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INTRODUCTION

The Town of Lenox

Lenox is a unique and special town in the center of the Berkshires of Western Massachusetts that boasts a rich heritage and a high quality environment for its 5,000 + residents as well as its many visitors. Through strong guidance and effort, the qualities of small town New England, many of which are prominent in Lenox Village, remain today. The diversity of the community is present in the well kept residential areas, the historic estates, and the beautiful natural resources. As the summer home for the Boston Symphony Orchestra at Tanglewood, together with Shakespeare and Company at Edith Wharton's grand estate, the Mount, and through the many resorts, culture and tourism play important social and economic roles. These activities support a significant commercial base which provides local income and revenue.

Lenox lies at the center of the Housatonic River watershed surrounded by extensive mountain plateaus. Most development and population is located along the valley, where originally farming was extensive. The uplands are rough and stony lands that are scarcely inhabited by people although they provide a forest habitat.

Lenox is an integral part of the Pittsfield Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). It lies adjacent to the City of Pittsfield, the principal employment and service center of the MSA, located between that City and I-90, the Massachusetts Turnpike, which can be accessed at Lee. I-90 links the Berkshires with the rest of Massachusetts eastward and with New York's Capital region to the west. Lenox is both a destination and a through point for heavy in-county travel flows to the north and south, generally conforming to the geography.

Purpose of the Master Plan

In 1968, in the midst of rapid growth that was threatening to overwhelm the town, a Master Planning Study was undertaken. Since 1968, the Town, the region, the nation and the world have changed. In the immediate and long term future Lenox residents and all involved in the community will face many challenges. Issues of economic, social and technological change can have positive and negative effects; some of which may be anticipated and dealt with. This Plan can serve as a useful tool in understanding the challenges faced and the choices available for the community.

The Lenox Town Planning Board, with the approval of the Board of Selectmen and the voters, have therefore commissioned a complete Update to the Master Plan. Although much of the content and vision of the original Plan has been retained, new information and a fresh perspective is reflected in this new version.

This Plan seeks to describe the primary components of the community today, and the links between factors in the development of Lenox historically and currently. Land use, environmental factors, the economy, transportation, housing, community services and facilities are all related. A solid understanding of the community should lead to a relevant vision for the future which considers the needs and desires of the community as a whole.

Overall the Plan strives to ensure that Lenox will continue to have living and working areas which are aesthetically pleasing and functionally sound. This is accomplished by encouraging continuation of adequate services and a stable economic base, guiding good use of land, preserving other important aspects of Lenox, and by planning for positive change through community participation and support for those ends. This Plan also strives to assure that any expenditures that are allocated for land or public facilities will result in a maximum benefit to the Town and its residents.

The main provisions of this Comprehensive Master Plan are to be used in conjunction with the Zoning By-law, other land use regulations, with budgeting decisions, and other programs which facilitate achieving the goals of the Plan. Together they can form an integrated program for the guidance of Lenox' future development and sustainability. They are designed to maintain the existing desirable characteristics of the community, and to enhance the future quality and livability of the town as much as possible.

Scope and Authorization of this Plan

The direct area of examination of this Plan is the Town of Lenox. Lenox is not an island though. The land and municipalities around the Town are also important to consider when planning and are therefore included in the study area..

The time interval in which the proposals of this Plan are to be achieved is referred to as the planning period. In this instance, the period is basically twenty years, with intermediate periods leading to that.

Many of Lenox's future development issues and opportunities will be determined by regional conditions of the metropolitan area. The metropolitan population has been actually declined over the last several decades, following historically strong growth from the 1940's to the mid 1970's, spurred by increases in the regional labor market. Economically, the Pittsfield Metropolitan Area has been a manufacturing center based partly on traditional paper making, plastic industries, electrical and defense contracting. While electrical and defense manufacturing employment has declined steeply in the last dozen years, paper making and plastic industries continue to be strong.

The outlook for the regional economy is forecast in this Plan. The regional tourism industry, which is particularly strong in Lenox, can be expected to continue to prosper and grow in the future. It is therefore reasonable to expect the local fiscal base to be healthy in the future. Retail activities are favored by these social and economic trends. The community has many other areas of strength and potential.

The pages of this report attempt to determine the impacts that these various issues will or could have on Lenox, and try to suggest how these and other issues might be best approached. Area-wide planning issues are covered in depth in the Sub-Regional Cooperation Policy Plan.

Preparation and amendment of a Master Plan is one of the primary functions of a planning board as defined in Section 81, Chapter 41 of the General Laws of Massachusetts.

Under Section 81-C of the Planning Enabling Legislation all Planning Boards that are established under the act are required "from time to time to make careful studies and when necessary prepare plans of the resources, possibilities and needs of the city or town, and upon the completion of any such study, shall submit to the Selectmen a report thereon, with its recommendations."

In Section 81-D it is stipulated that "The Comprehensive Plan shall be internally consistent in its policies, forecasts and standards, and shall include the following elements: Goals and Policies, Land Use Plan, Housing, Economic Development, Natural and Cultural Resources, Open Space and Recreation, Services and Facilities, Circulation, and Implementation." For continuity, Goals are listed throughout the various sections of this plan that cover the required elements. Together they comprise a set of Goals and Policies. "Such plan shall be made and may be added to or changed from time to time by a majority vote of such planning board and shall be a public record."

Process and General Vision

The Lenox Planning Board has taken advantage of a grant from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs Growth Planning program to prepare this Master Plan. Funds

have been made available on a matching basis from the Town as well. Technical assistance has been given to the Planning Board by the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC).

This Plan was prepared through the direct involvement of a broad based committee of residents of the Town of Lenox who have strong ties to the community, utilizing professional support from BRPC. The committee assisted in molding the draft report which was presented to the community for further input at a publicized meeting on March 11th 1999, reviewed the Lenox Planning Board at a Public Hearing on March 25th, 1999, and then approved by the Planning Board on April 12th 1999.

Long term goals for the Town and its residents express the community's desire for growth and maintaining and enhancing a quality living and working environment. Goals for the next 20 years encompass the key elements of the community. These goals are listed in each Comprehensive Master Plan section. The goals were arrived at through community input which included a community wide survey and public meetings throughout the Planning process. Each section also addresses actions necessary to promote and achieve goals over the long term. These are presented within a framed analysis of trends likely to pose challenges and opportunities.

A master plan can be valuable for shaping the type of development in Lenox's future. The plan aims to express a consensus concerning what is desired in private and public projects. In the future, as changes in the community are proposed, the same process and the following questions should be asked: What is the relationship of this change to existing conditions? Would the change be in conformance with established goals, policies and plans? Is the change in general agreement with objectives represented in the Patterns for Future Land Uses Map?

Change should be in keeping with the general vision that Lenox should:

Guide the development, enhancement and conservation of the town to create a more diverse yet tightly woven community that pridefully sustains its rich cultural base and excellent amenities as it meets the economic and social needs of present and future residents.

To accomplish the vision the community must balance social, economic, and environmental needs to preserve overall quality of life and community character. Consistent with other strategies, it will require strong efforts to expand the open space network, improve connections between people and places, and to support affordable housing and the economy, within the context of preserving community character and the environment. This will be promoted by:

- ***Implementing the Master and Open Space/Recreation Plans***

This Plan should be used as a guide for reaching decisions regarding community improvements and land use changes. Community conditions and priorities will also change over time. It is also important to continue on-going planning by monitoring progress of actions recommended in the Plan, new development conditions and trends. Therefore, the Planning Board must consider means of amending and updating this Plan discussed in the Summary and Implementation section.

HISTORY AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

A Community with Much to be Proud of

Historical, cultural and tourist oriented attractions continue to provide a source of income for many residents of Lenox and surrounding towns. Historic Lenox Village is truly a showcase of interesting architecture, public buildings such as the Town Hall and Library, social points such as prominent churches and the Lenox Community Center, and various offices and personal service establishments. Restaurants, inns and shops are particularly attractive to the seasonal population and the many visitors who frequent town to enjoy cultural opportunities such as the world-renowned Tanglewood music center. Resorts and guest accommodations also contribute to the financial well being of the town, providing substantial public funds to maintain a high level of quality public services.

One of the joys of frequenting Lenox Village is its pedestrian accessibility, which serves residents as well as visitors. The Village of Lenox Dale retains much of its character, continues to be a place where families can afford to live, and provides links to key industrial and river recreation points.

History

The early settlement of Lenox showed three typical New England nuclei: two at the center of the best agricultural land and the third in the southeastern corner of the town, close to the river to exploit a power resource. Lenox Village (or Lenox Center) and New Lenox were agricultural centers; Lenox Dale was an industrial center.

Table POP1 Historical Town Population Trends*

Year	Population
1800	1,041
1850	1,599
1900	2,942
1950	3,627
1970	5,804
1990	5,069
1998	5,594

* Sources: 1800-1990 U.S. Census, 1998 Annual Town Census

During the decades following the Civil War, New England farms could not compete with the products of the Midwestern states, and the economy began to shift. In Lenox this migration from farming was fortunately coupled with the development of the Berkshires as a grand summer resort of the wealthy. Capitalizing on its early appeal as the intellectual center of the Berkshires and the seat of the County Court House, Lenox became the major focus of this form of development in the Berkshires. Stately and even grandiose mansions were built on the assembled great estates. In the "gay nineties," recalls a historical chapter in the Annual Town

Report celebrating the Bicentennial, Lenox earned the nickname "summer capital," with all the political and economic power the term implies.

