



## CHAPTER 5 – THE CREATIVE ECONOMY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The concept of *the creative economy* gained attention in 2002 with the publication of a book by urban theorist Richard Florida titled *The Rise of the Creative Class*. This book made a case for the importance of creative professionals from the arts and related areas to urban economies. It argued that the future of metropolitan areas throughout the United States would be significantly linked to the degree to which regions could attract and retain these creative professionals, who would generate substantial economic growth while also improving local quality of life for residents.

The creative economy focused the attention of economic development professionals on the economic value that arts and cultural industries bring to a community, drawing on their core competencies. It has led to continuing exploration of the economic value and impact of aesthetic and cultural resources within communities in terms of directly providing livelihoods to many people, enriching neighborhoods and regions as a whole, and helping to create a sociocultural environment that makes a region attractive to businesses, families, and individuals. A number of regional areas across the country with strong arts and culture traditions have advanced the creative economy idea. (Harris et al 2013:7)

The relationship of these concepts to the economy of Berkshire County and its communities inspired local cultural organizations and led to preparation of a 2007 study, *The Berkshire Creative Economy Report* (BEDC 2007). Under the leadership of a regional steering committee, *The Berkshire Creative Economy Report* examined the creative sector of the Berkshires economy and provided a vision for the creative economy in Berkshire County, outlining the connection between creativity, heritage, community, and landscape.

The 2007 study notes that the Berkshire's artistic and cultural institutions and creative based businesses have become a potent economic engine, a unique creative sector helping to drive the region's economy. Now part of the

1Berkshires countywide economic development strategy, the goals of the Berkshire Creative Economy Project are to:

- Elevate the status of the creative economy within the county;
- Integrate its leadership into the region's economic and business leadership base;
- Increase the awareness of residents, legislators, and others; and
- Implement a strategic plan for the sector's development.

Lenox is a leading center of the region's creative community as evidenced through the range and quality of cultural organizations and attractions located within the Town. Lenox's economic development and planning strategy embraces taking a leadership role in implementing *The Creative Economy* concept locally and regionally. For Lenox, the creative economy yields substantial economic and quality of life benefits through cultural heritage tourism.



***Tanglewood, summer home of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, is a primary cultural attraction in the Berkshires and is located within walking distance of Lenox Village. (Photo: npr.org 2012)***

## HERITAGE TOURISM AND THE CREATIVE ECONOMY

Heritage tourism is the foundation of the Lenox economy and combines historic, arts, cultural, and lifestyle activities with quality of life amenities and experiences—an impressive example of the creative economy at work. Major attractions such as Tanglewood, Kripalu, and Canyon Ranch draw the attention of heritage visitors to the region offering world class arts, culture, and health and wellness experiences.

Other distinctive regional attractions provide visitors with rich and rewarding artistic, cultural, historic, and nature experiences that fill in the opportunities available. The historic character of Lenox and its surrounding natural environment provide an appealing context that attracts visitors today as it did during the Gilded Age. High quality inns, restaurants, and shops housed in historic buildings provide visitors with the level of services they seek.

Heritage visitors are among the most desirable leisure and tourism travelers—they tend to stay longer and spend more. Heritage visitors want a complete experience, expect high quality, and like to linger in the restaurants and other places where residents tend to gather. They want to experience authentic places. They want to learn about a place and combine their visits to cultural and interpretive attractions with interesting dining and shopping opportunities in historic areas of rich character.

Historic buildings and landscapes are directly associated with the character and authenticity sought by heritage visitors. Historic preservation is an essential strategy in establishing the authenticity and sense of place that heritage visitors value. Historic preservation is important to the Lenox economy and quality of life.

*Partners in Tourism*, a coalition of national organizations involved in heritage tourism, defines cultural heritage tourism as “traveling to experience the places and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past.” The organization’s website [www.culturalheritagetourism.org](http://www.culturalheritagetourism.org) articulates five guiding principles for successful and sustainable programs:

**Collaborate:** Much more can be accomplished by working together than by working alone. Successful cultural heritage tourism programs bring together partners who may not have worked together in the past.

**Find the Fit:** Balancing the needs of residents and visitors is important to ensure that cultural heritage tourism benefits everyone. It is important to understand the kind and amount of tourism that your community can handle.

**Make Sites and Programs Come Alive:** The human drama of history is what visitors want to discover, not just names and dates. Interpreting sites is important and so is making the message creative and exciting. Find ways to engage as many of the visitor’s five senses as you can, as the more visitors are involved, the more they will retain.

**Focus on Authenticity and Quality:** Quality is an essential ingredient for all cultural heritage tourism, and authenticity is critical whenever heritage or history is involved.

**Preserve and Protect Resources:** A community’s cultural, historic, and natural resources are valuable and often irreplaceable.

