



CHAPTER 3 – PLANNING CONTEXT

Community planning in Lenox is undertaken through a network of interrelated organizations, documents, and processes. Regionally, strong guidance and support is provided through both governmental and private non-profit organizations and their initiatives. Locally, Town staff provides support and assistance to an array of volunteer boards, commissions, and committees, each with a particular planning role.

Planning is the framework through which historic preservation happens. A range of planning processes in local and regional governance affect historic resources, landscape, and community character. Chapter 3 provides an overview of planning in Lenox. Additional detail on the information outlined here is provided in subsequent topical chapters when appropriate.

REGIONAL PLANNING CONTEXT

Berkshire County has a dedicated set of regional organizations that collaborate together on issues related to planning, environment, economic wellbeing, and quality of life. Due to its distinctive geographical attributes—encompassing the entire western edge of Massachusetts and framed around the north-south valleys of the Hoosic and Housatonic Rivers—Berkshire County and its regional organizations have a strong identity and sense of shared history.

Regional organizations engaged with the Town of Lenox include the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, 1Berkshire Strategic Alliance, Berkshire Natural Resources Council, Housatonic Heritage, and Housatonic Valley Association.

Every master plan and economic development strategy prepared for the Town of Lenox recognizes the important impacts of regional demographics, economic conditions, and planning initiatives on the town. Several key planning documents that regional organizations have prepared provide guidance for planning in Lenox.

Sustainable Berkshires

The Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) is the state designated and funded regional planning organization serving Berkshire County. The BRPC assists

local municipalities with regional and local planning services. BNRC has assisted the Town of Lenox with numerous local planning studies and initiatives over the past two decades and is an ongoing source of professional planning guidance and support.

In 2010, the BRPC was awarded one of 45 nationwide federal Housing and Urban Development Sustainable Communities Planning Grants. Over a three-plus-year planning process, BRPC developed a regional sustainability plan that builds on existing efforts to advance regional interests and serves as a regional comprehensive plan for Berkshire County and its communities.

Sustainable Berkshires, Long-Range Plan for Berkshire County (BRPC 2014) contains eight separate planning Elements. Each Element is a separate report but is interrelated with the other Elements. Element reports contain background information about the topic area; analysis of key issues and opportunities; a vision for a desired future; goals, policies and strategies to achieve that vision; and a list of tools to accomplish the identified strategies. The Elements are:

- Conservation and Recreation,
- Local Food and Agriculture,
- Housing and Neighborhoods,
- Infrastructure and Services,
- Economy,
- Climate and Energy,
- Historic Preservation, and
- Land Use.

The Historic Preservation Element of the Sustainable Berkshires Plan is the most directly relevant to the preparation of this preservation plan for Lenox. However, other plan Elements frame issues and strategies that affect historic resources and landscapes as well.

Countywide, the *Sustainable Berkshires* summarizes ten broad trends that present challenges to the region and its communities. These broad trends have had a significant impact on Lenox as well.

Trend 1 – Population Decline and Aging

Berkshire County has declined in population since the 1970's, from 149,402 to 131,219 (2010 U.S. Census), a decrease of 18,183 people, or 12.2%. Compared to the state, the county has a much lower birth rate, a smaller number of the 20 to 32-year-old age group, and a large elderly population.

Trend 2 – Next Generations

Generations post baby boomers are not as well off within the region.

Trend 3 – Consumptive Development Pattern

Berkshire County has not experienced extensive development. However, more and more of the development that has occurred is on larger lots in rural areas.

Trend 4 – Conservation and Biodiversity

Berkshire County has an extensive array of rich resources and a significant amount of protected land. However, resource and land conservation efforts are often not well aligned.

Trend 5 – Regional Affordability Crisis

Cities and towns in the Berkshires lack affordable housing. Much of the existing affordable housing, especially in the urban areas, is aged and in poor condition with code violations common.

Trend 6 – Living Wages

With the shift away from manufacturing to service and tourism jobs, the economy has fewer living wage employment opportunities.

Trend 7 – Workforce Supply and Skills

As the nation's economy moves more towards a global market, the Berkshire's work force is increasingly not competitive in that market.

Trend 8 – Declining Municipal Revenue Streams

Municipalities struggle to maintain or provide services on dwindling or stagnant revenue streams caused by low property taxes due to low growth.

Trend 9 – Climate Change

Municipal revenues, which are already stretched, will need to address the impacts of climate change.

Trend 10 – Inclusive and Welcoming

The county's population is still relatively homogenous. To reverse population decline, the county will need to be more inclusive and welcoming of different people.

The *Sustainable Berkshires* plan is a thorough and thoughtful overview of conditions throughout the region and strategies for community betterment. This historic preservation plan for Lenox embraces the plan and seeks to implement its strategies as applied to Lenox in coordination with regional initiatives and perspectives.

Historic Preservation

The Historic Preservation Element of *Sustainable Berkshires* provides a comprehensive overview of historic preservation within the region and strategies for each of five subjects:

1. Preserving Historic Assets,
2. Fostering Community Support for Historic Preservation,
3. Building Historic Preservation Institutional Capacity,
4. Increasing Use of Historic Preservation Tools and Techniques, and
5. Integrating Historic Preservation into the Larger Community and Region.

Under each of these subjects related to historic preservation, a summary of background information and existing conditions is provided; opportunities and challenges are reviewed; and a set of goals, policies, and strategies is presented.

The vision statement for historic preservation in Berkshire county reads:

Berkshire County residents, businesses, municipalities, and preservationists enjoy and actively work to protect the rich history of the region – its iconic landmarks, historic buildings, and heritage landscapes. Vibrant Main Street districts with active village greens are bordered by walkable historic

neighborhoods with mature street trees. Rural landscapes uphold the heritage of the region, its agriculture, westward expansion links, and Native American beginnings.

New balances with old in compelling ways as historic buildings take on different uses and existing neighborhoods add green features and new buildings while upholding the integrity, character, and aesthetics of the built environment. History is embedded in the pride, recreation, education, economy, and daily activities of the region and its people in tangible ways that are ever-evolving.

Among the goals and strategies developed for the preservation subject areas listed above, a number are relevant and applicable to potential preservation strategies for Lenox. They include:

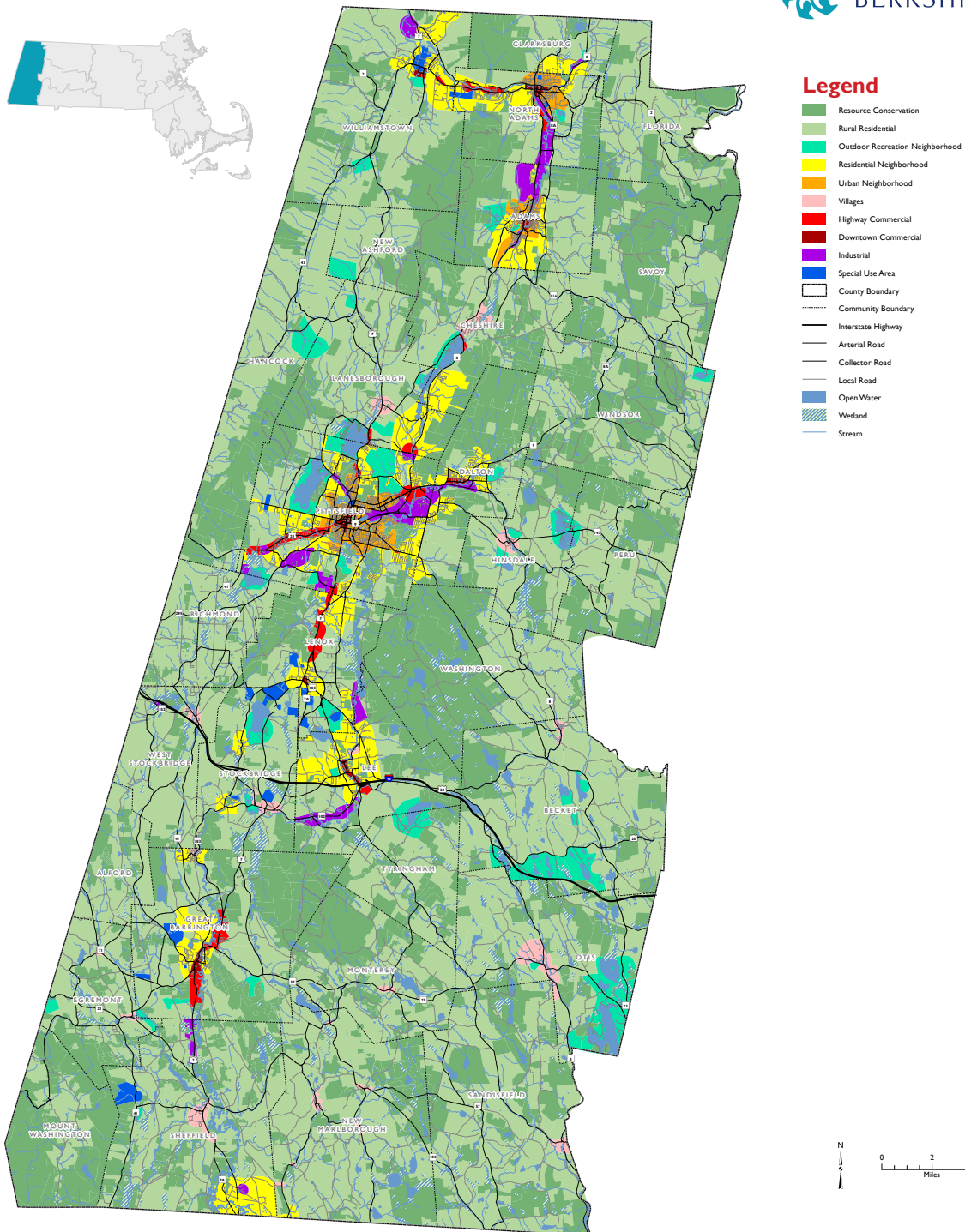
- Coordinating priorities and approaches across municipal lines—in particular using a **common thematic framework** for the inventory of and communication about historic resources.
- Updating and improving **historic resource inventories**, including using GIS mapping to aid in analysis and understanding. Thematic nominations common to different communities and areas within communities can simplify processes and deepen appreciation.
- Using **National Register** listings, especially districts, to promote public recognition and pride.
- Improving the visibility of preservation and **local awareness** of sites and resources through outreach and programming.
- Building regional and **local capacity** of preservation organizations, especially local historical commissions and history organizations.
- Increasing the level of protection for historic assets through the use of available preservation **tools and techniques** in local governance.
- Building historic preservation into local **development review processes**.
- Promoting use of **financial tools and incentives**, such as rehabilitation tax credits and forms of technical assistance to property owners.
- Linking historic activities as a partner to **economic development** efforts, such as heritage tourism, downtown/village revitalization, local foods initiatives, neighborhood revitalization, and sustainability initiatives.

The Historic Preservation Element of the *Sustainable Berkshires* plan is used as a point of departure for the Lenox preservation plan, which will be fully coordinated with the regional vision and strategies.

The Lenox historic preservation plan will also be particularly coordinated with the Land Use, Conservation and Recreation, and Economy Elements of *Sustainable Berkshires*. The **Land Use Element** promotes a more predictable, sustainable, and connected pattern of development, which should include recognition of historic resources and landscape characteristics.

- The Berkshire landscape, along with the cultural attractions, is one of the primary reasons tourists visit the Berkshires. Land use policies that maintain the Berkshire landscape will keep the Berkshire desirable as a tourist destination.