The decline of railroads and the upsurge of the automobile, together with the coming of "a more restless generation" and heavy income and inheritance taxes, were among the factors that produced the gradual decline of Lenox as a resort town. Some of the obsolete mansions were donated to schools and other institutions, some were transformed into resort centers, and others were divided into development projects - either to form new residential areas or to revitalize and intensify old ones. Gradually, the formation of a "new tourism," based on automobile travel, emerged. This new form of tourism, spurred along by the development of Tanglewood, encouraged a greater number of people to travel into and enjoy Lenox for shorter periods of time in less grandiose accommodations, and cast Lenox into a new resort framework. Excellent restaurants, fashionable shops and galleries abound, drawing many tourists - particularly from the New York Metro area and Boston - for an enjoyable weekend.

Lenox Village is the center of focus for many residents and visitors, and a National Historic District was established along Main and Walker Streets in order to "promote the educational, cultural, economic and general welfare of the public through the preservation and protection of the distinctive characteristics of buildings and places significant in the history of Lenox." (Section 1.1, *Lenox Historic District Bylaw*). Structures in this District are held to design standards enforced by a Historic District Commission and the Building Inspector. In addition, numerous buildings and sites of historic and cultural interest are located throughout town. See list of Historic Buildings and location at the end of this chapter.

Cultural Resources

Tanglewood, begun as the Berkshire Music festival in the 1930's, operates as the summer home of another esteemed long-term visitor - the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Other attractions include the Edith Wharton Restoration estate (The Mount) and its theater component, and numerous spas and resorts, including Canyon Ranch, Kripalu, Cranwell, and Eastover. In addition to these, an important institution that provides Lenox with unique opportunities for environmental appreciation is the Pleasant Valley Sanctuary of the Massachusetts Audubon Society. Other important municipally-controlled assets in Lenox are four public parks, a playground, Lenox Academy and the Community Center Building, covered in the community services and facilities and recreation sections of this Plan.

In addition to these resources, nearby museums include Lenox's own Berkshire Scenic Railway and Museum in Lenox Dale, the Frelinghuysen Morris House and Studio on Hawthorne Street, the Berkshire Museum and Hancock Shaker Village in Pittsfield, and Norman Rockwell Museum and Chesterwood in Stockbridge. Theater companies - particularly summer stock - abound, and include Shakespeare & Company, the Barrington Stage Company, the Berkshire Theater Festival and Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival in Becket. North Berkshire County also has many cultural resources.

Churches are cultural as well as spiritual and historic resources. Numerous churches and other town establishments owe a part of their physical impressiveness to the wealthy patrons of the late nineteenth century, but continue to offer sites for worship and architectural appreciation today. The Church on the Hill, a clapboard edifice built in Federal style in 1805 located at the top of Main Street, is on the National Register of Historic Sites, as is an adjacent cemetery (the earliest marked grave is dated 1776). St. Ann's, further south on Main Street, is a granite church in the Norman Gothic Revival style, built in 1911. Trinity Episcopal on Walker Street, also a stone Norman Gothic Revival, was built between 1885-1888 with detached bell tower. St. Helena's Episcopal Chapel in New Lenox was built in 1892. St. Vincent DePaul Chapel, Lenox Dale, is a Roman Catholic Church of more modern construction.

In September, the annual Tub Parade closes the summer season in a fashion reminiscent of Lenox in the 1890's and celebrates the onset of the wonderful colors of the spectacular fall foliage.

Goals

Residents want to see all of Lenox's qualities preserved for future generations, yet still allow for needed changes and improvements.

- *Preserve Lenox's outstanding historical, cultural, and visual resources*
- *Provide for community needs while promoting cultural tourism as a vital part of the economy*

Future Challenges, Needs and Opportunities

Lenox's very strong cultural connections appear to be self-sustaining for the most part. Tanglewood and the Wharton estate are immensely popular attractions, the town's resorts have achieved national fame, and the Massachusetts Audubon Society's Sanctuary provides a valuable opportunity for protection and appreciation of natural habitat. The Berkshire Scenic Railway should be actively encouraged in their efforts to expand the operations of the Railway, and given assistance in doing so. The Ventfort Hall Association is also continuing to work to fully restore Ventfort Hall, a National Register property.

In January 1993, the town was successful in winning a national competition to attract the National Music Center to the 63 acre former Bible Speaks property, which is a former "great Estate". The Center was to be a multi-function facility that would include a retirement community for professionals from the music, radio and recording industries; a library of American music; a performance center and an interactive hands-on museum devoted to all forms of American music. The National Music Foundation estimated that the Music Center would create a large number of jobs, draw hundreds of thousands of visitors, and be a boon to the local economy. In early 1998, additional state funding was secured.

However, in the late spring of 1999, the Music Center project was permanently cancelled due to funding problems and other difficulties. The tremendous potential of the site as a performing arts center remains. An exciting possibility is for Shakespeare & Company to acquire the site and expand their operations. Regardless of specific ownership factors, potential venues and uses, the facilities present would point to the likely continuation of performance arts at the site.

There may be an opportunity to promote Historic preservation by expanding the boundaries of the Downtown Historic District to add a modicum of land and structures and more closely align this district with property lines. In addition, in the Spring of 1999, a state grant to fully inventory Historic properties and routes was being sought by a local group in conjunction with the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission.

Strategies

Active residents, town leaders and organizations should *continue to foster adaptation that will promote social diversity and economic prosperity while protecting and preserving the historic, cultural and environmental features that are important components of Lenox's heritage.*

- *Preserve history through education, public and private historic preservation and restoration endeavors. A high level of public & private commitment, participation and cooperation is required.*
- *Under the watchful eyes of local boards and commissions, historic sites should be well preserved and utilized without being compromised by unsuitable development not in keeping with the character of Lenox. This important task can be done in a helpful manner by providing clear guidelines and efficient site, sign and design review.*
- *Preserve the historical qualities of Lenox Village and the estate areas by continuing to allow and expand options for guided reuse.*
- *Support participation in a proposed Great Estates scenic byway program to draw attention and support to the aesthetic and historic appeal of agricultural fields and historic structures, with an economic tie to tourism.*

LENOX HISTORIC AND CULTURAL SITES AND STRUCTURES

Property Name # on map	Building Name	Assessor's Parcel #	Location/Map #	Era/Style	Building Type	Past/Current Use
Aspinwall Park (now Kennedy Park) [1]	NA					P: Formerly the posh Aspinwall Hotel, burned 1920's or 30's, overlooks Tanglewood and the Stockbridge Bowl C: Town park
Barboza, George House	Private Residence			Federal, Early residence		P: Private Residence
Bellefontaine (now Canyon Ranch) [2]	Mansion (w/o dorm & gym addition) & gatehouse	22-C-1 Special Zoning status	Kemble St.	Beaux-Arts Classical, 1899		P: Residence C: Resort, spa center Canyon Ranch
Belvoir Terrace [3]	Main Building	18A-1 Special Zoning status	80 Cliffwood Street	Elizabethan Revival, 1884-86		C: Dance school/ camp
Blantyre [4]	Main Building	26-3,4 Special Zoning status	Rt 20/East Street	Elizabethan Revival, 1901-04		C: Country inn
Brookhurst [5]			West Street			C: Private/ Foundation
"Cemetery on the Hill" [6]				Earliest date of death is 1776	Monuments	Cemetery (still used??) graves include Jonathan Hinsdale & Serge Koussevitzky
"Church on the Hill" [6] (Congregational Church, United Church of Christ)		National Register	169 Main Street	1805, Federal (Benjamin Goodrich, architect)	Clapboard	P & C: Church
Clipston Grange (National Music Foundation) [20]		Special Zoning status		Vernacular, c. 1880		C: Great Estate, operations for National Music Foundation
Cranwell (Wynhurst) [7] (Coldbrooke)	Cranwell Hall (excluding West Wing), Wickham Hall, Berchman's Hall	25, 27, 28, 29, 28B-20 Special Zoning status	55 Lee Road (off Walker Street)			P: Great estate residences C: Resort, conference center
Curtis Hotel [30]	Hotel + additional "Cottages" on Main & Walker Streets		6 Main Street	Classical Revival, 1829. Later additions in 1883 and 1898, incorporating some Victorian elements	Brick	P: Site has been home to an inn of some fashion since 1773. C: Retirement housing in hotel proper, with public shops on first floor 1979-Present.
Dibble Tavern Site	Site marker			Site Marker- one of		

