. In 2002, the Department responded to over 100 alarms, which have steadily increased over the last 10 years. The Department has a full membership of 34 volunteers in 2003. Several facility and equipment upgrades are being considered over the next 10 years, including expansion or relocation of the Fire Station.

- The Sheffield Highway Department is located on Pike Road and included 4 full-time employees. The department is responsible for overall roadway maintenance and improvements. While demands on the department have grown with increasing population, state funding (Chapter 90) has declined over the last 10 years. The Department needs to assess, replace and upgrade equipment as needed. In addition, the town is considering the long-term relocation of the Highway Garage. The current facility was built in the mid-1960s and is located within the Sheffield Water Company public water supply recharge area.
- The Friendly Union/Dewey Hall is operated by the Sheffield Friendly Union (a non-profit organization) and used for several public and private functions including the Sheffield Council on Aging and Senior Center. This facility is an important public gathering space located in Sheffield Center but is becoming inadequate for the growing Senior Center membership and activities.
- The Stone Store, a circa 1834 structure on the Sheffield Green, is a unique edifice and the oldest commercial building in the Town of Sheffield. It is only one of the several buildings now owned and operated by the Sheffield Historical Society, a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting interest in the history of the Town, including the hamlet of Ashley Falls. The Store is used as an exhibit space, information center, and museum for the Sheffield area. It enhances the Town Green, provides a place for residents and visitors to learn about contemporary and historic Sheffield and Ashley Falls, and serves as a center for information about venues in the area. The Store is located directly in front of the 19th century Town Hall and adjacent to the 18th century Congregational meetinghouse.
- The Sheffield Council on Aging is developing plans for a new Senior Center.
- The Sheffield Transfer Station, located on Barnum Street, is a fee-based facility providing local residents and businesses cost-effective trash disposal and recycling services. Waste from the Transfer Station is transferred to the SeaMass B3 facility in Canaan, NY where it is transferred again out of state. The recycling program is currently operating at about 30%, a successful rate.
- The Bushnell-Sage Public Library, located in the renovated former grade and high school, opened in 1997. The additional space and facilities has provided the opportunity for new and expanded programs, exhibits, services and collections. This has resulted in increased membership and circulation, which is about 36,000 per year.
- The Sheffield Business Park was constructed with state funds in 1994 with a 30-year build out projection. The marketing study for the Business Park stressed the importance of getting the “right” first tenant to set the tone for the Park and its other tenants and that to do so might mean a 7-10 year horizon for finding that first tenant. The Business Park has tremendous potential, particularly with an update of its possible uses to today’s local and economic climate (recognizing the local constraints to attracting light industry and clean manufacturing, which were the original intentions of the park, in addition to the national trend of such jobs moving overseas).
- The Southern Berkshire Regional School District (SBRSD) was formed in 1953 and still represents the same communities of Sheffield, Alford, New Marlboro, Egremont, and Monterey. SBRSD is considered one of the best small regional districts in the State. Sheffield is the largest member of the School District with 55% of the student enrollment. The Mt. Everett Regional School was constructed in 1992 and includes grades PK-12. Over the past 10 years, student enrollment in the district as well as Sheffield has declined. The cost per pupil is significantly higher than the state average due to many factors. School expenses represent about 75% of the annual Town Budget, one of the highest in the State. Managing school costs is a primary issue in Sheffield.

- Sheffield's municipal expenses grew by 43% between FY93 and FY02. The per capita expense has also risen over this 10 year period particularly in education, public safety and public works. Much of this growth can be attributed to increased costs of services (including fixed costs such as health insurance, workers compensation and other employee benefits), demand in service by a growing population, and a steep decline in state revenue sharing. Much of the tax burden has been placed on residents as their property values have risen at a much higher rate than commercial and industrial properties.

3. Government Structure and Administration

In 1989, the Town of Sheffield adopted and the state approved the Town Charter establishing a Board of Selectmen-Administrator form of government. Under the Charter the Town elects the Moderator, Board of Selectmen, Library Trustees and Planning Board. By Federal court order, the school committee is appointed. All other officers, boards, committees, and commissions of the Town are appointed by the Board of Selectmen.

The executive powers of the Town are vested in the Board of Selectmen who serve as the chief policy-making board of the Town. To aid the Board in conducting official business are the Town Administrator, Town Counsel, Treasurer-Collector, Tree Warden, Constables, and all department heads, employees and subordinates except those persons serving under officers and multiple member bodies elected directly by the voters of Sheffield. The Board of Selectmen also appoints all multiple member boards, committees, and commissions except those appointed by the Moderator.

Sheffield has an open Town Meeting, which is held in May for the purpose of electing Town Officers and voting on questions as required by General or Special Law. All town residents can attend and those 18 years and older are allowed to vote on warrant articles including the municipal budget, capital improvements and other changes to town policy and regulation.

4. General Services & Facilities

Town Hall

The Sheffield Town Hall was built between 1839 and 1860. This historic community gathering place currently meets the needs of Sheffield. There are 2 public meeting rooms (one large meeting hall and another smaller meeting space), storage facilities and several offices. The first and second floors underwent a major renovation in 1998 including interior wall and ceiling repairs, a new staircase, a new elevator and bathrooms. The building is in good repair and no major building or equipment capital improvements are anticipated in the next 10 years. One possible long-term improvement would be to renovate the old Grand Army of the Republic meeting room on the 4th floor [CHECK IF 3RD] as an additional public gathering space. Town Hall currently houses the offices of the Town Administrator, Town Clerk, Inspections Department, Assessors, and Tax Collector.

Town Administrator's Office - The Town Administrator's Office is staffed by 2 full-time employees in 2004 including the Town Administrator and an Administrative Assistant. The Town Administrator's primary responsibility is keeping the Board fully informed as to the needs of the Town and recommending measures requiring action by the Board or by the Town as deemed necessary. The Administrator also has several other duties and responsibilities:

- Oversight of Town accounting;
- Supervising all offices and departments;
- Staffing regular and special meetings of the Board and attend sessions of the Town Meeting;
- Compiling the annual operating and capital budget for all Town departments and submitting the budget to the Finance Committee;
- Assisting the Board in the recruitment of department heads and employees;
- Administering the Town's personnel system;
- Acting as an agent for the Board on collective bargaining issues;
- Recording the financial and administrative activities of the Town; and
- Investigating or inquiring into the affairs of any Town department or office under the supervision of the Board;

Over the past few years, the Town Administrator and Board of Selectmen have been involved in a number of important issues and projects that impact the community such as the Berkshire School Road Reconstruction, completion of the Village Green Project, the Town Master Plan, Transfer Station disposal rule changes, creating a three-year labor agreement with the Highway Department, and preparing an Interim Regional School Operating Budget Agreement during remaining years of school bond financing.

The Town Administrator anticipates no significant equipment needs other than general office equipment replacement or staffing changes in the Department over the next 5 years.

□ *Please see Map # 13:
'Town of Sheffield
Public Facilities & Services'
behind the MAPS tab.*

Assessors Office - The Assessors Department includes 3 half-time staff members which are responsible for determining real and personal property valuation and handling applications for tax abatements. The Office is considering the need for computerized assessors maps and the possible acquisition of hardware and software for a geographic information system (GIS) which would enable the Town to electronically inventory and analyze various ownership records, land uses, natural resources, and other regulatory boundaries (i.e. zoning districts).

Treasurer/Collector - The Treasurer/Collectors' Office serves the Town of Sheffield as the receiver and custodian of all town funds. This office receives and processes payments for numerous types of taxes and fees. Real Estate and Personal Property Taxes total the largest amount of revenue followed by Motor Vehicle and Transfer Station Fees. There are various other departmental receivables turned over to the treasurer. These include license fees, such as Alcoholic Beverage, Antiques, Car Dealer, Lodging, Common Victualer and others paid to the Selectmen's Office.

The Town of Sheffield operates on a Quarterly Tax Payment System for payment of Real Estate and Personal Property Taxes. The due dates of Aug. 1, Nov. 1, Feb. 1, and May 1 will remain constant on an annual basis. There are two annual mailings for these bills. The first mailing is on or before July 1st and the second, on or before December 31st.

Town Clerk - The Town Clerk is responsible for various meeting preparation and records management including town meetings, voter registrations and elections, local licenses and business registrations. The office is staffed by one full-time clerk and no major capital expense or additional staffing needs are anticipated over the next 5 years.

Inspectional Services - The Inspectional Services Department is responsible for zoning enforcement and issuing building permits for all new construction, alteration, and renovation. The department includes a part-time building inspector, plumbing and gas inspector, wiring inspector, sealer of weights & measures, Board of Health, and animal inspector.

The primary responsibility of the department is to ensure public safety through proper construction practices. Adequate inspectional services have a direct impact on the reduction of fires and injuries in the community, and adequate staffing enables the Town to maintain a good fire insurance rating which benefits the homeowner.

Permits Approved by Inspections Dept.				
Inspector	1993	1998	2002	% Change in 10 Years
Building	104	150	190	+83%
Plumbing	41	41	425	+936%
Gas	46	73	42	-9%
Wire	93	61	119	+28%
Title V*	NA	41	85	+100%
Animal**	183	86	120	-34%
* Includes new systems, witnessing perc. tests, and inspections;				
** Includes inspections and calls				

The Inspectional Services Department has been very busy over the past 10 years reviewing building permits for all types of residential, commercial and industrial development. The vast majority of building permits issued over the past several years have been for new single-family homes, which accounts for (83%) of all residential permits and over (20%) of all permits issued by the department since 1990.

No major capital or equipment improvement or staffing changes are anticipated by the department over the next 5 years.

Police Department

The Sheffield Police Department is located on the corner of Main Street and Berkshire School Road in Sheffield Center. The building served as the Town Library until 1997 when it was completely renovated and converted into the Police Department. The building includes a dispatch center, private offices, meeting rooms, storage, and restrooms.

The “Mission Statement” of the Sheffield Police Department

“To be an integral influence within our community in the enhancement of the community’s ability to create, maintain and improve the environment in which our community may grow, prosper and enjoy an enriched quality of life”.

The Department has a force of 4 full-time officers, the Police Chief, and 12 permanent interim officers (those that fill in for sick officers and those retiring) or special officers who are primarily retired and work road details. Full and

part-time staffing is up from approximately 11 in 1999 due primarily to the availability of federal grants. Staffing additions include 1 full-time officers and 6 part-time officers and administrative staff.

Police Department Requests For Services	
Year	Requests For Services
1998	2,319
1999	2,453
2000	1,925
2001	1,970
2002	2,009

Requests for service have decreased over the last several years. The department responded to 2,009 calls for service during the year 2002, of which 285 were for criminal offenses and 110 motor vehicle accidents.

Traffic safety is the main concern of the department particularly in the Town Center and at several intersections along Route 7. Domestic violence and juvenile programs are also a priority of the department. There is limited availability of support services, outside of probation, for domestic violence and juvenile issues that can address treatment for the accused and support for the victim.

The accepted standard for the ratio of police officers to every 1,000 people is about 2.0 to 2.5 officers. With a population of 3,335 full-time residents, Sheffield's ratio is about 1 officer to 1,112. Like a number of visitor-oriented communities, Sheffield has an extended population including non-resident second homeowners, faculty and students at the Southern Berkshire Regional School and at Berkshire School. This extended population and growing tourism in the region creates a sizable workload for the department's small staff.

The Police Station is in good condition and the only significant capital improvement that may be needed over the next 5 years is a prisoner holding cell that will be used as a temporary holding space until prisoners can be transferred to the facility in Great Barrington. The Department also has 3 cruisers which will have to be replaced periodically over the next several years. There is also a need to provide a secured parking area behind the station for police vehicles and equipment.

Fire Department

The Sheffield Fire Department, Voluntary Hose Company #1, is located on Depot Square in Sheffield Center. The Hose Company officially became the Fire Department in 1997, but no members are now covered by the Town insurance program. [CHECK DATE AND INSURANCE INFO WITH BOB W.]

The Fire Station was built in 1948 and is owned by the Voluntary Hose Company, while all equipment is owned by the Town. This facility includes a 3-bay garage, a meeting room, kitchen and one bathroom. The facility was renovated in 1998 raising the height of one bay to accommodate new apparatus. The Department currently had 3 pieces of apparatus including the main pumper truck (1994), the back-up pumper truck (1988), and a reserve pumper truck (1998).

The Fire Department had a full membership in 2003 including 6 officers and 28 regular members with an average of 10 years of service. While members of the Department are volunteers, they are well trained in programs such as HAZMAT, fire prevention, fire suppression, and EMS standards.

Fire Department Alarm Responses	
Year	Total Responses
1993	55
1998	82
1999	84
2000	93
2001	81
2002	88

The department primarily utilizes surface waters for fire suppression. There are approximately 25 dry hydrants around town and 20 wet hydrants connected to the Sheffield Water Company distribution lines in the Sheffield Center area. The Department averages 80 to 90 calls per year but responded to 108 calls in 2002, which was the busiest year on record. There has been an increase in the number of runs and demand for services over the past 10 years as documented in the table below. Between 1993 and 2002, department responses rose by over 85%. This increase in the demand for services, is largely due to the growing number of year-round and seasonal homes in Sheffield.

Ambulance services are provided to Sheffield by Southern Berkshire Volunteer Ambulance located in Great Barrington. The demand for ambulance service has also risen steadily over the past 10 years, and can be partially attributed to a rising vehicle accident rate, aging local population and the increasing population.

The Department is projecting the purchase of a new pumper/tanker truck in 2008. The Department also anticipates the purchase of a Jaws of Life cutting tool with ram over the next 5 years.

Over the next ten years there are a number of facility and service changes that need to occur. The Department is evaluating possible facilities expansion needs, which may include an addition to the building of 1 to 4 bays or renovations to increase the height of the current facility to accommodate larger apparatus. There are land constraints in the vicinity of the building that must be addressed by the department including septic systems and property owners that may have other plans for the land. Another possibility would be to relocate the Department to another location if these long-term issues can not be sufficiently addressed.

Another long-term consideration anticipated by the Department is the possible need for regional fire services. As more communities in the South Berkshire Region find difficulty in keeping volunteer membership, this option may become more necessary to adequately protect smaller communities.

Highway Department

The Highway Department, located in the Highway Garage at 35 Pike Road, is responsible for general roadway maintenance and repairs including sanding, snow plowing, grading and resurfacing of gravel roads, painting road centerlines, adding and changing culverts, cutting back edges for drainage, grading, graveling, patching and box paving, cutting brush, taking down and cleaning up trees, replacing signs, and equipment and facilities maintenance.

In 2003 the Highway Department had a staff of 4 full-time employees. The department also hires temporary summer help and encourages local residents to fill these positions. The Department also has 5 trucks used for various maintenance and repair services.

This Highway Garage was built in the mid-1960s and is approximately 16,000 square feet. It includes a 2-bay garage holding up to 6 vehicles, an administrative office, and storage facilities. The complex is located in a Zone I recharge area for the Sheffield Water Company Turnpike Well, and could be a potential threat of contamination. The Town anticipates the possible relocation of this facility within the next 10 years.

Chapter 90 Funding in Sheffield	
Section	Town of Sheffield, MA Facilities & Services
FY	Funding
1993	\$249,171
1998	\$406,640

Like other local services, the Highway Department has been affected by an increasing workload and demand for services with a growing and changing population in Sheffield. Chapter 90 Funds¹ are the primary source for major roadway construction projects in Town. Unfortunately, this major funding source has been cut back significantly in recent years. This has put a significant burden on department staff and resources.

The Department has identified several short and long-term projects for the next 5 to 10 years which are discussed in *Chapter 6: Transportation & Circulation*. However, most of these projects are dependent on Chapter 90 funding. Safety and volume are major concerns of the Highway Department.

Friendly Union/Dewey Hall

Dewey Hall, located in Sheffield Center, is privately owned and operated by the Sheffield Friendly Union. It was built in 1871 at the initiative of Reverend Orville Dewey and dedicated “to increase good and kindly feelings, and promote intelligence and cheerfulness”. The facility once served as the Town Library and is currently used by the Council of Aging as the Senior Center and for various public and private functions. The Friendly Union includes Dewey Hall (a small function hall with stage), 2 restrooms, offices and storage space. Renovations to the facility in the last few years include interior painting, restroom and kitchen improvements.

Council on Aging - The Council on Aging is a 9-member board comprised of a cross section of the community with the majority of board members over the age of 60. The Council is staffed by a part-time director, part-time assistant director with volunteer help for some activities.

The COA runs several projects and activities at the Senior Center such as weekly physical fitness classes, clinics for foot care and hearing, blood pressure and cholesterol testing, memory testing, and an annual clinic for flu shots. “Meals on Wheels” is provided to the Senior Center members through Elder Services of Berkshire County.

Sheffield Senior Center - The Town of Sheffield currently rents a small office in Dewey Hall from the Friends of Dewey Hall that acts as the center for many senior citizen activities. The Town pays for the use of the hall on a per day basis for fitness classes, potluck lunches, art classes, or speakers in the health field. However, as the elderly population in Sheffield grows and the Council on Aging provides more services and activities, the small office and hall are not sufficient to meet the needs of senior residents. Additionally, the facility is not fully handicapped accessible. The Friendly Union has asked the town to look for a new long-term location for the senior center, but will continue to house the center until a new location is found.

In 2002, plans were developed for the construction of the new Sheffield Senior Center. Preliminary drawings for a new facility show an attractively design, 1-story building in a Cape Cod Style. The new Senior Center would include a large dining hall, lounge, kitchen, restrooms, the director’s office, and storage space. An initial site next to Town Hall and an alternative site near the Bushnell-Sage Library were investigated, but found not to be feasible, so additional venues are being sought.

¹ Local transportation improvements funds provided by the State Department of Transportation

Town Park

Town Park encompasses 48 acres of mostly forested land off Miller Avenue. The park includes 2 small ball fields, a playground and pavilion which is used in the winter months for ice skating. The Sheffield Highway Department and the Town Park Committee are responsible for maintaining the park and have made several repairs to equipment and facilities over the past few years. Community businesses have also been generous in supporting the Town Park.

Expanding recreational activities in town is an important goal according to the 2002 Sheffield Community Survey. This survey also indicated that only about ½ of town residents use the Town Park and most were from the Sheffield Center area. Section 4.0: *Natural, Open Space, Recreation, and Agriculture Resources* discusses the Town Park and potential future recreational uses in greater detail.

Transfer Station

The Sheffield Transfer Station and Recycling Center is located on Barnum Street about ¾ mile from the intersection with Salisbury Road. Staffing includes 3 part-time attendants. In addition to trash collection and recycling, this facility provides annual collection programs for bulk waste and household hazardous products (HHP).

The Transfer Station is open 4 days a week and is an enterprise operation with funding provided by annual resident and business user fees. The facility is expected to accommodate Sheffield's needs over the next several years, but additional capacity is likely to be needed in the ten year period covered by the plan.

From the transfer station, waste is trucked to the SeaMass B3 facility in Canaan, NY where it is hauled by rail to other locations out of state. As of 2001, trash from commercial haulers was no longer being disposed of at the Transfer Station. Customers using a commercial hauler became eligible to receive an abatement for the trash component of their solid waste user fee. With the exception of small businesses (defined as a business having no more than one non-owner employee), all businesses are now required to use a commercial hauler.

Recycling is required in Sheffield and products are sorted into 3 categories: mixed paper; bottles, cans, juice boxes and plastics; and metal. In 2003, the Town's Recycling Coordinator estimated the recycling rate to be 30%, an excellent success rate.

There have been some changes in the Town's recycling program over the past few years. Since recycling continues to be handled through the Transfer Station, there is a user fee bill to all residents and businesses. The non-trash component of the user fee covers the cost of recycling and special collections. Residents who use a commercial hauler for their trash, but wish to bring their recyclables to the transfer station themselves, may receive a special sticker allowing access to the recycling area only. These changes were made in response to increased concerns about the town's liability for solid waste brought to the Transfer Station by commercial haulers and a new state requirement to inspect solid waste from commercial haulers as it is being disposed. A new brochure has been published giving residents much useful information about the Transfer Station and recycling program.

An assessment of Transfer Station needs is recommended to meet the community's long-term needs and current equipment needs of the attendants.

Bushnell-Sage Public Library

The Bushnell-Sage Public Library is located off Main Street in Sheffield Center and has been a public institution for over 75 years. The building originally served as the town's high school and then middle school until 1993 when the building was reconstructed and expanded to serve as the Library. (Between 1923 and 1997 the library was located in the building that now houses the Police Station). This new facility is approximately 7,200 square feet allowing for substantially expanded space for collections, resources and meeting rooms. Additional parking has been recently added to the facility for a total of 20 spaces.

In 2003, the Library was staffed by the director and several part-time employees and volunteers. The Library's highest priority is good service to the community. They have added several new programs such as children's programs, exhibits and adult lectures, and public meeting spaces.

Bushnell-Sage Public Library Stats		
Year	Permanent Collection	Total Circulation
1993	22,991	31,665
1998	28,434	33,041
2002	NA	36,000

The quantity and quality of the collection has also grown over the past several years. As a result circulation of library materials and membership has increased over the past 10 years. Total circulation in 2003 was approximately 36,000.

The Bushnell-Sage Library is in the process of becoming a full member of CW/MARS (Central Western Massachusetts Regional System), the largest automated library network in Massachusetts. Membership will expand the capacity to process requests for materials, speed up delivery, and, eventually, enable patrons to place requests from their home computers. Membership will also enhance reference and research capabilities for patrons by giving them access to additional databases.

The Library is anticipating expansion needs in the very near future. And there is room to expand behind the existing building. Additional meeting room facilities might also be pursued through a combination of state grants and donations from the Friends of the Library.

Sheffield Business Park

The Sheffield Business Park is located in the southeast section of town between East Stahl Road and Hewins Street. The Town created the Park in 1994 when it bought the property out of Chapter 61A, which had been planned for a residential subdivision. The Town subsequently received a Public Works Economic Development (PWED) grant from the State to construct the roadway and install utilities.

The Sheffield Business Park was subdivided into 5 parcels each just over 4 acres. The Town set guidelines for providing an opportunity for light manufacturing and other clean industries that would add to the tax base and create employment opportunities for local residents while remaining compatible with the surrounding residential neighborhood.

The marketing study for the Business Park stressed the importance of getting the “right” first tenant to set the tone for the Park and its other tenants and that to do so might mean a 7-10 year horizon for finding that first tenant. While a number of inquiries have been made over the years, most have not been in keeping with both the Town’s economic development and neighborhood objectives.

Although the Business Park remains vacant today it has tremendous potential, particularly with an update of its possible uses to today’s local and economic climate (recognizing the local constraints to attracting light industry and clean manufacturing, which were the original intentions of the park, in addition to the national trend of such jobs moving overseas).

These issues and potential opportunities are discussed in greater detail in Section 3: *Economic Development*.

5. Educational Services & Facilities

The **Southern Berkshire Regional School District (SBRSD)** was founded in 1953 as the first regional district in the State to serve public school children from kindergarten through high school. It serves the Towns of Sheffield, Alford, Egremont, Monterey, and New Marlborough. The regional agreement has not been changed since 1954, when North Alford was added. The agreement is due to be renegotiated in 2008.

SBRSD is governed by an appointed 10-member **school district committee** with representatives from each of the five member towns. (Sheffield currently has 4 members on the school committee). Each member serves a 2-year term with a maximum of 6 years of contiguous service. The committee provides oversight of all school functions with the annual budget being the primary concern. The committee employs a superintendent to manage the school district, business administrator, and a part-time treasurer to oversee the annual budget process. SBRSD’s administrative team includes the superintendent, an elementary principal, a principal for grades 7-12, a special education director, a community relations coordinator, a plant director, and 12 teacher leaders. SBRSD has a full-time teaching staff of 82 with an average tenure of 14 years.

SBRSD and State Statistics		
	District	State
Drop Out Rate (2000-2001)	3.2%	3.5%
Attendance Rate	94.8%	94.9%
Special Education	16.6%	15.2%
Students per computer	2.7%	4.9%
Classrooms on the internet	100.0%	89.3%
H.S. Grads Plan to Attend:		
4-Year College	NA	52.4%
2-Year College	NA	20.4%
Work	NA	12.8%
SAT Results, 2001		
Verbal	504	506
Math	501	514
Per Pupil Expenditures		
1997	\$5,508	\$4,933
2001	\$4,282	\$4,649
Town Master Plan; Town of Sheffield, MA		
Section 7: Community Facilities & Services		
2001	\$40,282	\$48,649

Source: Mass. Dept. of Education

In 2002, District students scored at or above the state average on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) categories. However, SAT scores in the district are slightly lower in the state-wide average. According to SBRSD, 82% of the 307 graduating seniors in 2001 are participating in post-secondary education, which is higher than the state average.

The district has more access to computers and the Internet than the state average. Also, the dropout rate is slightly lower than the state average. Mt. Everett High School is nationally recognized for its innovative schedule and programs.

The District still operates public school facilities for K through 6th grade in each of the towns except Alford, which voted to close their one-room school house in 1993. Each of the remaining towns has its own school facilities, and the Mt. Everett Regional School serves grades 7 through 12 for students from each community.

SBRSD Enrollment by Town, 1998 and 2002												
Town	Number of Students		School Facility									
			Monterey		South Egremont		New Marlboro		Undermountain (Sheffield)		Mt. Everett (Sheffield)	
Grade in School	Total		K		K-1		PK-6		PK-6		7 thru 12	
School Year	1998	2002	1998	2002	1998	2002	1998	2002	1998	2002	1998	2002
Alford	30	32	0	0	3	1	0	0	16	16	11	15
Egremont	128	113	0	0	6	7	2	1	61	58	59	47
Monterey	76	51	7	5	0	0	22	10	18	12	29	24
New Marlboro	162	179	1	0	0	0	43	48	50	52	68	81
Sheffield	554	515	0	1	0	3	24	20	294	280	236	211
Total Member Towns	950	890	8	6	9	11	91	77	439	418	403	378
All Others	138	141	0	8	0	2	0	12	0	74	0	45
Total	1088	1031	8	14	9	13	91	89	439	492	403	423

Source: SBRSD

Total school enrollment in SBRSD has declined over the past 5 years by about 5%. In particular, Sheffield student enrollment declined from 554 at the start of the 1998 school year to 515 in 2002 (a decline of 7%). In contrast, enrollment at Undermountain School has increased 12% over the past 5 years, and Mt. Everett has increased by 5%.

SBRSD Enrollment by Towns & Grade, 2002-2003*						
Grade	Alford	Egremont	Monterey	New Marl.	Sheffield	Total
Pre-K	0	1	2	5	1	9
K	2	8	6	14	60	90
1	0	11	4	9	45	69
2	0	8	3	15	24	50
3	4	7	3	11	48	73

4	1	11	4	14	35	65
5	9	7	2	12	33	63
6	1	11	1	13	43	69
7	5	10	4	14	38	71
8	3	5	4	17	36	65
9	2	7	6	9	29	53
10	4	9	1	15	40	69
11	1	6	7	18	40	72
12	0	10	2	8	27	47
Sub-Total	32	111	49	174	499	865
Out Choice	14	15	26.5	14	36	105.5
TOTAL	46	126	75.5	188	535	970.5

Source: SBRSD; Does not include inbound non-member students from School Choice*

Sheffield is the largest member of SBRSD with a total of 515 students starting the 2002-2003 school year. This represents more than 50% of the total student body. Alford is the smallest member town with 32 students. SBRSD also participates in the Massachusetts School Choice Program and approximately 15% of students come from outside district towns.

Sheffield Children Attending Public Schools					
Grade	1970	1980	2000	2001	2002
K	36	43	45	54	60
1	61	41	48	24	45
2	53	38	39	45	24
3	59	27	37	37	48
4	52	42	42	33	35
5	44	38	42	41	33
6	53	33	38	41	43
7	60	43	35	36	38
8	46	31	35	38	36
9	42	55	45	36	29
10	36	33	36	44	40
11	42	33	32	37	40
12	40	28	31	26	27
TOTAL	624	485	510	495	499
Outgoing Choice			19	32	36

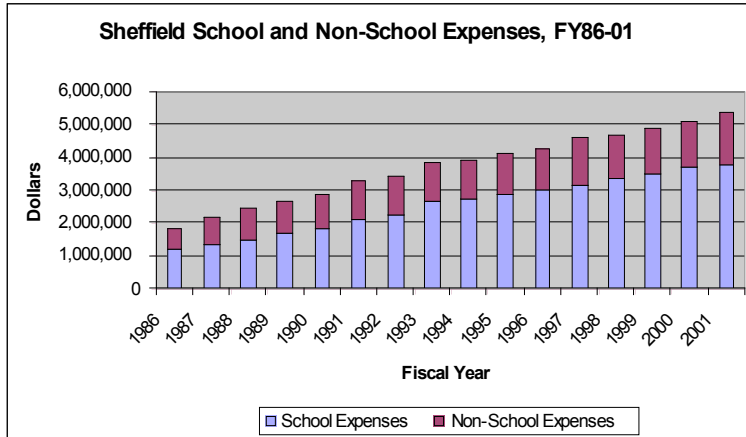
Source: Southern Berkshire Regional School District

The number of public school students from Sheffield has varied over the last several years. From a low of 501 local students in 1986, Sheffield school children peaked in 1999 at 722. Since then, the numbers of local students have dropped significantly to 515 at the beginning of the 2002-2003 school year.

In 1992, SBRSD completed a new \$25 million state-of-the-art school complex housing the Undermountain Elementary School and the Mount Everett School. This facility is located off Berkshire School Road and includes pre-kindergarten through 12th grade. In addition to the school buildings, the complex has several ball fields and playground for student and public use. No major capital improvements are anticipated by the SBRSD over the next 5 years.

Funding for the Mt. Everett Regional School was provided by the State as well as member towns. Sheffield, being the largest member town, was responsible for the bulk of the school construction bond. However, local student enrollment has declined for the last 5 years. In order to reduce cost and provide equity, an interim agreement was negotiated with the Towns of Alford, Egremont, Monterey and New Marlborough regarding the allocation of the operating budget for the Southern Berkshire Regional School District during the remaining years of the school construction bond. Under this agreement, which was approved by all five towns at respective town meetings, the school operating budget is allocated on a rolling average of the student enrollment from each town.

The cost of education is an on-going concern in Sheffield. The SBRSD constitutes approximately 75 to 85% of the annual town budget, which is one of the highest in the State. Transportation costs are also very high in the district due to the rural character of the communities served.



Being a rural school district, SBRSD is responsible for a relatively small number of students compared to the large geographic area of its member towns. It also operates 5 separate schools in 4 towns. These two factors may lead to higher than average school costs per capita. In fact, SBRSD costs per pupil are consistently higher than the statewide average (33% higher in FY01). In Sheffield alone, the cost per pupil has grown considerably over the past 15 years due to declining local enrollment. By comparison, the public school cost per capita have grown modestly as the population in town increases.



School choice has had an influence on the district. School and town officials estimate that the large majority of member-town students in younger grades, as well as a substantial number of students from outside the district, are sent to SBRSD schools. However, at the high school grades, the district tends to lose students to other districts, private schools or vocational schools.

The **Berkshire School**, located on North Undermountain Road, was founded in 1907 and enrolls 385 students from grades 9 through 12 and at a post-graduate level. Approximately 84% of the student body consists of boarders while the remaining are day students. The exact number of students from SBRSD member towns is not available but is estimated to be between 25 and 50. A number of district students attend regional vocational schools in Lee, Pittsfield, Berkshire Hills and Northampton's Smith Vocational School

6. Town Boards, Commissions & Committees

Board of Health - The Board of Health is composed of five (5) members appointed by the Board of Selectmen, three (3) of whom may be any or all of the members of the Board of Selectmen. The term for members of the Board of Health is 3 years.

The Board of Health is responsible for all health codes, tenant complaints of unsanitary conditions, rabies prevention, communicable disease prevention, environmental health issues, septic system installations, inspections of older septic systems, new and old wells, noise complaints, and odor complaints.

Over the past few years the Board has seen an increase in the number of Title V septic inspections, applications for disposal septic construction or upgrades, along with well permits for existing and new homes. Title 5 inspections (private septic systems) have also become more difficult with additional state requirements. The Town's Septic System Repair Loan Program has helped a number of homes with sewage problems make improvements to meet Title 5 requirements.

Many of the Board's responsibilities for inspections are carried out by the volunteer members. However, the Board also contracts with individuals for food inspection, and animal inspection.

The **Berkshire Visiting Nurses Association**, through the Sheffield Board of Health provides disease prevention and health promotion services throughout the year to the residents of Sheffield. These services include regularly scheduled prevention clinics where residents receive personal attention in monitoring blood pressure, testing blood sugar, counseling on health related issues and referral as necessary to other medical care providers and wellness programs.