FUTURE LAND USE

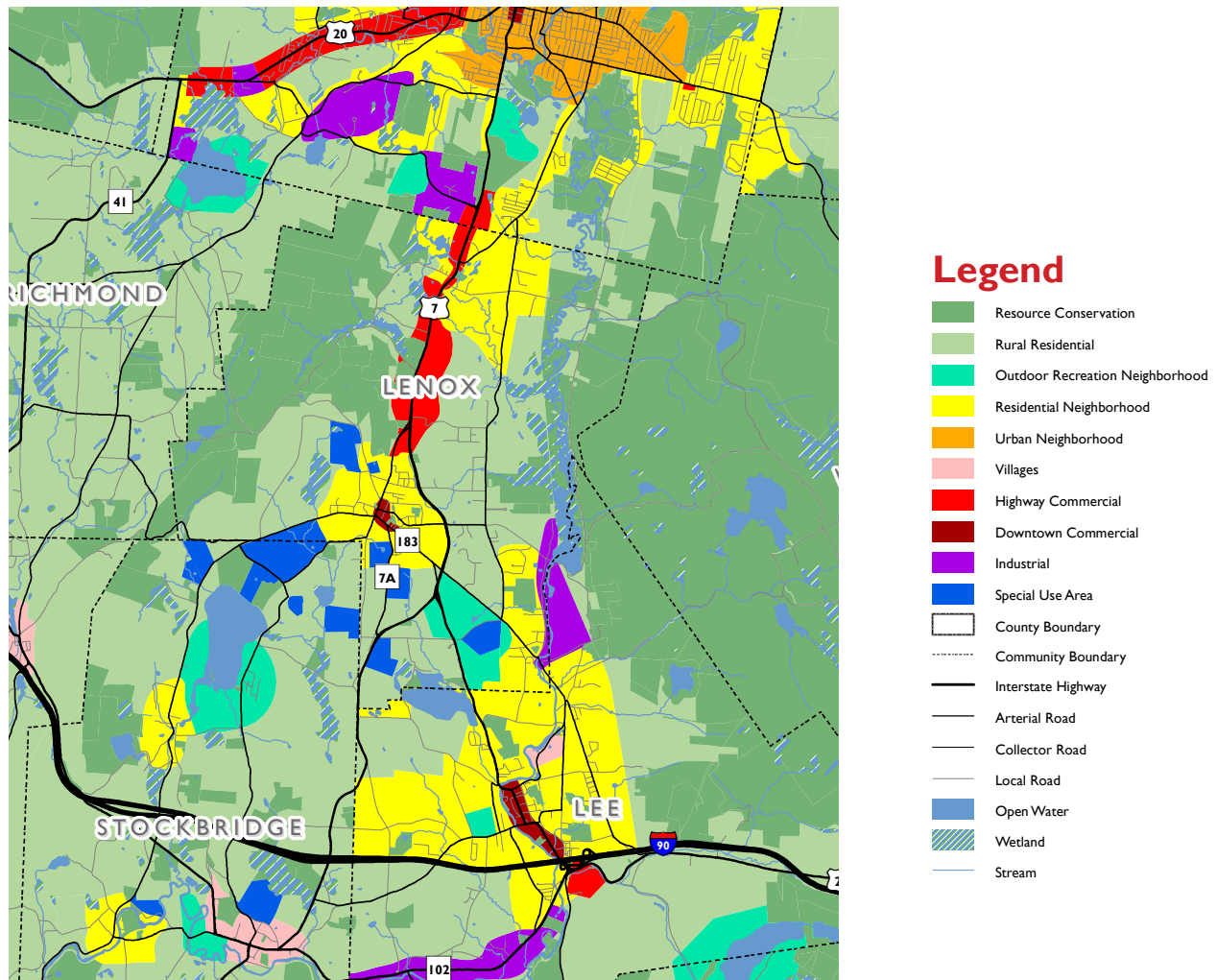


1/29/2014



The work that provided the basis for this publication was supported by funding under an award with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The substance and findings of the work are dedicated to the public. The author and publisher are solely responsible for the accuracy of the statements and interpretations contained in this publication. Such interpretations do not necessarily reflect the views of the Government. This map was created by the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission and is intended for general planning purposes only. This map shall not be used for engineering, survey, legal, or regulatory purposes. MassGIS, MassDOT, BRPC or the communities may have supplied portions of this data.

Future Land Use Map from Sustainable Berkshires



Future Land Use in the vicinity of Lenox, Lee, and Stockbridge

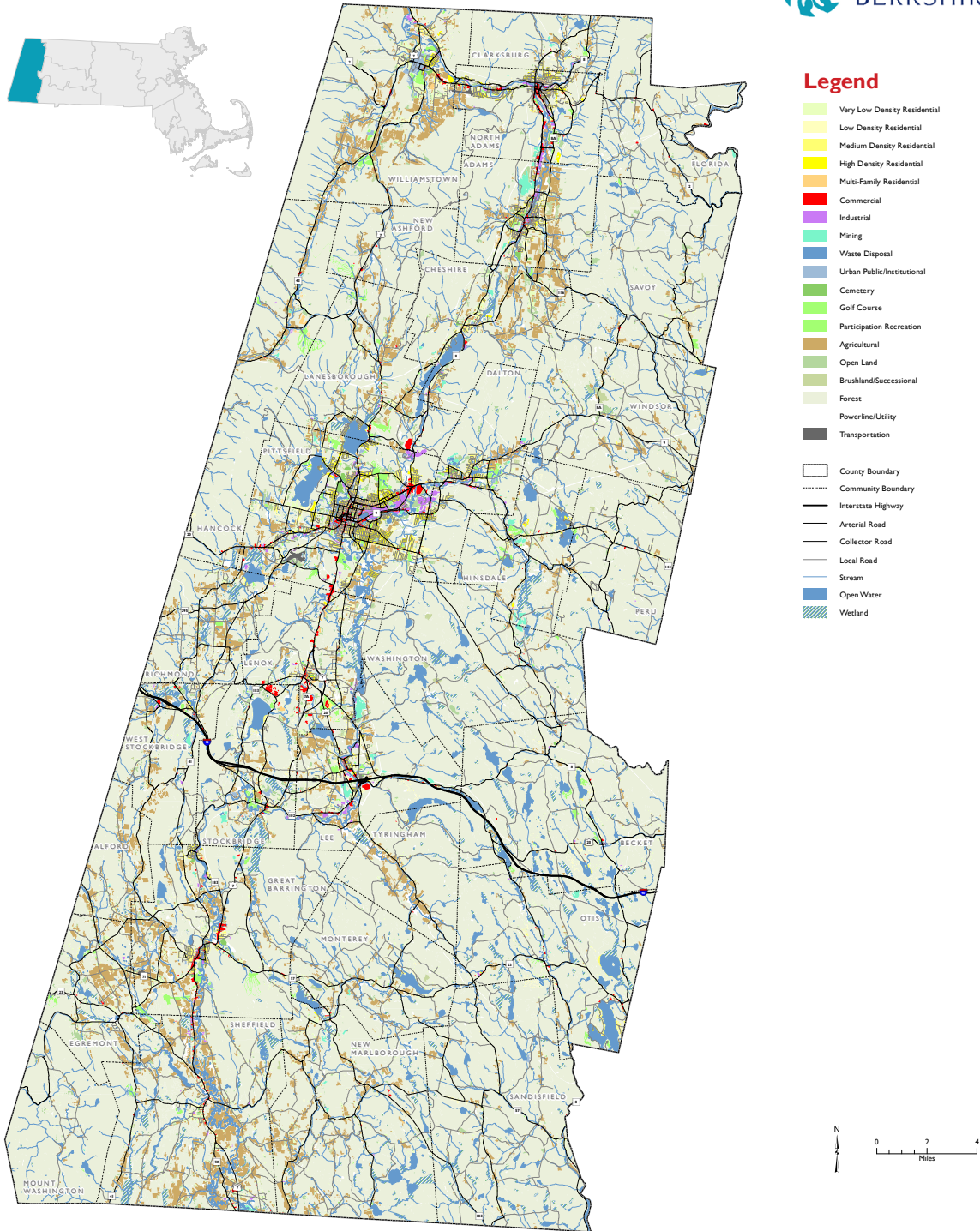
Land use categories identified for Lenox in *Sustainable Berkshires' Future Land Use Plan* include the following. Each is reflected in the more detailed Lenox zoning bylaws and reflects approaches to the treatment of historic buildings and landscapes.

- Resource Conservation – Lenox Mountain extending east to Route 7/20 in the vicinity of Kennedy Park and Yokun Brook as well as the floodplains along the Housatonic River on the east side of the town, featuring lands currently protected from development. It contains lands protected by conservation restrictions held by towns and non-profit organizations such as land trusts. These lands contain critical habitat, provide biodiversity and offer recreation resources. They provide connectivity of other resource areas and provide corridors for wildlife. Typically, they have many constraints to development including habitat and slope constraints. The scenic nature of many of these areas, including view sheds and landscapes, is a contributing factor to the Berkshires being a tourism attraction.

- Rural Residential – Undermountain Road area and vicinity of East Street south of New Lenox, where low-density residential development either exists or in many instances could occur, although in many instances there are severe constraints to development that would preclude any development. The emphasis here is to maintain a distinct rural identity and landscape and ensure that low density development in these areas employs best practices for wildlife-friendly landscaping, stormwater management, and resource protection.
- Outdoor Recreation Neighborhood – These areas are medium to high density neighborhoods around lakes, ski or other resort areas. In Lenox, they are located in association with resorts established on several of the Great Estates, often making use of the Town's Estate Preservation Area overlay zoning district. Many of the new residences here serve as second homes. These neighborhoods are important assets to the recreational economy of the Berkshires and the Town. Care needs to be given not to degrade the historic or recreational asset, in the case of Lenox the Estate buildings and landscapes, or impair associated environmental qualities, which could then degrade the economic value as a recreational resource. Primary uses within the neighborhoods are single family residences, condominiums, and recreational uses such as golfing, walking, and biking. Secondary uses include supporting retail/commercial and home based businesses.
- Residential Neighborhood – Area in the vicinity of Lenox Village and New Lenox, the Berkshires version of the suburbs. These areas are primarily single family homes with some duplexes and apartments. They are largely auto-dependent and do not contain a broad mix of services or retail opportunities for residents.
- Village – Lenox Village and Lenox Dale, though primarily residential in nature, these areas contain an eclectic mix of uses that can provide for many of the needs of the residents without the use of cars. Generally pedestrian friendly, these areas can foster a strong sense of community connectedness.
- Highway Commercial – Route 7/20 at the north end of Town, providing retail, commercial, and professional services to residents and visitors.
- Special Use Area – Activity centers such as Tanglewood, Kripalu Center, The Mount, Shakespeare and Company, Miraval-Lenox (Cranwell), Eastover Estate, and Canyon Ranch that are used by a relatively large number of people and, though self-contained, exert a strong influence on the surrounding area.

The **Conservation and Recreation Element** focuses on land conservation, environmental stewardship, and recreation, a particular strength of the Berkshires. The Conservation Element seeks to increase the connectivity of the region's open lands to support diverse habitat and recreational needs and retain the integrity of the region's most critically important areas to biodiversity, recreation, and scenery.

LAND USE - STATE (2005)



2005 Existing Land Use from Sustainable Berkshires

Its implementation can integrate natural and cultural landscape considerations into regional stewardship strategies, incorporating methodologies developed through the DCR's Cultural Landscape Inventory Program.

The **Economic Element** of *Sustainable Berkshires* recognizes the central role that historic, cultural, and landscape resources play in regional identity and the regional economic development strategy. In the new economy, a place based approach to attracting a talented workforce takes advantage of the Berkshire's high quality of life amenities.

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

In 2017, the BRPC updated the region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). Preparation of the CEDS is a coordinated regional planning process that documents economic development activities, ideas, and information and presents a plan for the future economic development of the region. Completion of the CEDS enables municipalities and organizations to access federal Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration grant funds.

The vision for the CEDS was drawn from the *Sustainable Berkshires'* Economic Element and is:

To create a diverse and robust economy that creates sustainable prosperity of all its residents. While capitalizing on the region's heritage, intellectual vigor, cultural assets, agricultural and natural resources we encourage and excel at innovation, collaboration and harnessing the entrepreneurial spirit.

The CEDS cites Bureau of Labor statistics from 2013 to note that the Leisure and Hospitality sector is the third largest in the count, representing 609 establishments and 9,056 jobs (BRPC 2017:16). This follows the region's leading sectors, Services (3800 establishments/45,344 jobs) and Education and Health Services (1023 establishments/15,382 jobs). The region's cultural venues and attractions, natural attractions, and outdoor recreation opportunities are recognized as important economic assets that contribute to the vibrancy of the region's economy (BRPC 2017:26).

The CEDS's goals focus on workforce development, entrepreneurship, infrastructure, collaboration, existing industry clusters, and economic resiliency. In support and expansion of the region's industry clusters, the plan recognizes the need to protect and leverage the region's natural resources, historic sites, and cultural assets (BNRC 2017:44,45).

The plan does not specifically cite the Berkshires' strong quality of life as a means of attracting talented workers and businesses. With regard to Lenox, the plan cites a series of current economic development projects that are ongoing and that enhance the region—more for Lenox than for any other community. They include:

- Niagara Mills potential redevelopment in Lenox Dale
- Miraval-Lenox expansion at Cranwell
- Eastover Estate transformation from a recreational family resort into a residential healing retreat

- Spring Lawn transformation into a high-end boutique resort
- Walker House renovation into an 8-unit market rate apartment building
- Elm Court's redevelopment into the high-end Travaasa hotel resort
- Tanglewood's expansion
- Lenox Manor's development on Route 7 as a 100-room extended stay hotel with event facilities (BRPC 2017:52-53,63-56)

Other Regional Initiatives

In addition to the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, several other regional organizations play important roles in planning and preservation in Berkshire County. These organizations collaborate closely together and are involved in a variety of regional initiatives that have direct relationships to planning in Lenox.