<u>Property Name</u> <u>[# on map]</u>	<u>Building Name</u>	<u>Assessor's Parcel #</u>	<u>Location/Map #</u>	<u>Era/Style</u>	<u>Building Type</u>	<u>Past/ Current Use</u>
Eastover [8]	Various			the original land grants given in town		
Elm Court [9]	Main portion of property in Stockbridge	National Register	Stockbridge St. (Lenox/ Stockbridge)			
Elms (Windsor Mountain) [10]	Main Building (excluding Dining Hall wing) (Groton Place)	21B-102 Special Zoning status	West Street			C: Windsor Mountain School
Erskine Park [11]			Off Stockbridge Street	Original house gone (burned c. 1910-20's)		P: Residence, including Geo. Westinghouse, who supplied electricity C: Grounds maintained as Fox Hollow
Ethelwynde [12]	Main Building	17D-2.3 Special Zoning status	Yokun Ave.			C: Kroft Engineering
Gables (originally Pine Acre, also formerly the Three Gables) [??]				Queen Anne, 1885. Porches, hipped roof	Clapboard/ shingles	P: Residence, former Wharton summer home for several seasons C: Inn
General Paterson House	Private residence			Federal, early residence, much modified		P: Residence C: Private residence
Grace Methodist			Lenox Dale			P: Church C: Apartments
High Lawn Farm [13]	Numerous residential/farm structures		Lenox Road (Lee/Lenox/ Stockbridge)			P & C: Dairy farm
Hinsdale, Jonathan House Site	Marker		Under Mountain Road	Site marker		
Home Farm (High Wyck) [??]						
Kemble, Fanny House Site [14]	Marker			Site marker, house torn down in 1905		P: Former residence of famous 19 th century actress C:
The Ledge	Private residence		Corner Clifford and Yokun Avenue			C: Private residence
Lenox Academy [15]		National	75 Main Street	Federal, c. 1803.		P: Private school 1803-66, public

<u>Property Name</u> [# on map]	<u>Building Name</u>	<u>Assessor's Parcel #</u>	<u>Location/Map #</u>	<u>Era/Style</u>	<u>Building Type</u>	<u>Past/Current Use</u>
		Register		Moved 1879, expanded 1892		high school 1886-1908, Trinity School 1911-1947, town meeting place and offices thereafter. C: Historical Society and Chamber of Commerce offices
Lenox Community Center [16]	Community Center		60 Walker Street	Classic Revival, c. 1923	Clapboard	P: Lenox Brotherhood Club C: Town recreation/ meeting facility
Lenox Elementary School [17]	Cameron School		109 Housatonic			P: School C: Planned assisted living facility
Lenox Historic District	District	Local Historic District	Main and Walker Streets			
Lenox Library [18]	"Old County Courthouse"	National Register, Preservation Restriction	18 Main Street	Greek Revival, 1815-16 (Arch: Isaac Damon)	Brick	P: Courthouse until 1868, when the county seat moved to Pittsfield. Privately bought and deeded to town for a Library in 1874. Also used for town office space until the Library expanded to fill the entire building. C: Town Library + gallery space
Lenox Railroad Station [19]	Depot, Berkshire Scenic Railway	National Register	Housatonic St. & Willow Creek Rd., abuts October Mountain State Forest			P: Railroad depot C: Berkshire Scenic Railway and Museum
Lenox School (National Music Foundation) [20]	Clipston Grange, Frelinghuysen Cottage (Bassett Hall)	22A-163 Special Zoning status	Kemble Street	Colonial Revival, 1881	Clapboard	P: School C: National Music Foundation
Lenox Town Hall [21]	Town Hall		6 Walker Street	Neoclassical, 1901	Brick	P & C: Replaced the Old Courthouse as home to town offices, rear once used as an opera house, now entirely devoted to town offices and meeting space.
October Mountain State Park					395 acres in Lenox	P & C: Part of large state forest, buildings include an educational center.
Old Town Hall	First County Courthouse		31 Housatonic Street	18 th Century vernacular, 1791.		P: Former Courthouse, also used for town office space, Post Office

<u>Property Name</u> [# on map]	<u>Building Name</u>	<u>Assessor's Parcel #</u>	<u>Location/Map #</u>	<u>Era/Style</u>	<u>Building Type</u>	<u>Past/Current Use</u>
Overleigh [22]	Hillcrest Center		Stockbridge Street	Moved to present location in 1903. Now somewhat run-down. Gothic/Tudor, 1903		C: Variety of shops since 1901 P: Residence C: School
Patterson-Eggleston Monument			Intersection of Main, Walker, Stockbridge, and West Streets	Marble obelisk (21' 9"), 1892	Revolutionary War Monument	
Pleasant Valley Sanctuary	Massachusetts Audubon Society		472 West Mountain Road		Education center, barn studio, ponds and trails on 1100+ acres.	C: Wildlife habitat/conservation area
Read, Fred House	Private residence		Lenox Dale	Federal, early residence, porch altered rest of house the same		P: Residence C: Private residence
Roseth, Forbes House	Private residence			Federal, early residence		P: Residence C: Private residence
St. Ann's R.C. Church	Church		134-140 Main Street	Norman Gothic Revival, 1911 (Arch: E. Burrell Hoffman)	Granite	P & C: Church
St. Helena's Chapel - [23]	Church		245 New Lenox Road	1892		P & C: Church
St. Vincent DePaul Chapel	Chapel		39 Crystal Street Lenox Dale	20 th century		P & C: Church
Sitzer, Richard House	Private residence			Federal, Early residence		P: Residence C: Private residence
Spofford, David House	Private residence			Federal, early residence		P: Residence C: Private residence
Tanglewood [24]	Various buildings, music halls		Main Gate on West Street, bulk of property in Stockbridge	Assorted		P: Estate residences C: Music/ concert center, summer home to the Boston Symphony Orchestra
Tory Cave						
Trinity Episcopal			88 Walker Street	Norman Gothic Revival, 1885-88	Stone	P & C: Church

<u>Property Name</u> # on map	<u>Building Name</u>	<u>Assessor's Parcel #</u>	<u>Location/Map #</u>	<u>Era/Style</u>	<u>Building Type</u>	<u>Past/ Current Use</u>
Valley Head (Braebrook) [25]				(Arch: Col. Richard Auchmuty). Detached bell tower.		
Ventfort Hall [26]		National Historic District	Reservoir Road 120 Walker Street, 148 Walker Street, & 55 Kemble Street	Gothic/ Flemish, 1893		P: Residence C: Vacant. Recently bought by consortium of historical society members and others interested in turning it into a museum.
Walker-Rockwell House	Private residence		74 Walker Street	Federal, 1804, later additions.	Clapboard	P: Residence of Judge William Walker, the Rockwells, the Curtises, and others; dormitory for Bordentown-Lenox school in the 1960's. C: Private residence
Wayside (Lenox Club) [27]	Main Building	17D-1 Special Zoning status	Yokun Avenue	Stick Style, 1875		P: Residence C: Lenox Club
Wharton, Edith House "The Mount" [28]	Main House, Gatehouse & Stable	National Historic Landmark, National Historic District, Preservation Restriction	South of Lenox on U.S. Route 7, Plunkett St.	1902		P: Residence of famous author C: Museum, theater festival
Winden Hill [29]						
Windyside [??]			Yokun Avenue			
Wyndhurst [7]			55 Lee Road	Tudor Revival, 1894		Hotel/ Resort

POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Lenox is a relatively small and stable community which is seen as community strength. Although the town has experienced a declining birthrate and increase in retirees, there is still a strong presence of families and long-time residents. This by nature makes Lenox a neighborly place in which to live, where residents feel safe and welcomed. A steady influx of those with a love for music and the quality of life evident in town have made Lenox their home. A variety of organizations and associations have traditionally contributed to making the town work.

Population Trends

The highest point Lenox ever recorded in a decennial (ten year) period, was 6,523 persons in 1980, according to the U.S. Bureau of the Census. Lenox's population trends prior to 1970 are discussed in the History section. The Town experienced a dramatic population decline in the 1980's due to exodus of the Bible Speaks organization. Smaller households also contributed to the decline in the 1980's. It should be noted that recent Town census figures are higher than U.S. Census estimates, due to different methodologies. Overall, during the 1990's, the population in Lenox is believed to have grown at a relatively slow rate.

Table POP1 Recent Town Population Changes

Year	People	% Avg. Annual Change	# Persons Loss/Gain
1970	5,804		
1980	6,523	1.24%	719
1990	5,069	-2.23%	-1,454
1996*	5,022	-0.09%	-47
1998**	5,594	1.41%	525

Sources: 1970-1990 U.S. Census, 1996 U.S. Census Estimate, 1998 Annual Town Census

Lenox's population trend is somewhat related to economic conditions in the Pittsfield area and in Berkshire County. Berkshire County's population reached its height of nearly 150,000 persons in 1970, and has experienced a slow but steady decline since then. Each decade has seen a loss of manufacturing jobs that has not been completely offset by other employment sectors (more information is contained in the section on Economics). This pattern created an overall effect of out migration of residents seeking employment elsewhere, decreasing County population. The 1996 Census population estimate for Berkshire County was 134,788, meaning population losses from 1970 to 1996 amount to approximately 15,000 persons, or 10% of the peak population.

Lenox's population trend is connected to the pattern of population and employment in the commuting area surrounding it, strongly tied to Pittsfield, but also including other parts of the

central and southern Berkshire County. Like South County, Lenox has been able to maintain a more steady population due to newcomers from other parts of the County and from outside the County and State, particularly upper income couples and retirees. Lenox's percentage of the surrounding area's population has fluctuated over time.