Finance Committee - The Finance Committee consists of the Town Treasurer in an advisory capacity without voting power and five (5) other members to be appointed by the Moderator with the approval of the Selectmen within two (2) weeks following the Annual Town Meeting. Members are appointed for three (3) years and their duties are to make recommendations at Town Meeting on all appropriations and to make transfers from the reserve fund when needed.

Planning Board - The Planning Board is composed of five (5) members elected to three-year terms, and one (1) alternate member appointed by the Board of Selectmen, with the powers and duties under the provisions of MGL C. 41, § 81A. The Board is responsible for reviewing development projects including subdivisions, site plans, and Form A's (new building lots that do not require formal subdivision review, also known as Approval Not Required lots - ANRs).

Planning Board Cases, 1998-2002					
Year	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Town Master Plan; Town of Sheffield, MA				16	17
Section 7 on Community Facilities & Services				0	0
Comm./Ind. Site Plans	0	0	0	0	0
Special Permits	3	4	4	4	1

The Planning Board has been directly involved in the implementation of the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations through development review. Over the last 10 years the Planning Board has sponsored a number of amendments to the Zoning Bylaws and Subdivision Regulations to improve the development review process and guide growth in Sheffield. Two (2) members of the Board were also appointed to the Master Plan Steering Committee.

Zoning Board of Appeals - The Zoning Board of Appeals is a 3-member Board with 3 alternate members appointed by the Board of Selectmen. The ZBA is responsible for reviewing cases involving variances from the Zoning Bylaws (such as dimensional requirements), special permits (for specific types of uses and projects), and appeals of decisions made by the Planning Board and zoning administrator.

ZBA Cases 1998-2002				
Year	Appeals	Variances	Special Permits	TOTAL
1998	2	0	3	5
1999	0	4	6	10
2000	0	4	6	10
2001	0	6	5	11
2002	1	3	3	7

The ZBA has been active over the past 5 years with an average of over 8 decisions annually. Most cases involve requests for variances from dimensional requirements (i.e. setbacks, frontage and lot size), which is typical for ZBAs around the State.

Conservation Commission - The Conservation Commission is a 5-member board responsible for environmental permitting in the community. Commissioners are appointed by the Board of Selectmen for 3-year renewable terms. The Commission works with the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection in an effort to enforce the Wetlands Protection Act, which now incorporates the Rivers Protection Act. With the increase in residential development and changing state regulations, the Conservation Commission has been very active over the past 5 years. A main concern and priority is to protect wetlands habitat and other sensitive environmental areas in Sheffield.

Park and Recreation Committee- The Park and Recreation Committee is a 5-member and volunteer committee appointed by the Board of Selectmen. The Committee has made several facility and program improvements in recent years. However, even with the number of expanded programs the Committee has added, there continues to be a steady increase in the demand for recreational fields and facilities as a result of population growth in Town. The need to expand recreational activities is for both children and adults.

Ashley Falls Historic District Commission - The Ashley Falls Historic District Commission is a 7-member volunteer committee appointed by the Board of Selectmen. The mission of the Commission is to preserve Ashley Falls as a “rural village” community and to foster continued appreciation of this mission and efforts of residents and town government to achieve this goal. The Commission typically reviews new development or renovation to existing structures in the Historic District to ensure that efforts are made to preserve and enhance old buildings for their historical and rural significance. The District Commission also proactively works with property owners to restore the district’s preservation goals.

Sheffield Historical Commission - The Historical Commission was established under the provisions of MGL C. 40, § 8D, for the preservation, promotion and development of the historical assets of the town. The Commission is made up of 6-members who are appointed by the Board of

Selectmen to 3-year terms. This volunteer commission is primarily involved in preserving family histories and artifacts in Sheffield. They have also been involved in recent years in creating an oral history of Sheffield and Ashley Falls through the memories and stories of long-time residents, the Historic Walking Tour brochure (a self-guided tour of Sheffield Center and suggested other points of interest), and inventory of historic homes.

Sheffield Cultural Council - The Sheffield Cultural Council is a 5-member citizen board appointed by the Board of Selectmen. The goal of the Sheffield Cultural Council is to offer residents of Southern Berkshire County the opportunity to attend and participate in events that are designed to promote excellence in the arts, humanities, and interpretive sciences. These events not only focus on entertainment, but also provide a valuable source of education for all.

Programs presented in recent years included New England Folk Music concert, student art exhibits at Berkshire South, an African music and dance program, Earth Day Celebration at the Berkshire Museum, Fall Festival of Shakespeare (an annual event giving area high school students the opportunity to act in several Shakespearian plays under the direction of Shakespeare & Co.), juggling performances, and Music for Seniors. The Cultural Council has also been awarded grants in recent years including ShoeBox for KidsAct/Barrington Stage Co., and the continuation of “A Place in Time” offered by the Sheffield Historical Society.

Industrial Development Commission - The Industrial Development Commission is a 5-member committee appointed by the Board of Selectmen. The Commission is primarily responsible for interviewing and recruiting parties interested in purchasing parcels of land at the Sheffield Business Park located on East Stahl Road. The Commission is dedicated to locating businesses that will be compatible with the community and provide economic growth, property tax expansion, and high quality jobs for Sheffield residents.

7. Water and Wastewater Facilities & Services

Sheffield Water Company

The Sheffield Water Company (SWC), a private utility, was established in 1895 with 4 springs serving the Sheffield Center area. In 2004, SWC provides drinking to approximately 465 accounts

in Sheffield Center serving approximately 1,750 residents, or about 52% of the total population. An estimated 75% of the customers are residential and the remaining 25% are comprised of commercial, industrial and municipal users. Approximately 50 million gallons are pumped annually according to the SWC.

The Company is staffed by two (2) part-time employees providing supervision, plant operation, treatment plant handling, water distribution maintenance, and meter reading services. The Company is fully funded by water service user fees.

SWC's public water supply is derived from six (6) groundwater sources including two (2) wells and four (4) springs identified in the table below.

Sheffield Water Company Public Water Supply Source Characteristics					
Source	Location	Approx. Flow (gallons per min.)	Year Estab.	Zone I Area	Zone II Area
Farm House Spring	Off Water Farm Rd.	5.4 gpm	1895	467-ft Square	USGS 38.4-acre Delineation Pending Approval
Red Rock Spring	Off Water Farm Rd.	2.7 gpm	1895	377-ft. Square	
Smith Spring	Off Water Farm Rd.	5.4 gpm	1895	467-ft Square	
Barrel Spring	Off Water Farm Rd.	2.7 gpm	1895	377-ft. Square	
Pike Road Well	Off Pike Rd.	110 gpm	1956	400-ft Radius	18.3 Square Miles
Maple Ave. Well	Off Maple Ave.	70 gpm	1991	250-ft Radius	

Water from the Red Rock, Barrel Springs and Farm House Spring recharge the Lower Reservoir and the Smith Spring provides water to the Upper Reservoir. Both reservoirs consist of 30,000-gallon cistern/storage tanks. Overflow is discharged to nearby Soda Creek.

The Pike Road Well is a 250-foot deep gravel-packed well which is pumped directly into the distribution system. The Maple Avenue Well (also known as Hubbard Well) is a 311-foot deep gravel-packed well pumped directly into the distribution system. The two wells alternate operation depending on water demand, time of year, drought conditions and other variables. The Zone II Area² for the Maple Avenue and Pike Road wells was delineated and approved by the State in 2001. The Zone II Water Recharge Area covers a large area in Sheffield, Great Barrington and Egremont.

Average annual consumption has varied in response to droughts, water conservation, and fluctuating industrial and agricultural needs. Public water consumption, however, has increased over the past 20 years at a moderate rate due primarily to residential development in the service area. The total annual water consumption in 2003 was 56 million gallons and the average daily consumption was 153,000 gallons. Sheffield Plastics is the largest single customer with an annual consumption rate of approximately 6 million gallons.

Sheffield Water Company Consumption Trends						
	No. of	Total Annual	% Res.	Ave. Daily	Est.	Total Gal./
<u>Year</u>	<u>Services*</u>	<u>Consumption</u>	<u>Volume</u>	<u>Volume (MGD)</u>	<u>Pop. Served</u>	<u>Person/Day MGD</u>
1980	350	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

² The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) delineated a single Zone II Area for the 4 springs in the fall of 2002. See Appendix 1: Glossary of Terms for a description of Zone I and II Areas.

1990	445	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
2000	528	47,000,000	75%	147,000	1,750	74
2003	465	56,000,000	75%	153,000	1,750	87

Source: Sheffield Water Company; * SWC installed new meter equipment in 2002 which changed the number of services from customer to service reading explaining the reduction in total Number of services between 2002 and 2003.

In 2003, the residential per service consumption averaged 259 gallons per day. This is within the range of normal consumption rate of 250 to 350 gallons per service per day. In 2002, SWC finished installing meters for individual customer service connections. Comparing individual meter readings to the master meters at the supply source verified that a significant amount of water was being lost through the distribution system. Corrective measures are being put in place to address the leakage.

To protect the existing water supply sources and provide for future public water needs, SWC owns approximately 375 acres of land around their water supply wells and springs. In 2003, SWC adopted a wellhead protection and emergency response plan.³ The purpose of the plan is to improve efforts to protect the company's six (6) existing drinking water sources. Targeted projects for water supply protection include the following:

- Funding for Zone I and Zone II acquisitions;
- Develop and implement a floor drain inspection program;
- Conduct a drainage study of the tributaries to the springs;
- Prepare an educational brochure specific to the Sheffield Public Water Supply System; and
- Increase storage capacity.

Wellhead protection is a strategy aimed at preventing drinking water contamination by managing the land area that supplies water to a well. Mapping and protecting recharge areas is critical to protecting water quality.

Different land uses located in Zone II Areas may potentially impact groundwater quality, thus are an important consideration in water supply protection. According to state and local mapping, the Zone II Area for the Pike Road and Maple Avenue wells primarily consists of croplands and woodlands. The Interim Zone II Area for the springs primarily consists of wooded lands. However, these two areas also contain small pockets of residential, commercial, agricultural and industrial uses. Field surveys conducted by the State identified several potential contamination sources (PCS) within the Zone II area for the Pike Road and Maple Avenue Wells.⁴ A total of 64 PCS locations were identified as illustrated on the map below; each is given a risk ranking by the State.

A specific site that poses potential contamination concerns is the Sheffield Highway Garage, which is located within the Zone I Area (primary recharge area) of the Pike Road well. Other specific concerns are oil and hazardous waste spills along Route 7 and the railroad tracks in the Zone II Area of the Pike Road and Maple Avenue wells, pesticide applications on agricultural lands, and

³ Wellhead Protection Plan and Emergency Response Plan for the Sheffield Public Water Supply System, Prepared by Tighe & Bond, June 2003.

⁴ Massachusetts Dept. of Environmental Protection, SWAP Zone II Delineation Project, November 1999 and March 2000.

Zone II residential development in Sheffield and Egremont that is not tied into public sanitary sewer systems.

The springs and their Zone II Area are entirely located within the Rural Zoning District which is intended primarily for private residential and agricultural uses. Most of the Zone II Area for the Pike Road well is also located in the Rural District. However, property located within the Zone I area is zoned General Business which permits a combination of light manufacturing as well as agricultural uses. The Maple Street well is located in the Village Center District which permits a mix of residential and commercial activities.

In 1991, the Town of Sheffield established Water Supply Protection Districts (WSPD) to protect the springs and well sources. WSPDs are overlay districts that cover the Interim Zone II Areas and are superimposed over the established zoning districts. These interim areas include all lands within a 0.5-mile radius of the wellheads and springs owned by SWC. The overlay districts establish additional protection measures by further controlling potential contamination sources. However, the protection measures recommended were not fully adopted into the zoning regulations.

Sewerage

The Town of Sheffield has no public sewer system and all residential and commercial building are served by private septic systems. However, there is a small sewage treatment system located at the Mt. Everett Regional School (South Berkshire Regional School District) on Berkshire School Road. This facility services the school facility and was required by the State at a cost of approximately \$1.5 million. This treatment system is in essence a large septic system, with 2 large tanks to retain sludge as grey water is released through the leach field. The Regional School's Septic System would need significant investment to provide service off-site⁵. The permitted capacity of 31,000 gallons per day is only for a rare, emergency surge. If the regular flow begins to approach 20,000 gallons per day, the increase would trigger a requirement for an upgrade. At present the sanitary reports indicate trying to stay below 10,000 gallons per day to lessen the expense and burden of required monitoring and reporting.

While the construction of a public sewer is probably not feasible today, an alternative approach would be to allow for small package treatment plants that could service commercial, industrial or residential growth in targeted areas. Currently, the Town has no package treatment plants and is concerned about compliance with state standards and long-term maintenance responsibilities. This issue should be explored further as fewer lands in identified growth centers are suitable for on-site disposal.

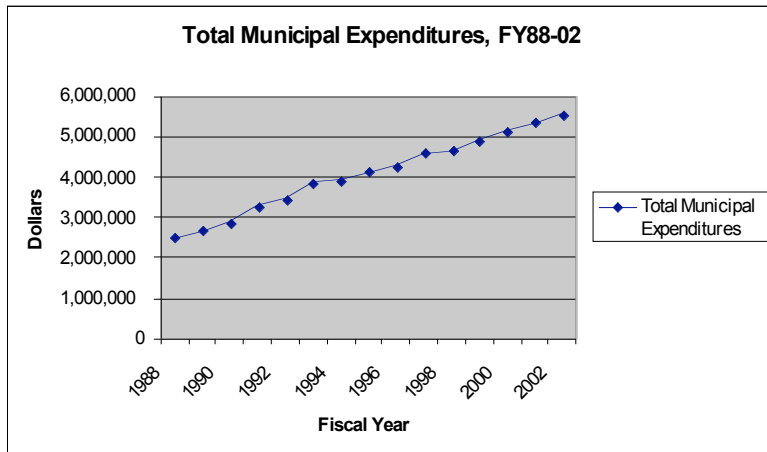
The lack of public sewer and limited area of public water supply through the Sheffield Water Company may limit the effectiveness of zoning techniques aimed at redeveloping or infilling areas in the community that are already built up such as Sheffield Center. Local zoning can be revised to create this opportunity. However policies that prohibit common strategies to manage and direct growth in small communities under Title V (such as shared septic systems, small package treatment plants and other alternative technologies) may unwittingly discourage the type of development most in character and sought after by Sheffield.

⁵ Thanks to Fred Finkle, Sanitary Technician, for interview

8. Trends in Municipal Revenue & Expenditures

Annual municipal budget appropriations are ordinarily made at the Annual Town Meeting held in the spring. Each department submits a budget to Town Meeting after review by the Town Administrator, the Finance Committee and the Board of Selectmen. Additionally, all capital improvements projects and bonds are presented at Town Meeting.

Sheffield's municipal expenses have grown substantially over the past 10 years. Overall expenses grew from \$3,885,383 in FY93 to \$5,555,639 in FY02. This represents an increase of 43%.



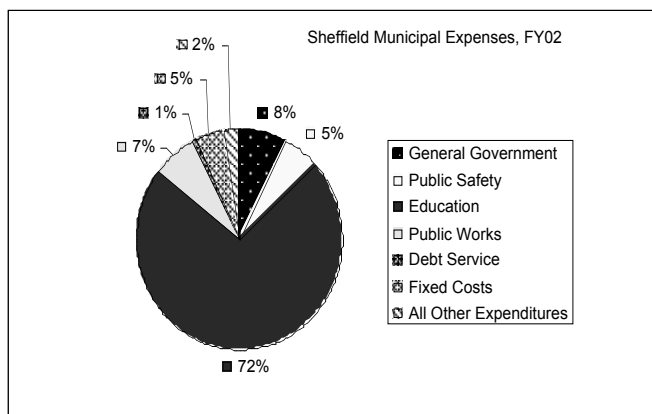
A number of factors have contributed to the growing town budget. Several important public projects in the early 1990s are probably the largest contributing factor including the construction of the Mt. Everett Regional School, the Bushnell-Sage Public Library, and major renovations to the Sheffield Police Station and Town Hall.

Service costs have also increased as a result of a growing population and associated demand for services. In terms of actual expenditures, education has grown the most over the past 10 years both in terms of funds spent and costs per capita. Other services that have grown rapidly include public safety, public works, and fixed costs such as unemployment, workers compensation, health insurance, retirement, and other employee benefits.

Town of Sheffield Actual Expenditures by Service, FY93 - FY02						
Service/Department	Actual Expenditures		Change in Services FY93-02		Per Capita Expense	
	FY1993	FY2002	\$ Change	% Change	FY93	FY02
Estimated Population	3,004	3,335	331	11%		
General Government	\$ 310,354	\$ 420,476	\$ 110,122	35%	103	126
Police	\$ 126,208	\$ 220,646	\$ 94,438	75%	42	66
Fire	\$ 6,012	\$ 23,771	\$ 17,759	295%	2	7

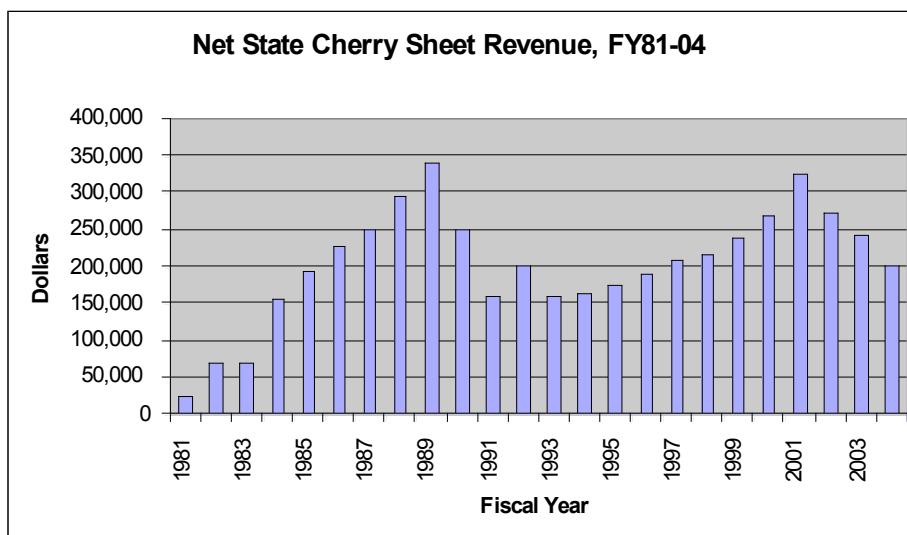
Other Public Safety	\$ 10,881	\$ 60,105	\$ 49,224	452%	4	18
Education	\$2,653,594	\$4,023,423	\$1,369,829	52%	883	1206
Public Work Highway	\$ 352,510	\$ 386,031	\$ 33,521	10%	117	116
Other Public Works	\$ 114,057	\$ -	\$ (114,057)	-100%	38	0
Health & Welfare	\$ 20,692	\$ 38,090	\$ 17,398	84%	7	11
Culture & Recreation	\$ 54,228	\$ 94,340	\$ 40,112	74%	18	28
Debt Services	\$ 27,700	\$ 37,053	\$ 9,353	34%	9	11
Fixed Costs	\$ 158,008	\$ 251,704	\$ 93,696	59%	53	75
Inter- Governmental	\$ 46,878	\$ -	\$ (46,878)	-100%	16	0
Other Expenses	\$ 4,261	\$ -	\$ (4,261)	-100%	1	0
Total Expenditures	\$3,885,383	\$5,555,639	\$1,670,256	43%	1293	1666

Source: Mass. Dept. of Revenue



Sheffield municipal expenses, like many comparable communities around the state, have grown steadily over the past several years as the costs of providing services, constructing new facilities, and fixed costs rise. However, an additional factor in Sheffield's growing budget is the loss of state revenues.

Over the past 5 years, the Town has lost state revenue, particularly for schools and public roads. State revenue for Sheffield peaked in FY01 at \$326,522 but has steadily declined to \$201,794 in FY04.



Tax revenues from local property value assessments have increased to kept pace with the municipal expenses. Between FY93 and FY02, residential property values increased by over

\$106,000,000 (or 50%). Residential property also carries a large share of the total tax burden - 85% of the total FY03 valuation is residential property compared to 10% commercial and 2% industrial. (See chart on next page.)

Town of Sheffield Property Valuation By Class & Tax Rate, Fiscal Years 1993-2003								
Fiscal Year	Tax Rate	Property Value By Class				Total Real Property Value	Total Personal Property Value	Total Valuation
		Residential	Open Space	Commercial	Industrial			
1993	13.68	\$ 212,628,600	\$ 1,405,000	\$ 23,230,100	\$7,294,500	\$244,558,200	\$ 7,651,800	\$252,210,000
1994	14.26	\$ 213,871,666	\$ 1,400,600	\$ 24,944,517	\$7,372,800	\$247,589,583	\$ 8,019,900	\$255,609,483
1995	14.36	\$ 218,643,900	\$ 1,347,100	\$ 29,514,200	\$7,157,900	\$256,663,100	\$ 7,988,223	\$264,651,323
1996	14.36	\$ 220,961,000	\$ -	\$ 29,956,600	\$7,157,900	\$258,075,500	\$ 7,806,713	\$265,882,213
1997	14.43	\$ 222,081,400	\$ -	\$ 29,693,700	\$7,339,100	\$259,114,200	\$ 7,588,190	\$266,702,390
1998	15.44	\$ 222,265,132	\$ -	\$ 32,470,004	\$6,732,700	\$261,467,836	\$ 7,548,100	\$269,015,936
1999	15.76	\$ 224,783,025	\$ -	\$ 32,675,917	\$6,660,400	\$264,119,342	\$ 8,159,530	\$272,278,872
2000	15.94	\$ 227,121,895	\$ -	\$ 32,736,375	\$6,857,000	\$266,715,270	\$ 8,633,600	\$275,348,870
2001	14.20	\$ 267,938,977	\$ -	\$ 35,334,446	\$7,787,800	\$311,061,223	\$ 8,709,789	\$319,771,012
2002	13.00	\$ 314,362,764	\$ -	\$ 37,339,629	\$7,423,800	\$359,126,193	\$ 8,998,099	\$368,124,292
2003	13.46	\$ 318,661,201	\$ -	\$ 37,836,053	\$7,520,500	\$364,017,754	\$ 8,880,350	\$372,898,104
Change in Value	-0.22	\$ 106,032,601	NA	\$ 14,605,953	\$ 226,000	\$119,459,554	\$ 1,228,550	\$120,688,104
FY03 % of Value		85%		10%	2%	98%	2%	100%
Change in % of Value	-2%	50%	NA	63%	3%	49%	16%	48%

Source: Town of Sheffield Assessors Office

A primary reason for the significant increase in demand for public services, and, consequently, the municipal budget is the amount and type of development in Sheffield over the past several years. Residential growth over the last decade has been relatively high (in comparison to the previous 20 years) while the commercial and industrial sectors have grown modestly.

In fact, commercial and industrial development has been limited and provided only a small amount of new tax revenue. Commercial property values over this 10-year period grew by \$14,600,000 and industrial by just \$226,000 (or 3%). Additionally, the type of commercial and industrial building stock in Sheffield (storage, trucking and smaller retail) does not typically appreciate at a very high rate.

Residential growth, however, does and has appreciated substantially over the past 10 years. Yet new year-round homes also place the largest burden on municipal facilities and services, particularly in schools, roads, recreational and other community services. If Sheffield is going to meet the growing demand and cost for services it has to either increase the tax burden on residential property, or expand the tax base through commercial and industrial development.

9. Municipal Comparisons

The growing tax burden on residential properties is evidenced by comparing Sheffield to other municipalities in Massachusetts with similar characteristics in terms of population, social-economic, and/or geography. (See Appendix 4 for full comparison of Sheffield to other municipalities). Three Criteria were used in this analysis:

- Population: Municipalities with Populations between 2,000 and 5,000
- Location: Municipalities in Berkshire County
- Socio-Economic Characteristics – Based on the State’s classification of Sheffield and other communities as a “Resort/Retirement/Artistic’ Community (RRA)”⁶

Based on these criteria, there are a total of 93 towns (including Sheffield) in the comparison as shown in the table below.

SHEFFIELD	C	P	R	Towns in Municipal Comparison			NORTH BROOKFIELD	P
STOCKBRIDGE	C	P	R				BOXBOROUGH	P
WILLIAMSTOWN	C		R				ROCHESTER	P
WINDSOR	C		R				CARLISLE	P
W. STOCKBRIDGE	C		R	HADLEY	P	R	BRIMFIELD	P
NEW ASHFORD	C		R	OAK BLUFFS	P	R	DEERFIELD	P
NEW MARLBORO	C		R	NAHANT	P	R	SUNDERLAND	P
EGREMONT	C		R	EDGARTOWN	P	R	AVON	P
MONTEREY	C		R	TISBURY	P	R	BOYLSTON	P
TYRINGHAM	C		R	WEST TISBURY	P	R	BERLIN	P
SANDISFIELD	C		R	TRURO	P	R	HATFIELD	P
ALFORD	C		R	WELLFLEET	P	R	HOLLAND	P
PITTSFIELD	C			ESSEX	P	R	SHERBORN	P
LANESBOROUGH	C	P		IPSWICH		R	PLYMPTON	P
CHESHIRE	C	P		ROCKPORT		R	WILLIAMSBURG	P
NORTH ADAMS	C			BREWSTER		R	BOLTON	P
LENOX	C			CHATHAM		R	PROVINCETOWN	P
LEE	C			NANTUCKET		R	WARREN	P
ADAMS	C			CONWAY		R	PAXTON	P
CLARKSBURG	C			SHUTESBURY		R	WENHAM	P
DALTON	C			DENNIS		R	NORTHFIELD	P
RICHMOND	C			ORLEANS		R	W. BROOKFIELD	P
GREAT BARRINGTON	C			UPTON		R	BERNARDSTON	P
FLORIDA	C			EASTHAM		R	ASHBY	P
SAVOY	C			WHATELY		R	HARDWICK	P
HINSDALE	C			LEVERETT		R	MILLVILLE	P
HANCOCK	C			ASHFIELD		R	HUBBARDSTON	P
BECKET	C			CUMMINGTON		R	WEST NEWBURY	P
PERU	C			HAWLEY		R	HUNTINGTON	P
WASHINGTON	C			ROWE		R	EAST BROOKFIELD	P
MT WASHINGTON	C			GOSNOLD		R	SHELBURNE	P
OTIS	C			CHILMARK		R	DUNSTABLE	P

C = In Berkshire County; P = Population between 2,000 and 5,000;

⁶ “Report/Retirement/Artistic Communities (RRA)” are part of a classification system devised by the Massachusetts Department of Revenue (DOR) based on socio-economic characteristics such as employment and business types, location, income, and other financial criteria. Four towns in South Berkshire County qualify as RRA communities including Egremont, Sheffield, Stockbridge, and West Stockbridge. Lenox is identified as a “growth community”. Lee is identified as a “rural economic center”, and Great Barrington an “urbanized center”.

In all, there are 32 communities in Berkshire County, 44 communities with populations between 2,000 and 5,000, and 40 communities with RRA classification. Many of the RRA are located in the Berkshires or coastal areas of Massachusetts (such as Cape Cod and the Islands). Several of these communities fit 2 or more of the criteria for comparison to Sheffield.

Summary of Sheffield Rank in Comparison to Other Communities			
Category	Sheffield Rank		
	Berkshire County Communities	Communities with Populations Between 2,000 and 5,000	Resort/Retirement/Artistic Communities
Total Number	32	44	40
Population, Housing, Land & Water			
2000 Population	10	23	16
Total Housing Units	9	17	19
Water Area	14	29	27
Land Area	2	1	2
Total Area	2	2	6
Pop Per Square Mile	17	42	25
Housing Per Square Mile	18	41	24
Income and Property Wealth			
1989 Per Capita Income	22	16	17
1999 Per Capita Income	13	19	30
1989 Median Household Income	29	37	35
1999 Median Household Income	22	33	28
1989 Median Family Income	23	38	32
1999 Median Family Income	25	40	35
Roads, Taxes & Budget			
2000 EQV/ 2000 US Census	17	20	31
Land SQ Miles	3	1	4
2001 Public Road Mileage	2	1	6
FY02 Operations Budget	9	28	20
Average Single Family Home Tax Bill	6	13	14
FY02 Total Parcel	10	5	18
Revenue			
Tax Levy	9	19	19
State Aid	16	39	27
Local Receipts	12	30	23
All Other	14	23	36
Total Receipts	10	10	19
Expenditures			
General Government	9	21	21
Police	10	33	22
Fire	16	40	31
Public Safety	7	28	21
Education	8	13	15
Public Works	15	30	23
Human Services	9	27	23
Culture & Recreation	9	29	22
Debt Service	18	38	30
Fixed Costs	11	29	22

Intergovernmental	11	25	23
Other Expenditures	16	29	28
Total Expenditures	9	26	20
Municipal Receipts from State			
Lottery, Beano & Charity Games	12	24	10
Additional Assistance	12	4	10
Exemptions: Vets, Blind and Surviving Spouses	17	33	24
Exemptions: Elderly	12	16	10
State Owned Land	13	11	13
Public Libraries	11	27	18
Subtotal General Government	12	33	13
Total Receipts	16	43	25
Labor Force			
Labor Force	9	20	19
Employment	9	24	19
Unemployment	12	37	19
Unemployment Rate	27	42	25
Expenditures Per Capita			
General Government	14	26	8
Police	6	29	16
Fire	12	17	21
Public Safety	12	26	14
Education	15	17	13
Public Works	21	25	12
Human Services	10	29	18
Culture & Recreation	3	28	13
Debt Service	24	41	32
Fixed Costs	9	27	16
Intergovernmental	1	16	1
Total Expenditures	24	13	11

Source: Mass. Department of Revenue

The most comparable municipalities to Sheffield are those that meet all three of the criteria as Sheffield does. There is only one other community, Stockbridge, that meets all three criteria. There are two other communities (Cheshire and Lanesboro) that meet the criteria for Location and Population; 11 other communities that meet the RRA and Location Criteria, and 9 communities that meet both Population and RRA criteria.

Based on these comparisons, the following observations are made:

Berkshire County Communities

- Sheffield ranks 2nd in total land area (second only to Sandisfield).
- Sheffield ranks in the lowest quartile for median family income in 1999.
- Sheffield ranks 2nd in public road mileage (second only to New Marlboro).
- Sheffield has the 6th highest average single family tax bill.
- Sheffield is in the top quartile for public safety and educational expenditures. It is also in the top quartile for police, culture & recreation, and intergovernmental expenses per capita. However, Sheffield is in the lowest quartile for debt service and total expenditures per capita.

- Sheffield has the 7th lowest unemployment rate.

Communities with Populations between 2,000 – 5,000

- Sheffield ranks 2nd in total square miles.
- Sheffield's density is one of the very lowest in terms of population and homes per square miles.
- Sheffield has the most public road mileage.
- Sheffield is the 5th lowest in receiving state aid.
- Sheffield is in the lowest quartile for police, fire, and debt service expenditures.
- Sheffield has one of the lowest unemployment rates.
- Sheffield has one of the lowest debt services per capita.

Resort/Retirement Artistic Communities

- Sheffield is in the highest quartile for total land area.
- Sheffield ranks in the lowest quartile for per capita, family and household income.
- Sheffield ranks in the highest quartile in public road mileage.
- Sheffield ranks in the lowest quartile for expenditures on fire and debt services.
- Sheffield ranks in the highest quartile for general government and intergovernmental expenditures per capita.

Community Facilities & Services Action Plan

Based on the inventory and assessment presented above, the following are recommended improvements in the Community's facilities and services. Recommended improvements reflect the existing and anticipated future needs for each department based on the amount and type of growth anticipated in Sheffield. The practicality of improvements is also based on a limited annual budget.

Overall Goal

Carefully invest in the facilities and services that support the goals and objectives of Sheffield's Master Plan.

Community Facilities & Services Objectives

1. Assess infrastructure & improvements required for vibrant Village Centers and neighborhoods.
2. Strive to maintain rural roadway character in outlying areas.
3. Explore appropriate designs and locations for community facilities & services.
4. Anticipate and assess services needed for a growing population.

Community Facilities & Services Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Assess and plan for needs in Village Centers and neighborhoods.

- a. In conjunction with the Village Center Plan process, consider contracting for engineering services to:
 - i. Estimate how much more infill and expansion can be supported by the septic filtering capacity of the soils in Sheffield Center.
 - ii. Estimate the costs and benefits of establishing a village deep well and distribution system to support desired infill and enhancement in the Ashley Falls Village Center and 'Clayton Area'.
 - iii. If deemed necessary, investigate alternative sewage treatment technologies that might be appropriate for one or both of the Village Centers and nearby neighborhoods.
- b. Consider creating an Artisan and Craft Center to promote and market locally produced goods, combining workspace with public space.
- c. Assess the needs of the Farmers' Market and locate appropriate site.

- d. Work to keep the Post Office on the Village Green.
- e. Evaluate and decide on a suitable location for the Senior Center.