Representatives of these organizations have provided insight into the regional planning context and the issues and opportunities for planning in Lenox. The coordination of historic preservation strategies for Lenox with their initiatives is outlined in subsequent chapters of this plan.

1Berkshire

1Berkshire Strategic Alliance, Inc. (1Berkshire) is a countywide organization focused on economic development and promotion of the region as a preferred place to visit, to live, and to grow a business. 1Berkshire was created in June 2016 by a merger of four separate countywide economic development organizations and is the voice of the Berkshire business community, with over 1200 members.

1Berkshire provides programs that connect businesses with each other and with potential customers. It works to develop future business leaders and support entrepreneurs. 1Berkshire serves as the county's visitor bureau and state designated Regional Tourism Council. It manages the region's visitor website, undertakes regional promotion, and publishes a regional visitor guide.

The Berkshire Economic Development Corporation (BEDC) is one of the four regional organizations that came together to form 1Berkshire. Under their leadership, a regional steering committee was assembled to prepare ***The Berkshire Creative Economy Report*** outlining a vision for the creative sector of the regional economy (BEDC 2007).

Berkshire County is known historically for the quality of its natural and historic landscape, which has attracted visitors and residents to the region since the 1840s. The Berkshires have prospered as a source of ingenuity, creating a way of life conducive to artistic expression and cultural enterprise. Today, Berkshire County continues its legacy as a restful retreat for the metropolitan area wealthy and as an artist retreat for those working in all branches of artistry. The region's artistic and cultural institutions and creative based businesses have become a potent, new, economic engine, a unique creative sector helping to drive the regional economy.

The Berkshire Creative Economy Report provides a vision for the creative economy in Berkshire County, outlining the relationship between creativity, heritage, and landscape. The creative sector is one of the most important economic engines in the county, providing more than 6,000 jobs. It includes a

wide range of non-profit cultural institutions, commercial businesses, and individual artists involved in:

- Media,
- Commercial Arts,
- Design,
- Literary Arts,
- Visual Arts and Crafts,
- Performing Arts, and
- Heritage and Conservation.

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 number of organizations and initiatives centered within or immediately adjacent to the Town. Tanglewood, the Boston University Tanglewood Institute, Shakespeare and Company, The Mount, the Kripalu Center, the Frelinghuysen Morris House, Ventford Hall, and Eastover are among the heavy-weight organizations and sites that establish Lenox as a center of the Berkshire's creative economy.

Short-term recommendations of the report include:

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

The town's economic development and planning strategy should embrace its leadership role in this endeavor. Local quality of life is a leading factor in attracting creative enterprises and the visitors that sustain them. This includes the character of the historic village, historic buildings and attractions, and the natural and historic landscape.

Berkshire Natural Resources Council

Berkshire Natural Resources Council (BNRC) is a non-profit, membership-supported land conservation organization founded in 1967. The BNRC has completed over 200 conservation projects encompassing 14,500 acres of conserved land throughout Berkshire County. The organization conserves land through direct acquisition, donation, and the holding of private conservation restrictions.

The BNRC owns and maintains over 1000 acres of ecologically significant conversation properties in and adjacent to Lenox, most prominently along Yokun

Ridge and Lenox Mountain, around Parsons Marsh, and overlooking the Housatonic River. Public access to the trails on its properties is encouraged.

The BNRC works closely on conservation initiatives with the Town, the Lenox Land Trust, and private landowners. They are currently working with The Mount in the design of a trail system on conservation lands on and adjacent to the site's property, linking The Mount to Edith Wharton Park, jointly owned by the Towns of Lenox and Lee.

The BRNC's High Road trail initiative envisions an interconnected county-wide trail network which would include the trail systems in Lenox. They support Town initiatives to create a Town-wide trail network connecting Lenox Mountain to the Housatonic River, including linkages to Lenox Village, Lenox Dale, and the Great Estates.

Housatonic Heritage

The Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area, also known as Housatonic Heritage, has been designated by Congress as a National Heritage Area to serve the Housatonic River watershed in Massachusetts and northern Connecticut.

National Heritage Areas are regional landscapes created to coordinate local partners in telling the stories of their region while preserving historic, cultural, and natural resources; supporting local economies; and enhancing local quality of life. Housatonic Heritage has a small staff and uses a significant portion of its yearly federal funding to provide grants for local town and non-profit initiatives.

Housatonic Heritage collaborates with a wide range of partners to strengthen the identity of the Upper Housatonic River Valley and to preserve and promote the region's historical, cultural and natural resources. The heritage area serves as a catalyst for regional thinking. The Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, Berkshire Natural Resources Council, and Housatonic Valley Association are among the regional organizations it works closely with in support of town and regional initiatives.

Housatonic Heritage has a particular focus on the Housatonic River with information, interpretation, programming, events, and projects to improve water and environmental quality. Though not a land owner itself, the heritage area supports local and regional land trusts and conservation organizations in preserving open space and providing trails and programming experiences to residents and visitors.

Housatonic Valley Association

The Housatonic Valley Association (HVA) is an association of individuals, families, community groups and businesses working together on behalf of the natural environment throughout the 2000 square-mile Housatonic Watershed, from the Berkshires to Long Island Sound. The HVA focuses on clean water, land protection, and connecting people to the natural world. They partner with a broad spectrum of individuals, neighborhood groups, government agencies and peer organizations to solve environmental problems.

LOCAL CONTEXT – A SHARED LANDSCAPE

The Town of Lenox has a close geographical relationship with the Towns of Lee and Stockbridge. Together, all three communities have a relationship to the City of Pittsfield, just to the north. These relationships are shaped by the valley of the Housatonic River, which has its headwaters in Pittsfield, and the steep wooded hills to the east, west and south. Their planning and development are intertwined.

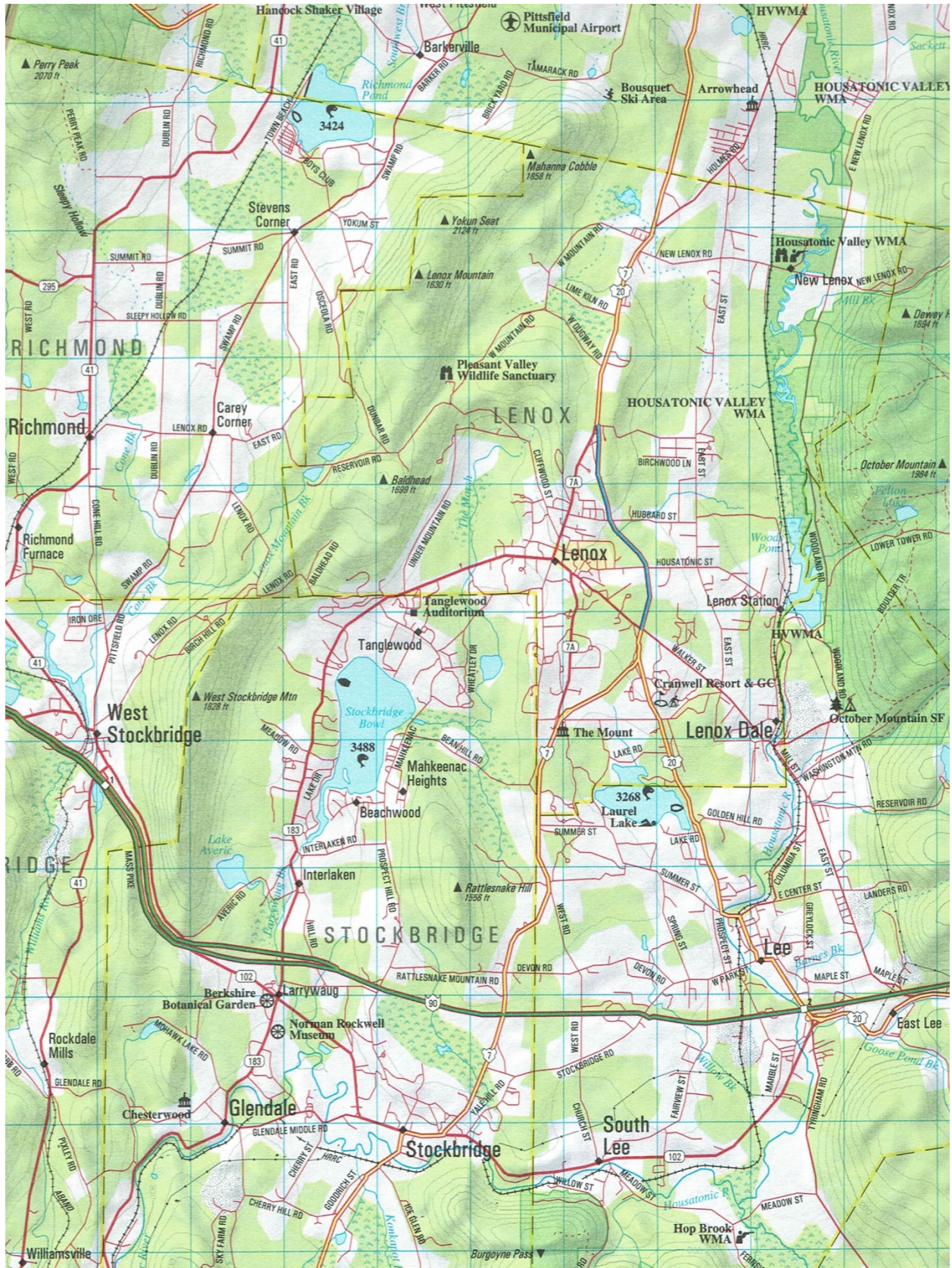
Settlement of the region emanated from Stockbridge, which was settled first and from which families moved north to establish farms in the mid-eighteenth century. The long, high ridges of Lenox and West Stockbridge Mountains on the west, October Mountain on the east, and Monument and Beartown Mountains on the south create a triangular valley with Stockbridge at its southern base and Pittsfield at its northern tip. The Housatonic River flows south from Pittsfield along the east side of the triangular valley at the base of October Mountain. The river then turns west along the base of Beartown and Monument Mountains before turning south again toward Housatonic and Great Barrington, leaving the valley.

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Lenox, Stockbridge, and Lee have shared this valley landscape, first shaped by farms, later by the Great Estates, and today by Berkshire County's version of suburban and second home development. The historic villages of Stockbridge, South Lee, Lee, and Lenox are focal points. The small historic mill centers of Lee and Lenox Dale are very small versions of heavily industrial Pittsfield. The region's Great Estates are cultural venues and resorts that help sustain the local and regional economies. All are bound together by the valley's low rolling hills that have provided the visual appeal that has charmed visitors for almost two centuries.

Today, Lenox shares its New England village heritage with Lee and Stockbridge. Lenox benefits from the Great Estates located both within the town and along its borders with Lee and Stockbridge—the village of Lenox is more the geographic center of the Great Estates than are either of the villages of Lee or Stockbridge. The Towns of Lenox and Lee demonstrate their shared geography and heritage by cooperating in governance through shared staff and governmental services. In undertaking planning initiatives all three towns are bound together in a common relationship within which each impacts the other. Their coordination and mutual regard are of benefit to each.



Lenox, Lee, and Stockbridge share a valley landscape bounded by mountains on the east, west, and south.



Atlas map showing the valley landscape shared by Lenox, Lee, and Stockbridge (DeLorme 2009)

PLANNING IN LENOX

Lenox was among the first towns in the Berkshires to initiate community planning measures through the adoption of zoning regulations. The zoning bylaws adopted by the Town in January 1941 delineated four areas of land use: residential, business, educational, and industrial (Wood 1968:147). These regulations were in effect during Lenox's period of post-war growth and expansion.

Lenox's full time population in 1910, the peak of its Cottage Era of development, was 3060 persons, about twice its population than during its peak period of agricultural development in the 1850s. Between 1920 and 1940, the Town's population remained relatively steady at the slightly reduced numbers of between 2691 and 2884 (US Census 1920, 1950).

Between 1940 and 1970, the Town's population doubled to 5804 (US Census 1980). During this period of growth, Lenox became firmly established as a suburban bedroom community to the much larger City of Pittsfield, just to the north. In Lenox, suburban subdivisions were developed along East Street and elsewhere, and a number of the Cottage/Great Estates subdivided their street frontages with new, small, single family lots. The Route 7/20 bypass around Lenox Village was constructed in 1949, and the Massachusetts Turnpike was completed in 1957 (Kennedy 2016: loc 2134). Highway commercial development occurred along the northern portion of Route 7/20 in Lenox.