Table POP2 Recent Town and Surrounding Area Population Trends

	Lenox	Surrounding Area	Lenox's % of Surrounding Area
1970	5,804	93,960	6.2%
1980	6,523	89,614	7.3%
1990	5,069	85,485	5.9%
1996*	5,022	(est.) 82,000	6.1%
1998**	5,594	(est.) 82,000	6.8%

Sources: 1970-1990 U.S. Census, 1996 U.S. Census Estimate, 1998 Annual Town Census

Note: Surrounding area includes Pittsfield, Lee, Lenox, Stockbridge, Washington, Great Barrington Tyringham, Richmond, Becket, Dalton, Lanesborough, West Stockbridge

Because of Lenox and Berkshire tourist attractions, such as Tanglewood, Lenox is also home to many seasonal residents who hail from the New York City metro area, Hartford, and Boston. Many of the estimated 1,000 plus part-time residents own or rent cottages, live in the newer condominium complexes, or rent rooms or apartments. In addition, the daytime population swells, particularly during the summer season, due to vacationing tourists. Although exact figures are difficult to obtain, there appears to be an average of several thousand visitors each summer night in Lenox.

It appears that the demographic characteristics of new Lenox residents is related to the demographic characteristics of visitors to Lenox and the Berkshires. Thus visitors apparently find Lenox attractive and some portion seek to make the town their permanent residence.

Demographic Characteristics

An aging populace is a national trend that is more pronounced in the Berkshires and in Lenox. Lenox has a large and rising number of seniors, although all age groups are represented. In 1990, those over 65 represented 21.7% of the population and children under 18 also comprised 21.7% of the population. The median age of Lenox residents was 40.9 years in 1990 versus 33.6 years for Massachusetts. In the table below, which includes the age distribution of surrounding towns, the bolded figures highlight the strong segment of seniors, and hint at out migration occurring among the younger age groups.

Table POP3 1990 Town and Sub-Regional Population By Age

Age Group	Lenox Pop.	% Lenox Pop.	% Lenox Sub- Region Pop.	% Massachusetts Pop.
Under 5 years	288	5.7%	6.5%	6.9%
5 to 17 years	812	16.0%	16.8%	15.6%
18 to 24 years	385	7.6%	8.9%	11.8%
25 to 34 years	627	12.4%	15.7%	18.3%
35 to 44 years	741	14.6%	15.0%	15.3%
45 to 54 years	589	11.6%	10.3%	10.0%
55 to 64 years	529	10.4%	9.8%	8.6%
65 to 74 years	470	9.3%	9.4%	7.6%
75 to 84 years	410	8.1%	5.6%	4.4%
85 years and over	218	4.3%	2.1%	1.5%
	5,069	100.0%	100.00%	100.0%

Source: U.S. Census

The median population age has continued to rise in the last decade due to a combination of factors. One reason is a declining birth rate. At the same time, improvements to health care have extended life spans. In the 1990's many existing residents have naturally advanced to the senior age group while retirees have also flocked to town. By 2000, those over 65 will comprise well over 25% of the population and soon after that seniors will reach 30% of the population. Many college age young adults leave Lenox and the Berkshires. While some return to the Berkshires, they often live in other towns while in their 20's and 30's. Out-migration - forced by the decline of high-paying manufacturing jobs in the area, has not affected Lenox as deeply as other municipalities in the area. It has affected the age structure of the town's population.

Lenox's ratio of 2.45 persons per household is a bit below the national and state average. This ratio dropped significantly in the 1980's from 2.69 in 1980. Another population characteristic of note is the high percentage of persons of the White race (96.5%). In 1990, the largest minority groups were Black, Asian, and Hispanic peoples. The diversity of the population is higher in Lenox than in most towns in the County.

Population Projections

Population projections are most reliable when they incorporate local historical trend data. Using Table POP2 historical population change rates for Lenox, we can formulate various projections. In Lenox, the historical data generally projects *increasing* population. The only period which indicates a decreasing population is the 1980-1990 time-frame, largely attributed to the Bible Speaks move.

The national and state trends are toward an aging population and lower household sizes. Those trends should continue to occur in Lenox in the future. Public policy may influence the growth rate of the senior population.

It is likely that Lenox's population will grow slowly or remain basically the same, a desired pattern as expressed in the community survey. It is likely that Lenox will continue to experience periods of population gains and losses, especially due to changing local and regional conditions, but also impacted by state and national conditions.

Table POP4 Town Population Projections

Year	Projection 1	Projection 2	Projection 3	Projection 4	Projection 5
2000	5,080	5,080	5,080	5,547	4,748
2010	5,688	5,220	4,977	5,476	4,427
2020	6,325	5,820	5,313	5,406	4,106

Source Notes:

Regional Economic Models, Inc. (REMI) Amherst, MA, forecasts use economic and U.S. Census population data from 1960 to 1990. The three REMI projections are based upon an overall declining County population from 1990 to 2010, with a significant gain in overall County population from 2010 to 2020.

- Projection 1: REMI Dispersal Scenario is based upon an increasing share of County population outside Central Cities (Pittsfield)
- Projection 2: REMI Middle Scenario is based upon a continuation of County population distribution patterns
- Projection 3: REMI Concentrated Scenario is based on a halt in the County population distribution pattern of declining Central Cities (Pittsfield)
- Projection 4: Recent Historical Trend (Modified - U.S. Census: 1970-1990, 1997 Town Census)
- Projection 5: U.S. Census Trend (Straight Line - U.S. Census: 1970-1990)

Goals and Strategies to Maintain a Dynamic Balance

Residents are genuinely concerned about the future for their children and grandchildren, and strive to find a balance between social diversity, economic prosperity, and environmental and aesthetic protection. Lenox residents' recent responses to a community-wide survey and at public visioning meetings give a great deal of insight into the character of the community. Public participation would indicate that most residents want to:

- *Keep community size stable and rate of growth low*
- *Preserve communal qualities and enrich opportunities for social diversity and interaction among the population and with nature*
- *Generally preserve community composition but become a bit more diverse and inclusive of younger people and families*

The issue here is scale and composition of the community, not so much population size. The influence of tourism and Lenox's status as a quality community will help to sustain the community. In the future the visitor population of Lenox may continue to increase, related to attractions, the amount of land and type of zoning allowed for hotels, motels, restaurants, etc.

Development related to these increases that is not carefully managed could prove to be very troublesome.

Lenox is a community with a high quality standard, and as such its demographics will continue to generally gravitate toward a higher income, higher age population. Market and fiscal factors have accelerated the changing demographic composition. The main issue is simply whether the community will make special efforts to redirect, and compensate for, some of the market forces that are changing the community composition. Difficult choices regarding the affordability of housing, development, redevelopment and reuse will continue to surface.

- *To find and maintain a proper course, actions in the public domain should continue to account for the needs and rights of all members of the community*
- *Increase publicized opportunities for people to participate positively; continually build the base of residents willing to interact in the community and to further community betterment*

COMMUNITY SERVICES, FACILITIES AND SUPPORT

The Town currently offers a variety of services designed to meet the needs of the public. These services often require facilities and infrastructure. These services are funded primarily by property taxes, although other sources also contribute. This section includes a summary of conditions and future needs pertaining to education, public safety, and other town and government related services. Non-governmental community services are also briefly considered. Community needs in Lenox are often met in part by private organizations that tap into private resources and through volunteerism by people who care about the community, are civic-minded and have a spirit of cooperation.

Public infrastructure such as town roads, and the water and wastewater systems serve most residents and businesses. Town officials and the Department of Public Works have been working hard to improve facilities and services. Utilities are discussed in detail in the Utilities section of this plan. Investments will be necessary to address long-term needs such as improved roads and additional sidewalks, discussed in the Transportation Section. Creation and implementation of a capital improvement program is proceeding; it will require significant internal and external financing.

Although Lenox is fortunate to have high level of town revenue, all public needs must be met through a careful allocation of local resources. Local government, and the people involved with it at every level, are working on this important job.

Education and Learning

Public Schools

The Lenox Memorial Middle-High School (housing grades 6-12), originally constructed in 1966, and expanded and renovated in 1996-98, occupies a rolling 30 acre tract on East Street. The modern structure houses 20 classrooms, 9 laboratories, several special purpose rooms, and has a design capacity for approximately 500 students. It has a separate wing for the Middle School. Its facilities also include a library, a gymnasium, cafeteria, a new 500 seat auditorium, faculty work areas, and various administrative offices. Every part of the school reflects up-to-date educational equipment.

By modernizing and expanding the Memorial Middle-High School, the town has taken a vital step forward providing quality facilities for education, every town's most demanding community responsibility.

The Morris Elementary School (housing pre-grade through grade five), built in 1961 and expanded in 1994-96, is an attractive structure standing on a pleasant West Street site of ten acres donated by the Morris family. The School houses 19 classrooms, three resource rooms, a computer lab, a new gymnasium and a cafeteria which also serves as an auditorium. A music

room, art lab, a kitchen, teachers' lounge, and a number of special purpose rooms complete the facilities.

Enrollment dropped sharply in the 1980's, then rebounded in the early 1990's. It has been stable recently. A large number of students from nearby towns, particularly in the upper grades, take advantage of Lenox's participation in the Commonwealth's School Choice program. These students represent over 10% of total enrollment.