Recommendation 2. Assess and plan for Sheffield's participation in the school district.

- a. Assess the impact of the Regional School District on Sheffield.
- b. Address the expiration of Regional School District assessment formula contract in 2008.
- c. Assess the impact of town provided services to the school on Sheffield's fiscal budget and town services.
- d. Assess the future infrastructure needs of the schools.
- e. Explore additional ways the grounds and facilities might be utilized by the community.
- f. Explore opportunities for student mentoring and training with local businesses and other schools.

Recommendation 3: Evaluate protective services and facilities as necessary for a growing population.

a. Police Department:

- i. Continue to evaluate the quality of all department equipment and consider replacement of equipment and vehicles as necessary.
- ii. Assess wireless communication systems.
- iii. Consider providing an improved prisoner holding cell.
- iv. Consider fencing around the police parking lot.
- v. Consider seeking additional grants to expand police staffing and community-oriented programs such as KOPS for KIDS and DARE programs.

The Sheffield Police Vision Statement identifies the use of problem solving techniques and communication with the community to enhance the quality of life. The department values open communication, high standards, training and education, and input from the community.

b. Fire Department:

- i. Review the costs and benefits of a new pumper / tanker truck by 2008.
- ii. Consider a Jaws of Life cutting tool with ram.
- iii. Identify and plan for the long-term needs of the Sheffield Fire Station.
- iv. Evaluate the costs and benefits of establishing regional fire services.
- v. Assess long-term staffing needs.

The Fire Department is anticipating significant expansion or relocation needs in the near future and over the next 10 years a number of additional facility and service needs can be anticipated. The Department is evaluating possible facilities expansion needs which may include an addition to the existing station or a new station in or close to Sheffield Center.

Another long-term consideration anticipated by the Department is the possible need for regional fire services. As more communities in the South Berkshire Region find it difficult in keeping volunteer membership this may become more necessary to adequately protect smaller communities.

Recommendation 4: Evaluate expansion and improvement of municipal services and facilities as necessary.

a. Highway Department:

- i. Evaluate relocating the Highway Garage.
- ii. Consider developing a short and long-range road maintenance and improvement program in conjunction with the recommendations in the Transportation & Circulation section of the Master Plan.
- iii. Consider an advisory committee as noted in the Transportation & Circulation section of the Master Plan.
- iv. Encourage working with the Board of Selectmen and local interest groups to expand the tree planning program to beautify the town.
- v. Consider protective sheds for equipment.

This Highway Garage was built in the mid-1960s and is approximately 16,000 square feet. It includes a 2-bay garage holding up to 6 vehicles, an administrative office, and storage facilities. The complex is located in a Zone I recharge area for the Sheffield Water Company Turnpike Well, and is a likely threat of contamination, so the Town anticipates the need to relocate this facility within the next 10 years.

b. Transfer Station:

- i. Assess equipment and safety needs of the existing facility.
- ii. Assess the carrying capacity of the current facility and extending hours to meet community needs.
- iii. Explore alternatives to address future and changing needs.

The Transfer Station is currently open portions of 4 days a week and is an enterprise operation with funding provided by annual resident and business user fees. The facility is expected to

accommodate Sheffield's needs over the next several years, but additional capacity is likely to be needed in the ten-year period covered by the plan.

c. Town Hall and Departments:

- i. Evaluate a comprehensive 10-year capital improvement program and service strategy.
- ii. Assess the municipal computer system.
- iii. Evaluate a centralized purchasing system.
- iv. Evaluate municipal facilities for ADA compliance.
- v. Consider options for a Geographic Information System (GIS) for use by various town departments.
- vi. Consider renovating the Grand Army of the Republic space in Town Hall as a public meeting space and provide handicapped accessibility.
- vii. Consider providing additional office and file space for town boards.
- viii. Consider expanding the Board of Selectmen to five members.
- ix. Consider establishing a stabilization fund for the capital and equipment recommendations for all Town departments.
- x. Review the structure of Town governance.

d. Senior Center:

- i. Evaluate, decide on and secure a suitable location for the Senior Center to meet projected needs.

The Senior Center administrative offices are currently operating out of Dewey Hall. This space has become inadequate for a growing senior population and with the increasing variety of activities sponsored by the organization. The Council on Aging has developed preliminary plans for a new Senior Center.

e. Bushnell-Sage Public Library:

- i. Support staff efforts to improve computer networking with other library systems to improve access to publications and materials to all Sheffield residents.
- ii. Support expansion of public events and exhibits.
- iii. Consider the costs and benefits of expanding the facilities to accommodate library needs and larger public events, meetings and other gatherings.

f. Business Park:

- i. Review Business park criteria and ways to streamline the approval process.
- ii. Consider developing the Business Park around agriculture-related activities.
- iii. Consider broadening the scope of businesses sought.
- iv. Consider allowing a developer to own, build and manage appropriate spaces and rent to smaller businesses and cottage industries.
- v. Explore alternative uses for the Business Park.

Update and revise the criteria used to consider and accept tenants for the Business Park, to bring in jobs and tax revenues. Changes in the business and economic climate since the Business Park was created nearly 10 years ago (recognizing the local constraints to attracting light industry and clean manufacturing, in addition to the national trend of such jobs moving overseas), create a need to up-date some of the criteria to recognize the full potential of this resource.

Recommendation 5: Evaluate active and passive recreational programs and facilities to serve the community.

- a. Assess existing playgrounds and picnic sites, including the need for a secure area for children.**

A potential source of funding is the Small Town Program administered by the State Division of Conservation Services (DCS). A Self-Help Grant may also be possible.

- b. Evaluate new locations for small public parks and playgrounds in growing residential areas.**

Such locations evaluated may include surplus public parcels for such purposes as picnic areas and playgrounds, athletic fields and community gardens.

- c. Evaluate improvements to the Town Park.**

- d. Promote use of the Town Park.**

- e. Facilitate the scheduling of events at town recreational facilities.**

- f. Continue to promote volunteer stewardship and sustainable management of Town Park and land by local service organizations and clubs.**

- g. Evaluate connecting the Town park and surrounding neighborhoods, Sheffield Center and other areas through green corridors and trails.**

- h. Investigate the opportunity to cooperate with the Southern Berkshire Regional School District and Berkshire School in expanding joint recreational programs for youths and adults.**

- i. Seek potential locations for a town beach.**

The town could create a Swimming Area Committee to evaluate natural beach swimming opportunities. The Committee could explore available locations, costs, funding programs and liability issues. Possible sites could include Three Mile Pond (owned by the State) and Mill and Trout Ponds (privately owned) as well as others.

Recommendation 6: Foster inter-town cooperation where opportunities exist to improve services and reduce costs. Potential areas of cooperation include:

- a. Participating in joint community planning efforts.
- b. Creating greenways and open space projects across town borders.
- c. Sharing services, equipment and/or personnel.
- d. Shared recreational programs and facilities.
- e. Participating in regional affordable housing development and economic development activities.
- f. Purchase of materials and equipment in bulk.

Neighboring communities can benefit greatly by inter-local cooperative agreements. Funds can be pooled for roadway improvement and maintenance, utility expansion, resource protection, and many other municipal services (i.e. emergency, schools, recreation, and cultural activities). For small communities like Sheffield facing rapid growth, decisions regarding the location of public facilities, infrastructure expansion, and transportation are likely to have direct or indirect impacts on neighboring communities.

Recommendation 7: Work with the Sheffield Water Company (SWC) to improve public water service to the community.

- a. **Establish a Wellhead Protection Committee and adopt and implement the Wellhead Protection Plan and Emergency Response Plan.**

The main steps involved in implementing the plan are as follows:

- Funding for Zone I and Zone II property acquisitions
 - Revise the Water Supply Overlay Protection District (WSPD) to apply to the updated Zone II designations and meet current state requirements.
 - Develop and implement a floor drain inspection program
 - Conduct a drainage study in the area tributary to the springs
 - Prepare an educational brochure specific to the Sheffield public water supply system
 - Increase storage capacity and hydrant flows.
- b. **Assess carrying capacity and current infrastructure and continue to expand the water distribution system, improve water quality and install water volume and quality monitoring equipment as needed.**
- c. **Develop new water sources as needed.**

- d. **Consider the long-terms costs and benefits of acquiring the SWC to ensure that adequate funding is provided to maintain and expand the water system as necessary.**

There are approximately 467 homes and businesses that rely on the Sheffield Water Company for safe drinking water. The SWC's Wellhead Protection Plan can provide many community benefits including reducing risk to human health, potential cost savings with respect to long-term monitoring and treatment, support for local bylaws making them less likely to be challenged, assurance of clean drinking water supply for future generations, enhancing real estate values, and protecting valuable conservation lands from development.

Recommendation 8: Address other community development issues and needs.

- a. **Establish a Town Visitor Center.**
- b. **Identify discrete locations for future cell towers, bury overhead power lines in appropriate locations and create high speed Internet infrastructure.**
- c. **Update, maintain and expand the town's website and promote town information sources such as the *Sheffield Times*.**
- d. **Evaluate the costs and benefits of extending Mt. Everett Regional Schools' sewage treatment facility to its surrounding neighborhood.**
- e. **Investigate, develop guidelines and provide for the use of package treatment plants and other alternative technologies for septic and sewage needs.**
- f. **Continue to seek state, federal and private funding for community development projects and goals.**

8. LAND USE

1. Background

This section of the Master Plan takes into account the analysis made in previous sections concerning growth trends and their impacts on man-made and natural resources. From here, we look forward to Sheffield's projected growth over the next 10 years and compare this to the community's long-term vision. In doing this we establish a comprehensive land use plan which reflects the community's goals for growth management and conservation over the next ten 10 years. The underlying theme for *Section 8: The Land* is as follows:

- Identify and address particular growth issues in a specific and innovative way.
- Balance community concerns of land rights, economic opportunities, and land stewardship.
- Encourage appropriate growth in targeted areas to create new economic and residential opportunities thereby enhancing the overall quality of life for local residents.
- Control the impacts of growth on municipal infrastructure, schools, neighborhoods, agriculture, and cultural and natural resources.

2. Sheffield's Land Yesterday and Today

An analysis of land use patterns based on aerial photography interpretation and town property records illustrates the changes in the community over the past 50 years. The following map shows Sheffield's current land use patterns based on the latest state aerial photography (1999).

► *Please see Map # 16:
'Town of Sheffield
Land Use'
behind the MAPS tab.*

Land Coverage

The preceding map is broken down into 17 land use categories and based on the interpretation of the most recent state data. This bird's eye view of Sheffield shows that the town's appearance has gradually changed over the past 50 years.

Sheffield Land Patterns based on Aerial Photography, 1952-1999					
Type of Land	1952	1972	1978	1980	1999
Forest/Vacant Land (including floodplain)	49%	55%	61%	66%	60%
Residential	1%	3%	3%	>3%	<7%
Comm./Industry	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
Trans./Utility	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
Agriculture Land	37%	27%	20%	15%	24%
Recreation and Open Land	-	<1%	2%	2%	3%
Wetlands/Wood Swamps	13%	13%	13%	13%	<5%
Open Water	1%	1%	1%	1%	<3%

Source: Based on interpretation of Statewide Aerial Photography

Forest Land - The majority of land in Sheffield is in forest cover (over 60 percent of the community), which increased by 15% between the early 1950s and 1980. In the mid-1900s the community had many more farms with large pastures, hayfields, orchards and croplands. Many of these open lands have been inactive and allowed to reforest. Between 1980 and 1999, forest cover declined slightly as some farms were re-activated and more residential development started to occur.

Sheffield Land Use by Category				
Land Use	Aerial Photographs (1)		By Parcel (2)	
	Acres	%	Acres	%
Forest	18,645	60.1%	2,399	7.9%
Agriculture			7,636	25.1%
Pasture	2,032	6.6%		
Orchard	46	0.2%		
Cropland	4,775	15.4%		
Open Land	704	2.3%		
Open/Recreational			593	2.0%
Wetland	1,534	4.9%		
Water	830	2.7%	830	2.7%
Residential	1,724	5.6%	7,183	23.6%
Residential < .5 Acres	298	1.0%		
Vacant Residential			4,546	14.9%
Commercial	77	0.3%	471	1.6%
Industrial	56	0.2%	61	0.0%
Vacant Industrial			64	0.0%
Mining	42	0.1%	84	0.0%
Waste Disposal	26	0.1%		
Transportation	35	0.1%		
Urban Open	125	0.4%		
Recreational	80	0.3%		
Public Non-Taxable			3,795	12.5%
Private Non-Taxable			1,691	5.6%
Uncategorized Land			630	2.1%

(1) Land uses based on interpretation of 1999 Statewide Aerial Photos;

(2) Land uses based on parcel records, Sheffield Assessors Office, 2002

Agricultural Land - Comparing the older aerial photography to the current ones, it appears that much of the former agricultural lands, now tree-covered, were in the southern portion of town. Even though total agriculture land declined over the past 50 years it remains the second largest land coverage in the community. In fact, over the past 20 years agricultural lands have increased by about 9%.

Interpretation of the 1999 aerial photographs indicates that the actual agricultural land in use in town is 6,685 acres.¹ Active agricultural lands identified in aerial photos are broken down into pastures, orchards, and croplands.

Cropland (15% of land area) is the largest agricultural use and third largest town-wide. The majority of cropland is situated along the Housatonic River where the soils are deep and rich.

Residential Land - Residential land coverage more than doubled between 1980 and 1999 (from 3% to 7%). Higher density residential land use (less than ½ acres) is primarily concentrated along Main Street between Sheffield Center and the Ashley Falls Village areas. Lower density residential coverage is distributed throughout Sheffield with the highest concentrations fronting on existing local roads. The most noticeable changes as one travels around the community is the addition of a number of new residences along rural roads such as Undermountain Road, Boardman Street, Hewins Street, Salisbury Road, and Polikoff Road.

Commercial Land - The most noticeable changes as one walks or drives through Sheffield have been a series of commercial developments along Route 7. Commercial and industrial land use has remained relatively small in terms of total coverage (less than 1% of all lands in Sheffield) over the past 50 years. New businesses along Route 7 have been limited in size and number, and by proximity to the Housatonic River and its flood plain. Industrial land use has been declining. Yet because commercial and industrial uses are so visible, they are an important factor in the community's future. The placement, distribution, architectural quality, and accessory uses (such as parking areas and signage) of these developments must be carefully planned in order to achieve Sheffield's goals of maintaining its attractive rural character.

Water - Since 1952 many hundreds of acres of open water have been created with the construction of dams for multiple purposes. Threemile Pond, for example, has changed from 156 acres to a total of 727 acres. While the original intent of the construction of dams was power for mills, many residents have created small ponds out of marsh and swamp for irrigation, recreation, or landscaping. These new impoundments have resulted in an increase in private recreational opportunities as well as to increase different types of wildlife habitat.²

Land Use by Property Ownership

The previous map was based on aerial photo interpretation – that is, the visual impact of different land uses. In contrast, the following map and discussion are based on property ownership and associated land use classification made by the town. The estimated acreage in each category is based on land ownership and use records kept by the Assessors Office.

► *Please see Map # 15:
'Town of Sheffield
Land Use by Parcel'*

behind the MAPS tab.

¹ This figure is smaller than the acreage listed in the Chapter 61 and APR programs because not all land in these parcels are actively used for agricultural purposes.

² Sheffield Open Space Plan, 1987

Compared to land coverage interpretation of the aerial photographs, Sheffield has slightly more land in agriculture use (25%), indicating that some of these lands are not actively farmed. Sheffield also has less land ownership in forest land (8%) and more land in residential use (24%) when compared to aerial photo interpretation of land coverage.

Sheffield's parcel count has grown moderately since 1990 with the addition of approximately 140 new lots. This is consistent with development trends during the 1990s, which included a high percentage of scattered residential construction on new or existing large lots, and relatively few new residential subdivisions. Parcels in residential use make up about 1/2 of all parcels in town and increased by about 7% (from 42% to 49%) since 1990.

Sheffield Parcel Count by Property Class, 1986-2003										
FY	Single Family	Multi Family	Apt	Misc. Residential	Vacant Land	Open Space	Commercial	Industrial	Other Usage	Total
1986	916	65	9	0	291	529	38	9	208	2,065
1987	938	65	10	0	270	554	20	8	226	2,091
1988	965	67	11	0	311	430	48	9	312	2,153
1989	961	81	7	42	801	68	51	15	202	2,228
1990	982	84	9	42	859	67	55	15	203	2,316
1991	1,017	82	10	38	866	64	60	16	213	2,366
1992	1,026	56	10	65	871	63	69	19	236	2,415
1993	989	58	9	51	898	59	59	21	257	2,401
1994	1,061	74	9	27	855	59	62	21	287	2,455
1995	1,083	45	9	55	831	57	62	22	292	2,456
1996	1,101	73	8	27	849		63	22	308	2,451
1997	1,115	43	8	57	829		64	23	310	2,449
1998	1,123	44	8	56	775		91	21	322	2,440
1999	1,143	45	8	55	757		92	21	327	2,448
2000	1,153	43	8	53	731		92	22	350	2,452
2001	1,164	44	8	53	710		88	23	354	2,444
2002	1,187	40	7	53	692	0	93	22	353	2,447
2003	1,200	39	7	53	686	0	96	21	353	2,455

Source: Mass. Dept. of Revenue, Division of Local Services

Parcels in commercial use have grown by about 41 since 1990 and remain a small (4%) but growing percentage of the total parcel count. Parcels in industrial use have remained about the same and make up a very small percentage of the total parcel count in Sheffield. The number of vacant parcels has changed the most since 1990 declining by 173, or from 37% to 28% of the total parcel count. Many of these parcels have been put to residential and agricultural use.

Residential Land Use Trends & Patterns

Over the last 30 years several towns in the South Berkshire Region have sustained a significant consumption of land for residential development. The table below illustrates the amount of land that has been converted from other uses, primarily agricultural and forestry, into residential use in a number of these communities. Sheffield, being one of the fastest growing communities in the region, has seen the largest consumption of land for residential use (over 5,300 acres since 1970).

Consumption of Land in Acres for Residential Use in Sheffield Area, 1970-2000								
Town	Residential Development		Population		Residential Dev. In Acres per Capita		% Gain or Loss	
	1970	2000	1970	2000	1970	2000	Population	Dev. Land
Lee	2,825	2,908	6,426	5,985	0.440	0.486	-6.9%	10.5%
Lenox	2,471	2,376	5,804	5,077	0.426	0.685	-12.5%	60.8%
Sheffield	1,274	6,582	2,374	3,335	0.537	1.974	40.5%	267.7%
Stockbridge	4,220	5,297	2,312	2,276	1.825	2.327	-1.6%	27.5%
W Stockbridge	2,753	4,683	1,354	1,416	2.033	3.307	4.6%	62.7%

Source: U.S. Census and Statewide Aerial Photo Interpretation

Population growth and housing development has begun to change the traditional land use patterns in Sheffield. Until the recent era, the community was settled based on a central village surrounded by agricultural lands. Residential development until the mid-1980s was mostly centered in and around the villages of Sheffield and, to a lesser degree, Ashley Falls. Since then, most new homes have been built along rural roads outside established village neighborhood areas. Older neighborhoods and streets in the village areas such as Main Street, Maple Avenue, and Root Lane in Town Center, and East Main Street, School Street and Railroad Street in Ashley Falls typically have smaller lots, narrower frontage and shorter front yard setbacks. Traditional architecture is common in these established neighborhoods, and streets are narrow at 20 to 22 feet on average.

Residential Development Characteristics in Sheffield, 1992-2001						
Development Characteristics	Approval Not Required		Subdivisions		Second Homes	
	Total	Average	Total	Average	Total	Average
Number of Units	143	14 per year	27	2.7 per year	27	2.7 per year
FY02 Building Value	\$29,637,700	\$207,257	\$ 555,600	\$168,726	\$7,366,500	\$272,833
FY02 Land Value	\$6,732,400	\$47,080	\$1,131,900	\$41,922	\$ 2,120,200	\$78,526
FY02 Total Value	\$36,370,100	\$254,376	\$5,687,500	\$ 210,648	\$9,486,700	\$351,359
Type of Dwelling	130 SF Dwellings, 13 other residential types		All SF residences		23 SF Dwellings, 4 other res.	
Land Area (acres)	939.5	6.6	38.6	1.43	348.8	12.9
Finished Area	187,531	1,311	29,699	1,100	39,774	1,473

Source: Sheffield Assessors Office

The Table above demonstrates that the majority of residential development over the past 10 years has occurred on existing rural roads throughout the community. The majority of these homes are permitted for development without subdivision approval under the State's ANR laws. As long as a parcel (existing or new) fronts on an existing public street and meets the minimum zoning requirements (such as lot size and setback) the new home does not have to follow other requirements of the subdivision regulations. The result can be excessive curb cuts and tree clearing along some of the Town's most attractive rural roads.

The second most common form of residential development over the past 10 years has been seasonal homes. The Housing Distribution map in *Section 2: Who We Area and How We Live* illustrates that seasonal home development is also distributed throughout town but with the highest concentrations in the southwest quadrant between Berkshire School Road, Undermountain Road, Route 7 and the state line. Both ANR and seasonal home development have been averaging larger lot sizes than required by local zoning..

Village Land Use Patterns

Historically, the Town Center has contained a mix of civic, institutional, commercial, industrial, and residential uses all within walking distance of each other. The surrounding lands were mostly in agricultural uses. However, as the land use maps for housing and business development illustrate, residential development has begun to spread out into more rural parts of the community while commercial developed has followed a linear pattern along Route 7.

Town Center and Ashley Falls remain the traditional mixed-use cores of Sheffield with commercial, office residential, public and education uses. While new development has been limited in both areas, some residential properties have been converted to commercial uses such as small retail stores, home businesses, and accommodations.

Recent scattered residential and commercial development patterns may have a significant effect on household travel. Residential accessibility is measured in terms of distance to desired locations such as work, recreation, services, and shopping. Scattered development affects our ability to link trips efficiently for different purposes and the opportunity to complete more than one activity at a single stop.

Mixed uses in Town Center and Ashley Falls should be encouraged as much as the market will allow. Major advantages of mixed-use are the ability to reduce vehicle trips, ease walking trips, improved residential property values in surrounding neighborhoods, better opportunity for casual social contact, enhanced rural character, and a greater sense of community.

Commercial Land Use Patterns

Sheffield's commercial land use patterns have changed moderately over the past 30 years with the greatest concentration of retail and service activity remaining in or near the Town Center. However, zoning is geared for commercial development on Route 7 from the Great Barrington town line to intersection of Route 7A. Over the last several years scattered highway-oriented commercial developed has begun to occur along this corridor.

Like many communities, Sheffield has designated large stretches of the Route 7, a major regional arterial highway, for commercial uses as retailers and related businesses gradually fill in the individual sites. Under this scenario, new development is scattered and spread out while sites closer to the Town Center and Ashley Falls Village often remain underutilized. Also by designating more commercial land than may be necessary, the Town may be diluting the economic vitality of the traditional business districts.

Commercial development patterns are expected to continue along Route 7 with commercial enterprises gradually replacing older houses and vacant lots. New business sites are somewhat controlled by floodplain and wetland regulations. Strict laws require the landowner to make a substantial investment for the development of a commercial lot on the floodplain. This may influence the rate of growth.

Scattered commercial establishments along local highways can disrupt through traffic, reduce capacity, and generally lack cohesiveness that often results in unattractive development. The pattern of businesses along the north and central sections of Route 7 as illustrated on Map 12 are typically too far apart to allow one-stop shopping and often have no functional relationship with one another.

Land designated for commercial use should be based on local and regional market demands for various types of businesses. Through zoning, the Town should allocate just enough land for this purpose, not more. Sizing the quantity of commercially-zoned lands to local needs can stimulate desired commercial growth in targeted areas, encourage revitalization, improve the quality of established village districts, and protect transportation improvements. Some basic guidelines for sustainable commercial development are as follows:

- Limit the quantity of retail-zoned land and emphasize existing village districts to provide economic strength and react more swiftly to consumer preferences.
- Rezone excess land to encourage reinvestment and improve quality of existing commercial properties.
- Scale retail-zoned land to reflect the realistic assessment of size, strength, and character of the market.
- Stimulate infill, new forms of mixed use, and pedestrian oriented retail development on remaining land.
- Reserve some of the previously zoned commercial land for agricultural businesses, housing, civic uses, recreational features and open spaces.

Industrial Land Use Patterns

According to aerial photography interpretations and local assessors' records there are less than 75 acres in Sheffield dedicated to industrial use. The largest industrial use is the Sheffield Plastics operations. Several smaller industries and manufacturers such as Sheffield Pottery and Custom Extrusions make up the balance of industrial lands.

There are as many vacant industrial acres as active in Sheffield. Most noticeable is the Sheffield Business Park located in the southeast section of town between East Stahl Road and Hewins Street. The Park was previously a working farm and enrolled in the Chapter 61 Program. The Town created the Park in 1994 and subsequently received a Public Works Economic Development (PWED) grant from the State to construct the roadway and install utilities. While the intended uses for the park include light manufacturing and other clean industries, it remains vacant.

The Town should reexamine the long-term goals for the Sheffield Business Park and industrial development in general. Suitable lands should be used to attract smaller businesses in growing local industry sectors such as services and construction, or to support growth sectors such as retail and tourism. Industrial land uses should be well buffered from residential and general commercial areas. Certain types of businesses located on Route 7 that are not reliant on traffic and visibility such as

construction, wholesale distribution, agricultural processing, warehousing, certain automobile repair services, and storage facilities, should be directed to designated industrial districts. Some of these types of business might also be encouraged to relocate into the Sheffield Business Park. All industrial land uses must consider the needs of surrounding residential areas in terms of traffic, landscaping, screening, and other potential impacts.

Agricultural and Open Land Use Patterns

Acres of Protected Open Space in Sheffield, 1994-2002			
Ownership	1994	2002	Change in Acres
Federal	898.62	963.28	64.66
State	1,083.24	1,546.48	463.24
Town	153.50	85.14	(68.36)
Private Organizations	811.98	2,270.33	1,458.35
TOTAL	2,947.34	4,806.41	1,859.07

Source: Town of Sheffield Annual Reports

wetlands. There is also a high concentration of permanently protected open space in the northern section of town along the AMC Trail, along the west side of Route 41 at the base of the Mt. Washington Ridge, and farmland along the Housatonic River. Most protected open spaces over the last 10 years have been made by private organizations such as the Sheffield Land Trust, The Nature Conservancy, and Trustees of Reservations.

A significant amount of land in Sheffield remains in active agricultural use. Between the Chapter 61, 61A, and 61 B programs, there are approximately 10,000 acres of land in Sheffield designated for agricultural, forestry and recreational use. Additionally, another 1,804 acres of land in Sheffield are protected under the Massachusetts Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) Program.

Lands Listed in Chapter 61, 61A, 61B and APR			
Program	Total Acres (1)	On Prime Agri. Soils (2)	
		Acres	%
Chapter 61/Forestry	2,503.0	261.6	10%
Chapter 61A/Agriculture	7,114.2	2,088.2	29%
Chapter 61B/Recreation	680.7	36.3	5%
APR	1,804.1	253.3	14%

(1) Sheffield Assessors Records;

(2) Interpretation of Sheffield GIS Maps

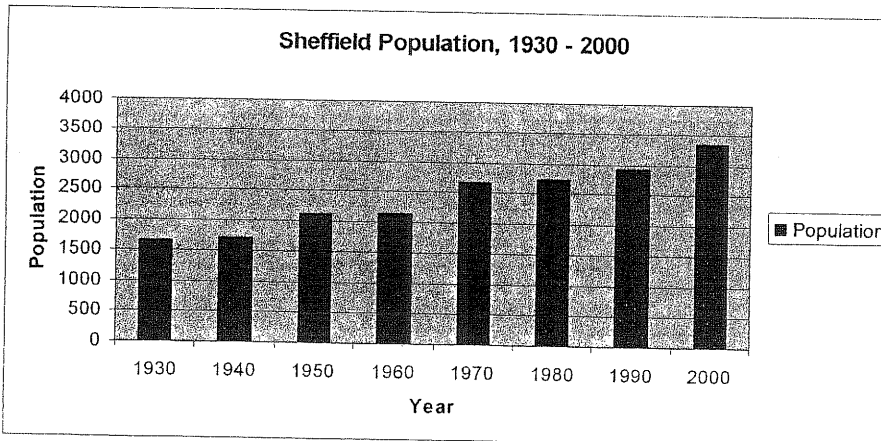
The majority of land in active agricultural use is located on prime agricultural soils. These rich lands run along the Housatonic River between Route 7 and Route 7A; Rannapo Road and Weatogue Road; and Boardman Street, Hewins Street and Shunpike Road.

Protected Lands in Sheffield, 2003						
Primary Use	Federal	State	Town	Private Non-Profit	Private	Total
Recreation	968		118		27	1114
Recreation & Conservation		486		49		535
Conservation		1217	58	2204	1322	4801
Agriculture				40	1042	1082
Unknown					39	39
Total	968	1703	176	2293	2430	7570.4

Source: Sheffield Assessors Office

3. Growth Trends and Projections

As presented in Section 2: *Who We Are and How We Live*, Sheffield's population has grown rapidly over the past 20 years. The increasing popularity of the community has also resulted in the addition of nearly 600 new residents and 480 homes since 1980.



A closer look at housing and population growth trends indicates that Census Block Group 3 incurred the largest increase in population, households and housing between 1990 and 2000. This area is located in the southwest quadrant of Sheffield between Undermountain Road, Salisbury Road, Route 7 and 7A, and the Connecticut state line. (See Population Density Map in *Section 2: Who We Are & How We Live*).

Population and Housing Units by Census Tracts and Blocks for 1990-2000						
Area	Total Population		Households		Homes	
	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000
Census Tract 9261	2910	3335	1158	1369	1460	1634
Block Group 1	1023	1132	407	453	552	590
Block Group 2	666	552	274	258	325	295
Block Group 3	409	788	160	333	219	405
Block Group 4	812	863	317	322	364	344

Source: US Census

The following projections are based on several variables including past population trends, housing and commercial construction, home sales, and local economic conditions. Accordingly, Sheffield could reasonably anticipate the addition of approximately 311 new residents between 2000 and 2010, or about a 9% increase.

Sheffield Area Population Trends & Projections									
	Census					MISER Projection			State Rank: 20 year Projection
	1980	1990	2000	Pop. Change 1980-2000	% Change 1980-2000	2005	2010	% Change for 20 Yrs.	
Berkshire County	29,090	28,048	134,953	105,863	363.9%	29,619	29,935	6.73%	13
Egremont	1,311	1,229	1,345	34	2.6%	1,182	1,156	-5.94%	320
Great Barrington	7,405	7,725	7,527	122	1.6%	8,882	9,306	20.47%	156
Lee	6,247	5,849	5,985	-262	-4.2%	5,039	4,767	-18.50%	348
Lenox	6,523	5,069	5,077	-1,446	-22.2%	4,563	4,260	-15.96%	343
Mount Washington	93	135	130	37	39.8%	186	216	60.00%	37
New Marlborough	1,160	1,240	1,494	334	28.8%	1,882	2,082	67.90%	29
Sheffield	2,743	2,910	3,335	592	21.6%	3,511	3,646	25.29%	118
Stockbridge	2,328	2,408	2,276	-52	-2.2%	3,057	3,232	34.22%	81
West Stockbridge	1,280	1,483	1,416	136	10.6%	1,317	1,270	-14.36%	341
Sheffield Area Totals	29,090	28,048	28,585	-505	8.5%	29,619	29,935	17.0%	NA

Source: U.S. Census and Massachusetts Institute of Social and Economic Research (MISER)

Sheffield's average age is expected to get older. The largest projected change in population is expected to be in the 45 and 64 year age group, which is projected to increase by 328 or a 36% increase. Senior citizens are also expected to grow in numbers between 2000 and 2010 by an estimated 54 residents. Younger residents (0-19) are expected to decline somewhat in numbers between 2000 and 2010 by an estimated 49 residents or a 5% decrease.

Town of Sheffield Population Trends & Projections					
Age Group	Census 1990	Miser Est. 1995	Census 2000	Miser Mid-Level 2005	Miser Projections 2010
0-4	173	202	180	150	158
5-9	202	226	244	219	190
10-14	212	219	235	254	232
15-19	186	193	194	208	224
0-19	773	840	853	831	804
20-24	156	190	190	187	202
25-29	206	155	184	182	179
30-34	247	264	205	231	232
35-39	238	283	295	230	254
40-44	231	267	311	325	256
20-44	1,078	1,159	1,185	1,155	1,123
45-49	195	234	264	305	319
50-54	138	215	253	286	332
55-59	145	168	250	299	340
60-64	164	107	133	199	237
45-64	642	724	900	1,089	1,228
65-69	136	151	96	121	182
70-74	108	119	136	86	107
75-79	75	87	95	108	66
80-84	55	56	58	62	72
85+	40	58	52	59	64
65+	417	471	437	436	491
TOTAL	2910	3194	3335	3511	3646

Between 1970 and 2000, Sheffield's housing stock grew by an average 228 dwelling units per decade (including new construction, conversions, and additions). Carrying this trend forward, Sheffield would have a total housing stock of 1,862 in 2010. However, with the increasing cost of land, large average lot size of recent residential development, growing acreage in protected lands, and limited infrastructure, it is projected that Sheffield will incur about 50% of this estimate, or an additional 114 dwelling units between 2000 and 2010.