Partners in Tourism also suggest four steps for getting started, or for taking an existing cultural heritage tourism program to the next level. Developing a successful program is an incremental process; these four steps can be repeated at each stage of development:

**Step One – Assess the Potential:** Evaluate what your community has to offer in attractions, visitor services, organizational capabilities, ability to protect resources, and marketing.

**Step Two – Plan and Organize:** Make good use of human and financial resources. They are the keys that open the doors to sustainable cultural heritage tourism. Set priorities and measurable goals.

**Historic preservation is an essential strategy in establishing the authenticity and sense of place that heritage visitors value.**

**Step Three – Prepare for Visitors:** Protect and manage your resources. Look to the future as well as the present. Be sure that the choices you make now improve your community for the long term.

**Step Four – Market for Success:** Develop a multi-year, many-tiered marketing plan that targets your market. Look for partners in local, regional, state or national groups.

## THE LENOX IDENTITY AND BRAND

As discussed in Chapter 6, *Planning and Land Use*, the Town of Lenox is beginning work on updating the Town’s Master Plan. This preservation plan proposes that the concept of *The Creative Economy* be at the center of the economic development element of the Master Plan and that the historic preservation implications of the concept be threaded through the Master Plan’s various policies and strategies.

**Quality of life and sense of place are central to heritage tourism and the creative economy and are directly related to historic preservation and the historic character of the community.**

Quality of life and sense of place are central to heritage tourism and the creative economy and are directly related to historic preservation and the historic character of the community. They benefit existing residents as well as visitors and help to attract new businesses and residents who wish to locate in a community that is a good place in which to live. Lenox’s historic identity is synonymous with its sense of place and is its brand. Historic preservation helps Lenox retain its character, authenticity, and appeal to visitors and residents. The following recommendations emphasize the relationship between historic preservation and the Lenox economy.

### **5.1 Use *The Creative Economy* as the principal concept in developing and refining the economic strategy for Lenox.**

Using the 2007 study, examine how the concept of the creative economy applies to Lenox, its attractions, and its businesses. Use the concept as the touchstone for partnerships, projects, and actions. (*Action to be led by the Select Board, Lenox Chamber of Commerce, and attractions.*)

### **5.2 Continue to market Lenox’s cultural attractions and quality of life.**

Keep it simple. Continue to do what has worked and emphasize Lenox’s strengths—take advantage of our advantages. Lenox is a wonderful place to visit and in which to live. Its heritage tourism and creative economy assets include places related to the arts; culture; history; nature; and lifestyle, health and wellness. Continue to work on extending the shoulder seasons for heritage tourism. (*Action to be led by the Select Board, Lenox Chamber of Commerce, and attractions.*)

### **5.3 Collaborate with Lee, Stockbridge, and local attractions in marketing as a regional coalition.**

As discussed in Chapter 3, Lenox, Lee, and Stockbridge share a common landscape area defined by the surrounding mountains and the Housatonic River. They have a shared history, shared attractions, and shared character. Lenox and Lee currently collaborate through shared municipal services. Entities responsible for marketing in the towns have close working relationships. These relationships

should continue to be strengthened especially with respect to marketing for heritage tourism. *(Action to be led by the Select Board, Lenox Chamber of Commerce, and attractions in collaboration with the Towns of Lee and Stockbridge.)*

**5.4 Work with communities and attractions throughout Berkshire County to reinvigorate *The Creative Economy* in 1Berkshire as a primary regional economic strategy.**

Restart a countywide regional working group focused on the creative economy, preferably through 1Berkshire or independently if not. Work with 1Berkshire to develop specific short and mid-term actions. Devote time, resources, and funding to the project. As recommended in the 2007 report:

- Develop a unified brand for the Berkshire Creative Economy;
- Develop leadership and organizational capacity for the initiative using the talents of existing arts and cultural organizations;
- Promote investment in website, marketing, materials, events, and organizational capacity; and
- Educate the Berkshire community about the economic potential of its creative economy sector.

*(Action to be led by the Select Board, Lenox Chamber of Commerce, and attractions in collaboration with other regional organizations and attractions.)*

**5.5 Through 1Berkshire, research similar and competing destination locations to examine their marketing and development strategies and levels of investment.**

Look at similar regions that are direct competitors to the Berkshires, such as Saratoga, NY, as well as more distant locations. Consult with experienced local attractions, such as the Lenox resorts, that are active in similar places across the country. Study what should be done both on a countywide basis and locally between Lenox, Lee, and Stockbridge. *(Action to be led by 1Berkshire and the Towns of Lenox, Lee, and Stockbridge.)*

## **CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS**

Cultural institutions and attractions are central to the local Lenox economy in attracting visitors and supporting other businesses. For the most part, these cultural institutions are shared with Lee and Stockbridge and argue for a collaborative approach to marketing and other economic development initiatives as discussed above.