Table COM1 Public School Enrollment

Year	Pre K-5	6-12	Total
1981			873
1989	314	378	692
1993	355	439	794
1997	365	419	784
1998	375	430	805

Source: Lenox School District

Special education programs are also provided.

The quality of Lenox's educational system is very apparent in SAT test scores that are far above state and national averages, and in the State Achievement Testing program scores that rate Lenox students highest among school districts in Berkshire County. This is a tribute to the high level of professionalism of the staff of teachers and administrators.

The schools are part of a school-business partnership with local employers. The Lenox School District shares a Food Services Director and a theater manager with the Southern Berkshire Regional School District. It also participates in the Southern Berkshire Educational Collaborative.

Continuing Education

There are several advanced education facilities in the Berkshires. Massachusetts College of the Liberal Arts, in North Adams, is a publicly funded four year institution. Berkshire Community College is a publicly funded, affordably priced, two year school offering a host of credit and non-credit courses at its main campus in Pittsfield. Some graduates of Lenox High School attend Williams College in Williamstown, a private four year institution. Its standards are very high, as are the costs to attend this excellent college. An extensive financial aid program is available at Williams to offset some of the cost. Simons Rock College of Bard, in Great Barrington, is a private two year institution.

Library

One of the town's strongest community assets is the Lenox Library. The origins of the present library date to the last decade of the 18th Century when a group of citizens developed a small private collection. Today, the Lenox Library Association oversees the library, which is largely

supported and endowed privately through a unique blend of funding sources. Annual public support from the town is crucial and typically represents about 30% of the annual operating budget.

The library is housed in two connected National Register historic 19th Century buildings; Sedgewick Hall and the former Berkshire County Court House on Main Street.

The first floor contains: an entrance foyer, display room, charging room with display cases and reference texts, children's reading room with tables fiction stack section staff work areas, librarian's office, large main reading room with periodicals and shelved reference texts, and 100 seat auditorium or exhibition hall.

The second floor houses: rented office space, music collection and listening room, two special collection rooms, special displays, stack, study, and carrel area of Sedgewick Hall balcony. It hosts the Welles Gallery and adult programs.

The list of physical facilities hints at the range of services offered by the library. Special collections in art, music, local history and children's books enrich the total stock of over 70,000 volumes, plus over 5,000 periodicals, videos, tapes, and records. A full time librarian and staff handle an annual circulation of 90,000 books and other media. The library has an after school teacher, and an extensive collection of CD-ROM programs are in the 'Homework Center' computer.

The library is working to integrate all its records in a computerized system for easy access. Material not available locally can be secured through the Western Massachusetts Regional Library System, an inter-library loan system with access to some of the finest libraries in the state.

Town Hall and Public Safety

Town Hall

Lenox's handsome Town Hall houses most town offices. The two-story brick structure, built in 1901 and well maintained, provides space for meetings and offices. Both floors feature East and West wings.

The second floor includes the Grange Room, a medium size meeting room used by the Planning Board and other boards and commissions, the School Superintendent's office, small offices for the Conservation Commission and the Building Inspector, and rest rooms.

The first floor is heavily utilized. It houses the Town Administration, and other offices. The auditorium in the southern section of the building is used for Town Meetings, elections, summer performances and other large public gatherings. The hall has a stage and seats approximately 300 persons, with room in the balcony for many more.

The basement houses the Police Department. The basement and the attic are also used for storage of Town records and documents.

Police Protection

Lenox is a very safe community as is evidenced by the low crime rate.

The Police Department occupies two basement offices in the Town Hall. From here the Chief and 9 full time officers administer Lenox's twenty-four hour police coverage. On busy weekends this force can be bolstered by additional part time employees available for traffic control.

Community policing includes crime prevention activities. Traffic problems also present a major police responsibility. Thus road patrol, bus follow-up, and summer weekend congestion demand much department time. According to the community-wide survey, the force provides excellent protection.

Fire Protection

The three strategically located stations of the Lenox Fire Department provide good protection for the town's developed areas. The Lenox Center station adjacent to Town Hall was built in 1911. The two story brick building is well kept and serves as an attractive headquarters. The main floor includes two equipment bays. The second floor includes rooms and facilities for the firemen. The New Lenox station near the corner of West Mountain and Pittsfield Roads was built in 1962. This single story girder and cement block structure contains two storage bays. The Lenox Dale station at School and Elm Streets was completed in 1963 and provides one bay and a small meeting room. It is constructed of brick in the bungalow style.

The Fire Department has an extensive collection of fire trucks and special equipment. Just recently a Ladder Fire Truck was added, giving the town the ability to fight fires from 75 feet in the air. There is an effective system of alarms connected to many facilities in town, and an array of emergency communication capabilities.

The Fire Department provides excellent protection for the town's developed areas, and also fights brush fires, typically responding to over 300 calls annually. Fire prevention is one of the main duties of the department, accomplished through inspections and education. The Department belongs to the Berkshire County Mutual Aid which assures immediate access to outside help.

Emergency

The Lenox Volunteer Ambulance Squad is comprised of 30 members certified as Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT's) at various levels. They annually respond to over 300 calls.

The local Police, Fire, Ambulance, and Civil Defense organizations communicate and cooperate to enhance Public Safety efforts.

Other Municipal Facilities and Services

Community Center

Since its acquisition by the town in 1955, the Community Center has offered an ever-growing scope of services to all Lenox residents. Imaginative response to changing recreation patterns and strong town support have sustained this viable asset. The imposing two-story structure bustles with activity throughout the year.

The Center was built in 1922 as a private club, and its original facilities have been smoothly adapted for full community use. It has also been upgraded for handicapped accessibility. The second floor contains a 275 seat auditorium with stage and adjacent kitchen for dinners serving up to 135 persons, the resident director's apartment and separate stairway and two small (8-10 people) meeting rooms. The first floor contains an activity room (20-30 people) for dancing and art classes and two large meeting rooms opening off the main entrance, being used as a senior citizens' activity areas coordinated by the Council on Aging. There is a large back porch, various tables for activities and games, and changing rooms. The playground behind the building has swings and a blacktop area for basketball.

The Center is heavily utilized. A large number of groups meet at the Center during the year, and its rooms are always used for private gatherings. Winter skating plus summer arts and crafts are available. The Center has a full time director to oversee and develop programs for a wide range of Lenox citizens, ranging from the very young to the very old. The Community Center staff arranges swimming and skiing trips.

Lenox Academy

The Lenox Academy, the oldest public structure, stands on the west side of Main Street about half way between Lilac Park and Cliffwood Street. A nineteenth century clapboard structure which once served as a town school, the academy helps lend a quiet, New England architectural flavor to Lenox Center. The Lenox Academy Building Trustee Committee, oversee a yearly town appropriation used to maintain the building. Various community and historic organizations used the Academy until a recent fire occurred. Restoration plans are proceeding.

Cemeteries

Lenox has three cemeteries that are maintained by the town: New Lenox, Mountain View, and the historic Church-on-the-Hill Burial Grounds. The Burial Grounds and New Lenox Cemetery are full. The Town's responsibility is largely upkeep - lawn and tree trimming plus headstone maintenance. The Public Works department performs necessary tasks to keep all the cemeteries in good condition. Mountain View Cemetery on Housatonic Street still has a large amount of unused space. The Catholic Church is responsible for maintaining St. Ann's Cemetery, just east of the Village Center, which is nearly full.

The following table summarizes information on the Town community facilities.