4. Future Land Use Scenarios & Alternatives

Community Build-Out Analysis

The Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA) conducted a build-out analysis for Sheffield in 1999 using a formula applied to all cities and towns in the Commonwealth. This formula generally factors in local criteria such as zoning requirements and undeveloped lands. The results of the State's build-out analysis are included in the tables below.

What is a Buildout Analysis?

A build-out analysis is a broad estimate of the maximum potential development that could occur in a community based on existing land use, environmental constraints, current zoning, and other land use regulations. Its purpose is to identify where growth could be accommodated and its resulting impact on the community. It is also used to assist in the analysis of the adequacy of existing land development management tools, such as zoning and subdivision regulations.

The State evaluated current land use and development constraints. They consider absolute development constraints to include water bodies, slopes over 25%, Zone I of public water wells, permanently protected open space and municipal lands (not including Chapter 61), and area within 100 feet of the River Protection Act buffer around perennial streams. Partial development constraints include wetlands³ and their 100 foot buffer area, 200-foot buffer from perennial streams, slopes between 15 and 25%, the 100-year floodplain, water supply protection districts, and multiple constraint areas (those areas having more than one of the above constraints).

EOEA Buildout Analysis Summary: Demographic Projects			
Demographic Area	1990	2000	Buildout
Population	2,910	3,335	28,800
Students	507	559	5,189
Households	1,158	1,634	12,157

Source: State of Massachusetts, 2000

³ EOEA does not consider wetlands to be an absolute constraint because some wetlands can be used in the total minimum lot size required by zoning.

According to the state's projections, Sheffield has approximately 11,000 acres of developable land, which is 31% of the total area of the town. To calculate residential buildout, EOE factors in minimum lot size, frontage and road right-of-way requirements to project the number of new house lots that can be created on the developable land. For commercial and industrial buildout projections, the State factors in current zoning regulations for the non-residential districts to determine a floor area ratio.⁴ Once the amount of developable land was determined, it was multiplied by the appropriate floor area ratio to yield the total additional square footage of commercial/industrial floor space.

EOEA Buildout Analysis: Potential Impacts	
Acres of Developable Land Area	11,062
Additional Residents	25,465
Additional Public School Children	4,630
Additional Residential Units	10,523
Additional Commercial/Industrial Buildable Floor Area (SF)	9,587,507
Additional Water Demand (gallons/day)	3,714,039
Residential Water Use (gpd)	1,909,847
Commercial/Industrial (gpd)	1,804,192
Additional Solid Waste (tons/yr)	17,316
Non-Recyclable	12,732
Recyclable	4,584
Additional Roadway Miles	83

Source: State of Massachusetts, 2000

According to the State, if all estimated developable lands were built out based on the maximum allowed by zoning, it would result in over 10,000 new homes and 9.5 million square feet of commercial/industrial floor space. At the maximum buildout, the population of Sheffield would be over 28,000, nearly 10 times what it is today.⁵ Under the State's buildout projections, Sheffield is currently at only 12% and 13% of its maximum potential population and housing development, respectively. Based on the rate of growth between 1990 and 2000, Sheffield's population would reach full buildout capacity in 60 years and housing development in 22 years.

The Town considers EOE's projected buildout to be highly overstated. The EOE buildout is based on general formula applied state-wide, which considers existing land use, environmental constraints, remaining developable land and existing zoning. However, based on current and historic development trends in Sheffield, it is highly unlikely that this extremely high buildout scenario will ever happen.

Town officials and other local leaders believed that there were problems with the above buildout analysis, largely because of crucial underlying assumptions, some of which might not hold true for the community and landscape in Sheffield:

- Developable Lands - Build factor for roads and odd lot sizes: 85%
- Additional Residents - BRPC projection of 2.42 persons per household

⁴ Floor Area Ratio (FAR) is a ratio of the gross floor area of the structure to the total area of the lot. It is calculated based on a combination of maximum lot coverage, maximum building height, parking regulations, and different commercial/industrial uses.

⁵ Report on Potential Buildout of Sheffield, MA, January 31, 2000. Prepared by the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission.

- Water Use – Based on 75 gallons per day per person (DEP/DHCD “Growth Impact Handbook”)
 - Municipal Solid Waste – Based on amount of solid waste generated per capita in Sheffield in 1997
 - MSW Generation Rate = .68 tons per year
 - Non-Recycled Rate = .5 tons per person per year.
 - Public School Students - .44 students per household in 1999
 - New Subdivision Road Mileage – Assuming 70% of new homes in subdivisions; multiply # of lots by frontage and ten by 0.6 to account for lots on opposite side of road.
 - Buildout projections do not include reductions for seasonal housing units
- DHCD Growth Impact Handbook determines that water demand for new commercial/industrial building is 75 gallons per 1,000 square feet of floor space.

► *Please see Map # 17:
‘Town of Sheffield
Enhanced Buildout’
behind the MAPS tab.*

An enhanced buildout analysis was conducted using the EOEA build-out analysis as a starting point. Additional local factors and trends including recent population growth, land development characteristics, environmental constraints, potential demand for land over time, the location of developable land, intensity of land use, available infrastructure, and household and employment projections were also considered. The preceding map shows the results of the enhanced buildout’s identification of land in Sheffield that is most physically able to sustain development. Specific modifications to EOEA’s buildout factors are identified below:

Environmental Constraints – The State formula does not consider soil suitability for septic systems as a limiting factor for development. However, an estimated 30% of developable lands lay over poorly drained soils. This is an important factor given the fact that Sheffield has no public sewerage system. Of this area, approximately 2/3rd is covered in the state’s buildout analysis under other development constraints leaving an estimated building constraint factor on an estimated 10% of the total developable land. The *Enhanced Buildout Map* takes into account hydric soils as the best available GIS data relating to wetlands.

Permanently and Partially Protected Lands – The state’s buildout analysis underestimates the total amount of permanently protected lands in Sheffield. For example the total estimated land under absolute constraints in the Rural District (including permanently protected private and public lands, water bodies, slopes greater than 25%, 100-foot River Protection Act zone, Zone I of public water supply wells) amounts to 7,922 acres. However, according to 2003 town records, there are approximately 7,236 acres of permanently protected open space in this district alone. The enhanced buildout estimates that an additional 10% of the state’s developable land inventory is actually under permanent protection. The State buildout analysis also does not factor in lands under the Chapter 61, 61A or 61B program. However, Sheffield has demonstrated over the last several years a

successful rate of converting these lands into permanent protection through conservation easements. For this reason an estimated 25% of these temporarily protected properties are expected to be permanently protected over the next 10 years.

Availability of Infrastructure - Sheffield has a very limited geographic area serviced by public water located in Sheffield Center and the surrounding neighborhoods. The amount of capacity and general condition of the system, as well as the limited amount of developable land adjacent to the service area, limited its growth potential. Additionally, the town has no sewerage system that would allow for higher density development on marginal lands.

Residential Development Factors – Residential development trends in Sheffield have been predominately single family homes on large lots along existing roads. However, EOEA projects are based on an assumption that 70% of new homes will be in subdivisions. The typical new residential lot is much larger than required by local zoning. The EOEA project also did not take into account the important local market for seasonal [or second] homes, which have a distinctly different impact on the landscape [median lot size more than 9 acres] and on Town services [no school children per household].

Commercial and Industrial Development Patterns – Assessors records indicate that there are approximately 96 active commercial parcels amounting to 471 acres, and 21 active industrial parcels totaling 61 acres of land. Therefore, the average commercial lot size is 4.9 acres and the average industrial parcel is 2.9 acres. In the absence of a sewer system and also limited availability of the water system, Sheffield's commercial and industrial lot coverage figures are much lower than the state's buildout projections.

Public School Students – The state buildout analysis estimates that there are .44 students per new household. However, the number of school-aged children in Sheffield has been declining as the median age in the community rises. Additionally, the state does not discount the number of seasonal housing units from the school projections. Seasonal homes account for approximately 13% of the town's total housing stock and this percentage is expected to increase. The following chart shows the number of school children per bedroom in year-round homes, based on Town Assessor records for May 2004.

As is shown by the chart, in Sheffield it is important to distinguish between the impacts of primary homes and the impacts of second homes. Considering the correlation between number of school children and the size of a dwelling unit will also be useful as the community works to implement the Master Plan's action plan relating to a broader range of choice in homes, including options that are affordable to working families, seniors on fixed incomes, and other traditional members of the local community who are being priced out of the local housing market. From the above chart it can be seen that in Sheffield the median number of bedrooms in single-family homes is 3. Multiplying this by 0.135 local school children per bedroom yield an average of .405 students per primary single family home. In contrast, homes in 2-family and 3-family structures are consistently smaller; the median number of bedrooms in these dwelling units is two or only .27 students per primary home in a 2- or 3-family structure. While the number is relatively small for apartments in buildings of 4 to 8 units, there still can be seen a consistent pattern of the apartments having a median of only 1.5 bedrooms per unit, or only .20 students per primary home in an apartment building.

Computation of School Children Per Bedroom in Primary vs. Second Homes			
(Assessor's use code) & Type of home	Total bedrooms Primary homes	Total bedrooms Second homes	Notes
(101) Single family	3126	603	Total 1243 single family [S/F] homes, of which 201 are second homes. Median 3 bedrooms per single family home
(109) Separate houses on same lot	115	22	Total 137 bedrooms, assume* proportion for second homes is same as among S/F homes [16%]
(103) Mobile Homes	52	2	Total 54 bedrooms, median 2 per mobile home
(104) Two-Family Structures	117	0	Total 117 bedrooms, median 4 per structure or 2 per unit
(105) Three-Family Structures	29	0	Total 29 bedrooms, median 6 per structure or 2 per unit
(111) Multifamily: 4 - 8 units per structure	44	0	Total 44 bedrooms in 29 units, average 1.5 bedrooms/unit
(013-018) Mixed use, primarily residential	222	25	Total 247 bedrooms, assume* 10% second homes
(031-081) Mixed use, primarily non-residential	189	22	Total 211 bedrooms, assume* 10% second homes
Total bedrooms	3894	674	
FY'04 Total FTE K-12 students in Sheffield's public school system	525		
Average student per bedroom in primary homes	0.135		

Source: Assessor Records, May 2004

*** NOTE:** These assumptions were recommended by June 3 & 10, 2004, Working Sessions as best estimates until more detailed data is available.

Suburban “sprawl” vs. village centers and outlying rural resource areas: alternative scenarios

The most important difference between the standard EOEa build out projections and Sheffield’s enhanced projections is that Sheffield still largely exhibits – *and wishes to continue to enjoy* – the classic New England small town pattern of village centers that feature a vibrant cluster of buildings and activities, surrounded by outlying, lightly settled rural resource areas. Consequently, the *Town Master Plan* project’s final deliberations focused on alternative scenarios for the next 10 years of growth and change in Sheffield. At first the alternative scenarios suggested for study were:

- Scenario 1. Continue along the path we are on, or
- Scenario 2. Focus a mix of buildings and land uses in village centers. At the same time decrease the projected amount of development in outlying rural resources areas, absorbing new development in ways that are least obtrusive.

After preliminary projections for “Scenario 1” were reviewed and discussed⁶, it was agreed the experience of the last 10 to 12 years may not be a good basis for projecting the next 10 years, because there is a sense that market forces are heating up in Sheffield because of its relative affordability compared to the region. Consequently, the project team generated the following combination of future scenarios:

- Scenario 1 Continue along the path we are on
- Scenario 1A Same path, but hotter market
- Scenario 2 Hotter market with growth and change guided to achieve a mix of buildings and land uses in village centers. At the same time decrease the projected amount of development in outlying rural resources areas, absorbing new development in ways that are least obtrusive. Assume Sheffield achieves a broader range of housing choice, including some units that are affordable to traditional resident groups who are being priced out of the community.

First the analysis began with the following summary of “where we are, and where we are headed”.

⁶ At the June 3, 2004, working session of Town officials and other community leaders

Trends in Valuation: FY1993 – FY2004

FY	Residential		Open Space		Commercial		Industrial		Personal Property		Total	Tax
	%	Valuation	%	Valuation	%	Valuation	%	Valuation	%	Valuation	Valuation	Rate
1993	84.31	212,628,600	0.56	1,400,000	0.21	23,230,100	2.80	7,294,500	3.03	7,651,800	252,210,000	13.68
1994	83.67	213,871,666	0.55	1,400,600	9.76	24,944,517	2.88	7,372,800	3.14	8,019,900	255,609,483	14.26
1995	82.62	218,643,900	0.51	1,347,100	11.15	29,514,200	2.70	7,157,900	3.02	7,988,223	264,651,223	14.36
1996	83.11	220,961,000	0.00	0	11.27	29,956,600	2.69	7,157,900	2.94	7,806,713	265,882,213	14.36
1997	83.27	222,081,400	0.00	0	11.13	29,693,700	2.75	7,339,100	2.85	7,588,190	266,702,390	14.43
1998	82.62	222,265,132	0.00	0	12.07	32,470,004	2.50	6,732,700	2.81	7,548,100	269,015,936	15.44
1999	82.56	224,783,025	0.00	0	12.00	32,675,917	2.45	6,660,400	3.00	8,159,530	272,278,875	15.76
2000	82.49	227,121,895	0.00	0	11.89	32,736,375	2.49	6,857,000	3.14	8,633,600	275,348,870	15.94
2001	83.79	267,938,977	0.00	0	11.05	35,334,446	2.44	7,787,800	2.72	8,709,789	319,771,012	14.20
2002	85.40	314,362,764	0.00	0	10.14	37,339,629	2.02	7,423,800	2.44	8,998,099	368,124,292	13.00
2003	85.46	318,661,201	0.00	0	10.15	37,836,053	2.02	7,520,500	2.38	8,880,350	372,898,104	13.48
2004	87.04	383,990,696	0.00	0	8.54	37,882,561	1.96	8,641,200	2.40	10,858,839	441,173,299	12.08
Change in #	2.73	171,362,096	-0.56	-1,400,000	8.33	14,652,461	-0.84	1,346,700	-0.63	3,207,039	188,963,299	-1.60
Change in %	3.24%	80.59%	100%	-100.00%	3966.67%	63.08%	-30%	18.46%	-21%	41.91%	74.92%	11.70%

Sheffield: Where we are, and where we're headed

Sheffield now

Rural landscape. The aerial photo interpretation of land use map shows in 1999:

- 60% forest
- 22% pasture/cropland/orchard
- 6.5% residential
- 0.5% commercial/industrial

“New England” pattern of villages and outlying rural areas. The population distribution map shows:

- Villages of Sheffield Center and Ashley Falls
- Some pockets appearing in outlying places

Largely rural road system, with good regional access.

- Arterial Route 7 = 8.4 miles
- Major Collectors 7A & 41 = 9.0 miles
- Minor Collectors [Town-maintained]
 - Paved = 83.1 miles
 - Oil & stone = 10.3 miles
 - Dirt = 24.3 miles
 - Sidewalk = 2,278 feet, all in Sheffield Center

Residential tax base. “Trends in Valuation” chart⁷ FY04 shows:

- 87.0% residential & rising
- 8.5 % commercial & falling
- 2.0% industrial and falling

Combination of primary and second homes, predominantly single family.

Assessor records⁸ show:

- | | |
|--|-------|
| • Total housing units | 1,512 |
| • [Total 1,477 primarily residential structures] | |
| • Single family: primary home | 1,042 |
| • Single family: second home | 201 |
| • Separate houses on same lot [total 26 lots] | 54 |
| • Mobile homes [24 primary, 1 second home] | 25 |
| • 2-family homes [32 structures] | 64 |
| • 3-family homes [5 structures] | 15 |
| • 4-8 unit homes [6 structures] | 29 |
| • Mixed use, primarily residential | 82 |

⁷ See preceding chart.

⁸ Many thanks to Tammy Blackwell of the Assessor's office for data; any errors in interpretation are the consultant's

Expensive to move here. Median assessed values for newly constructed homes:

- Primary homes \$213,600
- Second homes \$522,000

Town Census of persons claiming residency⁹

1991	2,965	
2000	3,531	
2004	3,385	(incomplete #)

Student population declining, although assessment isn't

- 0.135 students per primary residence bedroom
- Other towns' numbers declining more than Sheffield's
- Capacity in schools sufficient for years ahead

"Developed looking" land vs. parcel size per residential structure.

1999 aerial photo & Assessor counts indicate:

- 1.3 acres "developed" land per residential structure [just over 2,000 acres]

Business base has rural pattern

- Agriculture & at-home businesses in outlying area
- Service & tourist-oriented in Sheffield Center
- New construction/conversion for business near magnet of Great Barrington
[Northern section of Route 7 and Kellogg Road]
- Other than Town and Regional School, one major employer [Sheffield Plastics]
- Sheffield Business Park empty [no utilities, 4 acre minimum lot size]

Sheffield Water Company serves area around Sheffield Center¹⁰

- Maximum production under current permits and current pumps= 340,128 gallons per day ["gpd"]
- More water resources in ground; limitations are capacity of pumps and distribution system
- Depth of wells implies a contained, subsurface source aquifer [as opposed to a surface aquifer that could be the source of shallow residential wells]. Implies less vulnerable to leach fields, other pollutants
- 460 – 470 customers: 80% h/h, 10% Sheffield Plastics, 10% agriculture/businesses/Town

⁹ Thanks to Town Clerk Felecie Joyce & Registrar Pat Sadera for these numbers

¹⁰ Thanks to Dana Bartholomew for interview & sharing 2003 Tighe & Bond study

Regional School's Septic System not able to provide service off-site without large investment in new or expanded system¹¹

- Is a large septic system, not “sewerage treatment plant”
- Permitted capacity of 31,000 gpd only for rare, emergency surge. If regular flow begins to approach 20,000, would trigger requirement for upgrade
- Trying to stay below 10,00 gpd to lessen monitoring, reporting burdens

The Direction We Are Heading

Residential

- No new 2-family, 3-family, or multi-family constructed since 1991
Assume existing are all primary residences?
Some converted to single family second home, see below
- Mobile homes no longer allowed
- 2 additional homes on same lot constructed during the 1990s
Assume 1 every 3 years?
Assume second homes?
- Average 17 single-family primary homes/year 1992 – 2001 [36 between 2002-2003]
Median lot size: 2.02 acres
- Of “new” second homes, majority are conversions of primary homes rather than new construction, i.e. “gut and renovate”, keeping the exterior shell
Median lot size for newly constructed: 9 acres
Consultant does not have numbers on which to project shifts from primary to second home, nor for shift from 2-, 3-, or multi-family to S/F second
- While frontage “ANR” construction predominates, starting to see subdivisions

Business

- Don't have numbers on which to base projections of:
 - Conversion of residential structure to accessory business or all-business
 - Additional business square footage from construction of new buildings or additions to existing buildings

After review and consideration of these land use trends, the June 10, 2004, gathering of Town officials and other community leaders confirmed the following working assumptions for projecting alternative future scenarios.

¹¹ Thanks to Fred Finkle, Sanitary Technician, for interview

Summary of Assumptions for Scenarios

Scenario #1: Continue on current path

1. 17 newly constructed primary homes/year
2. 2 newly constructed second home/year [total 20 new over 10 years]
3. 2nd home on same lot: proportion of primary/second same as other single family; and all newly constructed are primary homes; 1 newly constructed every 3 years
4. No new mobile homes, 2-family, 3-family, multi-family
5. 1 new mixed use primarily residential every 3 years
6. No significant new construction for business

Scenario #1A: Current path but “hotter” market

1. 20 newly constructed primary homes/year
2. Total 25 newly constructed second homes over 10 years
3. 2nd home on same lot: proportion of primary/second same as other single family; and all newly constructed are primary homes; 1 newly constructed every 2 years
4. No new mobile homes, 2-family, 3-family, multi-family
5. 1 new mixed use primarily residential every 2 years
6. No significant new construction for business

Scenario #2: “Hotter” market, but some guided toward desired land use pattern

1. Cluster 1/3 of new primary homes [60], each on own .75 acre lot, and shift 20 S/F primary homes to a Village or Neighborhood Center, each on own .5 acre lot.
 - Reduces newly owned acres by 106
 - Reduces “developed looking” acres by 42
2. Cluster or shared driveway 1/3 [8] of new second homes, each on own 2 acre lot
3. Add 60 bedrooms in Village or Neighborhood Center, in 10 two-family, 2 three-family, & 1 four-family
4. Add 5 new businesses, each on 1.5 acre lot, averaging 1,500 s.f. floor space

Comparison of Fiscal and Landscape Impacts of Alternative Scenarios						
Scenario 1: Continue current course				Scenario 1A: "Hotter Market"		Scenario 2: Hotter but Guided
	Current	New	% change	New	% change	New
Residential						
New housing units	1,512	196	13.0%	235	15.5%	265
Residential valuation primary homes	383,990,696	48,928,500	12.7%	54,741,000	14.3%	56,954,900
Personal property val [2nd homes]	2,892,169	217,320	7.5%	271,650	9.4%	271,650
Real estate & pers prop revenue	4,673,545	593,682	12.7%	664,553	14.2%	691,297
Excise taxes	302,400	39,200	13.0%	47,000	15.5%	53,000
Number students	525	79	15.1%	95	18.1%	103
Per pupil costs @ 9602 [FY04]	5,041,050	762,207	15.1%	913,870	18.1%	989,006
Other Town operating costs	1,307,880	169,540	13.0%	203,275	15.5%	229,225
Net fiscal impact	6,486,533	-298,865	-4.6%	-405,593	-6.3%	-473,934
Acres new ownership [new residential parcels]	6,895	559	8.1%	681	9.9%	696
Acres looking "developed" [what people will see]	1,879	254	13.5%	306	16.3%	321
Water consumption in gallons/day	467,789	61,380	13.1%	62,865	13.4%	69,465
Septic output	421,010	55,250	13.1%	56,579	13.4%	62,519
Business						
Parcels in business use	184					5
Commercial & Industrial real property valuation	46,523,761	Assumes little impact on "the numbers" for business base		Still little impact on business tax base		2,000,000
Commercial & Industrial personal property valuation	7,966,670					0
Real Estate & personal prop tax revenue	658,244					216,485
Excise taxes	107,060					26,775
Town service costs other than education	192,559					2,910
Net fiscal impact	572,746					5,235
Acres in [new] commercial & industrial parcels	890					24,450
Acres that look "developed" for commercial & industrial	890					7.5
Water consumption in gallons per day	*					7.5
Septic output in gallons per day	*					112
						101

* = data not available

Implications of the Alternative Scenarios

Many assumptions go into each of the numbers on which projections are based. Over time Sheffield may gather more refined data and be able to insert better, updated numbers. Still, the patterns of fiscal, landscape, and community impact will remain the same:

- Second homes will have higher valuation and fewer school children than primary homes.
- Smaller homes with fewer bedrooms will have fewer school children than the typical single-family home.
- Sheffield is unlikely to see enough expansion of business real estate valuations to have a large impact on the tax base.
- The landscape impact of development [where it is and what it looks like], and its impact on community life [shifting from a small town to a wealthy resort suburb] will change the character of the community more than the actual number of new buildings.

5. Conceptual Land Use Plan: Guiding Growth and Changes To Where They Fit Best

The town-wide *Enhanced Buildout* map presented earlier in this section gives the most accurate picture that available information can paint regarding where the land can best sustain new construction. This map indicates that the community's desire to focus new homes, businesses, and civic activities in village centers is a logical concept that correlates with Sheffield's New England base of soils, water resources, and topography.

The southeast corner of town contains a concentration of relatively flat, dry, buildable lands. At the same time, though, townspeople are used to thinking of Sheffield Center as the principal village center in town. How much potential does the Center have to accommodate additional development?

The following two maps are based upon the town-wide *Enhanced Buildout Map*, and take a closer look at Sheffield Center and the Ashley Falls/Clayton Neighborhood areas from the perspective of what's there now, and what remaining development capacity each area may have. Participants in both the June 10, 2004, workshop of Town officials and other Community leaders, and the June 18, 2004 community-wide meeting agreed that:

1. There appears to be potential for careful infill and expansion in these two key parts of town.
2. The next step is for residents, property owners, and business owners to be involved creating detailed Village Center and Neighborhood plans.
3. There will be the need for investment in services & amenities in order to sustain future development in these important parts of Sheffield.

► *Please see Map # 18:*
‘Town of Sheffield
Sheffield Center Area Buildable Land’,
Map # 19:
‘Town of Sheffield
Clayton Area Buildable Land’
and
Map # 21:
‘Town of Sheffield
Conceptual Land Use’
behind the MAPS tab.

The *Conceptual Land Use Plan* (Map #21) shows on a map how the community’s vision of Sheffield’s future will rest on the landscape. There are many studies, much careful consideration and planning, and difficult challenges lying ahead on the way to achieving this vision. Nevertheless more than 120 townspeople at the June 18, 2004, community-wide session unanimously endorsed this conceptual plan as heading in the right direction for Sheffield.

Land Use Action Plan

Overall Goal

Sheffield absorbs new development in a manner that maintains the traditional New England pattern of vibrant village centers surrounded by scenic, sustainable rural resource areas.

Land Use Objectives

1. Foster vibrant village centers and neighborhoods with careful infill and contained expansion.
2. Ensure that when development occurs in agricultural and natural resource areas it is in ways that are least intrusive and avoid the most sensitive and valuable resources.
3. Greet motorists along Routes 7, 7A, and 41 with scenic views and carefully sited development.
4. Maintain the scenic appearance of ridgelines and upper slopes.

Recommendation 1: Work with residents, business owners and other property owners in Sheffield Center and in the Ashley Falls area to draft Village Center Plans that:

- a. Foster a vibrant mix of residential, business & civic uses.
- b. Seek thoughtful infill and limited expansion for desired housing options, retail and services.
- c. Evaluates water, sewer and other improvements needed to support desired village character and density.

Recommendation 2: Work with residents and property owners in the Clayton area to draft a Neighborhood Enhancement plan that:

- a. Foster a vibrant mix of residential & civic uses.

- b. Seek thoughtful infill and limited expansion for desired housing options.
- c. Evaluates water, sewer and other improvements needed to support desired neighborhood character and density.

Recommendation 3: Consulting with residents and property owners, agree on and carry out a coordinated set of voluntary, administrative and regulatory strategies for agricultural and natural resource areas that:

- a. Protect all natural resources.
- b. Minimize loss of farmland and orchards and encourage family farms.
- c. Minimize fragmentation of wildlife habitat.
- d. Absorb new homes in ways that have minimal impacts.
- e. Continue tradition of home-based business with little impact on neighbors & natural resources.
- f. Encourage preservation/reuse of historic structures.

Recommendation 4: Begin community-wide consideration of potential regulations that would:

- a. Avoid construction along ridges.
- b. Minimize clearing of trees and vegetation on upper slopes.

Recommendation 5: Working with residents, business owners and property owners, consider a coordinated set of voluntary and regulatory strategies along the Routes 7 and 7A Corridor that:

- a. Group roadside businesses to maintain scenic views between them.

- b. Apply site plan standards for attractive development and minimize curb cuts.
- c. Implement 'traffic calming' measures in Village Centers to slow traffic.
- d. Encourage motorists to stop and visit business and cultural offerings.

Recommendation 6: Working with residents, business owners and property owners, consider a coordinated set of voluntary and regulatory strategies along Route 41 that:

- a. Maintain rural and roadside character.
- b. Minimize impact of development on natural and scenic resources.

9. COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

1. Introduction

The Community Action Plan, in the original Master Plan draft, presented a summary of all recommendations put forth in that document. Since those recommendations have already been presented in their respective sections, they are not presented again.

The booklet, *The Town Master Plan, Summary of Recommendations*, which contains all the recommendations found in the Town Master Plan, is presented in the front of the Master Plan. This document was published after the Town of Sheffield Planning Board finished its review, revisions and adoption of the Town Master Plan in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws.

The following two sections are from *The Town Master Plan, Summary of Recommendations*.

2. A Community-Wide Effort

Over the past three years many townspeople have given their time, talents and energy to develop the Master Plan. They include those who worked on the Master Plan Steering Committee and many subcommittees, the Board of Selectmen, Planning Board members, and all who attended public forums, took a survey and/or provided comments and encouragement. For a partial listing of these neighbors and townspeople, please see pages i - iii in the Master Plan.

During these past few years this community-wide effort has:

- Established a common base of detailed information about Ashley Falls and Sheffield for the years 2000 – 2002, from which updated information may be derived.
- Documented a broad level of agreement regarding what we want for our community's future.
- Outlined clear policies and specific steps to move Ashley Falls and Sheffield in the directions their townspeople desire.

3. Moving Forward with Master Plan Implementation

(Note: This section replaces “Next Steps to Maintain Momentum” in the draft Master Plan.)

Now that the Planning Board has completed its review and revision of the draft Master Plan and formally adopted a Town Master Plan, the town is ready to begin implementing its recommendations.

Because many Master Plan recommendations require the support of town government, primarily the Board of Selectmen, the Planning Board or the Zoning Board of Appeals, the implementation

group is called the Master Plan Implementation Advisory Committee. It is hoped that this committee, and the subcommittees that focus on specific recommendations, will embody the talent, energy and imagination of a rich cross section of our town's population.

Implementing the Master Plan's recommendations is a long-term endeavor. Some Master Plan recommendations have been accomplished while others will require citizen review, voter approval and / or coordination across town organizations. Some recommendations may be implemented through private sector resources. Others will benefit from a partnership between the private and public sectors.

The Master Plan Implementation Advisory Committee, working closely with town boards, will prioritize the Master Plan recommendations. The Master Plan Implementation Advisory Committee will report to the townspeople on a regular basis.

The Planning Board, because of its special statutory responsibilities for long term planning, will be actively involved with the Master Plan Implementation Advisory Committee, as will the Board of Selectmen. The implementation of the Master Plan is an important responsibility of our town's government.

The Master Plan Implementation Advisory Committee needs town's people who will give time, talent and energy to realize the plan's recommendations. Some aspects will not be easy. But the Master Plan and its vision of Ashley Falls and Sheffield's future will become a reality with each recommendation's implementation. Each person has a role to play in shaping our town's future.

10. Revisions Made to the Draft Master Plan by the Town of Sheffield Planning Board During its Acceptance Process

1. Introduction

The Planning Board used the draft Master Plan dated June 25, 2004 during its review and adoption process. The revisions made by the Planning Board during this process are noted in this section. In presenting these adopted revisions, the text from the draft Master Plan dated June 25, 2004 will be presented first followed by the adopted text as it appears in the Master Plan.

Unless noted, all other text in the draft Master Plan, including that in all sections and all the text following the recommendations, as well as content of all the Appendices, were not reviewed by the Planning Board.

Following its review and adoption, The Master Plan document was reformatted by the Planning Board to:

- 1) provide uniform presentation and enhanced readability.
- 2) avoid spreading a table over two pages, where possible.
- 3) increase the font size used in the tables.
- 4) reference maps in the body of the text.

The text of Section 9, which had listed all the recommendations previously discussed in the sections, was replaced with the *Town Master Plan, Summary of Recommendations* document, previously published by the Planning Board. It is hoped that these changes make the Master Plan easier to read and therefore more usable.

2. Revisions

Section 1. A Vision For Sheffield

- Introductory paragraph: In the 1st sentence, “many months of work” was replaced with “two years of work”. In the 2nd sentence, “blueprint” was replaced with “guide”. In the 3rd sentence, the first word “while” was deleted and the 3rd sentence begun with the word “unplanned”; the word “that” was removed and the sentence ended with the word “live”. The 4th sentence was begun with “Coordinated” and “aspects” was changed to “qualities”.
- In 1. The Vision: In the 2nd paragraph, last sentence: the phrase “does not want to see itself turning into” was replaced with “does not want to become”. In the 4th paragraph, 7th bullet, the phrase “affordable to local members of the community” was changed to “affordable to all members of the local community.”

- In 2. How the plan was developed: 3rd paragraph, 1st sentence, the word “basis” was change to “guide”.