Two levels of attractions are present: (1) the large, nationally and internationally known attractions such as Tanglewood, Kripalu, Canyon Ranch, and (2) the smaller attractions unique to the region that fill out the rich offerings available to the heritage visitors. These include The Mount, Ventfort Hall, Shakespeare and Company, Boston University Tanglewood Institute, Frelinghuysen Morris House, Berkshire Scenic Railway Museum, Pleasant Valley Wildlife Sanctuary, and others. A list and brief description of attractions is included in Appendix A of this plan, *Preservation Partners and Stakeholders*.

The former group is formative, well established, and solid. They have strong reputations, are widely known beyond the region, and have their own sophisticated marketing programs. Their marketing, reach, and ability to draw the attention of new visitors to Lenox is central to the Town's prosperity.



*The Mount, a National Historic Landmark, was the home of renowned American author Edith Wharton and today interprets her life and times while sponsoring community cultural events on its grounds.*

**Most of these organizations occupy historic properties, and their continued vitality is important not only to the local economy but to the care and appropriate treatment of historic properties significant to Lenox history and character.**

The latter group is highly professional and of high quality but is not as widely known. They are unique attractions that provide richness, variety, and range to the Town's cultural offerings. Most of these organizations occupy historic properties, and their continued vitality is important not only to the local economy but to the care and appropriate treatment of historic properties significant to Lenox history and character.

While well established and professional, these smaller attractions nonetheless work hard to make ends meet. They are scrappy, edgy, and creative. On a yearly basis they attract the funding they need to continue their missions. In the past, while they have known each other, they have not necessarily worked closely together. During preparation of this historic preservation plan, these organizations expressed a strong desire to work more closely together. A stronger working relationship with the Town and with each other is recommended below for mutual benefit.

#### **5.6 Support Lenox's cultural institutions and attractions as central to the Town's economy, character, and well-being.**

In general, Town policies should recognize the role that the area's cultural institutions and attractions play in the local economy. Relationships should be maintained between the Town and the institutions and attractions, perhaps

through the formats noted below. They should be consulted and included in townwide initiatives and generally supported whenever possible. As discussed in Chapter 9, relationships between cultural institutions and the local schools should be promoted. *(Action to be led by the Select Board in association with the cultural institutions and attractions.)*

**5.7 Establish a working group of the cultural attractions to meet quarterly and discuss coordinated needs and actions.**

During preparation of this preservation plan, local cultural institutions and attractions expressed a strong desire to stay in communication and work more closely together. It is recommended that a working group of the attractions be established under the leadership of the Town and be convened and coordinated by the Chamber of Commerce. Town staff should be empowered to help coordinate and manage potential projects.

It is envisioned that the attractions could meet quarterly, coordinate their activities and schedules, and identify issues or initiatives that they could work on together for the year. The working group is envisioned as a forum through which communication can be facilitated and experiences can be shared. *(Action to be empowered by the Select Board, coordinated by the Chamber of Commerce and Town staff, and moved forward by the cultural attractions.)*



*Shakespeare and Company is a multi-faceted performance venue and training and education center for actors. The property includes several buildings identified in the Lenox inventory of historic properties.*

**5.8 Establish a local Cultural District in accordance with the program requirements of the Massachusetts Cultural Council.**

The Massachusetts Cultural Council manages a state level Cultural Districts Initiative program through which local Cultural Districts are identified and officially designated in accordance with established criteria. This initiative was authorized by the state legislature in 2010 and began to be implemented in 2011. Currently, forty-four local Cultural Districts have been designated across the state. Benefits include state-level recognition, promotion, and possible funding.

Local Cultural Districts help local arts, humanities, and science organizations improve the quality and range of their public programs to enhance the experience

of visitors and provide benefit to local residents. The Cultural District Initiative encourages communities to preserve their authenticity, strengthen their sense of place, stimulate economic activity, become more attractive, and create a higher quality of life.

A local Cultural District in Lenox could be an initial primary initiative for the working group of cultural attractions discussed above. In general, local Cultural Districts are envisioned to be walkable areas. In Lenox, the Cultural District is envisioned to be centered around Lenox Village and to extend from Tanglewood on the west to Ventfort Hall and Shakespeare and Company on the east. Expansion of the concept to include more distant, less walkable attractions is discussed in the following recommendation.

The local Cultural District can be used as a marketing strategy as well as a mean of coordinating between attractions and between attractions and the Town. It can be used to provide support for the more vulnerable attractions. *(Action to be empowered by the Select Board and implemented by the Chamber of Commerce, Town staff, and working group of cultural attractions.)*



***The Boston University Tanglewood Institute provides summer music training programs for predominantly high school aged (ages 10-20) students on its spacious grounds. Drawn from across the country and around the world, students and faculty perform in community settings throughout Lenox. The BUTI's historic property is composed of two former estates and is well documented on a 2012 inventory form.***

### **5.9 Establish a townwide Cultural Heritage District to extend the Massachusetts Cultural Council concept to attractions throughout Lenox.**

The Town's program for a local Cultural District could be extended townwide to include cultural attractions that are not within walking distance. While only the core area in the vicinity of Lenox Village would meet the criteria established by the Massachusetts Cultural Council with respect to their specific program, the entire area would benefit.