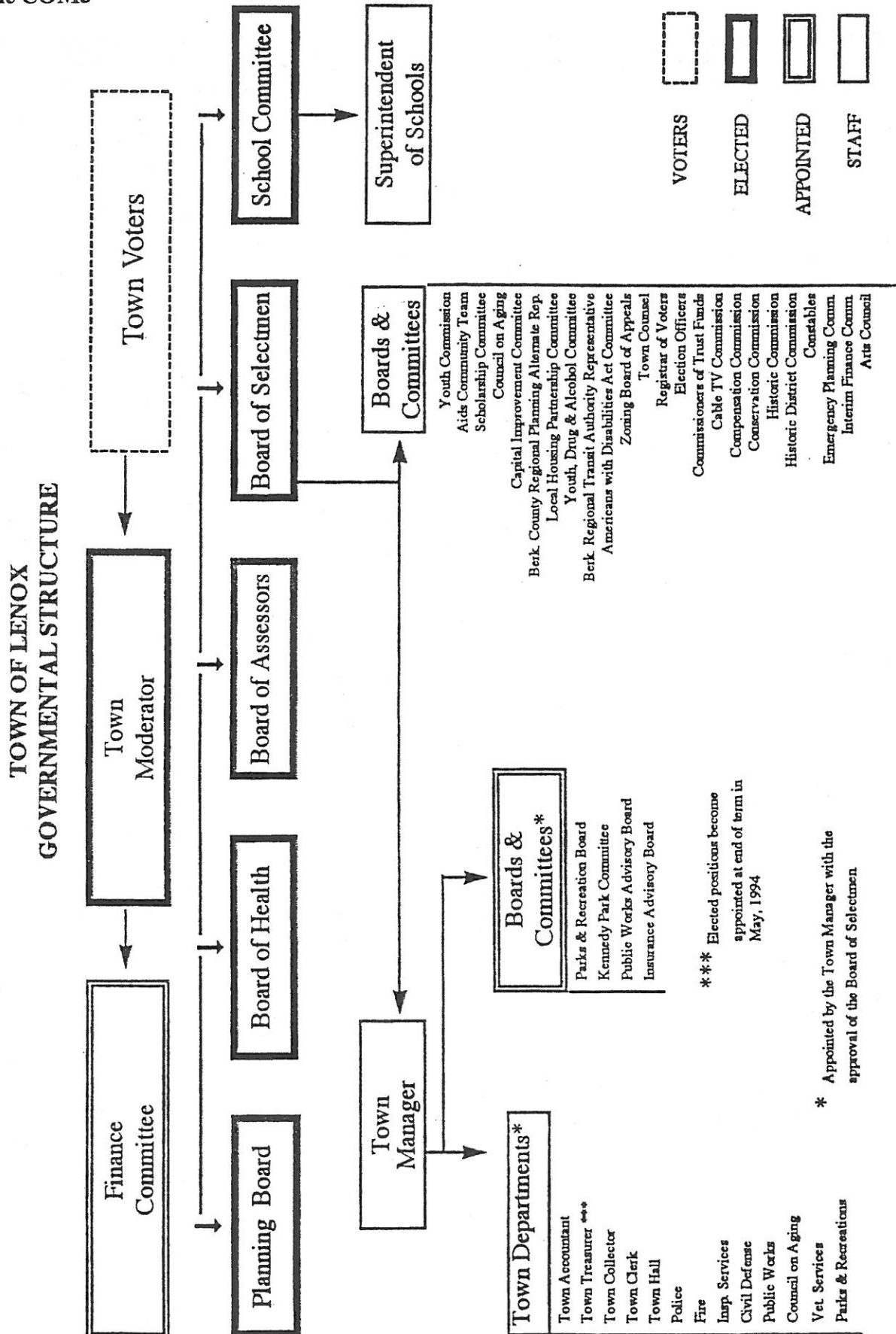
Table COM2 Town Community Facilities

Facility	Service Function	Built	Rebuilt	Space	Condition/ Status
Lenox Memorial High School	Education, Recreation	1966	1996-98	30 acres, sufficient building SF	Excellent
Morris Elementary School	Education, Recreation	1961	1994-96	10 acres, sufficient building SF	Excellent
Library	Library	1815			Historical
(Former) Center School	Children's Center rents part of building with rest vacant	circa 1900			In need of new roof and new boiler
Town Hall	Government, Police, Meeting	1901		Limited	Historical
Lenox Community Center	Activities, Meeting	1922			
Lenox Academy	Meeting, Offices	1803		Limited	Historical, Transition to add use as Museum
Lenox Center Fire Station	Fire	1911			
New Lenox Fire Station	Fire	1962			
Lenox Dale Fire Station	Fire	1963			
Public Works Building	DPW, Maintenance Equipment Storage				
Mountain View Cemetery	Burial			22 Ac.	Good
New Lenox Cemetery				< 1 Ac. Full	Good
Church on the Hill Burial Grounds				5 Ac. Full	Good
Utilities (see that Section)					

Government and Fiscal Conditions

Lenox is a Town with the traditional Town Meeting form of government, an elected representative body of five Selectmen, a multitude of other elected and appointed officials, boards and commissions, and a Town Manager. The Town currently provides a wide variety of services and facilities to residents including provision and maintenance of physical infrastructure and utilities.

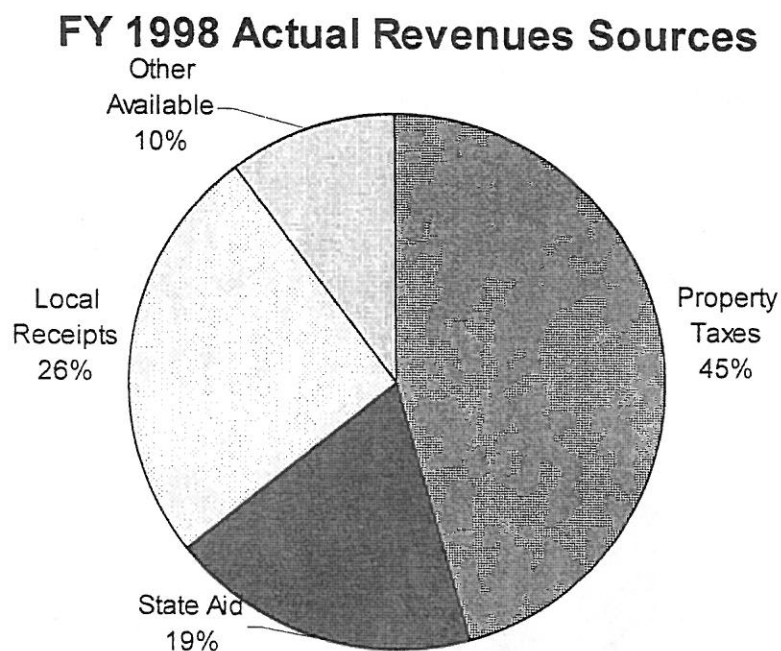
Table COM3



Currently all municipal functions are funded by property taxes, excise and other taxes, service fees, licenses, and transfer payments from state and federal levels. For FY 1999 (Fiscal year starting in July 1998 through June 1999), the Town levy on residential real estate property was \$13.60 per one thousand dollars of valuation, a bit lower than the average for Berkshire Towns. Currently the local property tax rate for all basic categories is the same. The tax rate has decreased slightly in the 1990's but total property valuation has risen.

Property taxes comprise 45.5% of the revenue base for FY 1999. The following graphic shows a basic breakdown of revenue in town. Other Available Revenue includes grants, sewer and water enterprises, interest, cash savings, etc.

Chart COM4



Currently, 73% of the property tax base is residential, with 21% commercial, 4% personal property, and industrial 1%.

The Massachusetts Department of Revenue statistics note 1,518 single-family parcels in FY 1999, with an average assessed value of \$168,018. This average value is relatively high for Berkshire County, but not unlike other towns in the southern portion of the County. Single-family properties generated nearly 3.5 million dollars in tax levies, with an average annual tax bill of \$2,285 per property, which is well above the County average of \$1,669.

There are also residential properties (mainly multiple unit structures) that are classified outside of single-family homes. These residential units generated nearly \$1.2 million dollars in FY 1999 tax levies. As noted in the Housing section, townhouses, condos, and assisted living for seniors

are gaining a significant share of the residential construction market and assessment base in Lenox.

Commercial properties are also a significant portion of the property tax base, totaling over 1.35 million dollars in tax levies in FY 1999.

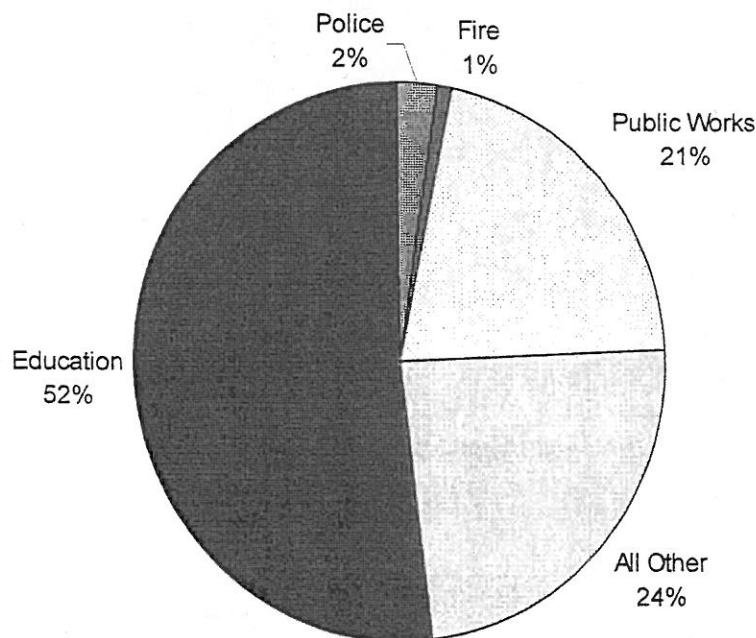
There are approximately 400 seasonal summer homes in Lenox. Some seasonal units have been converted to year-round use and may be either primary residences or second homes. Massachusetts also allows the taxing of personal property contained in non-domicile housing units; this comprises a significant amount of the \$256,037 in FY 1999 personal property levies for the town.

General fund expenditures for FY 1998 were \$11,953,121 with an additional \$1,761,933 going to enterprises and \$7,610,723 for capital projects.

The following graphic shows a basic breakdown of expenses in town.

Chart COM5

FY 1998 Actual Expenditures



The expenditure graphic includes School improvement expenses, which soon, along with total revenues and expenses, will decline. However, the largest General Fund operating expense in Lenox, as in most towns, is public education.

Non property tax revenue is an important component of local finance. More than half of Local Receipts are derived from a 4% Room Tax, a very significant revenue source. This source boosts revenues well above most other similarly sized towns, and supports higher expenditures.