Section 2. Who We Are & How We Live: Demographic Trends & Housing Conditions. Housing Action Plan

1. Housing Goals

- Word “goals” revised to “OBJECTIVES”.
- Goal # 1: “To ensure that residential development benefits the entire community and maintains the open space, farmland and scenic vistas and other elements of small town and rural character to the maximum extent possible” was deleted as it was a reiteration of the Overall Goal for Housing.
- Goal # 2, which became the first objective: “To encourage the reuse of existing structures and infill development wherever possible to meet all general and affordable housing needs” listed as the first “Objective” and revised to “Encourage the reuse of existing structures and infill development wherever possible to meet all general, senior, workforce and affordable housing needs.”
- Goal # 3, which became the second objective: “To encourage the development of small-scale and scattered site, low and moderate-income housing as needed by the current residents” was revised to drop the word “to” and begin with “Encourage”.
- Goal # 4, which became the third objective: “To develop partnerships with local and regional housing organizations to assist in providing more affordable housing in town” was revised to drop the word “to” and begin with “Develop”.
- Goal # 5, which became the fourth objective: “To provide incentives through land use regulations to expand affordable housing opportunities for all ages and appropriate income levels in South County” was revised to “Provide incentives through land use regulations to expand affordable housing opportunities.”
- A fifth objective was added: “Develop a definitive plan to achieve the goal of 10% for low and moderate income housing as outlined in Chapter 40B.”

2. Housing Recommendations

- Recommendation 1: “Create appropriate organizations for the promotion, ownership or management of affordable housing opportunities in Sheffield” was revised to delete the words “appropriate” and “opportunities”.
 - Sub-recommendation b.: “Evaluate, work with and/or incorporate housing ownership and management entities” was revised to “Establish housing ownership and management entities. ”
 - Sub-recommendation e.: “Seek Technical Assistance” was revised to “Create a database of regional, state and federal housing information.”
- Recommendation 2: “Carry out a plan to convert existing housing units to affordable housing units” was revised to “Consider converting existing housing units to affordable housing units.”
 - Sub-recommendation a.: “Identify Lower Value Properties for Affordable Housing Opportunities” was revised to “Identify properties for affordable housing opportunities.”
 - Sub-recommendation b.: “Establish an Accessory Apartment Amnesty Program”; “Establish” was revised to “Evaluate”.
 - Sub-recommendation c.: “Establish a Tax forgiveness Affordable Housing Plan” was deleted.
 - Sub-recommendation d.: “Provide for Land Swaps as an incentive for affordable housing” was renumbered to c. and revised to “Explore land swaps as an option for affordable housing.”
- Recommendation 3: Identify appropriate areas of Sheffield for new housing.
 - Sub-recommendation e.: “Encourage the community to exercise its ‘Right of First Refusal ’” was revised to “Encourage the town, with the community assistance, to exercise its ‘Right of First Refusal’ for properties that are good candidates for its Housing Plan unless it is more appropriate for the property to remain in its farm, forest, recreation or wildlife habitat condition.”
- Recommendation 4: “Provide for expansion and enhancement of well-established neighborhoods with development that incorporates the characteristics of traditional New England village design” was revised to “Expand and enhance established neighborhoods with development that incorporates the characteristics of traditional New England village design.”
 - Sub-recommendation e.: “Use cost-effective site development and construction practices” was revised to “Use quality site development and construction practices.”

- Sub-recommendation f.: “Consider providing guidelines, patterning and incentive to follow them” was revised to “Consider providing guidelines and patterning with incentives to follow them.”
- Recommendation 5: “Prepare zoning, subdivision and building code revisions to improve overall residential quality and opportunities for all income groups and promote Smart Growth principles” was revised to “Prepare zoning, subdivision and building code revisions to improve residential quality for all income groups and to promote Smart Growth principles.”
 - Sub-recommendation d.: “Provide for the careful conversion of larger homes to multifamily housing” was revised to “Consider the careful conversion of larger homes to multifamily housing.”
 - Sub-recommendation i. was added: “Consider alternative housing accommodations for the elderly.”
- Recommendation 6: “Utilize innovative public and private funding as well as technical assistance programs to maintain and produce additional affordable housing opportunities.” was revised to replace “as well as” with “and”.
 - Sub-recommendation d.: “Private Funding Opportunity” was revised to “Private funding opportunities.”
- Recommendation 7: “Take steps (including the preparation of revisions and amendments to existing Zoning Bylaws, Subdivision Regulations and Building Codes) to ensure that all residential development takes place within a framework that protects the rural integrity and small town character of Sheffield in keeping with Smart Growth principles” was revised to delete “in keeping with Smart Growth principles”.
 - Sub-recommendation d.: “Consider new bylaws and amending existing ones to allow for residential development in rural areas that is not visible from roads” was deleted.
 - Sub-recommendation e.: “Promote and provide incentives for common driveways” was renumbered to d. and revised to “Encourage the use of common driveways where appropriate.”
 - Sub-recommendation f.: “Encourage maintenance of existing trees and planting of new ones in areas of new residential development.” was renumbered to e. and revised to “Encourage maintenance of existing trees and planting of new ones, especially in areas of new residential development.”

Section 3. Economic Development: Economic Development Action Plan

1. Overall Goal for Economic Development

- An overall goal was added: “To identify economic growth opportunities in keeping with community character and quality of life in Sheffield.”

2. Economic Development Objectives

- The three bullets listed under “Overall Economic Goal” were placed under “OBJECTIVES”.
- Goal # 1, which became the first objective: “Ensure that the Sheffield Community has a strong involvement and stake in the process and feels an ownership of the program” was revised to “Ensure that the community and town boards are involved in the economic development process.”
- Goal # 2, which became the second objective: “Guide economic development toward targeted locations throughout the community where it is most appropriate and desired” and revised to “Guide economic development toward targeted locations where it is most appropriate and desired.”
- Goal # 3, which became the third objective: “Create a cooperative partnership between the public sector and business communities” was revised to “Foster cooperation between the public sector and business communities.”

3. Economic Development Recommendations

- The heading “General Recommendations” was revised to “Economic Development Recommendations”.
- As the majority of the recommendations were in long sentences, the Planning Board’s revisions presented recommendations to captured the essence of the draft text.
- Recommendation 1: “Provide Business Representation and Strengthen Sheffield’s Business Community” was revised “Establish an advocacy group for Sheffield’s business community.”
 - Sub-recommendation a.: “Promote Sheffield’s businesses” was revised to “Promote Sheffield and Ashley Falls businesses. ”
 - Sub-recommendation b.: “Assist businesses in understanding and complying with town regulations” was revised to replace “in understanding and complying” with “to understand and comply.”
 - Sub-recommendation d.: “Create a forum for the sharing of ideas, resources, and the development of cooperative programs, e.g. Sheffield agricultural forums, arts and crafts groups, and visitor programs” was revised to “Create a forum for businesses to share ideas and resources and develop cooperative programs.”
 - Sub-recommendation e.: “Support interaction between local youth and the business community, especially for mentoring and training (i.e., The rival of the Building

Structures Program at Mt. Everett)” was revised to “Support interaction between local youths and the business community, especially for mentoring, training and employment.”

- Recommendation 2:
 - Sub-recommendation a.: “Within 2 years gain funding and hire a consultant to work with residents, business owners, and property owners to review and enhance the existing plan for Sheffield Center, create an updated Ashley Falls Village Center Plan, and create a Neighborhood Enhancement Plan for the Clayton area. Consider and advocate use of TIP [regional transportation improvement program] funds for desired improvements” was revised to “With residents, business owners and property owners review and enhance the existing plan for Sheffield Center; evaluate an updated Ashley Falls village Center Plan and a Neighborhood Enhancement Plan for the Clayton Area.”
 - Sub-recommendation b.: “Maintain a “Historical New England Town” aesthetic, by encouraging this look in the signage, landscaping, and architecture and create a beautification committee” was revised to “Encourage a ‘Historic New England Town’ aesthetic in architecture, landscaping and signage.”
 - Sub-recommendation c.: “Improve traffic flow and parking and slow traffic speed through town (Lane designations and narrowing, signage, landscaping and other traffic calming measures along Main St.)” was revised to “Create a plan to improve traffic flow and parking on Main Street.”
 - Sub-recommendation d.: “Create a better space for gatherings, recreation and walking through redesign of existing town green” was revised to “Redesign the town green to improve spaces for gatherings, recreations and walking.”
 - Sub-recommendation e.: “Provide more opportunities for residents and visitors to “buy locally” by developing businesses such as a small pharmacy; a copy center; an arts and crafts center; additional restaurant/coffee shop facilities; “Made in Sheffield” shelves/sections in local stores; etc.” was revised to “Promote the sale and consumption of locally produced or grown products in local stores.”
 - Sub-recommendation f.: “Increase communications with a town bulletin board, brochure kiosk and website” was revised to “Create a town bulleting board, brochure and website.”
 - Sub-recommendation g.: “Explore sewer or package treatment system options that might reduce the cost of some establishments such as restaurants” was revised to “Explore alternative sewage treatment systems.”
 - A new sub-recommendation was added: “h. Create a beautification committee”.
- Recommendation 3: “Support Cottage Industries” was revised to “Support local industries.”

- Sub-recommendation a.: “Within 5 years resolve conflicts surrounding adjoining business and residential uses, through development of guidelines, for example relating to noise levels, traffic, smells, hours of operation, etc.) Who: Planning Board” and sub-recommendation c. “Provide incubator and mentoring services to assist home-based and cottage industries and other small businesses with technical and marketing expertise” were revised and combined into sub-recommendation b. “Support home based businesses, which are appropriate to their neighborhoods by providing incubator and mentoring services.”
- Sub-recommendation b.: “Also, continue with the traditions that have built Sheffield by encouraging and supporting home-based businesses (such as arts and crafts, agricultural products, eco-tourism, and more) that are in keeping with the character of the neighborhoods in which they operate” was renumbered sub-recommendation a and revised to: to “Redefine by-laws to govern business in residential neighborhoods.”
- Sub-recommendation d.: “Promote a “Sheffield” brand and establish a centralized, year-round agricultural and crafts market for such locally made products. This could start out as requesting shelf space in existing stores, and expand to establishing its own retail and wholesale business to market these products” was renumbered, revised and split into two sub-recommendations:
 - Sub-recommendation “c. Promote a ‘Sheffield’ brand.”
 - Sub-recommendation “d. Establish a centralized, year-round agricultural and crafts market for local products.”
- Sub-recommendation e.: “Support, without devaluing abutting properties, cottage industry, by creating suitable guidelines.” was revised to “Support, without devaluing abutting properties, cottage industries by creating suitable guidelines.”
- Recommendation 4: “Support Agriculture and Forestry Industries” was revised to “Support agriculture and forestry.”
 - Sub-recommendation a.: “Support and nurture the agricultural and forestry businesses that Sheffield is known for and which in turn support related businesses and the tourism economy through maintaining the landscape.” was deleted.
 - Sub-recommendation b.: “Encourage the development of businesses which process, market and distribute local agricultural products” was renumbered to sub-recommendation a. and revised to “Encourage the development of businesses which process, market and distribute local agricultural or forestry products.”
 - Sub-recommendation c.: “In marketing, promote the branding and purchase of Sheffield products” was renumbered to sub-recommendation b. and revised to “Promote the ‘branding’ and purchasing of such products.”

- Sub-recommendation d.: “Encourage technical training and education supporting the use of conventional best management practices and organic farming methods” was renumbered sub-recommendation c. and revised to “Support best management practices, organic farming and environmentally sensitive forestry methods through technical training and education.”
- Sub-recommendation e.: “Encourage Chapter 61A and 61 and 61B designation for agriculture and conservation to secure the land base needed by these industries, and encourage the town to exercise its option on Chapter lands to ensure they remain in agricultural hands and current use” was revised, renumbered and divided into two sub-recommendations:
 - Sub-recommendation d. and revised to “Encourage the use of Chapter 61, 61A and 61B designations.”
 - Sub-recommendation e. and revised to “Encourage the town to exercise its options on Chapter land.”
- Sub-recommendation f.: “Encourage “right to farm” laws and provide flexibility in signage requirements, especially through the growing season” was revised to “Encourage ‘Right to Farm’ by-laws, including seasonal signage.”
- Sub-recommendation g.: “Explore getting the state to waive or reduce taxes on animals and farm equipment for active farmers” was revised to “Explore state tax relief on farm animals and equipment.”
- Recommendation 5:
 - Sub-recommendation a.: “Within 2 years develop a campaign to welcome tourism and develop Visitors’ Center; through a collaboration between private and public entities, for example B&Bs, Chamber of Commerce, Conservation Organizations, Antiques Shops” was revised to “Develop a campaign to attract and welcome tourists.”
 - Sub-recommendation b.: “Provide visitor services in the town center including bathroom and telephone facilities, maps and brochures of Sheffield businesses” was revised to end with the word “brochures”; the phrase “ of Sheffield businesses” was deleted.
 - Sub-recommendation c.: “As mentioned in previous sections, building a town identity, developing and offering “Sheffield” brand products, providing business support services etc., will all help with these efforts” was deleted.
 - Sub-recommendation d.: “Enhance access to and promotion of recreational facilities with improved signage, and parking areas for hiking trails, and upgrading canoe launches to the Housatonic River; and ensure that the scenic rural landscape and

character of the town is maintained. Such improvements might be funded by grants under the proposed Upper Housatonic National Heritage Area, by Community Preservation Act funds or by the special aforementioned transfer tax)” was renumbered “c.” and revised to “Enhance access to and promotion of recreational facilities with improved signs, parking areas for hiking trails and upgraded canoe launches to the Housatonic River.”

- Sub-recommendation e.: “Explore additional public and private funding mechanisms” was renumbered “d.” and revised to “Explore public and private funding to achieve these objectives.”
- Recommendation 6: “Update Zoning and Bylaws” was revised to “Review all By-Laws.”
 - Sub-recommendation a.: “Hire an outside specialist to work with the Select Board, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals and the community to review and update Sheffield’s zoning guidelines to ensure that the bylaws are consistent, supportive of the town’s goals, and not favoring any particular sub-groups” was revised to “Hire an outside specialist to review and update Sheffield’s zoning and town by-laws to ensure they are consistent and supportive of town goals.”
 - Sub-recommendation b.: “Examine and update bylaws for all of the current districts for consistency with the findings, goals, and objectives of the Town Master Plan” was revised to “Examine and update by-laws for consistency with the findings, goals and objectives of the Master Plan.”
 - Sub-recommendation c.: “Poll the town as to its desire to create a separate Residential District or consider areas within the Rural District with more parameters to limit conflicts between residential uses and business uses. Currently, the Rural District permits retail businesses, public utility facilities, country clubs, commercial kennels, commercial greenhouses, commercial radio and television towers, nursing and related facilities. (In some ways, it is easier to establish a business in the Rural District than in the Commercial and General Business District. The Rural District has had more business growth than any other area.)” was revised to “Evaluate separate residential districts within the current rural district.”
- Recommendation 7: “Update Business Park Criteria” was revised to “Review Business Park criteria.”
 - Sub-recommendation a.: “Update and revise the criteria used to consider and accept tenants for the Business Park, to bring in jobs and tax revenues while controlling strip development. Changes in the business and economic climate since the Business Park was created nearly 10 years ago have made the initial criteria out-dated. For example, the 4 acre minimum lot size limits small business use of the Business Park” was revised to “Review criteria to consider and accept tenants for the Business Park.”

- Sub-recommendation b.: “Consider developing the Business Park around agriculture-related activities to promote locally produced farm products and tie into regional initiatives” was revised to “Consider local and regional agriculturally related activities.”
- Sub-recommendation c.: “Consider broadening the scope of the type of businesses that would be allowed to purchase space” was revised to “Consider broadening the type of businesses that would be allowed to purchase space.”
- Sub-recommendation d.: “Consider allowing a developer to own, build and manage appropriate spaces and rent to smaller businesses and cottage industries” was revised to “Consider allowing a developer to own, build and manage appropriate spaces and rent to smaller businesses.”
- Sub-recommendation e.: “Explore alternative uses for the Business Park” was deleted, as it was redundant.
- Recommendation 8:
 - Sub-recommendation a.: “Vigorously pursue high speed internet and cellular telephone access, perhaps by creating an ad hoc committee for this purpose” was revised to “Pursue high-speed Internet and cellular telephone access.”
 - Sub-recommendation b.: “Conduct an energy audit for the Town of Sheffield, businesses, and individual households, to identify ways of reducing energy use and related costs. In some cases this type of audit can be funded through grants” was revised to “Investigate ways to reduce energy use throughout the town.”
 - Sub-recommendation c.: “Investigate securing funding to bury power and telephone lines” was revised to “Investigate funding to bury power and telephone lines.”
 - A new sub-recommendation was added: “d. Investigate alternative energy sources for private or public use.”

Section 4. Natural Resources, Open Space, Recreation & Agricultural Resources (NORA)

1. Overall Goal for NORA

- The overall goal was revised from “Maintain Sheffield’s rural character, an essential part of Sheffield’s identity, and preserve, promote and enhance the Town’s recreational resources” to “Maintain Sheffield’s rural character and unspoiled natural and agricultural resources and preserve, promote and enhance the town’s recreational resources.”

2. The title “Keys to Maintaining Sheffield’s Rural Character” was revised to “Key Aspects of Sheffield’s Rural Character”; “#1.Open fields and farmed fields” revised to “Open fields”; “#2. Woodlands uninterrupted by structures” revised to “Farmed fields”; #3. Clear (undeveloped) wooded ridge lines and mountain sides” revised to “Uninterrupted woodlands”; “#6. Encourage careful site design to preserve rural character” revised to “Careful site design” and “Nature preserves” was added.

3. NORA Recommendations

- Recommendation 1: “Protect significant Open Spaces from adverse development” was revised to “Protect significant areas from adverse development.”
 - Sub-recommendation a.: “Through the coordination of organizations such as Sheffield Land Trust, The Nature Conservancy, The Trustees of the Reservation and town government, prioritize areas for preservation ” was added.
 - Sub-recommendation a.: “Work with landowners to secure conservation restrictions on significant lands, particularly along river, wildlife and ridgeline corridors” was renumbered to sub-recommendation b. and revised to “Encourage land owners to secure conservation restrictions on significant lands, along rivers and wildlife or ridgeline corridors.”
 - Sub-recommendation b.: “Encourage the placement of land under the Chapter 61, 61A and 61B current use programs and the use of Agricultural Preservation Restrictions” was renumbered to sub-recommendation c. and revised to “Encourage the use of Chapter 61, 61A and 61B programs and agriculture preservation restrictions.”
 - Sub-recommendation c.: “Encourage smart growth (i.e. site sensitive development, clustering, etc.) in harmony with rural character through amendments to the zoning bylaws” was renumbered to sub-recommendation d. and revised to “Encourage ‘Smart Growth’ by considering amendments to the zoning by-laws.”
 - Sub-recommendation d.: “Work with private conservation organizations to supplement efforts of local government in managing and acquiring open space” was renumbered to sub-recommendation d. and revised to “Partner with conservation organizations to supplement local efforts to protect, manage or acquire priority or other significant areas for preservation.”
- Recommendation 2: “Protect Significant Agricultural Lands” revised to “Protect agricultural and forest lands.”

- Sub-recommendation a.: “Encourage, educate and promote participation in Chapter 61A current use tax program and town’s exercising or assigning of its right of first refusal under these programs ” was revised, renumbered and divided into two sub-recommendations:
 - Sub-recommendation a. “Encourage, educate and promote participation in Chapter 61, 61A and 61B programs.”
 - Sub-recommendation e. “Encourage the town to exercise or assign its right of first refusal under these programs.”
- Sub-recommendation b. was unchanged but renumbered to be sub-recommendation c.
- Sub-recommendation c.: “Encourage, educate and promote the use of Agricultural Restrictions” was renumbered to sub-recommendation d. and revised to “ Promote the use of agricultural restrictions.”
- Sub-recommendation d.: “Encourage, educate and promote the principles of ‘Smart Growth’ ” was renumbered to sub-recommendation e. and revised to “Promote the principles of ‘Smart Growth’.”
- Sub-recommendation e.: “Encourage, educate and promote agriculture and inform town boards and property owners.” was combined with Sub-recommendation f.: “Encourage, educate and promote open and informed dialogue on the economic facts regarding open space” and renumber sub-recommendation f. and revised to “ Promote through the education of Town Boards and property owners the value of agriculture and open space to the town.”
- Recommendation 3: “Improve management, conservation and use of existing public open spaces, recreational facilities and natural resources and promote and expand recreational opportunities and facilities, especially on Town lands” was revised to “Promote and expand recreational opportunities, management and facilities, especially on town lands and other public ‘open spaces’.”
 - Sub-recommendation b.: “Inter-Board Policy” was revised to “Establish inter-board policies.”
 - Sub-recommendation c.: “Expand Volunteer Assistance” was revised to “Encourage volunteer assistance.”
 - Sub-recommendation g.: “Sheffield Recreation Handbook” was revised to “Consider producing a Sheffield Recreation Handbook.”
 - Sub-recommendation h.: “Develop a Public Swimming Area(s)” was revised to “Evaluate a public swimming area(s).”
 - Sub-recommendation i.: “Develop Canoe Launch Sites” was revised to “Evaluate canoe launch sites to include parking and coordinate regional river access points.”

- Recommendation 4: “Enhance and promote the use of alternative transportation modes in the community that complement natural and cultural resource protection.” was deleted as covered in 5. Transportation and Circulation and address in other recommendations in NORA. Recommendation 5: “Maintain, enhance and preserve local, state and federal scenic roads, both paved and unpaved” was renumbered Recommendation 4. and revised to “Maintain, enhance and preserve scenic roads, both paved and unpaved.”
 - Sub-recommendation a.: “Consider design standards for reconstruction of public ways that complement the surrounding rural character (see Transportation Section and Action Plan for details)” was revised to end after the word “character.”
 - A new sub-recommendation was added by the Planning Board: “sub-recommendation b.: Minimize detrimental impacts of public works projects.”
 - Sub-recommendation b.: “Consider designating as scenic roads, streets or portions thereof identified in section 2.3 and elsewhere, as well as seeking recommendations from the community” was renumbered sub-recommendation c. and revised to “Consider designating scenic roads.”
 - Sub-recommendation c.: “Minimize street signage that distracts from the aesthetics that a scenic road designation is intended to secure” was renumbered sub-recommendation d. and revised to “Minimize street signs that detract from scenic roads.”
 - Sub-recommendation d.: “The Town could inventory and maintain its heritage trees, replace those lost with appropriate native species, and support new trees along public ways, particularly in the village centers. Partnering with groups like the Sheffield Tree Project can help increase the resources available to the town” was revised, renumbered and divided into two sub-recommendations:
 - Sub-recommendation e. “Work with local tree groups to inventory, maintain and replace Sheffield’s heritage trees.”
 - Sub-recommendation f. “Work with Berkshire Bike Path council on routes and designations” was added based on sub-recommendation a in recommendation 4 of the master plan draft.
- Recommendation 6 “Protect Ecological Resources” was renumbered to Recommendation 5.
 - Sub-recommendation a.: “Ensure adequate protection of aquifers is provided in local bylaws” was revised to “Ensure by-laws protect town aquifers.”

- Sub-recommendation c.: “Critical Habitat Areas” was revised to “Protect critical habitat areas in land use change decisions.”
- Recommendation 7 was renumbered to recommendation 6.
 - Sub-recommendation a.: “A Scenic Mountain Act Committee could be formed to help the Conservation Commission review language and parameters from other communities toward Sheffield’s defining and enacting its own” was revised to “Update the Scenic Mountain Act process begun in 1975.”
 - Sub-recommendation b.: “Landowners might be encouraged to enroll in Chapter 61 Forestry and 61B Wildlife and Recreation current use assessment programs to help minimize the need and likelihood of conversion of this land” was revised to “Encourage landowners to enroll in the Chapter 61, 61A and 61B programs to help minimize the need and likelihood of conversion of this land.”
 - Sub-recommendation c.: “The Commission and Committee could work with local conservation organizations to compile a list of priority sites for which conservation restrictions might be procured from landowners” was revised to “Work with local conservation organizations to identify priority sites for conservation.”
- Recommendation 8: “Adopt the Community Preservation Act or create a similar mechanism to provide an ongoing source of funds to help implement community preservation and many of the recommendations in this section” was renumbered recommendation 7. and revised to “Adopt the Community Preservation Act or create a similar mechanism to provide an ongoing source of funds to help implement recommendations in NORA.”

Section 4. Cultural & Historic Resources

1. Overall Goal for Cultural & Historic Resources

- The overall goal was revised from “To enhance and preserve the historic resources and landscape essential to Sheffield’s character and economy and develop Sheffield as a cultural center and to raise visitor’s and the community’s awareness of these resources” to “Enhance and preserve the historic resources and landscape essential to Sheffield’s character and economy. Develop Sheffield as a cultural center, raising visitors’ and community awareness of these resources.”

2. There were no objectives listed for Cultural & Historic Resources. The draft Master Plan moved from Overall Goal to Recommendations.

3. Cultural & Historic Resources Recommendations

- Recommendation 1:
 - Sub-recommendation a.: “Obtain technical assistance to inventory and catalog Sheffield’s Heritage Landscapes and establish priorities for preservation of historical homes, landscapes and sites” was revised to “Inventory and catalog Sheffield’s Heritage Landscapes and establish priorities for preservation of historical homes, landscapes and sites.”
 - Sub-recommendation b.: “Establish an historic / architectural signage program, wherever appropriate, to identify historic resources and create an historic / architectural "trail" that enhances connections between historic/architectural places and settings through out the township.” was revised to “Establish a historic / architectural sign program to identify historic resources and create a historic / architectural "trail" that enhances connections between historic/architectural places and settings throughout the township.”
 - Sub-recommendation c.: “Establish an historic / architectural ‘walking tour’ in the town center” was revised to “Establish a historic / architectural ‘walking tour’ in the town centers.”
 - Sub-recommendation d.: “Enhance the covered bridge experience by connecting it to the town, beautifying the picnic area and improving the river access” was revised to “Enhance the covered bridge experience by connecting it to the town, beautifying the picnic area and improving river access.”
 - Sub-recommendation g.: “Secure wherever possible public access to scenic areas and historic sites. Landowners could be encouraged to place conservation or historic restrictions or easements on portions of their land or buildings and access to historic sites or places of interest could be sought. The town could explore a program to secure funding to purchase such rights and access” was revised to “Secure wherever possible, public access to scenic areas and historic sites.”
 - Sub-recommendation h.: “Work with local schools to increase awareness of these resources” was revised to “Work with local schools to increase awareness of scenic areas and historic resources.”
 - Sub-recommendation i.: “Consider creating a brochure of historic and cultural attractions for use locally and for visitors, perhaps include additional amenities such as restaurants, B&Bs, stores and other service establishments as well as natural and recreational attractions” was revised to “Consider creating a brochure of historic and cultural attractions for use locally and for visitors.”
 - Sub-recommendation j.: “Work with Sheffield’s cultural groups to promote Sheffield as a cultural destination, perhaps linking with B&Bs and other service establishments” was revised to “Work with Sheffield’s cultural groups to promote Sheffield as a cultural destination.”

- The Planning Board added Sub-recommendation l.: “Consider establishing a Historic District for the Sheffield Village Center and Sheffield Plain areas.”
- Recommendation 2.
 - Sub-recommendation a.: “Continue to seek historical preservation grants such as those offered by the Self-Help Program and the Community Development Block Grants” was revised to “Continue to seek historical preservation grants.”
 - Sub-recommendation f.: “Consider adopting the Community Preservation Act and/or a transfer tax program that can generate funds to protect historic and open space resources” was revised to “Consider adopting the Community Preservation Act and/or a transfer tax program to generate funds to protect historic and open space resources.”

Section 6. Transportation & Circulation Action Plan

1. Overall Goal for Transportation & Circulation

- No revision was made.

2. Transportation & Circulation Objectives

- The title “Prioritized Objectives” was changed to “OBJECTIVES”.
- Objective 1.: “To ensure the safety of our community members and visitors” was revised to “Provide safe roads, pathways and surroundings for all users.”
- Objective 2.: “To create clear communication to community members & visitors about our transportation and circulation network and its supporting facilities and services” was revised to “Inform community members & visitors about our roads, recreational routes and walkways and their supporting facilities and services.”
- Objective 3.: “To create opportunities for social interaction within the community; a sense of place and community (ergo less feeling of community, because everyone drives somewhere else for work and play)” was revised to “Create opportunities for social interaction within the community.”
- Objective 4.: “To promote, enhance or create alternate routes and/or modes of transportation” was revised to “Promote, enhance or create alternate routes and modes of transportation.”
- Objective 5.: “To create a community connection/partnership, both physically and socially, with other towns and organizations to assist in establishing a safe, well-defined circulation

network” was revised to “Establish partnership with other towns and organizations to achieve a safe, integrated circulation network.”

3. Transportation & Circulation Recommendations

- Recommendation 1: “Develop transportation patterns and a plan for traffic, using safety and design standards as the primary criteria that support village, neighborhood and rural character, particularly regarding Sheffield and Ashley Falls centers and the Route 7 corridor” was revised to “Develop transportation plans to support village, neighborhood and rural character.”
 - Sub-recommendation e.: “Promote narrow roadways and traffic calming measures” was revised to “Evaluate traffic calming measures.”
 - Sub-recommendation f.: “Develop and Implement a Routing Plan” was revised to “Evaluate a ‘Routing Plan’.”
 - Sub-recommendation h.: “Review and redesign street & parking area lighting” was revised to “Review street & parking area lighting.”
 - Sub-recommendation i.: “Incorporate “Village” visual cues” was incorporated into draft Master Plan sub-recommendation q. with is sub-recommendation m. in the Master Plan.
 - Sub-recommendation “j.: Publicize enforcement of speed limits and drunk driving regulations ” was renumbered sub-recommendation i. and revised to “Continue to enforce speed limits and drunk driving regulations; publicize enforcement results.”
 - Sub-recommendation “k.: Consider a tax deferment incentive for business owners who improve the facades of their stores to ‘fit’ the character of the town” was deleted.
 - Sub-recommendation “l.: Review bylaws for consistency and clarity of intent” was deleted as covered elsewhere.
 - Sub-recommendation “m.: Encourage ‘village-scale’, pedestrian-based development rather than strip development” was renumbered sub-recommendation j.
 - Sub-recommendation “n.: Encourage foot traffic and public gathering spaces so Sheffield Center and Ashley Falls are attractive, welcoming, pedestrian friendly community gathering places.” was renumbered sub-recommendation k. and revised to “Encourage foot traffic, biking to and in public gathering areas and retail development.”
 - Sub-recommendation “o.: Consider roadside rest areas which offer views, including of the river and mountains (historic markers, view descriptions, etc.)” was

renumbered sub-recommendation l. and revised to “Analyze the viability of pull-offs for views as well as safety.”

- Sub-recommendation “p.: Designate local, state and national ‘Scenic’ Roads/Create Scenic Roads Program, where appropriate as roads are more than just transportation networks being part of the character and history of the Town” was renumbered sub-recommendation m. and revised to “Create a Scenic Roads Program and seek ‘Scenic Road’ designations where possible.”
 - Sub-recommendation “q.: Highlight Historic Districts through signage, lighting, and other visual cues” was renumbered sub-recommendation n. and revised to “Highlight Historic Districts including the incorporation of village visual cues.”
 - Sub-recommendation “r.: Develop Design Criteria linked to safety, zoning and other regulations that support the village scale and uses and rural character, such as wooden guardrails made from locally grown hemlock, oak, etc.” was integrated into Master Plan sub-recommendation p.
 - Sub-recommendation “s.: Consider adopting the Project Integration Procedure (featured in Smarter Land Use by Karl Kende) to collaboratively design all land-use projects, including the Trail Network.” was renumbered sub-recommendation o. and revised to “Consider adopting ‘Project Integration Procedures’.”
 - Sub-recommendation “t.: Adopt design parameters which promote...” was renumbered sub-recommendation p. and revised to “Develop and adopt design parameters.”
 - Sub-recommendation “u.: Consider an Easy Reference Design Guide to give to property owners/developers” was renumbered sub-recommendation q. and revised to “Consider developing an easy reference design guide.”
 - The Planning Board added sub-recommendation “r.: Evaluate roads in light of maintenance costs.”
- Recommendation 2:
 - Sub-recommendation b.: “Identify and implement cost-saving measures” was revised to “Identify and implement cost-saving measures for all aspects of the Highway Department.”
 - Recommendation 3: “Develop and promote alternatives to single-person automobile travel, both as stand-alone efforts, and as part of a circulation network” was revised to “Promote integrated alternatives to single-person automobile travel.”