The townwide Cultural Heritage District will be particularly important to the interpretive program proposed in Chapter 9, townwide trails network discussed in Chapter 7, and wayfinding program discussed below. Other grant and funding

programs could be used to provide support for townwide initiatives, such as programs supported by Housatonic Heritage. *(Action to be empowered by the Select Board and implemented by the Chamber of Commerce, Town staff, and working group of cultural attractions.)*

Several sources of funding for cultural institutions could support the Cultural Heritage District initiative. Lenox's Community Preservation Act funding, noted in Chapter 3, provides grants to the Town's cultural institutions for work on historic buildings and landscapes as well as for open space acquisitions and improvements. It is possible that a variety of projects related to implementation of the Cultural Heritage District could be eligible for Community Preservation Act funding. Additional discussion of the Community Preservation Act is included in Appendix B.

The Massachusetts Historical Commission manages the Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund which provides funding for the restoration, rehabilitation, and stabilization of historic and archaeological properties owned by municipalities or nonprofit organizations. Projects can include the acquisition of an endangered property, restoration of an historic building, historic structures reports, and archaeological data recovery projects. This fund is also mentioned in Appendix B.

The Massachusetts Cultural Council manages the Massachusetts Cultural Facilities Fund which provides funding for the acquisition, design, repair, renovation, expansion, and construction of cultural facilities owned by non-profit organizations, educational institutions, and municipalities. Attractions like the Boston University Tanglewood Institute and Shakespeare & Company would be exceptional venues for such funding.



***Cranwell Spa and Golf Resort features luxury accommodations in two Cottage Era mansions and other buildings. Its grounds have been developed with an 18-hole golf course lined with medium scaled private residences.***

## HERITAGE BUSINESSES

Many businesses in Lenox benefit from the heritage tourism visitation drawn by the Town's cultural attractions. Many are located in historic buildings and/or located in areas of the Town with strong historic character, including Lenox Village and the Great Estates area. These are Lenox's heritage businesses. They include inns, bed and breakfasts, health spas, restaurants, shops, and services.

### **5.10 Recognize the central role of historic buildings and character in the Lenox economy.**

This is a consistent theme of this historic preservation plan and is listed here to emphasize the important role that historic buildings play as places of business in the Town's economy. The histories, stories, and previous uses of historic buildings should be interpreted.

### **5.11 Using the master planning process, create a forum through the Chamber for discussion of business interests and community character townwide.**

Include heritage businesses in the planning process being used to update the Town's Master Plan. Use a workshop/focus group format organized by the Chamber of Commerce to identify and address business issues and needs in different areas of the Town. Specifically, address the needs of businesses in Lenox Village, the Gateway Overlay Districts, North Rt. 7/20, Lenox Dale, and townwide.

What are the business goals, needs, and interests in each area that can be addressed in the Master Plan? What character and physical improvements need to be made? What is the role of historic preservation? How does the Town balance historic preservation and community character with business development needs? This topic is also discussed in Chapter 6 with respect to the Master Plan and in Chapter 8 with respect to the Historic District Commission in Lenox Village.

The forum could continue beyond the master planning process to be an ongoing working group, similar to that suggested for the attractions. *(Action led by the Planning Board with Town staff, the Chamber of Commerce, and participating businesses.)*

### **5.12 Explore ways in which local incentives can be offered to private business owners who preserve their buildings and properties.**

The Town and the Chamber should seek ways in which businesses that preserve their buildings and properties can benefit from local incentives. Inclusion and featured presentation in townwide marketing is one powerful form of incentive that gains the attention of businesses and can be used to reward preservation initiatives.

The potential for additional possible incentives such as local tax credits, access to revolving loans for historic preservation projects and improvements, or grants should be explored. The possibility of dedicating some form of public funding for privately owned properties in exchange for preservation restrictions on a historic buildings, façade, or property as a whole could be explored.