Table COM6 Comparable 1996 Residential Tax Rates and Expenditures Per Capita

	Residential Tax Rate	General Government	Police & Fire	Education	Public Works	Total
Lenox	13.50	120	102	1,090	83	\$1,953
Lee	14.72	68	103	908	77	\$1,469
Gr. Barrington	14.98	78	108	716	86	\$1,431
Stockbridge	9.83	158	151	655	254	\$1,431
Williamstown	13.40	74	58	658	110	\$1,080
Dalton	16.48	49	*69	593	153	\$1,034
Deerfield	13.35	62	*57	779	111	\$1,303
State Average		81	220	753	132	\$1,639

Note: * indicates Fire Protection not included.

Source: Mass. Dept. of Revenue

Due to large school and infrastructure bonding in the 1990's, long term debt is high in Lenox (over 41 million dollars in principal and interest - FY98) and debt service is a significant cost.

Non-Municipal Community Services and Facilities

Other prominent non-municipal community services and facilities include private schools, solid waste and recycling, and the provision of health and medical, electric, natural gas, and telecommunications services. State agencies and non-profit institutions also provide many community and social services.

The Tri-Town Health Department is a major cooperative venture between Lenox, Lee and Stockbridge that provides joint services. A major responsibility of the agency is to administer Title V Septic Regulations. It also helps prevent and fight disease, conducts a tobacco awareness program, coordinates food service standards training and collection of household hazardous wastes. The department offices and storage facilities are located in downtown Lee.

Visiting Nurses Association (VNA) of the Berkshires provides very valuable comprehensive health services to the community. In 1997, they provided nearly 9,000 home health visits to residents of Lenox.

Goals

One major goal of the community is to *continue to provide high quality public and educational services.*

The highest priority recreation need identified in the survey was for an indoor swimming facility. This is consistent with previous findings, including the 1984 Plan's Open Space questionnaire, where Lenox residents rated swimming their top priority. The highest priority identified at the community visioning workshop was to facilitate greater community interaction. Another priority identified in the survey was a need for an indoor recreation center facility. Therefore a general goal is to *provide a variety of recreational opportunities that serve all ages, physical conditions, and interests of year-round and summer residents.*

Future Challenges, Needs and Opportunities

Education and Learning

Public School enrollment is projected to be stable over the short term. Enrollment of Lenox residents is expected to decline slowly as a reflection of the changing demographic composition of the community. Since the schools are so highly regarded, enrollment from outside the community is expected to be strong and support stable overall enrollment.

The recent renovations to the school buildings provide an excellent base of facilities with ample room. If the facilities are carefully maintained, they should adequately serve the community into the foreseeable future. For the public schools, the challenge is simply to maintain the very high level of quality currently present by continuing to address needs on an on-going basis.

The School District recognizes a need to focus on recreational improvements. The adjacent ten acre tract of land to the south of the middle/high school site was thought to provide an opportunity for expansion of recreational fields, if necessary. However, this land was recently sold, apparently for another purpose. This issue may be better considered in the context of community recreation (see following subsection).

School districts often face the choice of whether increased regional facility and educational sharing will be pursued. This issue often becomes a hot topic of public concern when a large capital investment is required for a school facility improvement. However, in the 1990's, first Lenox and then Lee, adjacent independent school districts, decided to face the need for major renovations (Lenox) and school replacement (Lee), and to continue to support independent public school systems. The Lenox school system has provided many benefits for those attending its high quality schools. It has been, and will continue to be, very costly to maintain this independent system.

Many towns across the United States have consolidated high schools. A somewhat smaller number have consolidated middle grades. A much lower percentage of towns have chosen to share lower grades.

In 1968, it appeared that a future decision to regionalize seemed inevitable. This conclusion still seems valid over the very long term. Over the short to mid term, there may be opportunities to increase sharing of school system resources that would still allow varying degrees of independence, while reducing costs. Study groups should continue to investigate and explore various alternatives in the future.

For post secondary education, the lack of a four year institution within easy commuting range is a problem. Most students graduating from Lenox High attend schools outside Berkshire County. Many establish strong ties outside the area and do not return following graduation.

The 1998 Community-wide survey rated Continuing Education programs rather low, indicating this could be an area for improvement. A problem common to many communities is a disconnect between heavy emphasis on public school education, which serves the 18 and under age group, and limited emphasis on learning opportunities for adults of working age, which are virtually undistinguished from learning services for seniors and retirees.

To its credit, the Lenox Library appears to be moving Lenox well ahead of most towns, through its development of multigenerational and multiple media resources, including computer training for all age groups. The School and the Library should continue to develop a continuum of learning for all age groups that will enhance the independent use of home computer and media technology. If necessary, the school facilities could certainly be more fully utilized in the evenings.

Although the Lenox Library has been tastefully renovated in the past, it requires extensive work periodically. Currently, building improvements are being pursued.

Municipal Services and Facilities

Since residents generally give strong support to the continuation of present services, and generally rate them highly, every effort should be made to maintain them to high standards.

The Town has just recently appropriated funds for repair and renovation of the Lenox Academy building. Plans call for turning the building into an historical museum, with limited use by organizations. The Academy's use by town historical groups, its public exhibits, plus its visual contribution to Lenox's architectural image justify its continued full support by town funds.

In the post war era, with the exception of the late 1980's and early 1990's, Lenox's base of growing local governmental revenue has funded various new services that require space. A general view is that the Lenox Town Hall is fairly cramped.

Lenox has recently been more proactive in projecting its major expenses through a five year planning span. In 1998, a study of the Town Hall and Police Station was conducted. As a more comprehensive follow-up to that study, a Building Committee is starting to consider needs for the future. Renovation plans are being developed.

The structural condition of public buildings will need to be examined. Historical structures require special consideration. An inventory of space needs to be completed and evaluated in relationship to anticipated town employee and organizational needs for future space. The functionality of building should also be considered, as well as the location. This is a major advantage for some of the existing buildings that are proximate to the center of town, facilitating access and use. Findings of the Building Committee will likely need to be integrated into the Capital Plan.

Recreation

There are some tremendous existing facilities and programs for recreation and activities. For instance, the Community Center is an excellent centrally located activity center. Nevertheless, there are deficiencies in the range of available recreation programs and facilities in the Town of Lenox. This conclusion was apparent in both the responses to the survey conducted in early 1998, and in the feedback received from the public at various meetings. Residents generally felt that recreational needs were not being completely met for residents, especially for teenagers and young adults.

An indoor recreation center facility could be a shared facility for multiple uses that would serve diverse segments of the community. One important opportunity is the possibility of sharing recreation facilities (particularly new ones) with other towns. Plans for a sub-regional community center (with a pool) are proceeding in Great Barrington. This facility might partially meet the need and desire expressed in survey results. Lee is also interested in an indoor pool and there may be opportunities for joint efforts. The school auditorium is also available for cultural activities and this might include its use as a theater. These options would allow needs to be met at a lower cost.

For issues involving outdoor recreation facilities, reference the Natural Resources, Open Space and Recreation Areas section.

Government and Other Services

It is important to remember that government revenues fluctuate. The present period is generally considered to be a peak. If and when the need to reduce governmental expenses occurs, the pressure to eliminate or reduce services will arise. To some extent this can be softened by wise saving of 'free cash' assets. Lenox has established a policy to maintain its free cash to be used only for one time or emergency expenses. Careful imposition of fees can also offset revenue losses. Fees should not lead to additional burdens, or the exclusion of opportunities, for those who have limited financial resources.

When trying to reduce cost, or when it is necessary to improve existing services or develop new ones, the town needs to continue reaching outwards to surrounding communities. Tri-Town Health is a good example of resource sharing that is currently working. In this Plan we have mentioned other examples of potential cooperative sharing. Town boundaries are linked to the political system; beyond actual geographic relationships, there is no rationale for duplicating services in each and every municipality. The principle of cooperative sharing can be applied to virtually all services and to most facilities unless there are strict distance requirements. A common starting point for cooperative sharing to reduce costs would be equipment, assuming details can be worked out.

Home Rule laws also generally allow a city or town to restructure or reorganize itself or to take actions different than allowed under state law. Lenox should keep an eye out for changes in other towns that are innovative and provide a model.

Fiscal Considerations Related to Growth

The development trends in Lenox have followed extremely sound fiscal principles. Unlike many towns, it can be said that most of the development in Lenox in the last decade has apparently produced a net revenue benefit. Lenox is one of the highest revenue generating communities in Massachusetts, per capita.

Personal property tax rates have been stable in the last few years. The industrial category, traditionally a minor factor in Lenox, has been shrinking throughout the County. Tourist oriented retail and services are making up for some of the lost industrial base in the County, and have been important to Lenox.

Because the oversight and guidance of development has led to fiscally beneficial results, there would appear to be little reason to make changes. However, in order to achieve other community goals stated in this plan, some moderate adjustments may be necessary.

This plan includes many strategies that would encourage or discourage different forms of development and redevelopment in various areas under different conditions. When considering fiscal impacts of new development, it is relatively easy to project actual increases in property tax revenues.

If a new home is built at an assessed valuation of \$200,000 and is then taxed at the current FY 1999 local residential property rate per \$1,000, the annual expected tax revenue would be \$2,720.
$$(\$200,000 * \$0.0136 = \$2,720)$$

However, other potential fiscal benefits and costs are more difficult to quantify. Costs for specific types of development can only be roughly estimated, because it is very difficult to assign specific costs for general services that cover the whole town.