With growth occurring at a rapid pace, Lenox adopted new Zoning Bylaws in 1966, which were later updated in 1973. Also in 1966 the Lenox Planning Board embarked on preparation of a Master Plan for the Town, which was completed in 1968 (BRPC 2004:12-13; Wood 1968:147; Lenox 1968).

The 1968 **Master Plan Study Report** was the first comprehensive study of growth and development in the town. It was prepared by Community Planning Services, a division of Whitman & Howard, Inc., Engineers, Architects, & Planners out of Boston and funded with a federal Urban Planning Assistance Program grant through the Massachusetts Department of Commerce and Development from the federal Urban Renewal Administration of the Housing and Home Finance Agency.

The 1968 Master Plan provided a thorough examination of Lenox's economy; land use and development; population; parks, recreation and conservation; community facilities; transportation; and utility systems. In its observations, conclusions, and recommendations, the Master Plan identified planning themes and objectives that would resonate in later studies and be further developed and implemented over time. They continue to be of relevance today.

Two base assumptions upon which the 1968 Master Plan was founded, however, did not materialize. First was the assumption that Lenox's population (and the region's) would continue to grow at the same pace as it had during the decades of 1940 through 1960. The plan states, "For the last forty years Lenox has exhibited an accelerating rate of population growth and many factors indicate that there will not be a slowing of this trend." Based upon the industrial potential of the region, the Master Plan projected that Pittsfield's continued expansion

would lead to population growth in Lenox of 13,000 by 1985 and 20,000 or even 30,000 by 2000 (Lenox 1968:59,60).

In fact, the Town's population peaked in 1980 at 6523 persons and then declined to 5069 by 1990, at which level it has remained steady to the present. The immediate cause of this change in population trends was the closing of the GE large transformer plant in Pittsfield, announced in 1986, and the related decline of manufacturing in the city in subsequent decades (Kennedy 2016:loc2340). The estimated 2015 population for Lenox was 5026 (US Census 2011-2015). The growth pressures that had driven suburban development in Lenox in the mid-twentieth century had subsided.

The second base assumption of the 1968 Master Plan was the proposed extension of the Route 7/20 bypass north from the Gateway area in Lenox west of the current alignment of Route 7/20. This proposed extension has not been implemented and appears unlikely to be resurrected in the foreseeable future.

Anticipating continued rapid growth, the 1968 Master Plan laid out recommendations for intense suburban development and build-out in Lenox, delineating areas for:

- Rural Zoning – 3 acre minimum lots with no public utilities,
- Suburban Zoning – 30,000 sf average lots, one area with full public sewer and water and another with public water only,
- Urban Zoning – north and east of the village with 15,000 sf lots and a mixture of uses,
- Industrial Zoning – expanding existing areas modestly but also creating a floating zone for potential new business/research development (possibly on estate lands), and
- Commercial Zoning – “downtown” in the village core and “highway commercial” continuing along north Route 7/20.

“Downtown” recommendations focused on the need to preserve the historic character of the village, particularly Main Street, while sensitively developing Church Street with additional commercial buildings. The need for beautification of the village was emphasized, with pedestrian enhancements and parking located in the centers of blocks. These recommendations largely came to fruition following additional study in the early 2000s.

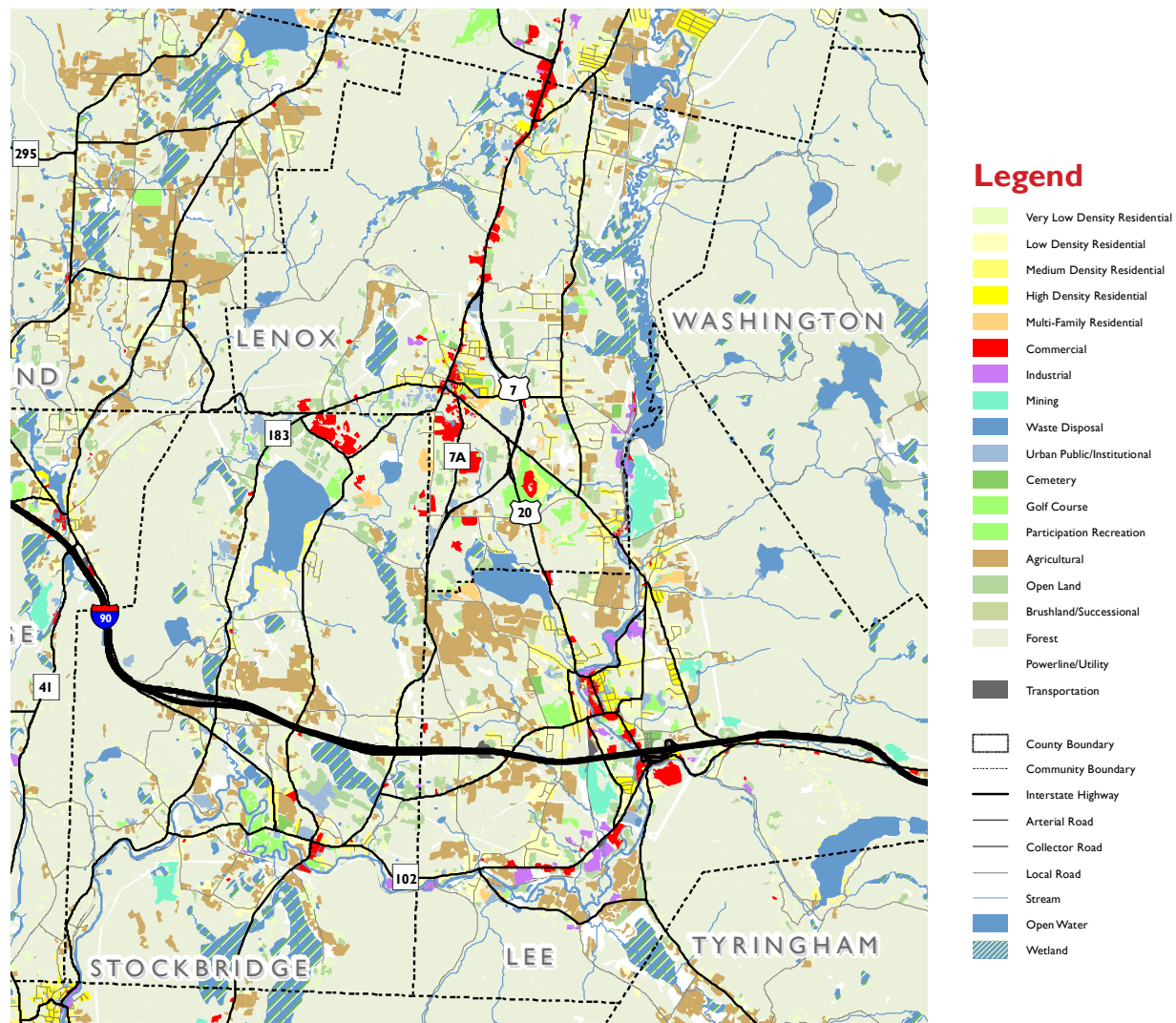
The Master Plan proposed a long range plan of land acquisition and conservation that has continued to be a focus of town policy, focusing on protection of land adjacent to Lenox Mountain, along the Housatonic River, and wetlands west of the Route 7/20 commercial area in north Lenox. The plan emphasized the need to connect open spaces using stream corridors and other natural features and providing trails for hiking, horseback riding, and bicycling.

In the two decades following completion of the 1968 Master Plan, Lenox enacted a series of measures important to the Town's historic preservation program. In

PLANNING CONTEXT

1975, Lenox established a **local historic district** for its village core and adopted the **Scenic Mountain Act** protecting the ridgelines of Lenox Mountain, Kennedy Park, and October Mountain. In 1984, the Town adopted the **Estate Preservation Area** bylaw protecting and providing development alternatives for eight of the town's Great Estates (Kennedy 2016: loc 2418). In 1987/1988, a **reconnaissance survey** was undertaken of historic resources throughout the Town under the guidance of the Massachusetts Historical Commission, part of a statewide initiative. Additional survey work has been undertaken since; this survey remains the foundation of the Town's historic preservation program. Each of these measures is discussed further below.

Also during this period, several prominent buildings were listed on the **National Register of Historic Places**, The Mount and the Lenox Library in 1971 and 1973, the Lenox Academy and the Church on the Hill in 1982, Elm Court in 1985, and the Lenox Railroad Station in 1989. The Mount was also listed as a **National Historic Landmark** in 1971.



2005 Existing Land Use in the vicinity of Lenox, Lee, and Stockbridge from Sustainable Berkshires

1999 Master Plan for Lenox

Work on a new Master Plan for Lenox was completed in 1999 under the guidance of the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRNC 1999). The plan was funded through a grant from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs Growth Planning program and with matching funds from the Town. Building on information and themes prepared in the 1968 Master Plan, the 1999 ***Master Plan for the Town of Lenox Massachusetts*** takes into account regional economic challenges and reduced demographics projections that manifested themselves during the 1980s and 1990s and remain relevant today. The plan was prepared in conjunction with a separate ***Open Space and Recreation Plan*** prepared for the Town.

The 1999 Master Plan covers the following topics:

- History and Cultural Resources,
- Population and Demographics,
- Community Services Facilities and Support,
- Economics and Business,
- Housing,
- Neighborhood Areas and Development Patterns,
- Transportation, Municipal Utilities,
- Natural Resources, Open Space and Recreation Areas, and
- Sustaining Lenox Through Wise Management of Land.

As outlined in the plan, in 1959, only 340 acres of land in Lenox were developed for residential, business, or industrial use. In the 1960s and 1970s, the pattern of sprawling consumption of land took hold and accelerated. By 1985, the time of peak population growth in Lenox, over 2200 acre were developed. Most of the developed land was converted from forest and agriculture to medium or low density single family homes (Lenox 1999:97).

During the 1990s, with the unanticipated reduction in population growth, the development of land slowed dramatically. Lenox was no longer in a pattern of high volume low-density sprawl. Most new development at the time was more compact and occurred through development along commercial corridors and the reuse of large institutional or estate properties. Only approximately 200 acres of land were converted to developed lands between 1985 and 1998 (Lenox 1999:97). Continued development along Lenox's scenic roads was recognized as potentially harmful to tourism, the Town's economic base.

Anticipated trends in 1999 assumed that Lenox's population would remain steady or grow slowly, which was considered desirable by residents. The volume of tourism, however, was expected to increase steadily. Even in 1999, Lenox had very little readily developable land remaining, most remaining land having severe development constraints, including both steep slopes and wetlands. The scarcity of land available for development has been a factor leading to higher land values. These trends were considered as having a positive impact in preserving both community character and the environment. The plan concluded that Lenox would continue to slowly progress toward build-out and the rate of land consumption

would continue to decline as large developable parcels would become more scarce (Lenox 1999:102-103).

The 1999 Master Plan proposed more sustainable growth management strategies to help maintain the Town's high quality of life. The plan recommended:

- Continue expansion of the Town's **open space network** through long-range planning and pro-active land acquisition and conservation, building on substantial land conservation actions previously taken (p93);
- Extend the **Yokun Brook** wildlife corridor from Pleasant Valley Sanctuary to the Housatonic River via protection and acquisition of land (p93);
- Support and work toward the **clean-up** of Housatonic River, Woods Pond, and Laurel Lake (p92);
- Adopt regulations for implementation of the **Scenic Mountain Act**;
- Preserve history through **education**, public and private historic preservation and restoration endeavors (p8);
- 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 (p8);
- Preserve the historical qualities of **Lenox Village** and estate areas by continuing to allow and expand options for reuse (p8, 50, 67);
- Promote fuller use of the villages as true **mixed-use centers** through reuse/rehabilitation, pedestrian streetscape enhancements, parking, and appropriate forms of new development (p67, 77);
- Generally enhance **Lenox Dale** by directing appropriate investment opportunities there (p51);
- Support participation in a proposed **Great Estate 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 (p8, 52);
- Protect corridor lands and **scenic roads** such as East Street and Undermountain Road through mechanisms such as easements, Scenic Road and/or Mountain designation, and Forest Legacy program (p78, 93);
- Continue to improve and extend **walking and biking** linkages into a complete network (p74, 77, 93-94);
- Allow **flexible alternatives** for residential development with incentives if necessary such as cluster zoning, planned unit developments, and neo-traditional neighborhood development (Summary p13);
- Revise the Subdivision Regulations with general conditions and guidelines for developers to incorporate **better design** and community benefits as

criteria for granting Special Permits and waivers for subdivision requirements (p109);