- Sub-recommendation a.: “Consider creating a pedestrian and bicycle trail network to important sites, such as schools, Town Park, Town Hall, Senior Center, etc.” was revised to “Consider creating a pedestrian and bicycle trail network.”
- Sub-recommendation b.: “Over each capital facilities planning period, consider dedicating a set percentage of local funds expended for transportation-related capital improvements to non-auto improvements such as sidewalks, bike racks & lockers, kiosks, van/bus shelters, trails, pedestrian crossing improvements, or other means of enhancing the ability of Sheffield’s citizens to move around Sheffield and its environs without cars” was revised to “Consider dedicating a percentage of the town’s funds for non-automobile improvements, such as sidewalks, bike paths and bike racks.”
- Sub-recommendation c.: “Encourage design guidelines requiring new construction to actively promote universal, pedestrian, & bicycle access by locating buildings in front of, rather than in back of, parking areas, providing pedestrian connections between premises at or near the building line, and providing bicycle facilities” was revised to “Encourage that new construction actively promote universal, pedestrian and bicycle access.”
- Sub-recommendation d.: “Encourage businesses to promote alternatives to automobile usage including various incentives to do so. Consider amending zoning to enable new businesses to contribute funds for pedestrian & bicycle improvements, shared parking areas, multi-occupant transport, etc., in return for a reduction in the amount of on-site parking which is required (excluding ‘handicapped’ parking), and/or more floor space” was revised to “Encourage businesses to promote alternatives to automobile usage, including various incentives for doing so.”
- Sub-recommendation f.: “Encourage design guidelines which require pedestrian and bicycle easements and recreation easements within new subdivisions to create a circulation network within each neighborhood” was revised to “Encourage design guidelines which require pedestrian, bicycle and recreation easements within new subdivisions to create a circulation network within each neighborhood.”
- Sub-recommendation h.: “Encourage car/van pooling through ‘pooling’ sites, (e.g.; Sheffield Center & off Rte 7 near Ashley Falls)” was revised to “Encourage car/van pooling through ‘pooling’ sites.”
- The Planning Board added sub-recommendation “j.: “Explore bus, taxi and van sharing within Sheffield and neighboring towns.”
- The Planning Board added sub-recommendation “k.: “Research ways to meet the transportation needs of seniors and others.”

- Sub-recommendation j.: “Explore the increased use of the Housatonic Railroad for freight to help slow the influx of large trucks and cars passing through Sheffield” was renumbered sub-recommendation l.
- Sub-recommendation k.: “Explore possible use of the Berkshire Scenic Railroad bed for recreation and or transportation needs” was renumbered sub-recommendation m. was revised to “Investigate expansion of Berkshire Scenic Railroad routes to town.”

Section 7. Community Facilities & Services Action Plan

1. Overall Goal for Community Facilities & Services

- “Sheffield carefully invests in the facilities and services that support the goals and objectives of this Master Plan” was revised to “Carefully invests in the facilities and services that support the goals and objectives of Sheffield’s Master Plan.”

2. Community Facilities & Services Objectives

- Objective 1.: “Invest in infrastructure & improvements required to support vibrant Village Centers & Neighborhoods” was revised to “Assess infrastructure & improvements required for vibrant Village Centers & neighborhoods.”
- Objective 2.: “Maintain rural roadway character in outlying areas” was revised to “Strive to maintain rural roadway character in outlying areas.”
- Objective 3.: “Design and locate community facilities in a manner appropriate to their operations and services was revised to “Explore appropriate designs and locations for community facilities and services.”
- Objective 4.: “Increase services as necessary for the growing population” was revised to “Anticipate and assess services needed for a growing population.”

3. Community Facilities & Services Recommendations

Recommendation 1: “Assess and plan for needs in Village Centers & Neighborhoods.

- In conjunction with the Village Center & Neighborhood Enhancement Plans process, contract for engineering services to:
 - Estimate how much more infill and expansion in Sheffield Center can be supported by the septic filtering capacity of the soils.
 - Estimate the costs and benefits of establishing a village deep well and distribution system to provide water to Ashley Falls to support desired infill and expansion of a Village Center, and enhancement of the Clayton Neighborhood.
 - If deemed necessary, over time investigate alternative sewage treatment technologies that might be appropriate for one or both of the Village Centers, and nearby neighborhoods.

- Consider Creation of an Artisan and Craft center to promote and market locally produced goods, combining workspace with public space.
- Assess the needs of the Farmers' Market and consider a permanent or semi-permanent site.
- Work with the Postmaster, the Postal Service, and property owners to keep the Post Offices on the Village Greens in Sheffield Center and Ashley Falls.
- Agree on and acquire a suitable location for the Senior Center."

Were revised to

"Recommendation 1: Assess and plan for needs in Village Centers and neighborhoods.

- In conjunction with the Village Center Plan process, consider contracting for engineering services to:
 - Estimate how much more infill and expansion can be supported by the septic filtering capacity of the soils in Sheffield Center.
 - Estimate the costs and benefits of establishing a village deep well and distribution system to support desired infill and enhancement in the Ashley Falls Village Center and 'Clayton Area'.
 - If deemed necessary, investigate alternative sewage treatment technologies that might be appropriate for one or both of the Village Centers and nearby neighborhoods.
- Consider creating an Artisan and Craft Center to promote and market locally produced goods, combining workspace with public space.
- Assess the needs of the Farmers' Market and locate appropriate site.
- Work to keep the Post Office on the Village Green.
- Evaluate and decide on a suitable location for the Senior Center.'

"Recommendation 2. "Assess the relationship with and impact of School District

- Address expiration of Regional School District assessment formula contract in 2008.
- Assess the impact of services (fire, police, etc.) provided to the school due to its location on Sheffield's fiscal budget and town services.
- Assess future infrastructure needs of the school as it ages.
- Explore additional ways campus and facilities might be utilized by the community.
- Explore opportunities for mentoring and training with local businesses."

Were revised to:

Recommendation 2. Assess and plan for Sheffield's participation in the school district.

- Assess the impact of the Regional School District on Sheffield.
- Address the expiration of Regional School District assessment formula contract in 2008.
- Assess the impact of town provided services to the school on Sheffield's fiscal budget and town services.
- Assess the future infrastructure needs of the schools.
- Explore additional ways the grounds and facilities might be utilized by the community.

- f. Explore opportunities for student mentoring and training with local businesses and other schools.

Recommendation 3: “Enhance protective services and facilities as necessary for a growing population base.

Police Department

The Sheffield Police Vision Statement identifies the use of problem solving techniques and communication with the community to enhance the quality of life. The department values open communication, high standards, training and education, and input from the community.

1. Maintain a high level of quality of all department equipment and replace equipment and vehicles as necessary.
2. Improve wireless communication systems.
3. Rehabilitate the Police Station to provide for a new prisoner holding cell over the next 5 years.
4. Install security fencing around the Police parking lot to protect department equipment and vehicles.
5. Continue to seek grants to expand police staffing and community-oriented programs such as the COPS and DARE programs.

Fire Department

The Fire Department is anticipating significant expansion or relocation needs in the near future and over the next 10 years a number of additional facility and service needs can be anticipated. The Department is evaluating possible facilities expansion needs which may include an addition to the existing station or a new station in or close to Sheffield Center.

Another long-term consideration anticipated by the Department is the possible need for regional fire services. As more communities in the South Berkshire Region find it difficult in keeping volunteer membership this may become more necessary to adequately protect smaller communities.

1. Carefully consider the costs and benefits of purchasing a new pumper/tanker truck which the department has identified as a needed capital expense in 2008.
2. Purchase a Jaws of Life cutting tool with ram over the next 5 years and determine if there are other purchases needed.
3. Plan for the long-term facilities need of the Sheffield Fire Station - Expanding the existing station over the next several years may require increasing the number of bays by up to 4, or renovating the existing facility to increase bay height to accommodate larger apparatus. There are land constraints in the vicinity of the station that must be addressed by the department and town including septic systems and property owners that may have other plans for the land. Another possibility would be to relocate the station to another location if these long-term issues cannot be sufficiently addressed.
4. Meet with public officials from surrounding communities in the next 2 years to evaluate the costs and benefits of establishing regional fire services.
5. Assess long-term staffing needs.”

Were revised to:

“Recommendation 3: Evaluate protective services and facilities as necessary for a growing population.

a. Police Department:

- i. Continue to evaluate the quality of all department equipment and consider replacement of equipment and vehicles as necessary.
- ii. Assess wireless communication systems.
- iii. Consider providing an improved prisoner holding cell.
- iv. Consider fencing around the police parking lot.
- v. Consider seeking additional grants to expand police staffing and community-oriented programs such as KOPS for KIDS and DARE programs.

The Sheffield Police Vision Statement identifies the use of problem solving techniques and communication with the community to enhance the quality of life. The department values open communication, high standards, training and education, and input from the community.

b. Fire Department:

- i. Review the costs and benefits of a new pumper / tanker truck by 2008.
- ii. Consider a Jaws of Life cutting tool with ram.
- iii. Identify and plan for the long-term needs of the Sheffield Fire Station.
- iv. Evaluate the costs and benefits of establishing regional fire services.
- v. Assess long-term staffing needs.

The Fire Department is anticipating significant expansion or relocation needs in the near future and over the next 10 years a number of additional facility and service needs can be anticipated. The Department is evaluating possible facilities expansion needs which may include an addition to the existing station or a new station in or close to Sheffield Center.

Another long-term consideration anticipated by the Department is the possible need for regional fire services. As more communities in the South Berkshire Region find it difficult in keeping volunteer membership this may become more necessary to adequately protect smaller communities.”

(Note: the next recommendation and subsequent recommendations were incorrectly numbered in the draft Master Plan; they were renumbered during the review process.)

“Recommendation 4: Expand and improve municipal services and facilities as necessary.

Highway Department

This Highway Garage was built in the mid-1960s and is approximately 16,000 square feet. It includes a 2-bay garage holding up to 6 vehicles, an administrative office, and storage facilities. The complex is located in a Zone I recharge area for the Sheffield Water Company Turnpike Well, and is a likely threat of contamination, so the Town anticipates the need to relocate this facility within the next 10 years.

1. Plan for the relocation of the Highway Garage in the next 10 years.

2. Develop and carry out a 5-year road maintenance and improvement program in conjunction with the recommendations in the Transportation report (i.e. safety, scenic roads, etc.). This program should be kept up-to-date and potential funding sources identified on a yearly basis. The program should identify targeted roads including priority, type of repair or improvement (with associated amenities such as landscaping, sidewalks, and signage), funding sources, and projected year for completion, and equipment needed.
3. Consider an advisory committee as noted in the Transportation section to leverage the resources available to the Department.
4. Work with the Board of Selectmen and local interest groups to expand the tree planting program along the Route 7 corridor, public lands and facilities, and neighborhoods to beautify the town.
5. Consider protective sheds for equipment (i.e. plows).

Transfer Station

The Transfer Station is currently open portions of 4 days a week and is an enterprise operation with funding provided by annual resident and business user fees. The facility is expected to accommodate Sheffield's needs over the next several years, but additional capacity is likely to be needed in the ten year period covered by the plan.

1. Assess equipment and safety needs of existing facility
2. Assess carrying capacity of current facility and expansion of hours to meet growing needs of the community.
3. Explore alternatives to address future and changing needs

Town Hall and Departments

1. Develop a comprehensive capital improvement program. A capital improvement program and service strategy should identify all anticipated large improvements over the next 10 years, with associated costs, funding sources and potential timeframe.
2. Upgrade the municipal computer system. Much of the equipment is outdated and not networked between departments. A plan should be made to implement needed hardware and software upgrades and changes to provide inter and intra-office efficiency and network security, including e-mail and the town web site.
3. Establish a central purchasing system for all departments for common supplies and materials.
4. Make ADA improvements to municipal facilities. Some municipal facilities have not been brought into compliance with the handicapped accessibility code due to budget constraints. The town should survey these facilities to determine the extent of renovations necessary and potential costs and funding sources.
5. Install a Geographic Information System (GIS) and provide needed staffing and training. The Assessors Office is considering the need for computerized assessors maps and the possible acquisition of hardware and software for a GIS which would enable the Town to electronically inventory and analyze various land ownership, uses, natural resources, and other regulatory boundaries (i.e. zoning districts). GIS can also be a valuable tool for the Police and Fire Departments and all three should be coordinated. The following steps would be taken over the next 2 years:
 - Coordinate needs with Police and Fire Departments

- Select hardware and software that is compatible with all departmental needs and the industry standard, ensuring its ability for expansion, networking and upgrades to meet projected needs over the next 10 years.
 - Acquire equipment and train staff
 - Enter all existing data into a common database
6. Consider renovating the Grand Army of the Republic space on the 4th floor in Town Hall. This space could be utilized as public meeting space as needed in the future. Handicapped accessibility is currently an issue to be resolved.
 7. Consider expanding the Board of Selectmen to 5 members to provide for the increase in work associated with growing towns and Sheffield's continued growth.

Senior Center

The Senior Center administrative offices are currently operating out of Dewey Hall. This space has become inadequate for a growing senior population and with the increasing variety of activities sponsored by the organization. The Council on Aging has developed preliminary plans for a new Senior Center.

1. Build or locate a new Senior Center in the next 2 years which will meet projected need for at least the next ten years. Town administration should work closely with COA to identify an appropriate location, finalize plans and permitting, and obtain state and other funding sources to construct this needed public facility.
2. Select a location in Sheffield Center. Sheffield Center provides convenience to many senior citizens in the community. The new facility should accommodate a nurse's office, a meeting room, a lounge, an office for the director and assistant director, and a large meeting hall to allow space for active and passive recreation (i.e. fitness classes, potlucks, dances, lectures, etc.).

Bushnell-Sage Public Library

1. Support staff efforts to improve computer networking with other library systems to improve access to publications and materials to all Sheffield residents.
2. Support expansion of public events and exhibits
3. Consider the costs and benefits of expanding the facilities to accommodate library needs and larger public events, meeting and other gatherings.

Business Park

Update and revise the criteria used to consider and accept tenants for the Business Park, to bring in jobs and tax revenues.. Changes in the business and economic climate since the Business Park was created nearly 10 years ago (recognizing the local constraints to attracting light industry and clean manufacturing, in addition to the national trend of such jobs moving overseas), create a need to up-date some of the criteria to recognize the full potential of this resource.

- Review Business Park criteria
- Consider developing the Business Park around agriculture-related activities to promote locally produced farm products and tie into regional initiatives.
- Consider broadening the scope of businesses sought

- Consider allowing a developer to own, build and manage appropriate spaces and rent to smaller businesses and cottage industries.
- Explore alternative uses for the Business Park.”

Were revised to:

“Recommendation 4: Expand and improve municipal services and facilities as necessary.

a. Highway Department:

- Evaluate relocating the Highway Garage.
- Consider developing a short and long-range road maintenance and improvement program in conjunction with the recommendations in the Transportation & Circulation section of the Master Plan.
- Consider an advisory committee as noted in the Transportation & Circulation section of the Master Plan.
- Encourage working with the Board of Selectmen and local interest groups to expand the tree planning program to beautify the town..
- Consider protective sheds for equipment.

This Highway Garage was built in the mid-1960s and is approximately 16,000 square feet. It includes a 2-bay garage holding up to 6 vehicles, an administrative office, and storage facilities. The complex is located in a Zone I recharge area for the Sheffield Water Company Turnpike Well, and is a likely threat of contamination, so the Town anticipates the need to relocate this facility within the next 10 years.

b. Transfer Station:

- Assess equipment and safety needs of the existing facility.
- Assess the carrying capacity of the current facility and extending hours to meet community needs.
- Explore alternatives to address future and changing needs.

The Transfer Station is currently open portions of 4 days a week and is an enterprise operation with funding provided by annual resident and business user fees. The facility is expected to accommodate Sheffield’s needs over the next several years, but additional capacity is likely to be needed in the ten-year period covered by the plan.

c. Town Hall and Departments:

- Evaluate a comprehensive 10-year capital improvement program and service strategy.
- Assess the municipal computer system.
- Evaluate a centralized purchasing system.
- Evaluate municipal facilities for ADA compliance.
- Consider options for a Geographic Information System (GIA) for use by various town departments.
- Consider renovating the Grand Army of the Republic space in Town Hall as a public meeting space and provide handicapped accessibility.
- Consider providing additional office and file space for town boards.
- Consider expanding the Board of Selectmen to five members.
- Consider establishing a stabilization fund for the capital and equipment

recommendations for all Town departments.

d. Senior Center:

- i. Evaluate, decide on and secure a suitable location for the Senior Center to meet projected needs.

The Senior Center administrative offices are currently operating out of Dewey Hall. This space has become inadequate for a growing senior population and with the increasing variety of activities sponsored by the organization. The Council on Aging has developed preliminary plans for a new Senior Center.

e. Bushnell-Sage Public Library:

- i. Support staff efforts to improve computer networking with other library systems to improve access to publications and materials to all Sheffield residents.
- ii. Support expansion of public events and exhibits.
- iii. Consider the costs and benefits of expanding the facilities to accommodate library needs and larger public events, meetings and other gatherings.

f. Business Park:

- i. Review Business park criteria and ways to streamline the approval process.
- ii. Consider developing the Business Park around agriculture-related activities.
- iii. Consider broadening the scope of businesses sought.
- iv. Consider allowing a developer to own, build and manage appropriate spaces and rent to smaller businesses and cottage industries.
- v. Explore alternative uses for the Business Park.

Update and revise the criteria used to consider and accept tenants for the Business Park, to bring in jobs and tax revenues. Changes in the business and economic climate since the Business Park was created nearly 10 years ago (recognizing the local constraints to attracting light industry and clean manufacturing, in addition to the national trend of such jobs moving overseas), create a need to update some of the criteria to recognize the full potential of this resource.

“Recommendation 5: Develop active and passive recreational programs and facilities to serve various groups within the community.

Detailed recommendations have been developed for passive and active recreational facilities in the Open Space and Recreation section of the Community Action Plan and Implementation Schedule.

1. Upgrade or replace existing playgrounds and picnic sites as needed, including a completely fenced in area where children can play without parents having to worry about their wandering off (like that at the Family Center in Gt. Barrington). A potential source of funding is the Small Town Program administered by the State Division of Conservation Services (DCS). A Self-Help Grant may also be possible.
2. Identify potential new locations for small public parks and playgrounds in growing residential areas. Consider using surplus public parcels for such purposes as picnic areas and playgrounds, athletic fields and community gardens.
3. Promote awareness of and increase the ‘user-friendliness’ of the Town Park and other existing or future parks and playground sites with safe and accessible off-street parking,

informational kiosks, bicycle racks, maintained trash receptacles, and other common accessories. Publicize and promote the process for scheduling community and individual events at these facilities.

4. Continue to promote volunteer stewardship and sustainable management of Town Park and land by local service organizations and clubs.
5. Seek connections between the Town Park and surrounding neighborhoods, Sheffield Center and other areas through green corridors and trails.
6. Investigate the opportunity to cooperate with the Southern Berkshire Regional School District and Berkshire School in expanding joint recreational programs for youths and adults.
7. Seek potential locations for a town beach. The town could create a Swimming Area Committee to evaluate natural beach swimming opportunities. The Committee could explore available locations, costs, funding programs and liability issues. Possible sites could include Three Mile Pond (owned by the State) and Mill and Trout Ponds (privately owned) as well as others.”

Were revised to:

“Recommendation 5: Evaluate active and passive recreational programs and facilities to serve the community.

- a. Assess existing playgrounds and picnic sites, including the need for a secure area for children.
- b. Evaluate new locations for small public parks and playgrounds in growing residential areas.
- c. Evaluate improvements to the Town Park.
- d. Promote use of the Town Park.
- e. Facilitate the scheduling of events at town recreational facilities.
- f. Continue to promote volunteer stewardship and sustainable management of Town Park and land by local service organizations and clubs.
- g. Evaluate connecting the Town park and surrounding neighborhoods, Sheffield Center and other areas through green corridors and trails.
- h. Investigate the opportunity to cooperate with the Southern Berkshire Regional School District and Berkshire School in expanding joint recreational programs for youths and adults.
- i. Seek potential locations for a town beach.”

“Recommendation 6: Foster inter-local cooperation where opportunities exist to improve services and reduce costs

Neighboring communities can benefit greatly by inter-local cooperative agreements. Funds can be pooled for roadway improvement and maintenance, utility expansion, resource protection, and many other municipal services (i.e. emergency, schools, recreation, and cultural activities). For small communities like Sheffield facing rapid growth, decisions regarding the location of public facilities, infrastructure expansion, and transportation are likely to have direct or indirect impacts on neighboring communities.

Some potential areas of cooperation include:

1. Participating in joint community planning efforts
2. Creating greenways and open space projects across boundaries
3. Sharing services, equipment, and/or personnel
4. Shared recreational programs and facilities
5. Participating in regional affordable housing development and economic development activities
6. Purchase joint material and equipment in bulk (i.e. fuel, school furniture, road salt, etc.)”

Were revised to:

“Recommendation 6: Foster inter-town cooperation where opportunities exist to improve services and reduce costs. Potential areas of cooperation include:

- a. Participate in joint community planning efforts.
- b. Create greenways and open space projects across town borders.
- c. Sharing services, equipment and/or personnel.
- d. Shared recreational programs and facilities.
- e. Participation in regional affordable housing development and economic development activities.
- f. Purchase of materials and equipment in bulk.

Neighboring communities can benefit greatly by inter-local cooperative agreements. Funds can be pooled for roadway improvement and maintenance, utility expansion, resource protection, and many other municipal services (i.e. emergency, schools, recreation, and cultural activities). For small communities like Sheffield facing rapid growth, decisions regarding the location of public facilities, infrastructure expansion, and transportation are likely to have direct or indirect impacts on neighboring communities.”

“Recommendation 6: Work with the Sheffield Water Company to improve public water service to the community.

There are approximately 467 homes and businesses that rely on the Sheffield Water Company for safe drinking water. The SWC’s Wellhead Protection Plan can provide many community benefits including reducing risk to human health, potential cost savings with respect to long-term monitoring and treatment, support for local bylaws making them less likely to be challenged, assurance of clean drinking water supply for future generations, enhancing real estate values, and protecting valuable conservation lands from development.

1. Establish a Wellhead Protection Committee and adopt the Wellhead Protection Plan and Emergency Response Plan. The Town and Sheffield Water Company should work together to adopt the Wellhead Protection Plan to the benefit of the entire community. The main steps involved in implementing the plan are as follows:
 - Funding for Zone I and Zone II property acquisitions
 - Revise the Water Supply Overlay Protection District (WSPD) to apply to the updated Zone II designations and meet current state requirements.
 - Develop and implement a floor drain inspection program
 - Conduct a drainage study in the area tributary to the springs
 - Prepare an educational brochure specific to the Sheffield public water supply system

- Increase storage capacity and hydrant flows.
2. Assess carrying capacity and current infrastructure and continue to expand the water distribution system, improve water quality, and install water volume and quality monitoring equipment as needed.
 3. Develop new water sources as need.
 4. The Town should consider the long-term costs and benefits of acquiring the SWC in the future to ensure that adequate funding is provided to maintain and expand the water system as necessary.”

Were revised to:

“Recommendation 7: Work with the Sheffield Water Company (SWC) to improve public water service to the community.

- a. Establish a Wellhead Protection Committee and adopt and implement the Wellhead Protection Plan and Emergency Response Plan.

The main steps involved in implementing the plan are as follows:

- Funding for Zone I and Zone II property acquisitions
 - Revise the Water Supply Overlay Protection District (WSPD) to apply to the updated Zone II designations and meet current state requirements.
 - Develop and implement a floor drain inspection program
 - Conduct a drainage study in the area tributary to the springs
 - Prepare an educational brochure specific to the Sheffield public water supply system
 - Increase storage capacity and hydrant flows.
- b. Assess carrying capacity and current infrastructure and continue to expand the water distribution system, improve water quality and install water volume and quality monitoring equipment as needed.
 - c. Develop new water sources as needed.
 - d. Consider the long-terms costs and benefits of acquiring the SWC to ensure that adequate funding is provided to maintain and expand the water system as necessary.

There are approximately 467 homes and businesses that rely on the Sheffield Water Company for safe drinking water. The SWC’s Wellhead Protection Plan can provide many community benefits including reducing risk to human health, potential cost savings with respect to long-term monitoring and treatment, support for local bylaws making them less likely to be challenged, assurance of clean drinking water supply for future generations, enhancing real estate values, and protecting valuable conservation lands from development.”

“Recommendation 7: Address other community development issues and needs.

1. Establish a Town Visitor Center. The town should consider creating a visitor center or renting a portion of current space such as at the Old Stone Store (owned by the Sheffield Historical Society) or Dewey Hall (owned by the Sheffield Friendly Union) for that purpose.

2. Work with electric and cellular service providers to identify discrete locations for future cell towers (i.e. church steeples), bury overhead power lines in targeted locations (such as Sheffield Center and Ashley Falls village), and create high speed internet infrastructure.
3. Update, maintain and expand the Town's website to include a description of departments and facilities, contacts (including e-mail with links directly from the site), local businesses, plans and regulations, maps, and upcoming community events.
4. Evaluate the costs and benefits of extending the small sewage treatment facility located at Mt. Everett Regional School on Berkshire School Road to its surrounding neighborhood.
5. Investigate and provide for the use of package treatment plants and other alternative technologies for septic and sewage needs. Develop guidelines for package treatment plants and any other alternative technologies to ensure compliance with state standards and to address long-term maintenance responsibilities.
6. Continue to seek state and federal funding for important community development projects and programs such as infrastructure improvements, new or rehabilitated public facilities, active and passive recreational projects, cultural programs and general government services. While funding programs are becoming more competitive, Sheffield should seek public and private funding sources to achieve specific community development goals."

Were revised to:

"Recommendation 8: Address other community development issues and needs.

- a. Establish a Town Visitor Center.
- b. Identify discrete locations for future cell towers, bury overhead power line in appropriate locations and create high speed Internet infrastructure.
- c. Update, maintain and expand the town's website and promote town information sources such as the Sheffield Times.
- d. Evaluate the costs and benefits of extending Mt. Everett Regional Schools' sewage treatment facility to its surrounding neighborhood.
- e. Investigate, develop guidelines and provide for the use of package treatment plants and other alternative technologies for septic and sewage needs.
- f. Continue to seek state, federal and private funding for community development projects and goals."

Section 8. Land Use Action Plan

1. Overall Goal for Community Facilities & Services:

No revisions made.

2. Land Use Objectives

- Objective 1.: "Foster vibrant village centers and neighborhoods with careful infill and clearly contained expansion." was revised to "Foster vibrant village centers and neighborhoods with careful infill and contained expansion."

- Objective 2.: “Absorb development in agriculture and natural resource areas in ways that are least intrusive and avoid the most sensitive and valuable resources” was revised to “Ensure that when development occurs in agriculture and natural resource areas it is in ways that are least intrusive and avoid the most sensitive and valuable resources.”

3. Land Use Recommendations

- Recommendation 1:
 - Sub-recommendation c.: “Invest in water, sewer, other improvements as needed to support desired village character and density” was revised to “Evaluates water, sewer other improvements needed to support desired village character and density.”
- Recommendation 2:
 - Sub-recommendation c.: “Invests in water, sewer, other improvements as needed to support desired neighborhood character and density” was revised to “Evaluates water, sewer other improvements needed to support desired neighborhood character and density.”
- Recommendation 3:
 - Sub-recommendation a.: “Help maintain the viability of farms and farming” and sub-recommendation b.: “Protect water resources” were combined into sub-recommendation a. and revised to “Protect all natural resources.”
 - Sub-recommendation c.: “Minimize loss of farmlands & orchards” was renumbered sub-recommendation b. and revised to “Minimize loss of farmland and orchards and encourage family farming.”
 - Sub-recommendation d.: “Minimize fragmentation of wildlife habitat” was renumbered sub-recommendation c.”
 - Sub-recommendation e.: “Absorb new homes in ways that are least visible” was renumbered sub-recommendation d. and revised to “Absorb new homes in ways that have minimal impacts.”
 - Sub-recommendation f.: “Continue tradition of home-based businesses with little impact on neighbors & natural resources” was renumbered sub-recommendation e.
 - Sub-recommendation g.: “Encourage preservation/reuse of historic structures” was renumbered sub-recommendation f.
- Recommendation 4:
 - Sub-recommendation b.: “Minimize clearing of vegetation on upper slopes” was revised to “Minimize clearing of trees and vegetation on upper slopes.”

- Recommendation 5:
 - Sub-recommendation b.: “Apply site plan standards for attractive development with minimized curb cuts” was revised to “Apply site plan standards for attractive development and minimize curb cuts.”
 - Sub-recommendation d.: “Welcome and encourage motorists to stop and visit business & cultural offerings” was revised to “Encourage motorists to stop and visit business & cultural offerings.”
- Recommendation 6:
 - Sub-recommendation a.: “Maintain roadside character was revised to “Maintain rural and roadside character.”
 - Sub-recommendation b.: “Site new development so as to keep scenic views open” was revised to “Minimize impact of development on natural and scenic resources.”

The text of Section 9 in the draft Master Plan, which had listed all the recommendations previously discussed in the sections, was replaced with the *Town Master Plan, Summary of Recommendations* document, previously published by the Planning Board. This document is located at the front of the Master Plan. “Next Steps to Maintain Momentum” in the draft Master Plan was replaced by Section 9. Community Action Plan in the Master Plan.

Appendix 1

Glossary of Planning Terms & Resources

General Planning Terms & Definition

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

Federal law enacted in 1990 that requires public agencies to operate housing programs in ways that make them accessible and that do not discriminate against persons with disabilities. It also requires that homeless shelters be accessible. It generally does not apply to private housing (but many of its provisions are included in the 1988 amendments to the Fair Housing Act).

Benchmark

A point of reference of a standard against which measurements can be compared. The origin of the term benchmark can be traced historically to woodworking on a bench or table, where a mark was placed as a point of reference from which relative lengths could be measured. Its contemporary use refers to a land surveyor's starting reference point, which is officially recognized as the location and elevation at that point from which the surveyor can determine another location and elevation. In the context of indicators, a benchmark is an accurate data point, which is used as a reference for future comparisons (similar to a baseline). Sometimes it also refers to "best practices" in a particular field, and communities compare themselves against those standards. For example, if the best recycling rate for communities in the state of Illinois is 33% of all homes in the jurisdiction or other communities in the state may use that figure as a benchmark to work towards or surpass. (Many groups use benchmarks as a synonym for **Indicator** or **Target**.)

Best Management Practices

Best Management Practices (BMPs), used here in terms of protecting water quality, are an effective way of addressing existing high-risk land uses, non-point sources of pollution and development practices and are the best available methods to prevent or mitigate a contaminated release to the environment. BMPs can be structural, non-structural or managerial techniques used to prevent and reduce non-point source pollution. Many BMPs are low or no cost efforts as they focus on a change in general practices. An example of BMP initiative for Sheffield would be to provide nurseries with information related to proper fertilizer and pesticide application that could be distributed to customers.

Chapter 40A

The State's zoning enabling legislation, called The Zoning Act. Originally enacted in 1954, it was updated in 1975 to facilitate and encourage the modernization of zoning ordinances and by-laws by municipal governments.

Chapter 41

The State's subdivision control law spells out the powers and duties of local planning boards, whose approval is required before land can be subdivided. It specifies the type of provisions the local boards can adopt and specifies certain procedural requirements. Subdivisions of land with adequate road frontage do not require local approval (called **ANR**, or approval not required plans).

Chapter 44B

The Community Preservation Act Enabling Legislation. Allows communities, at local option, to establish a Community Preservation Fund to preserve open space, historic resources and community housing, by imposing a surcharge of up to 3% on local property taxes. The state provides matching funds from its own Community Preservation Trust Fund, generated from an increase in certain Registry of Deeds' fees. (Chapter 267 of the Acts of 2000)

Cluster Subdivision

A form of development for single-family residential subdivisions that permits a reduction in lot areas and building requirements, provided there is no increase in the number of lots permitted under conventional subdivision and resultant land area is devoted to open space.

Community Preservation Act

The CPA, which was enacted in 2000, enables cities and towns to establish a property tax surcharge of 1-3% to fund open space, historic preservation, and affordable housing initiatives. The statute requires that 30% of funding must be distributed evenly under the 3 categories (10% to housing, 10% to open space and 10% to historic preservation). The remaining 70% is at the discretion of the community. CPA is enabling legislation and not a mandate but as of January 2003, 58 municipalities from around the Commonwealth have voted to adopt the program to achieve these local goals. Each community must also determine the level of surcharge and set policies that the statute leaves to their discretion such as exemptions for low-income or elderly homeowners. Communities that adopt CPA are eligible for matching state funds. The state's share comes from fees collected when real property transfers from sellers to buyers.

Community Reinvestment Act (CRA)

A federal law enacted in 1977 (and amended in 1989), which states that all federally insured financial institutions have a continuing and affirmative obligation to help meet the credit needs of the local communities in which they are chartered. Such institutions are required to demonstrate to their regulatory agencies, through regular examinations, that they are meeting the credit needs of their community, including low and moderate-income neighborhoods. That record is taken into account when the institution applies to enter new markets or merge or acquire another institution.

Comprehensive Regional Planning

Municipal planning on a metropolitan or regional level that is based on overall, not jurisdictional, boundaries. May include changes in jurisdictional boundaries, but typically addresses services and/or land use planning.

Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)

Massachusetts DHCD is the state's lead agency for housing and community development programs and policy. It oversees the state-funded public housing, administers rental assistance programs, provides funds for municipal assistance, and funds a variety of programs to stimulate the development of affordable housing. Until July 1996, DHCD was known as the Executive Office of Communities and Development. Prior to that, it was also called the Department of Community Affairs.

Department of Mental Health (DMH)

Massachusetts DMH, an agency within EOHHS, is the state's key provider of services to people with psychiatric disabilities, primarily through day programs, treatment and counseling services, and community-based housing. Its budget includes funds to assist homeless clients through outreach, shelter and transitional housing programs and to provide services for clients in community-based housing, as well as some funds for rental assistance.

Department of Mental Retardation (DMR)

Massachusetts DMR, an agency within EOHHS, is the state's key provider of services for people with mental retardation, primarily through a variety of social service programs and community-based housing. Like DMH, its budget includes funds to develop and staff community-based residences and subsidize the living costs of the residents.

Department of Public Health (DPH)

Massachusetts DPH, an agency within EOHHS, is the state's key agency for public health programs, including lead paint poisoning prevention, emergency and longer-term substance abuse treatment programs, programs for children at risk for developmental or other disabilities, programs for people with chronic medical problems and services for people living with AIDS. Its budget includes limited funds for the housing needs of its consumers, including supported housing services and rental assistance.

Department of Social Services (DSS)

Massachusetts DSS, an agency within EOHHS, funds most of the state's social services for families and children, including services and shelters for battered women, protective services for children, adoption, foster care and day care programs. Its budget includes limited funds for emergency shelter programs for children, adolescents and victims of domestic violence as well as transitional housing programs and rental assistance for specialized housing. Cases are handled in 26 area offices.

Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA)

Massachusetts DTA provides financial assistance and services for low-income families and individuals. In addition to administering the Temporary Aid for Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC) program, which replaced AFDC under state welfare reform, EAEDC (Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled and Children), and food stamp programs, it is a key provider of homeless services. It operates over 120 shelters for homeless families and individuals and pays rent arrearages to prevent the eviction of low income families.

Department of Veterans Services (DVS)

Massachusetts DVS, an agency within the Executive Office for Administration and Finance, oversees a variety of programs for veterans of the Armed Services, including outreach centers, shelters and transitional housing for homeless and formerly homeless veterans and their families (including their parents).

Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAM)

Formerly the Division of Capital Planning and Operations, this state agency operates within the Executive Office of Administration and Finance responsible for major public building construction and real estate services for the Commonwealth. It manages the redevelopment of over 3,700 acres of surplus state property.

Entitlement Community

A city or urban area with a population of 50,000 or more that receives Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds directly from the federal government.

Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA)

A Massachusetts Cabinet level agency that includes many of the state agencies that perform planning functions related to transportation.

Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA)

A Massachusetts cabinet level agency that oversees programs and policies relating to the environment. EOEA is made up of the Metropolitan District Commission and the Departments of: Environmental Protection; Environmental Management; Food and Agriculture; Fisheries, Wildlife and Environmental Law Enforcement; and the Metropolitan District Commission.

Executive Order 418

State executive order issued in 2000 by former Gov. A. Paul Cellucci and subtitled "Assisting Communities in Addressing the Housing Shortage". It makes available up to \$30,000 in planning resources to each community in the state to plan for new housing opportunities while balancing economic development, transportation infrastructure improvements and open space preservation. EO418 gives priority in the awarding of \$364 million+ in annual discretionary funding to communities that have been certified as having taken steps to increase the supply of housing to individuals and families across a broad range of incomes. It also establishes an inter-agency "Community Development Plan" program to ensure that cities and towns are adequately addressing the interests of resource protection, economic development and housing affordability.

Floor Area Ratio (FAR)

A commonly used measure of building intensity, FAR is the relationship between building volume and land area. Determined by dividing the gross floor area of all buildings on a lot and the area of that lot.

501(c)(3) Corporation

A section of the Internal Revenue Code that grants status as a nonprofit corporation. This designation entitles organizations to receive tax-exempt status and tax-deductible donations.

Geographic Information System (GIS)

A computerized system that stores and links spatially defined data in a way that allows information display and processing and production of maps and models. GIS is a powerful planning and analytical tool.

Green Development

Development that uses environmentally friendly building practices and energy efficiency. There are a number of public and private incentives for green development, and increasingly, nonprofit developers use green construction as a way of increasing the expendable resources of lower income persons.

Green Building

A whole-building and systems approach to design and construction that employs building techniques that minimize environmental impacts and reduce the energy consumption of buildings while contributing to the health and productivity of its occupants.

Greenfields

Undeveloped land. Smart Growth principles dictate that new development be steered away from greenfields to the maximum extent possible and toward sites where infrastructure and public transportation already exist, or to contaminated and/or underutilized sites that can be reclaimed to accommodate new development.

Greenway

Green areas, including parks that are often connected and accessible to the everyday lives of people in existing neighborhoods and communities.

Greyfields

Term coined by the Congress for the New Urbanism for failing retail properties (shopping centers) that require significant public and private-sector intervention to stem decline and redevelop into mixed use neighborhoods.

Growth Management

A central tenet of sustainable development that espouses the idea that uncontrolled growth cannot be sustained over time and that communities should intentionally plan the ways they want to develop.

Healthy and Sustainable Community

A community that develops and maintains a strong quality of life for its residents through consideration of long-term economic, ecological, social and political well-being

Impact Fees

A one-time assessments, which may be applied by municipalities to new development to fund the expansion or construction of municipal facilities and infrastructure that benefit the development.

Incentive Zoning

Zoning provisions that encourage but do not require developers to provide certain amenities or qualities in their projects in return for identified benefits, such as increased density or expedited processing.

Indicator

A measurement that reflects the status of some social, economic, or environmental system over time. The term Indicator is derived from the Latin verb *indicare*, meaning “to point out or proclaim.” Generally an indicator focuses on a small, manageable, tangible and telling piece of a system to give people a sense of the bigger picture.

Inclusionary Zoning

A zoning ordinance that requires a developer to include affordable housing as part of a development, or contribute to a fund for such housing.

Infill Development

The practice of building on vacant or undeveloped parcels in dense areas, especially urban and inner suburban neighborhoods. Promotes compact development, which in turn allows undeveloped land to remain open and green.

MassDevelopment (formerly Massachusetts Development Finance Agency, MDFA)

A quasi-public agency created in 1998 by the merger of the Government Land Bank of the Massachusetts Industrial Finance Agency. MassDevelopment offers a variety of programs in support of economic development, large-scale real estate development projects and brownfield clean-up including pre-development assistance, loans, loan guarantees, mortgage insurance and taxable and tax-exempt bond financing. Its programs can also be used for mixed commercial and residential projects.

Master Plan

A comprehensive long-range plan intended to guide the growth and development of a community or region and one that includes analysis, recommendations and proposals for the community’s population, economy, housing, transportation, community facilities and land use.

Mean

The statistical average. An arithmetic mean is determined by adding up all the data and dividing that sum by the number of data points (n). For example, in the series 1, 2, 6, the arithmetic mean is 3.

Median

The figure in an array of data points that falls midway in the series between the highest and the lowest values. For example in the series 1, 2, 6, the median is 2. (Note the distinction between median and mean.)

Mixed Use Development

Projects that combine different types of development such as residential, commercial, office, industrial and institutional into one project. Mixed-use redevelopment of neighborhoods promotes comprehensive revitalization through retention or addition of housing, services and jobs.

New Urbanism

A movement to build and rebuild communities on a human scale with interconnecting streets, homes with porches, pedestrian friendly traffic patterns, shared open space and greenways, local retail businesses that are near housing and services, and construction practices that are environmentally sensitive. In suburbia, may be a new town center or in cities, may be called an urban village.

Node Development

Nodes are small scale mixed use districts that provide basic services and conveniences to the surrounding neighborhood such as a small grocery, restaurant, pharmacy, or cleaning service.

Overlay Zoning

A zoning district, applied over one or more other districts that contains additional provisions for special features or conditions, such as historic buildings, affordable housing, or wetlands.

Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT)

Generally refers to arrangements under which governments exempt certain properties (e.g. public housing) or entities from real property or other taxes, but entity agrees to make some type of annual payment to the taxing entity, usually at a lower level than would be due under full taxation.

Peer to Peer

A technical assistance program administered by DHCD through which it provides small grants to local officials for short term problem solving.

Per Capita

Latin for “by heads”. A measurement that is presented in terms of units per person, as opposed to a total aggregate figure.

Quality of Life

The level of enjoyment and fulfillment derived by humans for the life they live within their local economic, cultural, social, and environmental conditions. The Jacksonville Community Council defines quality of life as the “feeling of well-being, fulfillment, or satisfaction resulting from factors in the external environments.” Quality of life, in this sense, is most directly measured using subjective indicators. However, objective indicators are often used to track the external conditions that affect quality of life.

Regional Planning Agencies (RPAs)

Public agencies that coordinate planning in each of thirteen regions of the state. They are empowered to undertake studies of resources, problems, possibilities and needs of their districts. They provide professional expertise to communities in areas such as master planning, affordable housing and open space plan, and traffic impact studies. With the exception of the Cape Cod and Nantucket Commissions, however, which are land use regulatory agencies as well as planning agencies, the RPAs serve in an advisory capacity only.

Report/Retirement/Artistic Communities (RRA)

Under a classification system devised by the Massachusetts Department of Revenue (DOR), four towns in South Berkshire County qualify as RRA communities: Egremont, Sheffield, Stockbridge, and West Stockbridge. Lenox is identified as a “growth community”. Lee, a “rural economic center”, and Great Barrington an “urbanized center”. (Footnote: Massachusetts Department of Revenue (DOR), “Kind of Community” Report, 904b.xls). See Appendix 4.

Smart Growth

A land use planning technique in response to the problems associated with unplanned, unlimited suburban development. Smart growth principles call for more efficient land use, compact development patterns, less dependence on the automobile, a range of diverse housing opportunities and choices, equitable allocation of costs and benefits of development, and an improved job/housing balance. Examples of smart growth development and planning include:

- Providing for mixed-use development in and near town and village centers
- Locating housing in close proximity of public transit
- Allowing higher density mixed use development near transit stops, along commercial corridors, or in town and village centers
- Redeveloping environmentally impacted or brownfield sites
- Restoring vacant, underutilized or abandoned building for productive use
- Encouraging the development of housing and preservation of open space so that the goals of each will be mutually satisfied using techniques such as cluster zoning, transfer of development rights, or other innovative zoning or regulatory devices
- Promoting the redevelopment of vacant infill parcels
- Participating in regional responses addressing housing, natural resource, transportation, public service, and employment needs

Massachusetts Smart Growth/Sustainable Development Principles

- 1. Redevelop First.** Revitalize community centers and neighborhoods. Encourage reuse and rehabilitation of existing infrastructure. Redevelop brownfields, reuse of historic structures, rehabilitate existing homes and schools.
- 2. Concentrate Development.** Support development that is compact, conserves land, integrates uses, and fosters a sense of place. Create walkable districts. Mix commercial, civic, cultural, educational and recreational activities with open space and housing for diverse communities.
- 3. Be Fair.** Share benefits and burdens of development equally. Provide technical and strategic support for inclusive community planning to ensure social, economic, and environmental justice. Make regulatory and permitting processes for development clear, transparent, cost-effective, and oriented to encourage smart growth and regional equity.
- 4. Restore And Enhance The Environment.** Expand land and water conservation. Protect and restore environmentally sensitive lands, natural resources, wildlife habitats, and cultural and historic landscapes. Preserve critical habitat and biodiversity.
- 5. Conserve Natural Resources.** Increase our supply of renewable energy and reduce waste of water, energy and materials.. Construct and promote buildings and infrastructure that use land, energy, water and materials efficiently.
- 6. Expand Housing Opportunities.** Support the construction and rehabilitation of housing to meet the needs of people of all abilities, income levels and household types. Develop housing, particularly multifamily, compatible with a community's character and vision.
- 7. Provide Transportation Choice.** Increase access to transportation options, in all communities, including land- and water-based public transit, bicycling, and walking. Invest strategically in transportation infrastructure to encourage smart growth.
- 8. Increase Job Opportunities.** Attract businesses with good jobs to locations near housing, infrastructure, water, and transportation options. Support the growth of new and existing local businesses.
- 9. Foster Sustainable Businesses.** Strengthen sustainable natural resource-based businesses, including agriculture, forestry and fisheries in industry clusters consistent with regional and local character. Reduce dependence on imported fossil fuels.
- 10. Plan Regionally.** Support the development and implementation of local and regional plans that have broad public support and are consistent with these principles. Consider the long-term costs and benefits to the larger Commonwealth.

Smart Codes

Modification of existing state building codes to allow realistic construction requirements/costs for older buildings. New Jersey and Maryland, for instance, encourage rehabilitation by amendments that cut the costs and time of rehab work.

Smart Growth Incentives

Use of tax and planning incentives by state and local governments to promote sustainable growth in developed areas and discourage growth in green areas. For instance, state funding is funneled to schools in dense, built areas and not provided for schools in new areas with no infrastructure.

Stakeholder

Participant in a community mobilization effort, representing a particular segment of society. School board members, environmental organizations, selected officials, chambers of commerce representatives, neighborhood advisory council members and religious leaders are all examples of local stakeholders.

Strip Development

A commercial or retail development, usually one-store deep, that fronts on a major street.

South Route 7 Corridor Area

For purposes of this Master Plan, "South Berkshire" means the seven-town area including Sheffield, Egremont, Great Barrington, Lee, Lenox, Stockbridge and West Stockbridge.

Streetscape

The surface vehicle and pedestrian components of a public right of way including roadway pavement and curbing, parking areas, sidewalks, street trees and pits, public signage and traffic control devices, cross-walk treatments, and street furniture such as benches, trash receptacles, and lighting fixtures.

Sustainability

A sustainable society is one that is healthy, vital, resilient, and able to creatively adapt to changing conditions over the long-term. Sustainable Seattle defines it as the long-term health and vitality of cultural, economic, environmental and social systems.

Sustainable Development

The United Nations Commission on Environment and Development defines it as "development which meets the needs of the present without endangering the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (*Our Common Future*, 1987). Sustainable Seattle describes it as economic and social changes that promote human prosperity and quality of life without causing ecological or social damage.

SWOT Workshop

A interactive public participation process in which the format is to identify the community's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. These terms can be further defined as follows:

- **"Strengths"** are the already existing positive qualities of a place that should be built upon.
- **"Weaknesses"** are the aspects of a place that are obstacles to desired change and must be addressed if progress is to be made toward the future.
- **"Opportunities"** are areas where a place's strengths or potential strengths align with long term trends, giving that place a competitive advantage. Pursuing opportunities today can ensure long term economic health.
- **"Threats"** are emerging or long term trends that could destabilize a place's economic health.

Transfer of Development Rights (TDR)

The conveyance of development rights by deed, easement or other legal instrument from one parcel of land to another. It is a mechanism used to encourage development in certain areas and not in others.

Transit Oriented Development (TOD)

Mixed-use, higher density development centered on existing or new transportation facilities (including bus, rail, automobile, bicycle and pedestrian). In many cities, neighborhood redevelopment strategies are increasingly centered on TOD.

Universal Design/Universal Access

Products and buildings that are accessible and usable by everyone, including people with disabilities.

Urban Growth Boundary (UGB)

A locally designated boundary for projected growth that restricts zoning and services inside the boundary. Inner city neighborhoods are often found within UGBs, which may in turn help concentrate resources inside growth neighborhoods.

Housing Terms & Definitions

Affordable Housing

A subjective term. As used in this Master Plan, it includes workforce and moderate-income housing and housing generally affordable to the community, not just households earning no more than 80% of the area median income at a cost that is no more than 30% of total household income.

Affordable Price

This means the sale price affordable to households at the median family income in each town. CHAPA defines “Affordable Purchase Price” as monthly housing costs equal to 28% of the family income, with a 30-year mortgage at 8.25% interest, 10% down payment.

Affordable Housing Program (AHP)

An affordable housing program run by the Federal Home Loan Bank (FHLB) system, AHP provides grants and subsidized interest rates on advances to its member institutions for low and moderate-income housing.

Affordable Housing Trust Fund

See “Housing Trust Funds” and “Massachusetts Affordable Housing Trust Fund” below.

Affordability Gap

This means the difference between prevailing home prices and what households in a given income range can afford to pay for housing costs. A comparison is made between median single-family home sale prices to the home buying power of a town’s median family income.

Alternative Housing Voucher Program(AHVP)

A DHCD rent subsidy program funded by the State for people under 60 with disabilities on waiting lists for public housing.

Area Median Income (AMI)

The estimated median income, adjusted for family size, by metropolitan area (or county, in non-metropolitan areas). AMI is updated annually by HUD and used as the basis of eligibility for most housing assistance programs. Sometimes referred to as “MFI,” or median family income.

Chapter 40B

The State’s comprehensive permit law, enacted in 1969, which established an affordable housing goal of 10% for every community. In communities below the 10% goal, developers of low and moderate income housing can seek an expedited local review under the **comprehensive permit** process and can request a limited waiver of local zoning and other restrictions which hamper construction of affordable housing. Developers can appeal to the State if their application is denied or approved with conditions that render it uneconomic and the State can overturn the local decision if it finds it unreasonable in light of the need for affordable housing. (Chapter 774 of the Acts of 1969; M.G.L. c.40B §20-23); see also Comprehensive Permit)

Chapter 40B Unit

A housing unit that is (a) made affordable to low- or moderate-income households by a state or federal housing development subsidy, and (b) included or eligible for inclusion in the state's inventory of low- and moderate-income housing. Chapter 40B units count toward each community's 10% low- and moderate-income housing threshold, which determines a developer's right of appeal to the state's Housing Appeals Committee (HAC).

Chapter 121D

(See “Massachusetts Affordable Housing Trust Fund”)

Chapter 667¹

State public housing program. Administered by Local Housing Authorities (LHAs), provides rental housing for low-income elderly (age 60+) and handicapped persons.

Chapters 167 & 689²

State public housing programs. Administered by Local Housing Authorities (LHAs), they provide rental housing with specialized services for low-income persons with mental illness, mental retardation or physical disabilities.

Chapters 200 & 705³

State public housing programs. Administered by Local Housing Authorities (LHAs), they provide rental housing for families. Chapter 200 housing developments were constructed in the 1940s and 50s, originally to house low-income veterans. The program was replaced in the 1960s by the 705 program, with the goal of providing smaller-scale housing (maximum 24 units), in neighborhood settings, for low-income families. During the late 1980s and early 90s, some 705 funding was made available to allow LHAs to purchase units on the private market.

Citizen's Housing and Planning Association (CHAPA)

A Massachusetts-based non-profit umbrella organization advocating for affordable housing.

Citizen Planner Training Collaborative (CPTC)

A professional education initiative affiliated with UMASS that provides local planning and zoning officials with tools, training and information about land use planning.

Co-Housing

A hybrid form of housing that combines private and communal forms of living. Residents occupy individual, complete living units, but may share additional kitchen, dining and recreational facilities with other residents. Ownership and design may take a variety of forms.

Community Action Agency (CAA)

CAAs, sometimes called CAP agencies, are publicly and privately funded agencies that provide social services, such as fuel assistance, daycare and education to low-income residents. By law, the State must distribute at least 90% of its federal Community Services Block Grant funds to CAAs. The State also contracts with CAA's to operate its fuel assistance and weatherization programs. CAAs may also be involved in the development and management of affordable housing.

Community Development Advance

A reduced-rate advance (loan) that may be accessed by FHLB member institutions to help finance the purchase, construction, rehabilitation, or predevelopment financing to projects in income-eligible neighborhoods.

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)

HUD program that provides flexible annual grants on an entitlement basis, by formula, directly to states and larger communities (population over 50,000) for activities benefiting low and moderate income people, including housing, community development, economic development, services.

Community Development Corporation (CDC)

A form of community-based organization engaged in local housing and economic development activities. Although CDCs vary in size and scope, most are nonprofit, tax-exempt 501(c) 3 organizations. Under Massachusetts's law, CDCs must be located in and serve a designated community where the median family income is below 85% of the regional median family income. There are 67 CDCs operating in Massachusetts today.

Community Development Finance Corporation: (CDFC)

A state quasi-public agency, created in 1975, to provide flexible financing for small business, commercial development and housing ventures expected to provide a public benefit. (increased employment and affordable housing opportunities in targeted low-income areas). It works in partnership with community development corporations (CDCs).

¹ There has been limited funding for the creation of new units under any of these public housing programs in recent years.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI)

An organization certified by the US Department of the Treasury as a lending institution that has a primary mission of promoting community development. To be certified, the organization must serve a target market, offer development services, maintain accountability, and be a non-government controlled legal entity. CDFIs provide a wide range of financial products and services, including mortgage financing, commercial loans, financing for community facilities, and financial services needed by low income households. Some also provide technical assistance.

Community Development Fund (CDF)

A component of the Massachusetts Community Development Block Grant Program, CDF supports revitalization efforts and addresses the needs of low and moderate-income residents by supporting housing, community and economic development activities in Massachusetts cities and towns.

Community Housing Development Organizations (CHDOs)

Nonprofit community-based organizations that meet certain HUD criteria and thus qualify to apply for HOME funding set-aside specifically for non-profits.

Comprehensive Permit

Expedited permitting process for developers building affordable housing under Chapter 774 “anti-snob zoning” law. A comprehensive permit, rather than multiple individual permits from various local boards, is issued by local zoning boards of appeals to qualifying developers. Comprehensive permits are not authorized in communities that meet the following State standards including:

- 10% or more of housing stock in existence is subsidized.
- At least 1.5% of land zoned for residential, commercial or industrial use is utilized for subsidized housing.

Community Services Block Grant (CSBG)

Federal poverty reduction program created to provide services to encourage self-sufficiency for low-income families and individuals. CSBG provides funding to the state’s 25 Community Action Agencies (CAAs) for a wide range of social service programs including housing assistance, child care, youth and family development, elder services, fuel assistance and many others.

Condominium

A type of real estate ownership in which owners own their own units plus an undivided share of all common areas. In Massachusetts, condominiums are established under MGL Chapter 183A. Limited equity condominiums are those where the resale price is regulated, through a deed covenant, a regulatory agreement, a land trust or other mechanism.

Congregate Housing

Housing accommodation that offers separate rooms or apartments but provides shared activities of daily living with other residents. May be rental or ownership.

Consolidated Plan (ConPlan)

A combination planning document and performance report required of states and communities receiving HUD block grants. The ConPlan establishes local housing needs and priorities, and HUD uses it to assess proposed local housing policies and funding requests. Applicants for funding under any of 17 other HUD programs must show that their application is consistent with the local ConPlan. The ConPlan has several components, including: housing and community development needs analyses, an annual action plan, and an annual performance report.

Co-operative: (co-op)

A form of shared ownership housing where all residents own stock in the corporation that owns the property. They do not own their own units, but co-op share ownership entitles a resident to a long-term lease on a unit and a vote in the governance of the property. Limited equity cooperatives are a form of affordable, resident-controlled homeownership in which the individual share purchase prices are very low so that the resident does not need mortgage financing to buy in. Like rental properties, co-ops may be syndicated to raise money for the construction.

Deferred loan (or “deferred payment second mortgage”)

Debt (borrowed money), often from a public or charitable source, repayment of which may be postponed for a specified period of time, indefinitely, or forgiven entirely. A commonly used financing mechanism to support affordable housing.

Emergency Assistance (EA)

A state program to assist low-income pregnant women and households with children who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness.

Emergency Shelter Grants (ESG)

A federal program designed to improve the quality of existing emergency shelters for homeless people, provide additional shelters and transitional housing, meet shelter operating costs, provide essential services to homeless individuals, and support programs to end homelessness. Funding is provided to states and cities according to CDBG formula.

Executive Order 215

State executive order, issued in 1982 but not enforced, which required all state agencies to withhold discretionary development-related state assistance from municipalities that were unreasonably restrictive in their housing practices.

Expiring Use Restrictions (EUR)

Refers to affordable housing where the restrictions on rents and/or incomes of occupants could or will expire in the near future if owners prepay their publicly assisted mortgages and convert the units to market rate housing. The units were built with federal and/or state subsidies (such as low cost mortgages, interest subsidies, rent subsidies and loan guarantees). While mortgages and other assistance often had terms as long as 30-40 years, many gave owners the option to prepay the mortgage after 20 years and thus remove use restrictions on the property.

Extremely Low-Income

Household income below 30% of area median, as defined by HUD for its own programmatic purposes.

Factory-built Housing

Any home that is built in a factory setting as opposed to on site. This can include manufactured and modular homes as well as pre-cut (in which building materials are factory-cut to design specifications then transported to the site for assembly) and panelized units (in which panels—a whole wall with windows, doors, wiring and outside siding—are transported to the site and assembled).

Fair Housing Act

Federal legislation, first enacted in 1968 and expanded by amendments in 1974 and 1988, that provides the Secretary of HUD with investigation and enforcement responsibilities for fair housing practices. Prohibits discrimination in housing and lending based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, handicap, or familial status. There is also a Massachusetts Fair Housing Act, which extends the prohibition against discrimination to sexual orientation, marital status, ancestry, veteran status, children, and age. The state law also prohibits discrimination against families receiving public assistance or rental subsidies, or because of any requirement of these programs.

Fair Market Rents: (FMRs)

Maximum rents allowed by HUD in the Section 8 rental assistance program. Updated and published annually, FMRs represent HUD's estimate of the actual market rent for an apartment in the conventional marketplace. HUD sets FMRs by unit size (0-bedroom, 1-bedroom, etc.) and regions within each state. The current FMRs are posted on HUD's website at <http://www.huduser.org/datasets/fmr.html>

Family Self Sufficiency (FSS)

Program Family Self-Sufficiency is a HUD program for public housing and Section 8 tenants. Tenants who choose to participate sign a contract outlining progress they seek to make toward economic self-sufficiency over five years; in exchange, local housing agencies commit to provide appropriate services (day care, training, etc.) to help tenants meet goals and put any rent increases which may occur as participant incomes rise into an escrow account for tenants to use at end of program.

Family Unification Program

A HUD Section 8 rent subsidy program which provides rent subsidies to families, including victims of domestic violence, at risk of losing their children to foster care (or unable to regain them) due to lack of housing.

Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC)

Federal agency established in 1933 that guarantees (within limits) funds on deposit in member banks and thrift institutions and performs other functions such as making loans to or buying assets from member institutions to facilitate mergers or prevent failures. Regulates some banks under the Community Reinvestment Act.

Federal Home Loan Bank System (FHLB)

Created by Congress in 1932, the FHLB System's public policy mission is to support residential mortgage lending and related community investment through its member financial institutions. The System fulfills its mission by providing members with access to reliable, economical funding and technical assistance, as well as special affordable housing programs. Federal Home Loan Banks are government sponsored enterprises, federally chartered but privately capitalized and independently managed.

Federal Home Loan Bank of Boston (FHLBB)

One of the 12 district banks, the FHLBB covers the 6 New England states and is owned by more than 460 New England financial institutions. A wholesale bank (a bank for banks), it provides access to credit for its members and administers several programs to promote community development and expand affordable housing.

Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation (FHLMC or Freddie Mac)

Congressionally chartered agency established in 1970 (and privatized in 1989) to buy qualifying residential mortgages from originating lenders. The loans are either kept in portfolio or packaged and sold as securities. Freddie Mac also offers programs with more flexible underwriting guidelines for lower income homebuyers. With Fannie Mae, the corporation's activity has helped to create an enormous secondary mortgage market.

Federal Housing Administration (FHA)

Federally sponsored agency, now a division of HUD, that insures lenders against loss on residential mortgages. It was founded in 1934 in response to the Great Depression to execute the provisions of the National Housing Act.

Federal Housing Finance Board (FHFB)

U.S. government agency created by Congress in 1989 to assume oversight of the Federal Home Loan Bank System from the dismantled Federal Home Loan Bank Board.

FHA Insurance

Insurance program by which the federal government stimulates new housing production. When a mortgage is FHA insured, the Federal government promises to buy it from the lender at full value if there is any default.

Federal National Mortgage Association: (FNMA or Fannie Mae)

Created in 1938 to purchase FHA, and later VA and conventional mortgages, Fannie Mae is now a privately-owned and managed, federally chartered corporation, the largest source of home mortgage funds in the United States. It buys qualifying residential mortgages from originating lenders and either keeps them in portfolio or packages and sells them as securities. Fannie Mae also offers programs with more flexible underwriting guidelines for lower income homebuyers.

Federal Reserve Board: (FRB)

Governing board of the Federal Reserve System. Its seven members are appointed by the President of the United States, subject to Senate confirmation, and serve 14-year terms. The Board establishes Federal Reserve System policies on such key matters as reserve requirements and other bank regulations, sets the discount rates, and tightens or loosens the availability of credit in the economy.

"Friendly" Comprehensive Permit

A comprehensive permit that meets or closely approximates local affordable housing guidelines, or that a community has actively recruited, such as by procuring for a developer to build low-income housing on a parcel of town-owned land.

Fuel Assistance

DHCD program, using federal LIHEAP—low income heating assistance programs—funds, which makes grants to low-income families, elders and people with disabilities to help pay winter heating costs.

Government National Mortgage Association (GNMA or Ginnie Mae)

An agency of HUD, Ginnie Mae guarantees payment on mortgage-backed pass-through-securities, which represent pools of residential mortgages insured or guaranteed by the FHA, the Veterans Administration, or the Rural Housing Service. It also manages a portfolio of federally owned mortgages. It does not purchase loans.

Government Sponsored Enterprise (GSE)

An enterprise established by the federal government but privately owned and operated. These enterprises are excluded from the budget totals because they are classified as private entities. However, financial information concerning them is included in the budget. Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac are GSEs, as are the Federal Home Loan Banks.

Heating Energy Assistance Retrofit Task Weatherization Assistance Program (HEARTWAP)

A state-run weatherization program providing emergency heating system repairs, tune-ups, retrofits, etc. to low income households.

HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME)

A federal program run by HUD which provides annual grants on an entitlement basis to states, large cities and consortia of smaller communities for affordable housing activities, including homeownership, rent subsidies, housing development and rehabilitation.

Home Modifications Loan Program

A newly established state funded loan program that provides loans for access modifications to the principal residence of elders, adults with disabilities and families with children with disabilities. Based on income eligibility, from \$1,000-25,000 may be extended as a deferred payment loan, due upon sale or transfer of the property, or as a low interest amortizing loan. The loans are secured by a mortgage lien on the property.

Home Mortgage Disclosure Act: (HMDA)

A federal law enacted in 1975 (and amended in 1989) that requires home mortgage lenders to compile and make available information on every mortgage loan application received. Such information includes the race, sex, and income of the potential borrower and the disposition of the application.

Homelessness Intercept Program (HIP)

DHCD program to help homeless families find permanent housing and to help families at risk of homelessness.

HOP (Homeownership Opportunities Program)

DHCD program that is no longer in effect which provided 5%-down MassHousing mortgages with state-funded interest subsidies to first time homebuyers purchasing homes in developments where developer reserved at least 30% of units for buyers earning less than 80% of median. Some units were sold to LHAs for family public housing.

HOPE VI

A federal program (aka the Urban Revitalization Program) that provides funding for the revitalization of severely distressed or obsolete public housing sites. Funds can be used for demolition or rehabilitation of units; construction of replacement units; rental assistance to tenants who are displaced; provision of self-sufficiency services for tenants; and for programs designed to improve management.

Housing Appeals Committee (HAC)

A quasi-judicial body within DHCD, which hears appeals by developers, local zoning boards on comprehensive permit (Chapter 40B) decisions by local Zoning Boards of Appeal.

Housing Choice Voucher Program (See "Section 8")**Housing Consumer Education Centers**

A statewide information and referral network that assists tenants, landlords, current and prospective homeowners with their housing problems. The Centers are located at agencies that provide a variety of housing services throughout Massachusetts.

Housing Cost Burden

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

Housing Development Support Program (HDSP, or Heads Up)

A component of the Massachusetts Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program, "Heads Up" provides gap financing for affordable housing projects of seven units or less, in smaller communities.

Housing Innovations Fund (HIF)

State funded program, using bond proceeds to help finance innovative forms of affordable housing, such as SROs, transitional housing, limited equity cooperatives and community residences and to preserve existing affordable housing developments.

Housing Opportunities for People With AIDS (HOPWA)

Federal program that provides funds to states and cities for housing assistance and supportive services for low-income people with HIV/AIDS and their families.

Housing Services Program

State-funded program to prevent homelessness and assist tenants, landlords and homeowners with housing problems and questions.

Housing Stabilization Fund (HSF)

State program using bond proceeds to fund a variety of activities including homeownership, affordable housing development and preservation, demolition of abandoned housing, and local match to federal HOME grants.