Several studies in Massachusetts have shown that industrial and commercial development generally produce a net fiscal boost while residential development is generally a net fiscal drain. It can be shown that a parcel that will be developed for typical residential use would often actually be better fiscally for the town as non-tax paying, non-cost generating Open Space.

Any new development is also likely to generate some cost. In a general sense, costs resulting from residential development can be estimated on a per unit and a person scale. Costs per person are relatively high in any community, and a new home would need to be highly valued and of lower household size to generate revenue that would exceed the estimated per person cost.

The foremost purpose of any local government is to serve the needs of its people. Educating our youth is a crucial and ennobling responsibility. Public school costs are a very significant local expense. When residential growth directly incurs additional school expenses those expenses are generally not recouped by additional local residential property taxes and state funding.

Residential units that are not generating school enrollment and associated costs, however, are likely a net fiscal benefit to the town, and that is why many communities in Berkshire County are

encouraging senior housing and seasonal housing. On the plus side, it should also be noted that with residential growth, the commercial tax base might also expand due to an increase in local purchasing power.

Fiscal impacts have been estimated for various land uses. The following page from the Growth Impact Handbook (from DHCD) is not community specific but it does give a general picture of what to expect from different types of development.

Fiscal Impacts of Various Land Uses

Note: (+) means more revenue than service costs; (-) means less revenue than service costs

The development types listed below (on a sliding scale from high to low) return more revenue to the community than is expended to provide general government or school services. After Open Space development, the municipal break-even point is reached; the point at which revenues from particular kinds of development are equal to the cost of providing general government services to the development. Below this point, general government services cost more to provide than the kinds of development listed below would return in revenues.

<u>Type of Development</u>	<u>Revenue/Gen.Govt.</u>	<u>Revenue/School</u>
Research Office Parks	(+)	(+)
Office Parks	(+)	(+)
Industrial Development	(+)	(+)
High-Rise Garden Apartments (Studio/One Bedroom)	(+)	(+)
Age-Restricted Housing	(+)	(+)
Garden Condominiums (One/Two Bedrooms)	(+)	(+)
Open Space	(+)	(+)

The three types of development immediately below would generally cost more for general government services than they would bring in revenues, but would still bring in more revenues than would have to be expended to provide school services for them. After Expensive Single-Family Homes, the school district break-even point is reached. That is the point at which revenues from the development generally are equal to the cost of providing school services to the development.

Retail Facilities	(-)	(+)
Townhouses (Two/Three Bedrooms)	(-)	(+)
Expensive Single-Family Homes (Three/Four Bedrooms)	(-)	(+)

The four types of development listed immediately below usually cost more for both general government and school services than any of them returns to the community in property taxes.

Townhouses (Three/Four Bedrooms)	(-)	(-)
Inexpensive Single-Family (Three/Four Bedrooms)	(-)	(-)
Garden Apartments (Three+Bedrooms)	(-)	(-)
Mobile Homes (Unrestricted Occupancy)	(-)	(-)

Adapted from "Land, Infrastructure, Housing Costs, and Fiscal Impacts Associated with Growth", Robert W. Burchell & David Listokin, Center for Urban Policy, Rutgers University. This is an interesting view of revenues produced by types of development balanced against the cost of providing services to these kinds of development, although hedged by disclaimers and with the placement of retail facilities in the revenue loss category disputed by some experts.

Growth leads to increased costs to the general government and schools, specifically relating to operating costs and capital costs. Exact costs are difficult to determine because they may not be triggered until a cumulative threshold of growth is reached. Examples of operating costs are the hiring of additional personnel or increases in the hours of existing personnel. For instance, after a certain point, an additional full time policeman or fireman may be required. Growth also increases complexity and additional emphasis on grants and infrastructure, and places importance on consultants or higher skilled personnel who often require higher salaries. On the other hand, some non property tax revenue would be also expected to increase with additional development, with much of this revenue related to infrastructure.

It is important to estimate *how much growth might be accommodated without triggering new costs*. This is done by estimating what services and facilities are currently, truly, at or near full capacity. This is somewhat difficult, as most people in town and most segments of town/school governmental services would naturally desire enhancement.

There is certainly potential for more growth, both residential and non-residential, in Lenox. This will be particularly obvious if extensions of sewer coverage are made in town. The challenge for Lenox is to determine how it can guide forms of development, at levels and in forms that are acceptable to the community, that will lead to net fiscal benefits.

Another fiscal factor to consider is how the developed and undeveloped components of the community affect overall property values. This is difficult to calculate, but many communities that have built new facilities or amenities, revitalized or improved the appearance of key developed sections of town, or preserved key undeveloped sections of town, have experienced increased valuations for existing properties above that of nearby towns that have not done so.

Translating some of the above information into projected numbers is a useful exercise, even though we can only generalize. To a significant extent, any additional costs resulting from new residential development would be related to household size, and especially to new school children. The following are national ratios:

Table COM7: Table of Ratios of Persons and School Children for General Residential Types with Two or Three Bedrooms

Residential Type	Persons		Average School Age	
	2 BDR	3 BDR	2 BDR	3 BDR
Single Family	2.40	3.09	.20	.67
Manufactured/Mobile Home in Park	2.18	3.17	.26	.78
Senior Housing/Apartments	1.80			
Garden Apartments	2.15	2.91	.30	.83
Townhouse Condos	2.05	2.81	.11	.44

Source: Development Impact Handbook, Center for Urban Policy, Rutgers University

The above standards may be somewhat applicable to Lenox although the rate of school age children is generally lower in New England than the national rate. Public education (and to some extent, spending for it) is mandated. According to the State Department of Revenue, the integrated average per pupil cost in Lenox was \$8,259 in (FY 1996).

The need for most other town services is also related to population and demographics. An average municipality would be expected to add employees and increase spending in relation to the level of growth it experiences - in order to continue its level of service. These expenses would presumably be in public safety, public works, health and welfare, and other general governmental duties.

In Lenox and Berkshire County, school and other municipal cost estimates should also strongly account for seasonal residences (which generally carry far less costs). However, impacts should be estimated based upon *potential* year round units, as many units originally proposed or begun as seasonal units can become year-round.

For non-residential development, additional costs can be related to several factors, such as number of employees, volume of water usage, extent of wastewater treatment required, and traffic generated.

To some extent, the cost of services is also tied to the location and patterns of development. One national study estimates that the net public cost for a low density residential community is approximately three times higher than that of a high density community. The difference was due to inefficient expenditures for public school operational, instructional, and transportation services, and also because sprawl creates potentially higher public liabilities for road maintenance and future provision of public water and sewer. Local, state and national expenditures have heavily subsidized this costly pattern. Lenox should provide adequate infrastructure, but carefully consider appropriate coverage.

Many towns in Massachusetts and in Berkshire County have apparently come to the conclusion that residential development that is likely to produce school age children attending public schools should be discouraged or fiercely fought. Unfortunately, when this trend becomes widespread, it can lead to unbalanced communities and unsustainable regions (in human terms).

This situation, which is believed to contribute to the rising cost of housing and a shortage of affordable housing in Massachusetts, has led other states to shift the burden of education to the state level, to reduce governmental costs, or to allow local impact fees for schools. Other states have also been more inclined to allow more ways for municipalities or regions to directly collect fees or taxes for commercial uses and other forms of development. This has not been the case in Massachusetts and there is little reason to believe this situation will essentially change.

In summary, Lenox, a relatively high value town, has to support high quality, high cost services. The town has the choice of continuing its present course, but the substantial and growing property tax base puts the town in the financial position of being flexible in regards to growth and redevelopment.

Because a community is not a business, every new proposed development project that is within the discretion of Lenox officials to approve or deny should not be judged solely on financial merits. It is not necessary, and indeed it would be counterproductive, for Lenox to uniformly apply the general rule that residential uses that produce school age children are net fiscal losers to its public policy on housing. Residential reuse or development of large scale is contrary to public desires anyway. Supporting a balanced population and providing *some* affordable housing are not contrary to public needs or desires.

Developing Strategies

The recent renovation of facilities is an investment that should serve the community well over time. The main strategy should be to utilize these facilities to provide the fullest service feasible and also maintain its flexible response to town needs. Service quality and effectiveness is promoted by careful focus and refinement of service delivery. Efficiency is promoted by sharing. Those with special needs require particular attention. While continued investments will be necessary, Lenox should continue to carefully budget and schedule future building improvements (capital planning generally covered in the Utilities section).

The goal of *Continuing to provide high quality public and educational services* can be met by:

- *Set and track performance measures for the provision of public services*
- *Consider ways to enhance existing services and access to them for people with special needs, such as children, elderly, low-income, handicapped and disabled*
- *Explore cooperative resource sharing. This can be done independently. It should also be considered when planning for community building facility improvements. Those needs should also include indoor recreation.*
- *Consider requiring Financial Impact Analysis for large projects*

To achieve the range of community goals expressed in this Plan, the community would be better served if it evaluated the overall fiscal impacts of *all development* versus individual projects. In this way the town may be able to successfully meet its financial challenges and leverage the benefits of the growth it is experiencing to meet other goals related to the needs of the people and of the environment.