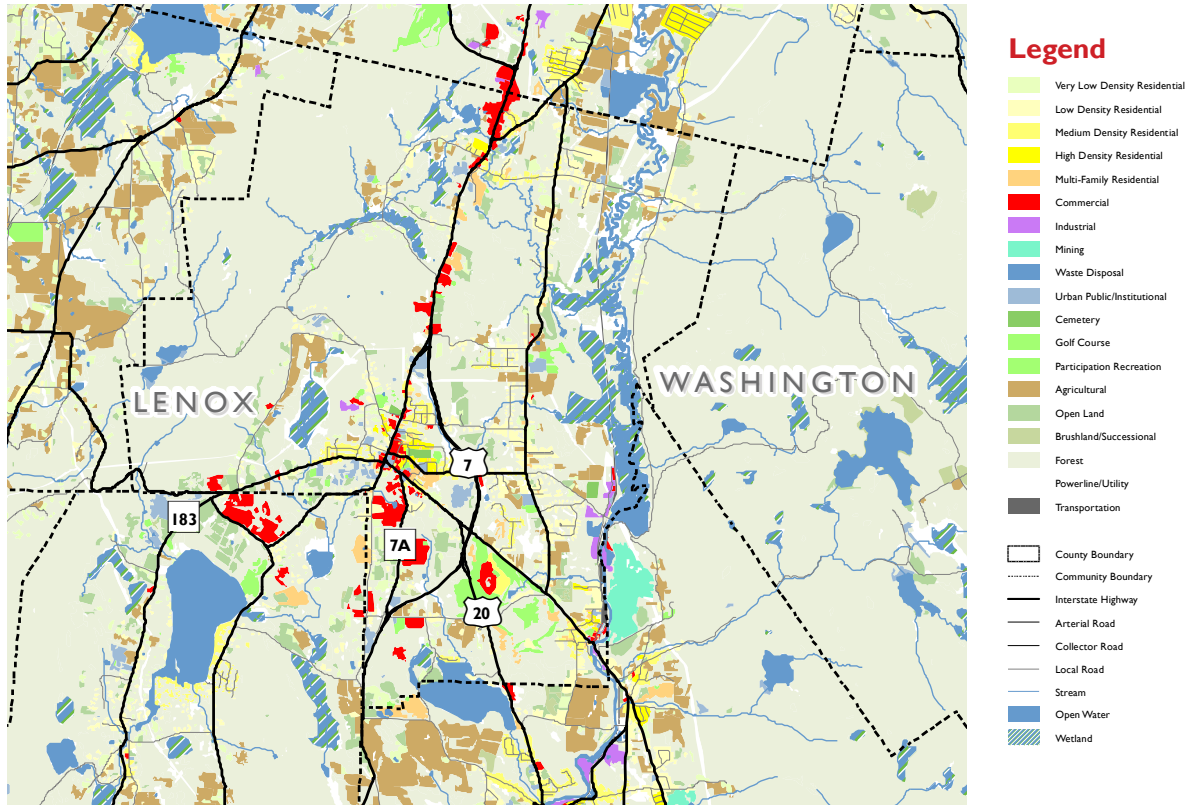
- Extend requirements **Environmental Impact Analysis**, particularly in larger developments and on marginally developable lands (Summary p5);
- **Modifying zoning** to limit residential development in areas where it would not be in keeping with the character of the community or negatively impact the environment, in particular reducing the density allowed in the general area along and near East Street (p109);
- Consider **zoning overlays** or other changes to combat the visual impacts of sprawl, such as allowing flexible zoning lot frontage, or providing enticements for developers to set aside open space for recreation and/or conservation in their projects (p93);
- Consider zoning changes to **increase density** in and near villages (Lenox Village and Lenox Dale, p106);
- Expand **design guidelines** for certain areas such as the Route 7/20 commercial area tied to site plan review (p106).

Subsequent Planning Initiatives

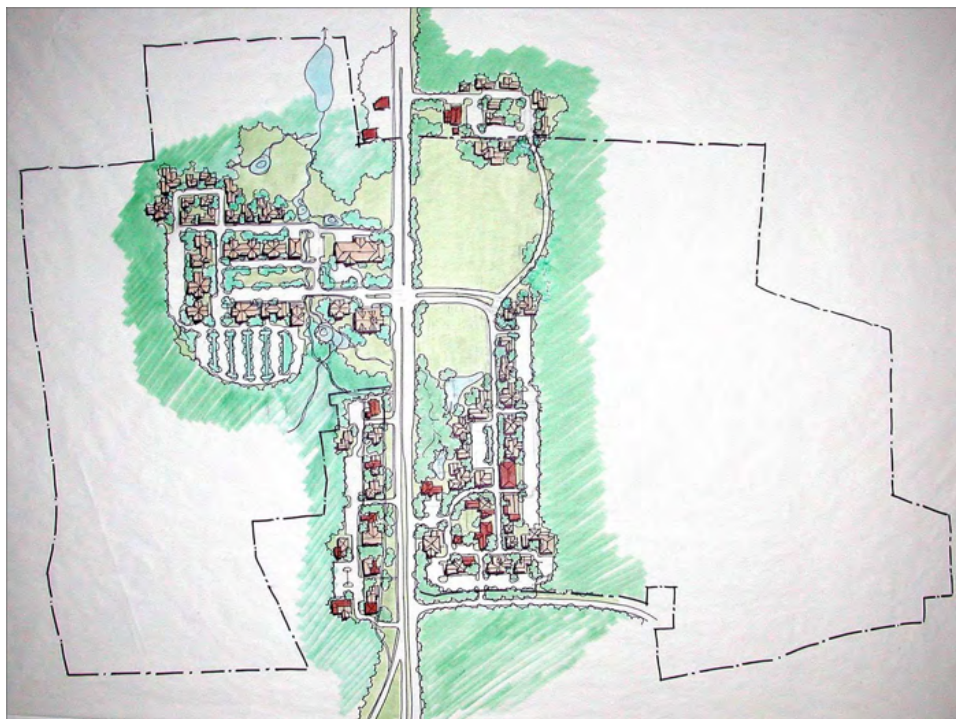
In the two decades following preparation of the 1999 Master Plan, Lenox has undertaken a number of additional planning initiatives and implementation projects further developing and realizing many of the master plan concepts. They have included:

2002 – **Lenox Gateway Redevelopment Plan**: a study of development options for the Gateway Area of Route 7/20 just north of the intersection with Main Street. The study proposed a vision based on traditional development forms with new mixed use development grouped around existing historic buildings, which are preserved and adaptively reused. Creation of a Gateway Overlay District was recommended, which was implemented in the Town's Zoning Bylaws. Since preparation of the plan, a Courtyard by Marriott hotel has been constructed on land proposed to remain as protected open space. However, other aspects of the proposed plan still remain feasible to implement (Dodson 2002).

2003 – **Downtown Transportation Management Study**: a study of traffic intersections and parking in Lenox Village. This Transportation Study served as the transportation component of the 2004 Community Development Plan – see below. Recommendations included converting the historic Walker and Main Street intersection with the Paterson Monument into a roundabout, installing pedestrian bulb-outs on Main Street, and consolidating interior block parking. These recommendations have not been implemented. (Clough 2003)



Land Use in Lenox from Sustainable Berkshires—note that adapted uses on many of the Great Estates in the southern portion of the Town, including Tanglewood, are shown as Commercial (red).



Proposed master plan for the Gateway District on Route 7/20 (Dodson 2002:31)

2004 – **Community Development Plan**: a study conducted between 2002 and 2004 based on a 2000 Community Development Plan program initiated by the Governor. The plan was intended to further develop and implement aspects of the 1999 Master Plan and Open Space and Recreation Plan. It examined conditions and recommendations for open space, housing, economic development, and transportation. Conservation and open space goals proposed in the plan included:

- ***Lenox’s outstanding historical, cultural, and visual resources are preserved.***
 - Important, high quality, **pastoral lands, ridges and viewsheds** continue to be assets as development is limited and key permanent acquisitions occur.
 - **Corridor lands**, such as those near Brushwood Farms, remain scenic and undeveloped through protective mechanisms.
 - Under the watchful eyes of local boards and commissions, **historic sites** are well preserved and utilized without being compromised by unsuitable or inappropriate development.
 - A high level of public & private participation and cooperation is evident in sustaining **conservation and cultural endeavors**.
 - A **Great Estates Scenic Byway** is designated, linking cultural and historical sites. (BRPC 2004:12)

Importantly, the 2004 Community Development Plan introduced comprehensive **Geographic Information System** (GIS) mapping to Lenox. In conjunction with the plan, BRPC prepared an extensive set of detailed GIS maps of the Town, facilitating analysis of the natural and built landscapes from a variety of perspectives.

The economic component of the plan recognized that Lenox’s strong historic and cultural assets were an important defining characteristic for the town and revenue generated from the tourism industry played an important role in the town’s tax base. It noted that historical, cultural and tourist oriented attractions provide sources of income for many residents of Lenox and surrounding towns and that historic Lenox Village was a showcase of interesting architecture, public buildings. Much of the employment in Lenox was heavily dependent upon services. The plan stated that the town will continue to work collaboratively with each of the area resorts, estates and other cultural attractions to encourage and promote them as strong local and regional tourism assets. (BNPC 2004:24)

During the course of preparation of the Community Development Plan, in 2003 the Town adopted an **Open Space Residential Development Bylaw** and in 2004 updated its subdivision controls to provide better alternatives for road design and layout, improved landscape, and overall site design (BRPC 2004:13). The draft bylaw in the plan’s appendix differs somewhat from that in the Zoning Bylaw as of 2016. The appendix to the plan included a **Village Improvement Plan**, which promoted streetscape enhancements, signage standards, preparation of design guidelines for the Historic District, and the Clough Associates parking and transportation improvements.

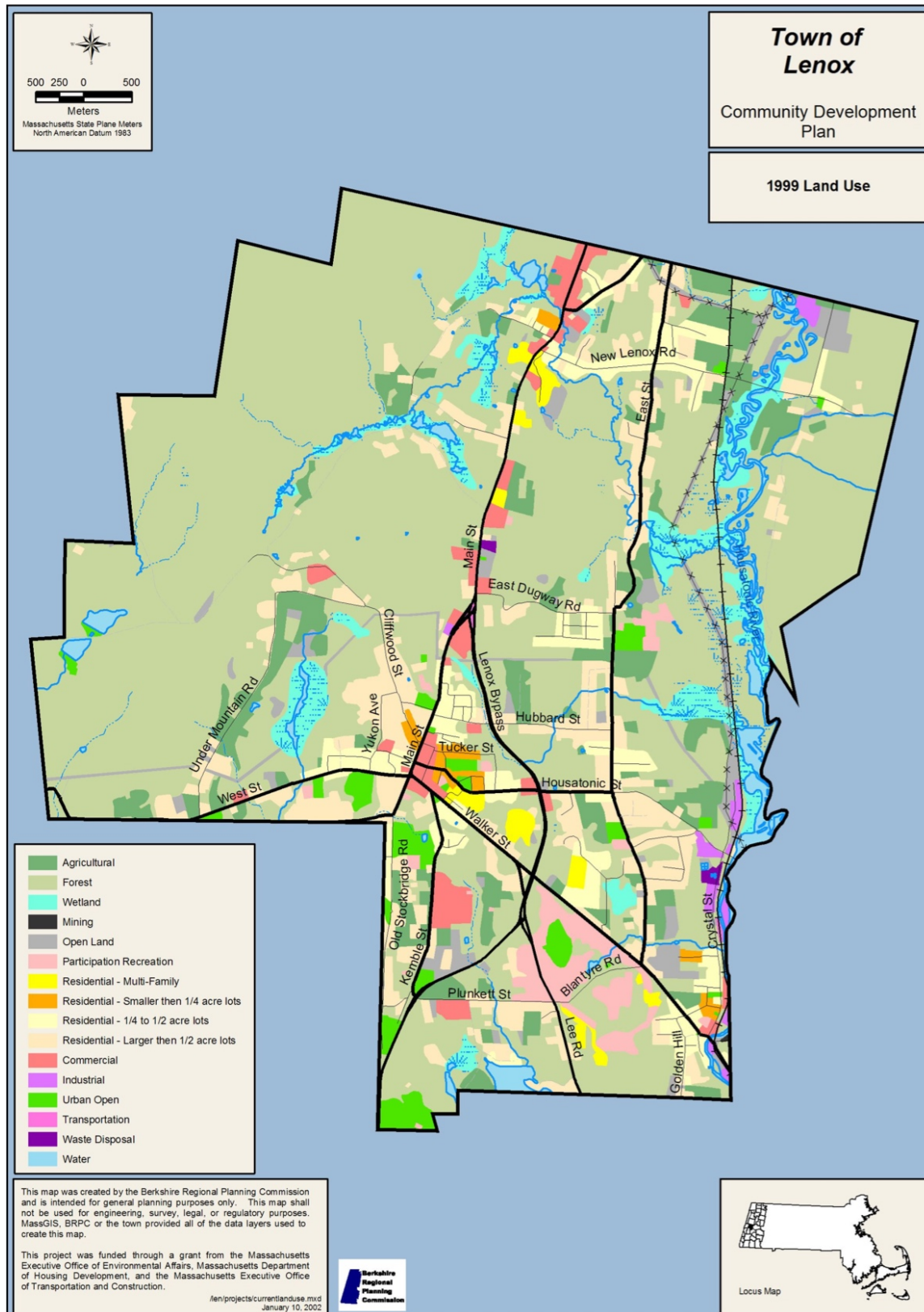
- In addition to the Open Space Bylaw and Village Improvement Plan, recommendations of the plan to be implemented included:
 - Pursue a comprehensive update of the Lenox **Zoning Bylaw** in order to protect natural resources, expand housing opportunities, and encourage greater economic development opportunities.
 - Pursue the development of a mixed-use zoning district along the lower district of Route 7/20 with capacity for additional growth. Redevelopment of the area should be consistent with the 2002 Lenox **Gateway Redevelopment Plan**.
 - Update zoning and employ corridor access methods to **improve overall composition and design** of the Route 7&20 upper district area.
 - Encourage the reuse and redevelopment of existing commercial and industrial locations in **Lenox Dale**. Provide adequate resources to continue overall redevelopment of the area.
 - Pursue public and private initiatives such as environmentally sensitive **trail sections** and other improvements to make the lakes, reservoirs and remote woodlands more accessible for canoeists, wildlife observers, walkers and bikers.
 - Seek funds to help advance voluntary land protection efforts in Town, including implementation of the **Community Preservation Act** in Lenox.
 - Update to the 1999 **Build Out Analysis** prepared in conjunction with the Master Plan to better assess the impacts of new development on natural resources.
 - Implement elements of the 1999 **Open Space and Recreational Plan**.