Housing Trust Fund

A fund established by state legislation or local ordinance that uses public funds to finance the construction or renovation of affordable housing. The fund typically has a dedicated, ongoing source of revenue. Most are administered by a public agency, but foundations or other entities administer some.

Limited Equity Homeownership

Ownership housing in which resale values are restricted in order to maintain the long-term affordability of the units. A technique often used for housing developed with public assistance in order to reduce development costs (e.g. funding, relaxed zoning regulations, discounted sale of public land). Can take the form of a cooperative, a condominium or fee simple ownership.

Local and Regional Housing Authorities (LHAs)

A housing authority set up by a city or town, or group of towns, in accordance with state law to provide low-income family or elderly housing.

Local Initiative Program (LIP)

A state program under which communities may use local resources and DHCD technical assistance to develop affordable housing that is eligible for inclusion on the State Housing Inventory. LIP is not a financing program, but the DHCD technical assistance qualifies as a subsidy and enables locally supported developments that do not require other financial subsidies to use the comprehensive permit process. At least 25% of the units must be set aside as affordable to households earning less than 80% of the area median.

Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)

Local Initiatives Support Corporation is a national nonprofit organization established to help resident-led, community-based development organizations transform distressed communities and neighborhoods into healthy ones. By providing capital, technical expertise, training, and information, LISC supports the development of local leadership and the creation of affordable housing, commercial, industrial and community facilities, businesses, and jobs.

Low-Income Household

Household income below 80% of metropolitan area median, as defined by HUD, for its own programmatic purposes. (Note: 80% of median income is still considered by many to be moderate income and 50% of median to be low-income. These were the standards that had been used for more than 25 years until HUD changed them in the mid-1990s.)

Low- and Moderate-Income Housing(or abbreviated, low-income housing)

Housing affordable to persons with incomes at or below 80% of the median family income for the metro- or non-metro area where they live, as set annually by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Low-Income Heating Assistance Program (LIHEAP)

The federal program which provides funds to states for Fuel Assistance programs.

Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC)

Federal tax credit for developers of affordable housing. States receive an annual dollar value of credits, which they then allocate to qualifying projects based on priorities established in a state allocation plan. DHCD is the allocating agency for Massachusetts.

Manufactured Homes

Homes built entirely in the factory under a federal building code administered by HUD. The Federal Manufactured Home Construction and Safety Standards (commonly known as the HUD Code) went into effect June 15, 1976. Manufactured homes may be single- or multi-section and are transported to the site and installed. The Federal standards regulate manufactured housing design and construction, strength and durability, transportability, fire resistance, energy efficiency, and quality.

Massachusetts Affordable Housing Trust Fund (ATHF)

A \$100 million revolving trust fund (\$20 million per year for five years) established by the Massachusetts Legislature as Section 227 of Chapter 159 of the Acts of 2000, and now known as Chapter 121D. Administered by MassHousing, ATHF functions as a gap filler, the last funding piece necessary to make an affordable housing development financially feasible and sustainable for the long term. Funding is typically in the form of deferred payment loans. (ATHF is also a common acronym for affordable housing trust funds in general. See “Housing Trust Fund.”)

MassHousing (formerly the Massachusetts Housing Finance Agency, MHFA)

A quasi-public agency created in 1966 to help finance affordable housing programs. MassHousing sells both tax-exempt and taxable bonds to finance its many single-family and multi-family programs. MassHousing bonds have financed over 70,000 rental units in mixed income projects and over 35,000 home mortgages and home improvement loans. The Agency oversees and regulates the properties it has assisted, and runs a number of other programs, some on behalf of HUD and DHCD.

Massachusetts Housing Investment Corporation (MHIC)

A private, non-profit corporation which provides loans for affordable housing, equity funds for low-income housing tax credit (LIHTC) developments and loan guarantees for lead paint abatement loans. Created in 1991 by a consortium of banks, MHIC also administers a bridge financing program for tax credit projects in conjunction with the Massachusetts Housing Partnership Fund.

Massachusetts Housing Partnership Fund (MHP)

A quasi-public agency created by the Legislature in 1985 to support affordable housing and neighborhood development. It is funded by state-mandated contributions from interstate banks and has received State funds as well. A seven-member board appointed by the Governor and the state’s banking industry governs it. MHP provides technical assistance and below-market financing to nonprofit and for-profit developers and public agencies. It offers both long term fixed-rate financing and bridge loans for affordable rental housing, runs the “Soft Second” program for first time homebuyers together with DHCD, and provides funds to assess the feasibility of potential projects.

Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC)

A state agency that assists individuals with disabilities to live independently and go to work. MRC is the agency responsible for vocational rehabilitation and independent living services and for determining eligibility for federal SSI/SSDI benefits for Massachusetts citizens with disabilities.

Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP)

A state-funded rental assistance program begun in November 1992, as a revised version of the state’s previous rental assistance program (Chapter 707). It has both a project-based component and a tenant-based component.

McKinney Act/McKinney Programs

The Stewart B. McKinney Federal Homeless Assistance Act of 1987 established a number of federal programs through HUD, HHS and other agencies to provide housing and services to homeless families and individuals as well as those at risk of homelessness.

McKinney Emergency Community Services Homeless Grant (EHP)

A federal program providing annual grants from HHS to states for distribution to CAAs to provide services to the homeless.

Metropolitan Statistical Area: (MSA)

The term is also used for CMSAs (consolidated metropolitan statistical areas), and PMSAs (primary metropolitan statistical areas), geographic units used for defining urban areas that are based largely on commuting patterns. Office of Management and Budget defines metropolitan areas for statistical purposes only, but many federal agencies use them for programmatic purposes, including allocating federal funds and determining program eligibility. HUD uses MSAs as its basis for setting income guidelines and fair market rents.

Mixed Income Housing Development

Development that includes housing for various income levels. In urban neighborhoods, it is a tool to deconcentrate poverty. In suburban neighborhoods, it is a design principle that designates a percentage of housing to different price ranges and may include persons with very low incomes.

Mobile Homes

Factory-built home produced prior to June 15, 1976, when the HUD Code went into effect. By 1970, mobile homes were built to voluntary industry standards that were eventually enforced by 45 of the 48 contiguous states.

Moderate-Income Household

A household (1 + persons) whose gross monthly income is at or below 80% of the median family income for the applicable metropolitan or non-metropolitan area.

Modular Homes

Factory-built home built to applicable State, local, or regional codes where the home will be located. Modules are transported to the site and installed.

Mortgage

Debt instrument by which the borrower (mortgagor) gives the lender (mortgagee) a lien on property as security for the repayment of a loan. The borrower has use of the property, and the lien is removed when the obligation is fully paid. A mortgage normally involves real estate, and is commonly used to purchase a house.

Mortgage Banker

Company, or individual, that originates mortgage loans, sells them to other investors, services the monthly payments, keeps related records, and acts as escrow agent to disperse funds for taxes and insurance. A mortgage banker's income derives from origination and servicing fees, profits on the resale of loans, and the spread between mortgage yields and the interest paid on borrowings while a particular mortgage is held before resale.

NeighborWorks Network®: (NWOs)

A nationwide network of community-based, locally-controlled nonprofits, NeighborWorks® organizations develop resident leadership, increase homeownership, produce and preserve affordable housing, and develop special programs such as commercial revitalization and economic development. Each NWO is an autonomous organization governed by local residents, business leaders and government officials. There are 12 NWOs in Massachusetts chartered by the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation (see below), including CDCs and Neighborhood Housing Services (the predecessor to NW). All receive operating assistance and capital investment from NR.

Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation (NR)

A Congressionally chartered, federally funded, nonprofit corporation established in 1978 to assist in the revitalization of lower income neighborhoods. Its four core business areas: capacity building, affordable housing, resident leadership and community-based economic development. Services are provided to and through local Neighbor Works® organizations. Support includes training, operational grants, capital investments, and technical assistance. NR also advances broader community goals and provides broader training through national Neighborhood Reinvestment Training Institutes.

New England Fund (NEF)

An affordable housing program run by the Federal Home Loan Bank of Boston (FHLBB), NEF provides advances (loans) to member financial institutions to finance affordable housing. NEF is one of the most widely used programs for the development of new mixed income ownership housing under the comprehensive permit.

New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC)

A new federal program (enacted by Congress in December 2000) that authorizes tax credits in an amount expected to generate \$15 billion for the financing of economic development in low-income communities by 2007. The tax credits are

available to investors in “community development entities,” which will use the proceeds to make loans and investments in businesses located in low-income communities.

Expected to bridge financing gaps; create new partnerships among investors, communities, businesses, and government; and generate jobs, services and revitalization in distressed areas, in much the same way that LIHTCs did for affordable housing. A list of NMTC community development entities by state is available at <http://www.cdfifund.gov/programs/nmtc/index.asp>

Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA)

A notice by HUD to inform potential applicants that program funding is available. The NOFA outlines the application process and timetable, program requirements, and includes names and addresses of agency personnel to contact for application forms and information.

Project Based Assistance (PBA)

Term used to describe rental assistance which is assigned to a specific housing unit or housing development. Also refers to a specific Section 8 program.

Property and Casualty Initiative: (PCI)

A private community development loan fund capitalized by a consortium of twenty-six Massachusetts property and casualty insurance companies in 1999. PCI lends to a range of community development projects including affordable housing. It makes most of its loans directly, but may also participate with other community lenders.

Public Housing Agency (PHA)

A public entity which operates housing programs: includes state housing agencies (including DHCD), housing finance agencies and local housing authorities. This is a HUD definition, which describes the entities that are permitted to receive funds under or administer a wide range of HUD programs, including public housing and Section 8 rental assistance. It includes not only local housing authorities, but also state housing agencies, such as DHCD.

Regional Non-profits

Nine private, non-profit housing agencies who administer the Section 8 program on a statewide basis, under contract with DHCD. Each agency serves a wide geographic region. Collectively, they cover the entire state and administer over 15,000 Section 8 certificates and vouchers. In addition to administering Section 8 subsidies, they administer state-funded rental assistance (MRVP) in communities without participating LHAs. They also develop affordable housing and run housing rehabilitation and weatherization programs, operate homeless shelters, run homeless prevention and first-time homebuyer programs, and technical assistance and training programs for communities.

Rent Supplement (RS)

Program See “Section 8 Existing Loan Management Set Aside”

Rental Development Action Grant: (RDAL)

A DHCD program providing operating assistance through a loan to affordable housing projects.

Rental Rehabilitation

Grants to cities and states for rental housing rehabilitation. These grants, authorized by Section 17 of the Housing Act of 1937, as amended by the Housing and Urban-Rural Recovery Act of 1983, are designed to attract private financing to rehabilitation.

Rural Housing Service (RHS)

RHS, formerly Farmers’ Home Administration, is part of the US Department of Agriculture. It runs a number of housing programs for people living in non-urban communities with populations of up to 20,000, providing low-cost mortgages, loan guarantees, repair and rehabilitation loans to low-income homeowners. It also has programs to build affordable rental housing and has financed over 2,000 units in Massachusetts.

Seasonal Home (or seasonal housing unit)

Generally, a home other than the owner’s principal residence and which the owner occupies for only a portion of the year.

Secondary Mortgage Market:

Institutions—including, but not limited to, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac—that purchase home mortgages from originating lenders, providing liquidity to the mortgage market. They affect the housing market by increasing the supply

of funds local lenders have to lend. They also influence the types and pricing of mortgages lenders offer, and the underwriting standards they use (e.g. down payment and credit requirements, loan to value ratios, how rental income is counted in 2-4 family properties) by what they are willing to purchase.

Section 8

Refers to the major federal (HUD) program— actually a collection of programs—providing rental assistance to low-income households to help them pay for housing. Participating tenants pay 30% of their income (some can pay more) for housing (rent and basic utilities) and federal subsidy pays balance of rent. Now officially called the Housing Choice Voucher Program.

Section 8 for Homeownership Initiative

A new program that allows rental assistance recipients to use their vouchers to qualify for a mortgage. Participants must earn a minimum of \$10,300/year, work full-time, and be purchasing a single-family home.

Section 108 Loan Guarantees

A loan guarantee program within the CDBG Program under which entitlement communities may borrow up to five times their most recent annual CDBG allocations to fund additional housing rehabilitation or economic development activities.

Section 202

Federal competitive grant program provides capital advances to nonprofit organizations for the construction or rehabilitation of rental housing for very low-income elderly and/or handicapped persons. Advances are interest-free and need not be repaid if housing remains available for very low-income for at least forty years.

Section 221d3 program (HUD)

Active between 1961 and 1968, the program provided HUD interest subsidies on mortgages obtained from private lenders to bring the interest rate to 3%. The FHA also insures the mortgage. Initial income limits for admissions were 95% of median; now the limit is 80% of median with some priority given to very low-income households (earning under 50% of median).

Section 236 program: (HUD)

Active between 1968 and 1973 (though some mortgages started as late as 1980). This program provided HUD interest subsidies on mortgages obtained from private lenders to bring the interest rate to 1%. HUD (FHA) also insured the loans.

Severe Housing Problems

As used by HUD in defining priorities, severe housing problems are homelessness, displacement, housing cost burden above 50% of income, occupancy of housing with serious physical problems. Data on severe housing problems drawn from the American Housing Survey measures only cost burden and physical problems.

SHARP

State Housing Assistance for Rental Production -- a state funded multi-family production program that operated during the 1980s which uses operating budget funds to provide shallow 15 year loans to mixed-income housing projects in which at least 25% of the units were set aside for low-income households. Developers used MASSHOUSING tax-exempt mortgages and the SHARP loan was set at the amount needed to bring the effective interest rate to 5%.

SHOP (Self Help Homeownership Opportunity) Program

A federal program that provides funding to national and regional nonprofit organizations that provide technical assistance to low-income homebuyers in small and rural communities. Program is a complement to the Rural Housing Service self-help (or sweat-equity) housing programs.

Single Room Occupancy: (SRO)

Generally refers to housing units which are not equipped with both individual kitchen and individual bathroom facilities and which are rented for longer than 15 consecutive days. Some units may have kitchenettes and/or bathroom facilities.

Small Cities Program

A federally funded entitlement program, under which DHCD receives an annual grant (about \$38 million/year) of HUD CDBG funds to support housing and community development activities in the communities which do not receive CDBG entitlement funds directly from HUD. Communities apply to DHCD for funds for specific projects.

Soft Second

State first time homebuyer assistance program operated by the Mass Housing Partnership. Buyers obtain a bank mortgage for 75% of the purchase price and the Soft Second program provides a second mortgage for 20% of the price. The interest on the second mortgage may be subsidized for 10 years.

Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI)

This is the official list of units, by municipality, that count toward a community's 10% goal.

Sweat Equity

The equity that is added to a property through the unpaid labor put into its improvement. A method used to help reduce the cost of a home.

Syndication

As used in affordable housing, syndication refers to the raising of equity (investment capital) for low income rental housing through the sale to outside investors of a stream of tax credits.

Syndicated Cooperative

A cooperative owned in part by outside investors who are able to take advantage of federal tax credits.

TELLER (Tax-Exempt Local Loans to Encourage Rental Production)

A state (DHCD) program that is no longer in effect which set aside a portion of the state's tax-exempt bond volume allocation for local housing authorities (LHAs) so LHAs could provide tax-exempt mortgages to private developers of mixed income housing, with 20-40% of units set aside for low-income households.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

Block grant to states administered under the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, which established a new welfare system. The TANF block grant replaced Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). The chief feature of the new system is the abolition of a federal entitlement to cash assistance.

Tenant Assistance Program (TAP)

MassHousing-funded program providing training courses and seminars for residents and property management staff in MassHousing- and HUD-assisted housing, covering topics such as substance abuse and when to intervene, cultural diversity, AIDS awareness and domestic violence.

The Life Initiative (TLI)

A private community investment fund capitalized by a consortium of eleven Massachusetts life insurance companies in 1998. TLI invests in a range of community development activities including affordable housing, channeling most (2/3) of its loans and investments through community loan funds and intermediaries.

Transitional Housing

Temporary housing for families or individuals who do not have permanent housing but require more stability than an emergency shelter.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)

The primary federal agency for health programs, such as Medicaid and Medicare, and public assistance/ income maintenance programs such as Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), SSI and SSDI.

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

The primary federal agency for regulating housing, including fair housing and housing finance. It is also the major federal funding source for affordable housing programs.

Very Low-Income

Household income below 50% of metropolitan area median, as defined by HUD, for its own programmatic purposes. In 1995, 41% of renter households and 18% of owner households were very low-income according to American Housing Survey data.

Voucher

A government payment to, or on behalf of, a household, to be used solely to pay a portion of the household's housing costs.

Weatherization

Whole-house approach to improving the energy efficiency of an existing home. In the whole-house approach, all the energy-impacting systems in the home are examined and improved upon simultaneously, as needed.

Natural Resource Terms & Definitions

Active Recreational Use

Public or private land often improved by facilities such as swings, skateboard parks, ball fields or otherwise attracting widespread use or organized sporting events.

Agricultural Lands

Lands currently or formerly used for crop cultivation or the raising of livestock, and soils that are desirable to protect for organic or conventional agriculture.

Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) are places in Massachusetts that receive special recognition because of the quality, uniqueness, and significance of their natural and cultural resources. These areas are identified at the community level and are reviewed and designated by the state's Secretary of Environmental Affairs. ACEC designation creates a framework for local and regional stewardship of these resources.

Brownfields

An abandoned, idled, or underused property where expansion or redevelopment is complicated by real or perceived contamination. Brownfield sites include abandoned factories and other industrial facilities, gasoline stations, oil storage facilities, dry cleaning stores, and other businesses that formerly dealt with polluting substances.

Conservation Lands

Sites permanently protected in their natural state as wildlife habitat, vegetative buffer zones, open and forested areas of ecological or agricultural value and scenic beauty, and water supply recharge areas. Conservation land is often in proximity to major wetlands, rivers or water that could allow limited forms of passive recreation (e.g. hiking, fishing, and bird watching). They may also be part of corridors for wildlife habitat or farmland.

Conservation Easement

A legal agreement, often used to preserve rural areas or greenfields, in which a government or nonprofit can purchase a property in return for the guarantee of preserving it from development.

Forestry Lands

Sites currently preserved or managed for cutting and harvesting.

Non-Point Runoff

Surface water entering a channel from no definable discharge source.

Passive Recreational Use

Public or private conservation lands with selected amenities set aside for low-impact non-intrusive public use. (i.e. trails and picnic areas).

Point-Source

A stationary source of a large individual emission, generally of an industrial nature.

Wellhead Protection Areas/Recharge Areas

For public water supplies such as the Sheffield Water Company, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has established multiple zones that require different levels of protection. These zones include the following:

- **Zone I** – A protective land area immediately surrounding a public water supply well, wellfield or spring. Only land uses and activities that are directly related to the water supply are allowed within the area, and DEP requires the water supplier to own the Zone I land. However, some older wells do not comply with these requirements. The methods for determining the size of the Zone I area depends on the type of water supply. For a well, the Zone I consists of a circular land area defined by a 100 to 400 foot radius, typically based on the well's pumping rate. For a spring, the Zone I area is a square arranged such that the spring's outlet is 50 feet up-gradient and centered in relation to the down-gradient side of the square. The size of the square is determined by the maximum yield of the spring (highest historical or average high flow).
- **Zone II** – The area that contributes water to a public water supply well, wellfield or spring that is determined by site-specific conditions, including geology, topography, groundwater flow characteristics, well pumping rate, spring flow rate, and other characteristics.
- **Zone III** – The land area beyond Zone II delineation from which the surface water and groundwater drain into Zone II.

Economic Development Terms & Definitions

Chapter 121A

State law authorizing the creation of Urban Redevelopment Corporations to develop residential, commercial, industrial, civic, recreational, or historic projects in areas that are considered to be blighted, decadent or substandard.

Chapter 121B

State law permitting cities and towns to set up redevelopment authorities, subject to DHCD approval, to redevelop blighted or slum areas, carry out urban renewal projects and become eligible for URDG funds. While the urban renewal program no longer exists, localities can still create redevelopment authorities and apply for specific redevelopment grants. Redevelopment authorities have the power of eminent domain and they are exempt from the State's Uniform Procurement Act when engaged in property disposition and development, making them powerful tools for large scale redevelopment projects.

Chapter 121C

State law permitting municipalities to establish Economic Development Industrial Corporations (EDICs) for the purpose of implementing local economic development plans and projects to reduce unemployment and eliminate blight. Only communities that have been designated by the U.S. Department of Labor as labor surplus areas due to high unemployment are eligible.

Community Development Action Grant (CDAG)

A state funded program using housing bond bill funds, to help finance infrastructure necessary to make affordable housing and economic development projects feasible.

Community Economic Development Assistance Corporation (CEDAC)

A quasi-public agency created by the Legislature in 1978 to provide development assistance to nonprofit developers in order to increase the supply of affordable housing and help revitalize chronically distressed areas. By statute, it can only provide services to nonprofit corporations.

Community Enterprise Economic Development (CEED)

A state funded program providing operating funds for CDCs.

Commutershed

The general geographic area in which commuters will travel for the purposes of working

Laborshed

The general geographic area in which a regional employment center draws most of its workforce.

Ready Resource

DHCD program, using federal Small Cities funds, to help fund economic development activities in eligible communities.

Redevelopment Authorities (121B)

State law, under Chapter 121B, permits cities and towns to set up these entities, subject to DHCD approval, to redevelop blighted or slum areas, carry out urban renewal projects and become eligible for URDG funds. While the urban renewal program no longer exists, localities can still create redevelopment authorities and apply for specific redevelopment grants.

Redevelopment Corporations (121A)

State law, under Chapter 121A, permits corporations, individuals, non-profits and local housing authorities to set up redevelopment corporations to receive an exemption from local real estate and state corporate taxes, for a specific housing or economic development project. The corporation makes a PILOT payment instead.

Tax Increment Financing (TIF)

A method of funding redevelopment activities that allows communities to use all, or part, of the new tax revenue generated by development in a specific area to pay the site improvements, infrastructure and other activities that enabled it to occur.

Urban Renewal Development Grants

(URDG) A state funded DHCD program providing grants to redevelopment authorities for specific redevelopment projects (residential, commercial, industrial, educational, recreational, medical or governmental). Localities pay 100% of the cost initially and the state uses state and federal funds to repay them for 50% of the cost in 20-year installments.

Transportation Terms & Definitions

Accessibility

The ability to reach a location; a way or means of approach.

Accident Analysis

A statistically significant accident analysis should include the location and occurrence of all accidents on a roadway or at an intersection. Analyzing sections of highway results in road length and number of occurrences in a given time period. This allows a rate to be derived for the number of accidents per million vehicle miles, which is compared to a critical rate based on averages usually determined by the state.

Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program

In 1991 Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) established the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program (CMAQ), substantially expanding the focus and purpose of Federal transportation funding and programs to address air quality. CMAQ specifically provides assistance for air quality improvement and congestion mitigation projects in urbanized areas, which have been identified as non-attainment areas. The CMAQ program continues under the current Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century, or TEA-21.

Corridor Access Management

Corridor access management is a range of ways to preserve the safe, efficient traffic operations character of roads through application of land use control measure and design standards. It requires the coordination of land use and transportation planning to ensure that existing and future roadway environments are accessible, safe and provide adequate traffic operations. Proper access management provides a balance between movement of traffic, preservation of community character and access to land.

Corridor access management can help improve safety, preserve capacity on the transportation system, and help maintain mobility. This can preclude or delay the need to construct new infrastructure, reducing fiscal and environmental impacts. Proper use of these techniques can provide easier access to land parcels, increase transit of property abutting travel corridors. The basic principles that should be considered in implementing corridor access management are:

- Managing the regulating land uses along corridors
- Limiting access points on high volume roadways
- Applying proper site driveway design and location criteria
- Minimizing vehicle conflict points along roadway corridors
- Using appropriate roadway design and traffic control devices (signs, pavement markings, traffic signals) to maintain or improve traffic flow and safety
- Encouraging use of alternate modes of travel (transit, bicycle, walking)

Crash Rates

Calculated based on the number of accidents at an intersection and the volume of traffic traveling through that intersection on a daily basis. Rates that exceed the statewide average could indicate safety or geometric issues at an intersection. For example, the 2000 statewide crash rate in Massachusetts was 0.70 for an unsignalized intersection and 0.98 for a signalized intersection. These rates imply that on average 0.70 accidents occurred per million entering vehicles at unsignalized intersections throughout the state of Massachusetts and 0.98 accidents occurred per million entering vehicles at signalized intersections.

Dirt Roads (Resources)

The Baystate Roads Program provides training and publishes a number of helpful articles dealing with the proper construction and maintenance of dirt roads, many of which can be found on their website:

http://www.ecs.umass.edu/baystate_roads/index.htm. Also see the report “The Road Myths of Phillipstown”

Baystate Roads Program
College of Engineering
University of Massachusetts
214 Marston Hall
Amherst, MA. 01003
Phone: (413) 545-2604; Fax: (413) 545-6471

High Accident Location

The Massachusetts Highway Department compiles a list of the top 1000 high accident intersection locations throughout the state. The most current list (1999) compiles data from 1994, 1995, and 1996. None of the intersections in Sheffield are currently designated as high accident locations.

Local Technical Assistance Program

A nationwide effort financed jointly by the Federal Highway Administration and individual State Departments of Transportation. This can be a great resource for road and bridge know-how for municipalities dealing with their roads and highways. In Massachusetts the program is located at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. Contact the Baystate Roads Program (see above) for more information.

Level of Service

Average vehicle delay is related through a grading system called level of service (LOS). LOS ranks delay by a letter system similar to school grades A-F. LOS is usually used to describe a section of road or an intersection as experienced by drivers, but can also be applied for users of other modes of transportation. LOS A represents little or no delay, and F represents unacceptable congestion or delay. LOS F is the condition where the number of vehicles attempting to travel through a given point is arriving faster than they can physically pass through that point in a given period.

Mobility

The ability to move or be moved easily.

Mode

A way people or goods get from one place to another, such as using cars and trucks, freight and passenger trains, walking, bicycling, and riding buses.

Paratransit

Use of small buses or vans on flexible routes, usually serving people who cannot easily get around

Roundabout

Traffic circles, also referred to as rotaries or roundabouts, are channelized intersections where traffic moves in a one-way direction around a raised central island which is usually circular in shape. In North America, after initial resistance by highway authorities and motoring organizations, more than a thousand roundabouts have been installed with success reported in terms of safety, reduction in delays at busy intersections, cost-effectiveness, pollution, and traffic efficiency.

Street Classifications

Residential streets are classified according to their design, use (actual or intended), their relationship to other streets in the hierarchy and their residential character in the following categories:

- **Arterial Street:** A proposed or existing street servicing more than 120 dwelling units, or for non residential development is to be used for major through traffic with a volume in excess of 1200 vehicles in a representative 24 hour period, as determined by the most recent edition of Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE), Trip Generation.
- **Collector Street:** A proposed or existing street, which is used primarily for residential purposes, and servicing no more than 120 dwelling units. Or in the case of a non-residential development is used for through traffic with a volume of not more than 1200 vehicles in a representative 24-hour period, as determined by the most recent edition of Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE), Trip Generation.
- **Industrial-Commercial Street:** A proposed or existing street, which is used to provide local access to industrial-commercial enterprises.
- **Lane:** A proposed street, which is used primarily for residential purposes and servicing no more than 10 dwelling units.
- **Minor Street:** A proposed or existing street, which is used primarily for residential purposes, and servicing no more than 40 dwelling units.

Traffic Calming

Measures to reduce the negative effects of vehicles, and improve conditions for walking or bicycling. A familiar example is the orange barrels with the warning to stop for pedestrians.

Traffic Model

A traffic model is a tool for representing and analyzing the major ways people get around. Usually this tool is a software package, which incorporates a road network, land use data, and a mathematical formula to distribute and route trips. The model is calibrated to existing traffic counts. Then it can be used to forecast traffic and test the effect of changes in the road network.

Traffic Warrants

Engineering criteria applied to collected traffic data at given intersections to determine if levels of traffic have been or will be reached where certain typical improvements may be effective. Traffic warrant analysis may include: Traffic Signal Warrants; Left Turn Lane Warrants; or Right Turn Lane Warrants. Each state establishes a series of criteria and thresholds for determining if a traffic warrant has been made for a specific type of improvement.

Transportation Enhancement Program

The 1991 Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) called for a 10-percent share of all Surface Transportation Program funds to be used for transportation enhancement activities. The intent of the program is to develop and reinforce “livable communities” by funding projects that preserve the historic culture of the transportation system, and/or, enhance the operation of the system for its users. The Transportation Enhancement Program continues and is expanded under the current Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century, or TEA-21. The types of projects that are eligible include the following:

- Historic preservation
- Landscaping and other scenic beautification
- Scenic or historic highway programs, including tourist or visitor’s center facilities
- Acquisition of scenic easements and scenic or historic sites
- Pedestrian or Bicycle Facilities – Sidewalks, trails, storage facilities, promotional activities, safety education, etc.
- Rehabilitation and operation of historic transportation buildings, structures or facilities including railroads and canals
- Preservation of abandoned railway corridors.

Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP)

A prioritized, multi-year program for the implementation of transportation improvement projects in the region. As such, it serves as management tool to ensure the most effective use of limited funding for transportation improvements. It is also necessary for two other reasons. First the TIP is a requirement of the transportation planning process as most recently legislated by the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21). Secondly, a transportation improvement is not eligible for Federal funding unless it is listed in the TIP.

The TIP must include a certification by the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) that the process is being carried on in conformance with various applicable Federal regulations. Certification ensures the region's continued eligibility to receive Federal funds for highway and transit programs. In the Seacoast Area, the Seacoast Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) consists of the Strafford Regional Planning Commission and the Rockingham Regional Planning Commission. The MPO is responsible, under contract with the State, for conducting the regional transportation planning process utilizing federal planning funds. Federal rules require that the MPO TIPs be included in the State Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP) after a review process by the NHDOT, the Governor, Governor's Advisory Commission on Intermodal Transportation (GACIT), and the State Legislature. The most recent TIP was adopted in October 2002 for FY2003-2005. There are no specific projects listed for the Town of Barrington in the most recent TIP.

In Berkshire County, the MPO consists of the State Executive Office of Transportation & Construction (EOTC), the Massachusetts Highway Department (MHD), the Berkshire Regional Transit Authority, and the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC). The BRPC is responsible, under contract with MHD, for conducting the regional transportation planning process utilizing federal planning funds.

The development of the TIP follows a process whereby transportation projects, consistent with the **Regional Transportation Plan**, are solicited from the implementing agencies and local communities. They are reviewed and assigned a preliminary number. The MPO holds public meetings and hearing refine the draft TIP.

Prioritization is based on the following process:

- Annual funding is estimated and allocated by category according to state and federal requirements.
- Bridge projects are prioritized based on the **AASHTO** Rating System
- Enhancement projects are prioritized based on evaluations by the BRPC Transportation Committee in accordance with the state's Guidelines for Transportation Enhancements
- Highway projects are prioritized by generally calculating the maximum traffic volume benefiting per dollar expenditure using volumes, project length, project life and cost as parameters. (They range from 0.0 to 1.0)

Finally the TIP is prepared in accordance with the Transportation Planning Public Participation Process, which requires public input be solicited, public workshops and meetings, wide dissemination of draft copies, and a 30 day public review period.

Travel and Design Speed & Sight Distances

As speed increases the need for safe stopping sight distance (SSD) and corner sight distance (CSD) also increases. The table below presents these values for different design speeds as recommended by the American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO) for design purposes for passenger cars:

Acceptable Sight Distances			
<u>Speed (mph)</u>	<u>SSD (ft)</u>	<u>LTCSD (ft)</u>	<u></u>
35	250	390	335
40	305	445	385
45	360	500	430
50	425	555	480

Note: LTCSD is turning left at an intersection from a stop. Values for trucks are significantly higher.

Travel Demand Management (TDM)

TDM is a combination of strategies or actions whose goal is to encourage travelers to use alternatives to driving alone. TDM strategies may be developed for a single work site, specific corridor, or area.

Travel System Management (TSM)

TSM is a combination of low-cost strategies that use a total approach to transportation system management. The goal is to shift emphasis from expanding capacity to making better use of existing transportation systems.

Travel Time

The time it takes to travel door-to-door.

Unified Work Program (UWP)

The statement of transportation planning tasks to be completed for the year & the budget for them

Vehicle Miles of Travel (VMT)

The sum of all the miles traveled by vehicles (not people) in a specified amount of time

Volume

The number of vehicles that actually pass through a given mile of road in a unit of time such as a day; it can also be applied to transit or bicycle/pedestrian paths.

Way-Finding

Way-finding is the art and science of organizing signs and other traveler information to communicate what visitors want and need to know. It is a common sense approach to simplifying the complexity of streetscape information. It can also include preparing printed material such as brochures and maps. All across America, even in the Berkshires, communities are turning to way-finding sign systems to help travelers navigate through confusing and congested areas.