**5.13 Continue to support the Lenox Chamber of Commerce as the lead marketing entity for the Town, its attractions, and its businesses.**

This preservation plan recognizes the importance of marketing to the Lenox economy and the important role that historic resources play in the Town's identity and brand and in visitor experience. The Lenox Chamber of Commerce is the lead marketing entity for the Town as authorized and funded in part by the Select Board. In that role, it represents not only its members, but the Town as a whole. Historic character is an important part of the message. *(Action led by the Select Board, the Chamber of Commerce, cultural attractions, and businesses.)*



*Numerous inns and bed and breakfasts are located in historic homes in and around Lenox Village. Many private residents rent rooms to performers and visitors during the summer season, which can be an important source of income, especially for seniors.*

**5.14 Coordinate the messaging and marketing of the Chamber with that of the heritage businesses and cultural attractions.**

Through the working group of cultural attractions and possible forums for heritage businesses, coordinate yearly marketing plans and strategies conducted by the Chamber with those of individual attractions and businesses. Create online linkages where possible. *(Action led by the Chamber of Commerce with cultural attractions and businesses.)*

**5.15 Coordinate visitor contact, interaction, and information at businesses and attractions through the Chamber.**

Seek to create a coordinated visitor experience. Each business and attraction in Lenox should be providing the same messaging to visitors—what to do, where to go, the full range of opportunities for visitors in Lenox and surrounding areas.

Provide written scripts and notes that can be used and adapted by front line staff in contact with visitors. Make sure that information is accurate and up to date. Consider creating a simple program to train hospitality staff and volunteers to ensure quality and consistency in information provided to visitors. Training can be provided free, take less than an hour, be offered on site, and include refreshments as an added enticement to encourage participation.

By actively encouraging coordinated customer service throughout the Town, Lenox will be able to elevate the quality of the visitor experience to encourage more repeat visitation. *(Action of the Chamber of Commerce in consultation with attractions and businesses.)*



***Lenox Village, a local historic district, is a center for restaurants, shopping, and services.***

**5.16 Include heritage businesses in a townwide interpretive program. Encourage businesses to tell their own stories within the Town’s interpretive framework.**

Inclusion in a townwide interpretive program is a form of marketing that could be used as an incentive for heritage businesses. Chapter 9 of this preservation plan outlines a proposed townwide interpretive program. Existing businesses in historic buildings should be encouraged to participate in interpreting the stories of their buildings and the people who occupied them. Many of the inns and bed and breakfasts already provide historical information on their sites on their web pages.

Interpretation should use townwide interpretive themes and make connections between places with similar and related stories. Online and site promotion will encourage visitors to explore the Town’s interpretive sites, including historic neighborhoods and buildings. Online content and links will be coordinated. *(Action led by the Town in coordination with the working group of cultural attractions, Lenox Historical Society, and Chamber of Commerce.)*

### **5.17 Encourage quality in all things.**

Participants in workshops conducted as part of this preservation plan have affirmatively stated that the Lenox brand is about quality and friendliness—it always has been and always will be. Historic businesses play a critical role in presenting the Town to visitors and fulfilling a satisfying visitor experience. Their contributions should be recognized and their responsibilities underscored. *(Ongoing message and action led by the Chamber of Commerce.)*



***Original 1910 portion of the former Lenox High School, currently using state historic rehabilitation tax credits for conversion to apartments for seniors.***

## **HISTORIC REHABILITATION TAX CREDITS**

Federal and state rehabilitation tax credits are a potential incentive for use in the commercial rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of larger historic buildings in Lenox, including the Great Estates. To date, only the Lenox High School on Housatonic Street in Lenox Village (also known as Cameron House and the Lenox Elementary School) appears to have made use of federal tax credits. The building is currently using Massachusetts state historic rehabilitation tax credits in making renovations that will convert the building from assisted living use to affordable independent living apartments for seniors. Elm Court, the former Sloane/Vanderbilt estate on Old Stockbridge Road and located mostly in Stockbridge, may also use historic rehabilitation tax credits in its currently planned renovation into a luxury resort.

### **5.18 Encourage the use of federal and state historic rehabilitation tax credits in the rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of historic buildings to commercial use.**

It is surprising that more of the Great Estates properties converted to commercial use, such as Canyon Ranch, Cranwell, and Blantyre, have not made use of historic rehabilitation tax credits. Federal and state tax credits could be useful in the future rehabilitation of other historic buildings as well, though the small size of most commercial buildings and projects in Lenox precludes their widespread use. The smallest project currently using Massachusetts state tax credits has a construction cost of \$748,344 with \$443,162 of qualifying expenditures and a

resulting tax credit of \$88,632 (20%). Most projects involving historic buildings in Lenox have much smaller construction costs than this. However, federal and state historic rehabilitation tax credits should be kept in mind for future projects. Additional background information on federal and state historic rehabilitation tax credits is included in Appendix B.



*Graphically appealing site signage at the Boston University Tanglewood Institute using Boston University's graphic identity.*

## WAYFINDING

The opportunity and need to implement a system of wayfinding signage in Lenox was a topic of discussion among businesses and cultural attractions in workshops conducted as part of the preservation plan. Coordinated wayfinding signage not only helps visitors locate attractions and businesses, it raises the level of quality perceived by visitors by presenting consistent high quality graphics townwide that coordinates and reinforces the Lenox brand.