It appears that the Community Development Plan provided an impetus for a number of subsequent actions taken by the Town, such as updating of the Zoning Bylaw and the implementation of streetscape enhancements in Lenox Village.

2006 – **Zoning Bylaw of the Town of Lenox, Massachusetts**: update of the Town’s Zoning Bylaws as called for in the Community Development Plan. The previous bylaws had been prepared in 1966 and updated in 1975. (Lenox 2016)

2006 – **Our Town – Our Future, A Community Dialogue on Guiding Development**: a community discussion and workshop on growth management conducted in March 2006 spurred by public meetings in the development of the new Zoning Bylaws. (Land Use Incorporated 2006)

2006 – **Community Preservation Act**: adoption of the act at the Spring 2006 Town Meeting as an outcome of the Community Development Plan and community discussions. The Community Preservation Act (CPA) enables Lenox to participate in the state program by which state funds are provided as an incentive for raising local dedicated local funds for open space preservation, preservation of historic resources, development of affordable housing, and the acquisition and development of outdoor recreational facilities. The CPA is described in Appendix B and recommendations for use of funding for historic preservation are included in Chapters 5, 8, and 9.



1999 Land Use in Lenox as depicted in the 2004 Community Development Plan

2008 – **Lenox Village Center Improvement Plan:** conceptual design of streetscape enhancements for Lenox Village with additional recommendations for Village development standards. Significant aspects of the plan have been implemented, including pedestrian sidewalk improvements and the installation of Westinghouse era street lamps. The plan proposed an alternative to the previously proposed roundabout at Walker and Main, which has also not been implemented. (Walter Cudnohufsky Associates 2008)

2010 – **Route 7/20 Corridor Access Management Plan:** a detailed study of options for street improvement for the Route 7/20 roadway between New Lenox Road in Lenox and Dan Fox Drive in Pittsfield. The study recognizes the difficulties in improving traffic design due to the small sizes of adjacent commercial lots and the location of buildings and parking close to the main roadway. The study provides information, analysis, and recommendations to help address conditions as future development occurs. (Vanasse 2010)

2013/2015 – **Open Space and Recreation Plan:** background information on landscape and open space in Lenox and an update of the 1999 Open Space Plan. The plan documents environmental conditions and characteristics in Lenox not found in other Town plans. It shows the current extent of conserved lands in the Town and inventories parcels of conservation and recreation interest. (Lenox 2015)

The plan includes a nine-page Action List with actions, timeframes, and responsible organizations. In addition to water quality and wildlife habitat, the Action Plan cites goals and actions related to landscape character and historic resources, including:

Goal 3 – Agricultural and pastoral lands are protected.

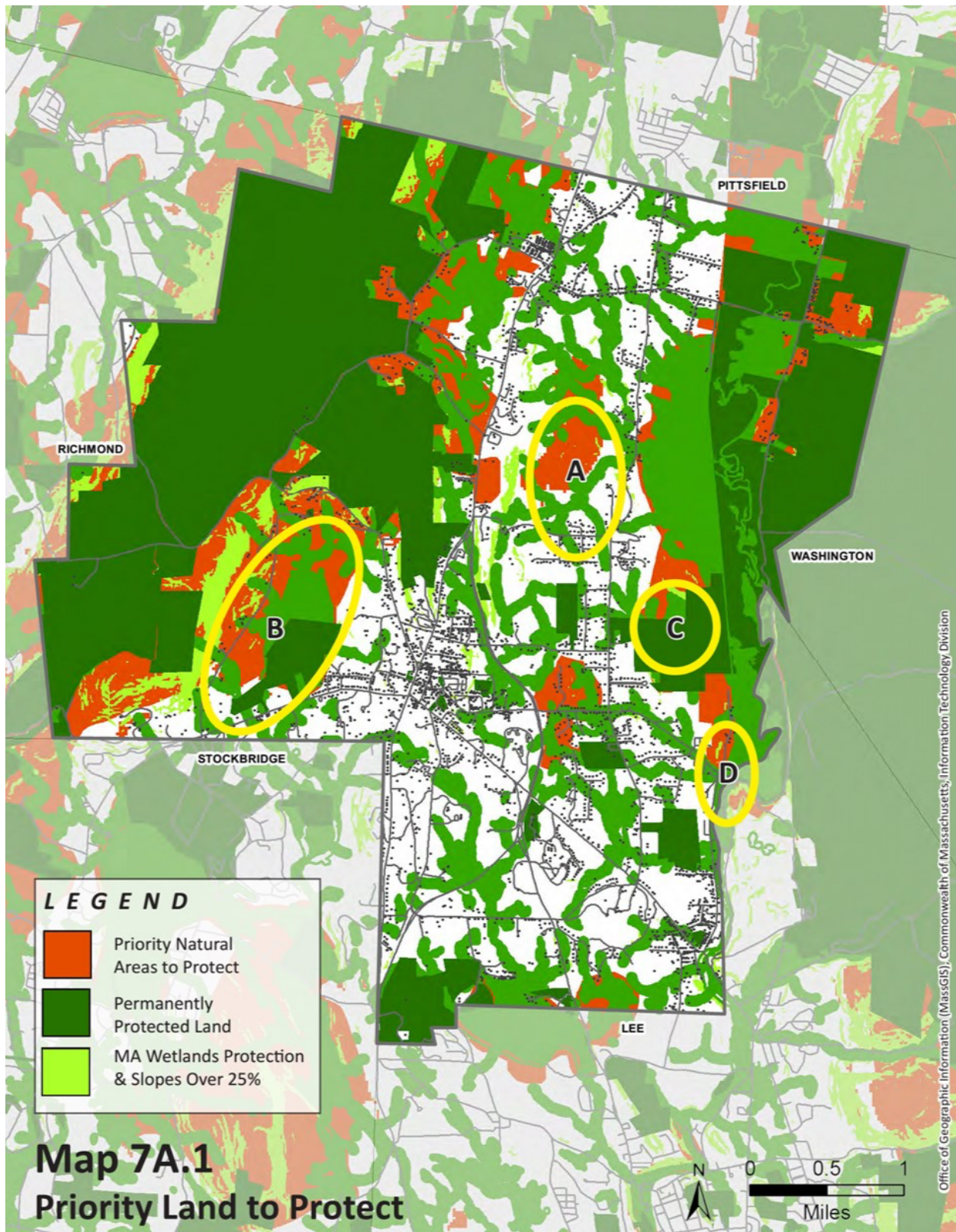
Action 3.1 Protect Agricultural land

- Map pastoral lands and promote Chapter 61A tax abatement programs and conservation restrictions
- Promote the Massachusetts Agricultural Preservation Restriction Program for Overmeade Gardens land
- Encourage an agricultural conservation restriction on Undermountain Stables hayfield and pasture

Goal 4 – Critical visual and historic resources are protected.

Action 4.1 Identify and protect cultural landscapes associated with the Great Estates

- Inventory Great Estate Landscapes
- Create historic walking tours including signs and displays about historic sites and activity in town
- Protect all Great Estates with conservation restrictions
- Support tourism and appropriate business uses
- Continue to support appropriate private business uses in Great Estates



Priority Land to Protect identified on the Existing Protected Lands Map from the 2013/15 Open Space Plan. "A" represents establishing an open space corridor across Lenox; "B" represents preserving lands north and west of Parson's Marsh, "C" and "D" represent parcels to protect along the Housatonic River corridor.

The Action Plan also outline goals and actions for connecting neighborhoods, open spaces, and recreational uses with a network of existing and proposed sidewalks and trails for walking, hiking, and biking. It advocates for creating a strong public constituency for open space and recreation through education, outreach, and collaborative partnerships.

2016/2017 – Lenox and Lenox Dale Walk Audits: supports the Open Space Plan through an review of conditions and recommendations for pedestrian connectivity and walks in Lenox Village and Lenox Dale. (WalkBoston 2016/2017)

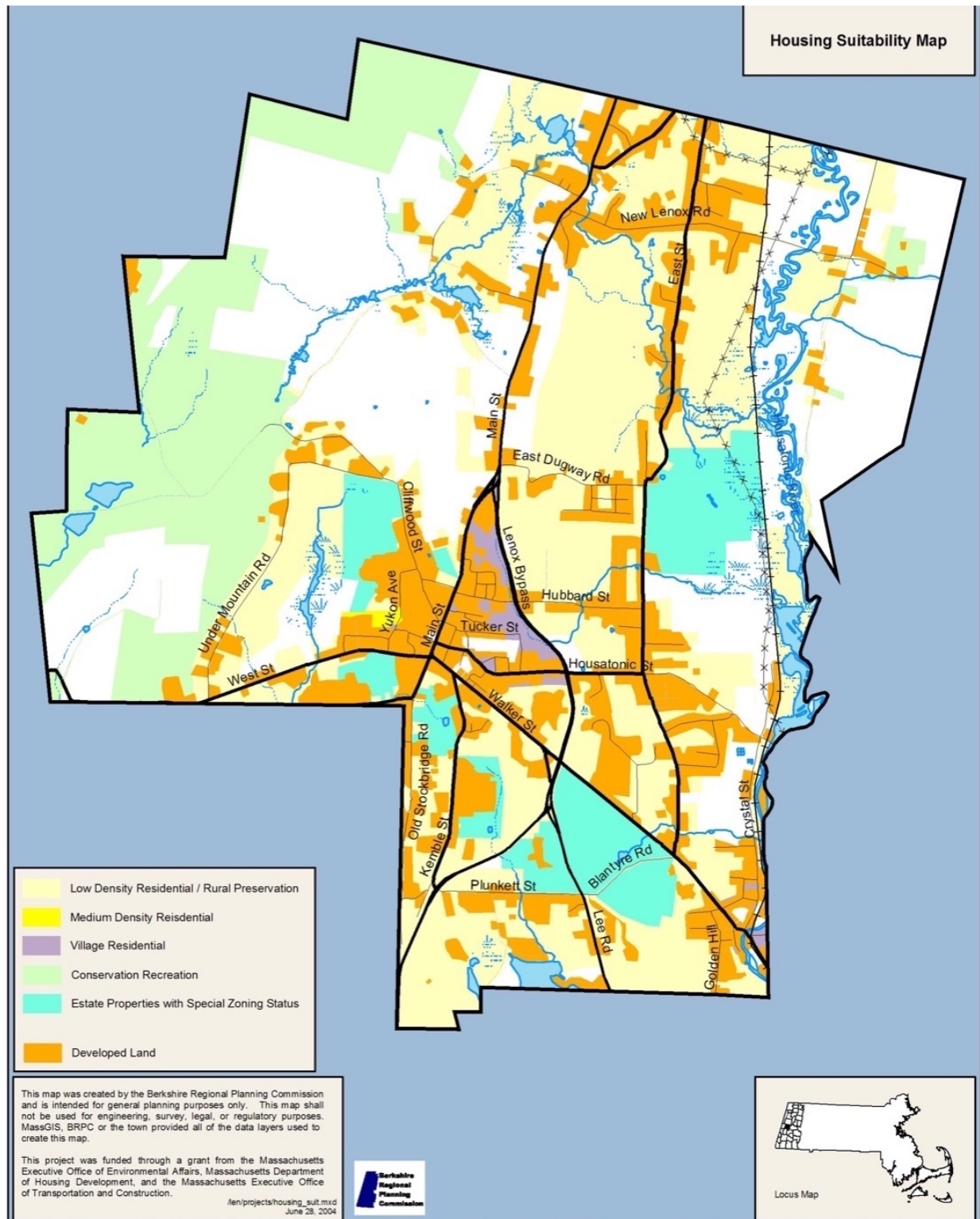
2017 – Lenox Housing Production Plan 2017-2021: a detailed analysis of housing in Lenox with recommendations for increasing affordable housing in the Town. The Housing Production Plan is a state and federal grant funded study that qualifies municipalities for access to funding for implementation projects. The main purpose of the plan is to help the community make progress toward the 10 percent state statutory minimum of affordable housing. The plan provides an in-depth examination of demographic, economic, and housing trends in Lenox using information available from the 2010-2015 US Census and other sources. In this respect, the plan provides useful information for other planning initiatives as well. (Lenox 2017)

The plan notes the very slow growth and development of housing in Berkshire County generally in recent decades. New housing within the Berkshires tends to cater to high-end seasonal and vacation housing demand. In Lenox, about 15% of housing stock is occupied by seasonal or occasional residents, placing pressure on municipal services but also supporting the local tax base (Lenox 2017:1).