Wayfinding signage provides direction to drivers on the road at key decision points and is one of the most effective means to help visitors navigate through unfamiliar territory. It also provides a physical presence that is designed as a system and helps unify the Town's presentation.

### **5.19 Prepare a townwide wayfinding plan that identifies sites to be included, locations for signage, and a system of graphically appealing sign types.**

Preparation of a townwide wayfinding plan is necessary for implementation of a coordinated system over time. The plan should be simple and straightforward. It should (1) identify sites and locations to be included in the wayfinding system, (2) identify the range of sign types necessary for the system, (3) identify the locations of signs and the messages to be conveyed, (4) provide the graphic design and physical design of each type of sign, and (5) prioritize signage for phased implementation. *(Action endorsed by the Select Board and led by Town staff in coordination with the Chamber of Commerce, cultural attractions, and businesses.)*

**5.20 Implement the wayfinding plan in phases over time as funding allows beginning with primary signage on major roads and working toward smaller, site specific signage over time.**

Implementation should begin with wayfinding signs along major roadways welcoming visitors to Lenox and providing directions to major visitor centers such as Lenox Village. Primary attractions and attractions located at a distance from the major centers should also be a priority. Additional smaller scaled signage to individual sites and attractions can be added over time. *(Action endorsed by the Select Board and led by Town staff in coordination with the Chamber of Commerce, cultural attractions, and businesses.)*

**5.21 Coordinate the graphic design and implementation of wayfinding signage with other online and printed materials.**

Graphically, the townwide wayfinding signage should be closely coordinated with the graphic identity used in Lenox's marketing and promotion. A high quality printed townwide fold-out map is recommended to complement the wayfinding system. Wayfinding signage should also be closely coordinated with signage for the townwide trail network discussed in Chapter 7 and the interpretive signage proposed in Chapter 9 of this plan. *(Action endorsed by the Select Board and led by Town staff in coordination with the Chamber of Commerce, cultural attractions, and businesses.)*

## **SENSE OF PLACE AND QUALITY OF LIFE**

The concept of the creative economy promotes the idea that community character, sense of place, and quality of life are central to economic vitality by attracting heritage visitors and creating a community to which creative businesses and new residents wish to locate. Local quality of life is a leading factor in attracting creative enterprises and the visitors that sustain them. The character of the community is the message and the attraction.

In Lenox, community character is established by historic buildings and landscapes. Lenox's distinctive historical development, outlined in Chapter 2, has left a legacy of fine homes, landscapes, and public places that have been adapted by cultural attractions, historic businesses, and residents to create a new economic reality of distinctive quality.

The preservation and appropriate treatment of Lenox's historic resources is central to the Town's economic wellbeing. Taken somewhat for granted in the past, the importance of historic preservation should be recognized and preservation principles, outlined in Chapter 4, incorporated into all Town initiatives as a matter of course.

**5.22 Recognize the role of historic character and historic resources in Lenox's identity, economy, and quality of life.**

This is a primary point of this preservation plan, repeated here to emphasize the relationship between historic character and quality of life for residents as well as for visitors. Heritage visitors like to go to places with authentic character—places that residents value. This is true for Lenox as a whole and for specific places such

**The preservation and appropriate treatment of the Lenox's historic resources is central to the Town's economic wellbeing.**

as Lenox Village and individual businesses and attractions. Lenox is an experience. *(Action and policy to be endorsed by the Select Board and community partners.)*

**5.23 Use sense of place and quality of life as primary marketing themes to attract new year-round residents.**

During workshops and meetings in preparation of this preservation plan as well as in previous planning documents the desire to attract new year-round residents has been expressed. Among the targeted audiences are professionals who are able to work from home by internet, many of whom fit the demographic for the creative economy. Retired couples and individuals are also among the targeted groups and tend to bring ample bank accounts able to help support local restaurants and services.

For a significant number of retirees, a Lenox residence is a second home, occupied in the Spring, Summer, and Fall. The second home market is important to the Lenox economy, though some local advocates lament its part-time impact and its tendency to drive up property costs, making home ownership in Lenox expensive for other Berkshire County residents. These issues are discussed in the 2017 Lenox Housing Production Plan. Nonetheless, sense of place and quality of life are important to attracting potential new residents, and the Town's historic character and resources are important defining features. *(Action led by the Lenox Chamber of Commerce.)*

**5.24 Use the master planning process to identify the physical goals and needs of each of Lenox's different areas to strengthen and enhance character and sense of place.**

This recommendation relates to 5.11 above (which asks businesses to consider their needs and goals) and to Chapter 6 with respect to updating of the Town's Master Plan. It is stated here to emphasize the relationship between sense of place, identity, and the Town's economy. What is the essential character of each of the important places in Lenox and how can we further enhance that character over time while simultaneously addressing identified issues and needs? *(Action of the Planning Board and partners.)*

The following brief discussion identifies key landscape areas in Lenox and outlines their character for consideration in planning for sense of place. Historic resources are important contributing features within each of the Town's landscape areas and should be recognized and preserved.