Berkshire towns are struggling, and while Lenox is better off than many, it is not as affluent or secure as its reputation suggests. 47% of Lenox households have low or moderate incomes. Most of these are unaffordably housed due to the limited amount and high cost of housing. Aside from the weak regional market, the potential for new housing in Lenox is influenced by the limited amount of land available for development, in part due to environmental constraints and to the fact that 25% of land in Lenox is already protected for conservation (Lenox 2017:2,35).

Lenox has an older population, many of whom do not participate in the labor force. 60% of those who do commute out of town to their jobs (Lenox 2017:2, 9-14). Many people who work in Lenox cannot afford to live there. Increasing the number of young, median-income families and increasing the amount of workforce housing are primary goals of the housing plan.

Lenox does not have enough housing to accommodate demand from seasonal and year-round homebuyers and renters. Since seasonal buyers typically have better means to compete for the housing supply that does exist, the demand they generate has a disproportionate impact on pricing, affecting not only low- and moderate-income households but also middle-income households who cannot find reasonably priced year- round housing (Lenox 2017:45). The profitability of seasonal rentals limits the amount of housing available for year-around affordable rental units.



Housing Suitability Map from the 2004 Community Development Plan. Already developed lands are shown in brown—this information has not changed substantially as of 2018 due to the limited amount of new development that has occurred since the 2008 recession.

The approach toward meeting affordable housing goals in Lenox will be incremental and include specific site-by-site decision making. Strategies include:

- Encouraging the creation of **accessory apartments** on existing properties,
- Encouraging creation of **apartments over commercial space** in Lenox Village, Lenox Dale, and in mixed use development along Route 7/20,
- Taking advantage of opportunities for **multifamily densities** where appropriate using by right performance standards,
- Allowing development of small affordable units on **vacant nonconforming lots**, and
- Using a variety of funding and **incentive programs**, including Community Preservation Act housing funds, to encourage workforce and affordable housing projects. (Lenox 2017:47-54)

LAND DEVELOPMENT AND ZONING

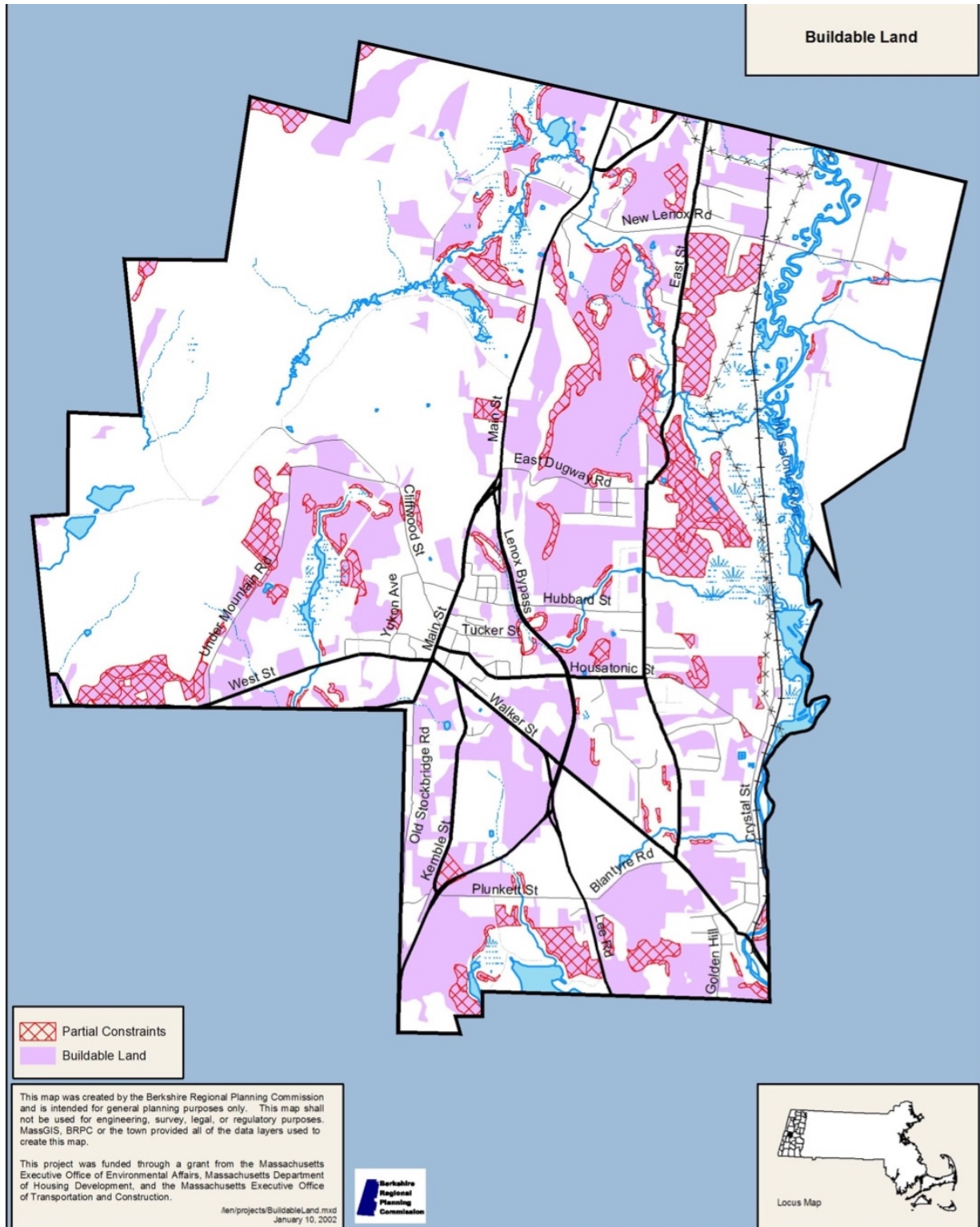
The Town of Lenox is beginning preparation of an updated Master Plan to replace the previous plan prepared in 1999, discussed above. Planning documents and initiatives developed since 1999 have laid the groundwork for the update and have established growth management approaches to areas such as Lenox Village and the Gateway area of Route 7/20. The recently prepared *Lenox Housing Production Plan 2017-2021* summarizes economic and demographic trends in Lenox and, in combination with the *2004 Community Development Plan*, can be cited to bring background information on the Town over the past decade up to date.

Land Development Conditions

Due to challenging economic conditions in the Berkshires generally since the mid-1980s, and a slow recovery since the Great Recession of 2008/2009, a limited amount of land development has occurred within Lenox over the past ten years. With little land development pressure occurring at present, the Master Plan update has the opportunity to plan proactively for desired future conditions.

Three background maps from the *2004 Community Development Plan* provide information on land development that remains pertinent today. The Housing Suitability Map on the facing page shows the extent of Developed Land in brown and areas of available land for new development in light yellow, indicated as Low Density Residential/Rural Preservation.

The amount of land that is actually developable is shown on the Buildable Land Map on the following page and is less than that shown in yellow on the Housing Suitability Map. Most of the remaining buildable land is located in a central north-south band on the upland ridge between Route 7/20 and East Street. Some of this land is already conserved, including in the vicinity of Parson's Marsh and The Mount. Areas indicated have physical constraints, such as areas of steep slope or wetlands.



Buildable Land Map from the 2004 Community Development Plan. Lands not colored are conserved, environmentally constrained, or already developed.

From these two maps it is apparent that Lenox has a limited amount of developable land and that most of the land that remains available is liable to be developed as low density, suburban residences, a continuation of the types of new construction that the Town has experienced in recent decades.

New development is likely to occur as single homes constructed by individual property owners and as small to medium-sized subdivisions constructed by local or regional developers. Development will continue to gradually fill in the map, beginning with parcels that are more accessible and easier to develop and continuing toward parcels that are more constrained and difficult to develop.

Many of these new residences are likely to be second homes purchased by people who are not full-time residents but who appreciate and are investing in the character of the Town. A focus of the Master Plan update, therefore, should be to assure that new residential development patterns address community-wide goals related to landscape connectivity, preservation of viewsheds and the character of local roads, construction quality, and trails.

Redevelopment will also occur, especially along the Route 7/20 commercial corridor and within Lenox Village and Lenox Dale. Most of the Town's surveyed historic buildings are located within the Developed Land areas shown on the Housing Suitability Map. The redevelopment of historic properties along the commercial corridor as well as in the villages is an issue that should be anticipated.

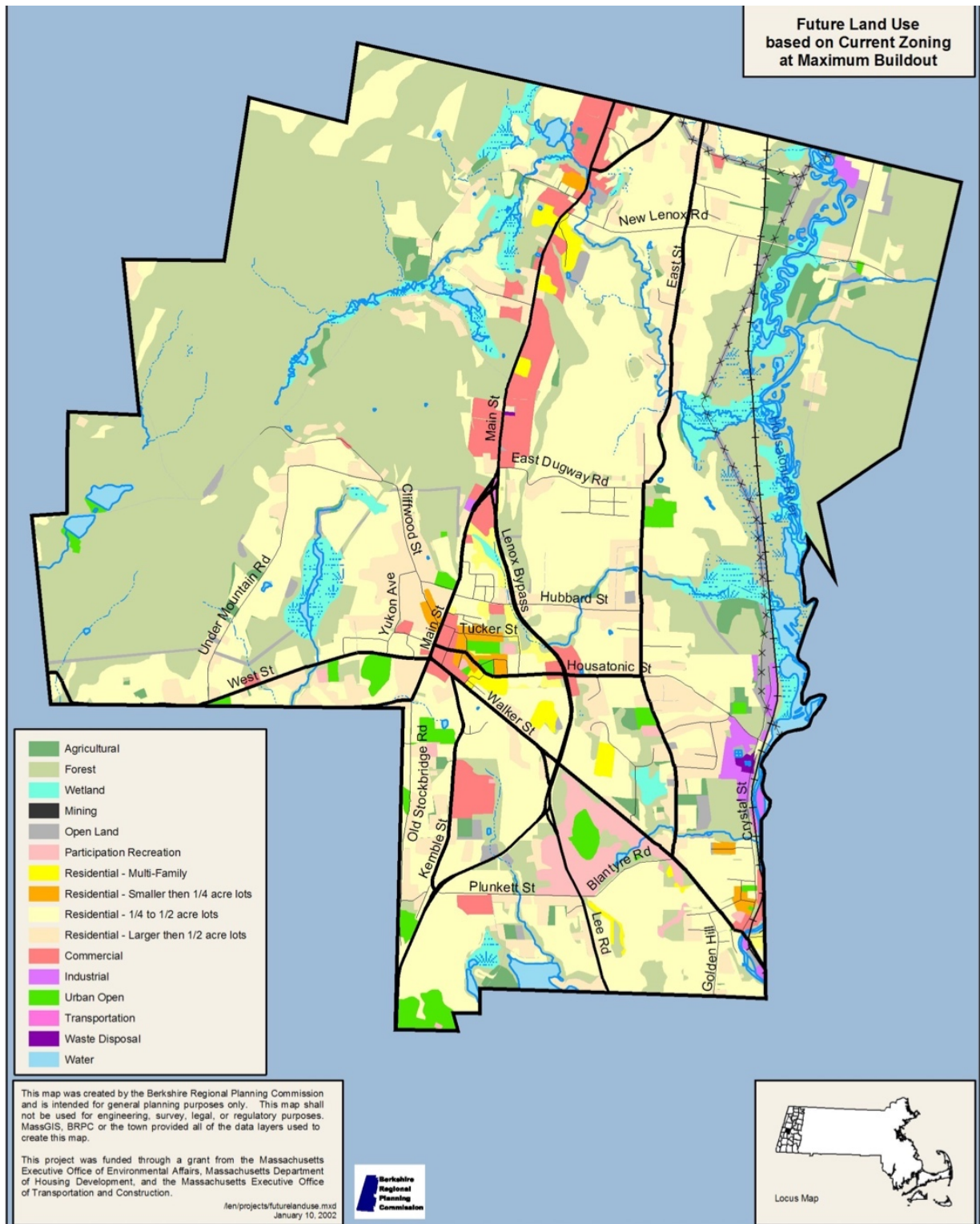
The addition of new construction on smaller lots within existing historic neighborhoods and commercial areas is also likely. Some new projects may propose multifamily housing that would increase village densities and further develop former estate properties. The redevelopment of existing historic residences as apartments, condominiums, and short-term rental units would continue a trend that has helped preserve and adaptively reuse mansions but which could also pose threats to historic neighborhoods.