***Stonover Farm Bed and Breakfast at the base of Lenox Mountain, west of the village.***

**Historic resources are important contributing features within each of the Town's landscape areas and should be recognized and preserved.**



*The Paterson/Egleston monument, focal point of Lenox Village.*

**Lenox Village** – The Lenox Village landscape area includes the historic village core and adjacent residentially zoning R-15 and R-30 areas. Lenox Village is central to the Town’s identity, both historically and today. Its historic character is comprised of resources and landscape patterns dating to the early nineteenth century County Seat Era of the Town’s development with the addition of wealthy neighborhoods and working class neighborhoods from the Cottage Era of the late nineteenth century. Recent preparation of a National Register Historic District nomination for the Village documents its significance and provides important background information for its preservation and enhancement.

Lenox Village is the center for historic businesses in the Town, including restaurants, lodging, shops, and services. Village streetscape improvements along Church Street have dramatically improved its character in recent years.

In planning workshops and discussions, questions have been raised about challenges experienced by businesses and possible future change. What additional improvements should be made to the Village? Issues have been identified about parking, internal circulation, and other amenities. What level of additional development can be accommodated? This question includes the potential of the addition of businesses as well as housing—multi-family and work force housing. The Town’s housing plan suggests selected housing infill in historic neighborhoods, which is also accommodated by current zoning.

How should the Town balance possible future new development with the preservation of the authentic buildings that give the Village its distinctive character? This preservation plan establishes a policy framework for such future decision making. The role and importance of the Village’s local historic district is discussed in Chapter 8.



*The commercial row in industrial Lenox Dale with October Mountain behind.*

**Lenox Dale** – The Lenox Dale landscape area includes the historic village and adjacent industrially zoned areas along the Housatonic River. Lenox Dale is significant as the Town’s historic industrial center. Its historic areas and features include the Housatonic River, railroad, industrial buildings and sites, commercial center, and residential neighborhoods. Planning needs to be undertaken for its long-term growth and enhancement. Central to that enhancement is the recognition and appropriate treatment of its historic buildings and sites.

Recommended historic preservation initiatives for Lenox Dale are discussed in Chapter 8 and include preparation of a comprehensive historic resource survey, preparation of a National Register nomination, and implementation of a program to encourage the appropriate treatment of historic resources.

The Town’s Master Plan should create an overall area plan for Lenox Dale that coordinates with the environmental cleanup of the Housatonic River, which is expected to take place over the coming decade. How can the Town use that process to enhance the river corridor, strengthen Lenox Dale’s commercial center, adaptively reuse industrial buildings, and strengthen historic neighborhoods? The potential for new infill housing and village residential development adjacent to and expanding Lenox Dale should be considered and would be an appropriate initiative to help address the Town’s housing issues.

The expected revival of the Berkshire Scenic Railway tours should be part of planning for the Dale and link the Dale to Lenox Village and surrounding attractions. The potential for expansion and enhancement of a significant public open space at the Lenox Depot has been a goal for Dale residents. Enhancement of the river corridor should include the implementation of trail linkages along the river, across the river to October Mountain, and westward to surrounding attractions.



*The suburban commercial corridor along Northern Route 7/20.*

**Northern Route 7/20 Corridor** – The Northern Route 7/20 Corridor landscape area includes the commercially zoned area along Route 7/20 north of the Gateway Mixed Use Development Overlay District.

Planning for the northern commercial portion of the Route 7/20 corridor has been undertaken in the past and should be reaffirmed today. This area developed in the 1950s and 60s and has been long considered visually unattractive. Yet it is an essential part of the Town and has its own distinctive character.

A number of historic buildings once present here have been replaced with commercial development that is important to both residents and visitors. A few historic buildings remain south of the more heavily developed commercial area. The corridor is difficult to redevelop due to the relatively small size of lots (as expected for new, current commercial development) and the close proximity of existing buildings to the road. Future planning should consider how the area can be visually enhanced and how businesses can be strengthened. Can the commercial potential of this area be expanded and become a new focus and amenity for the Town?

The 1950s/60s character of the corridor could be of historical significance and should be considered in a positive light. Its visually appealing characteristics should be strengthened and new development could be introduced to build on its appeal.



*The Arcadian Shop, outdoor activities specialty store, an adaptively reuse of a historic farmstead along Route 7/20 in the Gateway Overlay District.*

**Gateway Overlay District** – Directly related to the future of the Route 7/20 corridor is the Gateway Mixed Use Development Overlay District just to its south connecting the commercial corridor to the north end of Main Street. Visionary planning has been undertaken for this area but actual implementation has not been in accordance with the intended vision. A good deal of future development potential remains, and its implementation can have an important impact on the northern portion of the Town. The slow-down in commercial development pressure that has occurred since the recession of 2008 has given the Town time to re-examine and re-plan for this area.

Planning for the Gateway should be revised to address current realities and expectations. Primary goals of the previous plan, such as multi-use and multi-family residential housing, should be incorporated into new planning concepts for the area. The preservation of historic buildings along this corridor (mostly historic 19<sup>th</sup> century farmsteads) was recognized in the initial planning for the area and should be considered essential to future development concepts.

Previous planning sought to create new village-style development around existing historic complexes, which remains an appropriate course of action. Planning also sought to incorporate open space linkages into new development, which should be encouraged.



*View to the south from the 1894 mansion formerly known as Wyndhurst at Cranwell Spa and Golf Resort. The Great Estate mansions were constructed at high points in the landscape to take advantage of these views.*

**The Great Estates Area** – The Great Estates landscape area encompasses the land in the southern portion of Lenox south of West Street and Walker Street. Many of the Great Estates have been adapted to new uses and are discussed above as the Town’s Cultural Attractions and Historic Businesses. The strength and viability of these attractions and businesses is important to the Town’s economy and preserves the irreplaceable associated historic building and landscape resources.

Since the early 1950s, this area has been infused with new residential suburban development, and continued residential development pressure can be anticipated.

Master Planning should consider how to further preserve the landscape character of the historic roads, preserve vistas, incorporate open space linkages and trails within the area, and encourage additional new residential development that preserves and enhances the overall character of the landscape. The use of the Open Space Flexible Development option for new residential development will contribute to this goal, and the option’s use should be strengthened. Historic landscape features such as stone walls, field lines, and farm roads should be preserved where possible.



*Historic early nineteenth century farmsteads such as this one on East Street have lands that have been developed into mid-twentieth century subdivisions.*

**Suburban Landscapes** – The Suburban Landscapes area of Lenox encompasses most of the land zoned within Open Space Flexible Development Overlay District that is not protected conservation land or otherwise environmentally constrained. It is primarily the broad landscape corridor along East Street north of Walker Street.

Some late twentieth century suburban development is located within the Great Estates area, as discussed above, as well as within Lenox Village. But much of the Town's suburban development is located in the northern and eastern portions of the Town off of East Street, and future residential development will continue to fill in remaining developable lands in these areas over time. The quality of this development will establish the character of Lenox for the future, which will unavoidably be more dense.

As mentioned above, the Town's Open Space Flexible Development zoning overlay option is an important tool in determining the impact of future development on the character of Lenox and its landscape. Planning should review how this option can be strengthened and how design quality in new development can be encouraged.

The preservation of historic resources throughout the northern and eastern portions of the Town should be required when the lands around them are developed. Most of these resources are historic nineteenth century farmsteads. Zoning and subdivision mechanisms for achieving this end are discussed in Chapter 6. The conservation of environmentally constrained areas such as wetlands and steep slopes contributes to the enhancement of the landscape townwide.



*The Housatonic River Corridor and extensive Conservation Lands in Lenox complement the Town's historic character with the natural beauty for which the Berkshires are known.*

**The River Corridor** – The Housatonic River Corridor is visibly present extending down toward the river from the crest along East Street, but the most environmentally sensitive areas are located east of the railroad extending from Pittsfield to Lenox Dale.

The valley of the Housatonic River is a unique landscape area in Lenox that requires strong planning to preserve its wetlands and significant ecological areas, serve as a unified open space corridor, and provide passive recreational activity linking Lenox Dale with the vicinity of New Lenox as well as regional trail networks. The environmental cleanup of the river from PCB pollution from industrial plants in Pittsfield provides an opportunity for concurrent planning, open space protection, and infrastructure improvements to enhance the river corridor and make it ecologically healthy for future generations. The river corridor is a key asset for the Town and a focus for future conservation and enhancement.

**Conservation Lands** – Lenox's Conservation Lands include most of the landscape west of Lenox Village and the Route 7/20 commercial corridor and include Lenox Mountain, Kennedy Park, Parson's Marsh, and adjacent areas. On the east, Conservation Lands are located within the River Corridor and as individual conserved parcels. They include lands owned or restricted by land trusts, other non-profit organizations, and the Town.

Conservation lands have become an important part of the Town's character, connecting the mountains to the east and west to the central Marble Valley and Housatonic River corridor. Planning should address the connectivity of preserved open space with and through more developed portions of the Town. Environmentally significant areas should be protected, while less sensitive and recreational landscape areas are connected through trails. Both conservation and future new development can help protect sensitive lands and provide landscape connectivity.



*Stonover Farm Bed and Breakfast is located on a picturesque property at the base of Lenox Mountain, west of the village.*