Zoning bylaws in Lenox have evolved to address these types of development trends and will continue to evolve in response to issues and approaches explored in the Master Plan update. The following section outlines current zoning.

Current Zoning in Lenox

The current Lenox Zoning Bylaw was adopted by Town Meeting in 2008 and has most recently been updated in 2016 (Lenox 2016). The bylaw establishes zoning districts that have been created and refined over the years and includes a number of important special provisions and overlay districts to address issues and opportunities specific to the community. Site plan review for proposed land development projects are reviewed and approved by the Zoning Board of Appeals.

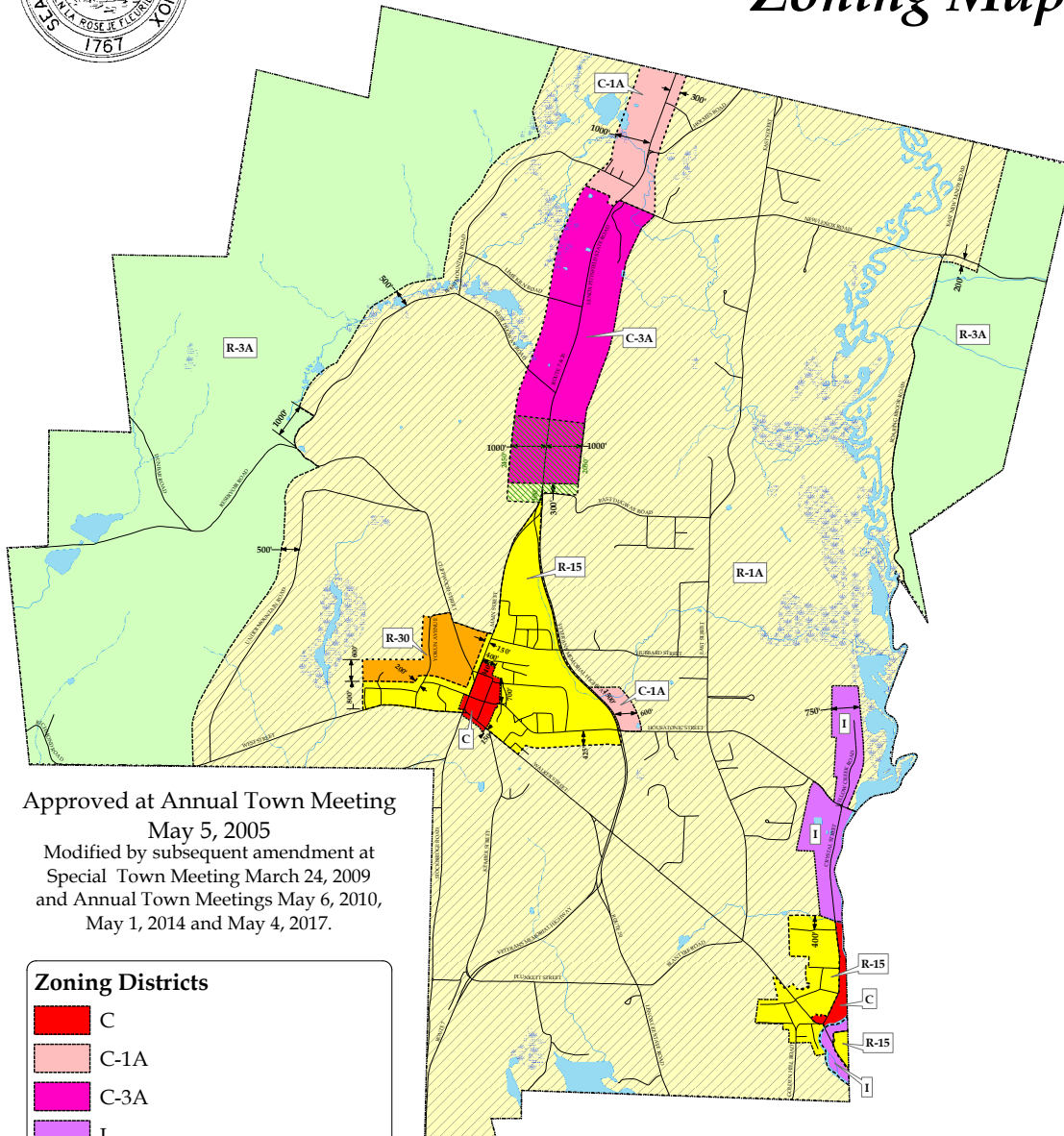
Spread throughout the Town, historic building and landscape resources are impacted by the Zoning Bylaw and by subdivision and land development regulations, practices, and procedures.



Future Land Use Map from the 2004 Community Development Plan



Town of Lenox Zoning Map



Approved at Annual Town Meeting
May 5, 2005
Modified by subsequent amendment at
Special Town Meeting March 24, 2009
and Annual Town Meetings May 6, 2010,
May 1, 2014 and May 4, 2017.

Zoning Districts

- C
- C-1A
- C-3A
- I
- R-15
- R-1A
- R-30
- R-3A
- Open Space Flexible
Development Overlay District
- Gateway Mixed Use
Development Overlay District

For the Flood Plain District see the Town of Lenox
Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM), dated July 5,
1982 and Flood Boundary Floodway Map (FBFM),
dated July 5, 1982.



0 3,000 6,000 9,000
Feet

1:18,000

1 inch = 1,500 feet

Massachusetts State Plane Meters
North American Datum 1983



- Town Boundary
- Roads
- Lake / Pond
- Wetland / Marsh
- Perennial Stream
- Intermittent Stream

Lenox Village and Lenox Dale

Lenox Village and Lenox Dale each have core commercial (C) areas surrounded by village-density residential areas (R-15). The **village commercial** areas permit single family residences, mixed use, retail, and other commercial uses on lots as small as 5,000 square feet (just over 1/9th acre). A variety of additional uses are permitted by Special Permit. The core of Lenox Village is designated as a Local Historic District, which is discussed further below.

Surrounding these core village commercial areas, the **R-15 residential neighborhoods** feature single family residences on lots as small as 15,000 square feet (just over 1/3rd acre). Duplex, townhouse, and multi-family residences are permitted by Special Permit. Both the existing village commercial and village residential areas are already largely occupied by existing buildings, most of which are historic. However, new construction could be possible through the further subdivision of existing larger lots and/or through the removal of existing buildings. There is no current mechanism by which the demolition of buildings may be prohibited.

On the west side of Lenox Village is a special **R-30 residential district**, which is the only location where this district occurs. This neighborhood is comprised of larger historic residences, some qualifying as mansions, with extensive landscaping. Like the R-15 village residential district, duplex and multifamily residences are permitted by Special Exception. In most cases, this could translate to the adaptive reuse of large existing residences, rather than new construction. Townhouses, which are not present and would require new construction, are not permitted. The minimum lot size in the R-30 district is 30,000 square feet (just over 2/3rd acre).

An “I” **industrial zone** is located along the Housatonic River north and south of Lenox Dale. Historically, this was an industrial and manufacturing area served by the railroad and was the reason for Lenox Dale’s existence. Manufacturing, lumber yards, building supplies, storage, and other uses are permitted.

Highway Commercial Districts

Lenox has two commercial zoning districts located along **Route 7/20 north** of the intersection with Main Street. North of New Lenox Road, the C-1A commercial district permits a variety of retail and commercial uses and has a minimum lot size of one acre. South of New Lenox Road to the intersection with Main Street is the C-3A commercial district, which allows townhouses and multifamily dwelling as well as office and professional uses but which does not allow most retail uses. Minimum lot size for the C-3A district is 30,000 square feet (just over 2/3rd acre).

Hotels are permitted in both the C-1A and C-3A districts by Special Permit. Restaurants are permitted in the C-1A district by right and in the C-3A district by Special Permit. Gas stations and automobile services are permitted only in the C-1A district by approval of the Select Board. A small C-1A area is located at the intersection of Route 7/20 and Housatonic Street.

A number of historic former farmsteads are located along Route 7/20 primarily within the C-3A district. The farm residences remain, most of which are

architecturally prominent. Several of these buildings have been adapted to commercial and office use. Some are threatened.

The Zoning Bylaw requires site plan approval by the Zoning Board of Approval for proposed projects within C-1A and C-3A areas. The Board of Appeals may approve a site plan subject to conditions, modifications, and restrictions as it deems necessary and in the interest of the Town and neighboring properties.

Standards for the review of projects and design standards for their implementation seek to protect natural resources and enhance community character. Plans should be consistent with concepts included in the Town Master Plan. New development should be compatible with the character and appearance of the existing natural and developed environment, providing continuity and definition to the streetscape and surrounding landscape.

The renovation of historic buildings is encouraged such that historic features and detailing are retained. New construction in association with existing buildings should be compatible to the character of the principal building and its landscaping. The removal or alteration of historic, traditional or significant uses, structures, or architectural elements shall be minimized.

Gateway Overlay District

At the south end of the C-3A commercial district a special Gateway Mixed Use Development Overlay District has been created to encourage creative mixed use development that is compatible with neighboring properties. The bylaw promotes mixed use, pedestrian oriented development with a high level of design quality. At least 10 percent of new development is required to be residential, and at least 25 percent of the land must be set aside as open space for the use of residents.

A series of general design and performance standards are outlined in the bylaw to which development must comply. Review is undertaken by the Zoning Board of Appeals. The *2002 Lenox Gateway Redevelopment Plan* provided the concept for the Gateway Overlay District and illustrated how it might be implemented (Dodson 2002). Though not explicitly mentioned in the bylaw, existing historic buildings within the district were intended to be preserved and adaptively reused. New similarly scaled mixed use buildings were envisioned to be constructed around the existing structures to create a pedestrian friendly village character.

The design and performance standards express this intent by stating that architecture should demonstrate cohesive planning and identity and by encouraging inspiration from traditional New England design elements. Designers are not, however, to be restricted in their creativity. New development should have a single point of access from Route 7/20 with internal road system, pedestrian network, and landscaped open space.

The hotel developed on the site since adoption of the Gateway District provision does not fulfill the intent of the bylaw or the design and performance standards. However, additional land remains to be developed and could yield better results.

R-1A Residential District and Open Space Flexible Development

The largest zoning district in Lenox is the R-1A residential district which comprises most of the land between the Housatonic River on the east and Lenox Mountain on the west. The R-1A district is oriented toward single family homes and has a minimum lot size of one acre.

Public water is available throughout Lenox provided by reservoirs on Lenox Mountain and mains running north-south along both Main Street and East Street. The municipal sewer line runs north-south along Main Street and southeast along Housatonic Street to a treatment plant on Crystal Street north of Lenox Dale. Public water is generally available to new residential development. Where public sewer lines are not locally available to new development projects, private onsite septic systems are required in accordance with state standards.

The entire area of the R-1A residential district is subject to the Open Space Flexible Development provision of the zoning bylaw through which the option for open space development is encouraged. Approval is obtained through a Special Permit granted by the Planning Board. The purposes of the open space provision include the:

- Preservation of open land for scenic beauty and agricultural, open space, forestry, and recreational use;
- Preservation of historical and archeological resources,
- Protection of the natural environment including landscape and water resources;
- Perpetuation of the appearance of the Town's traditional New England landscape;
- Preservation of historic buildings and structures of the Town as well as their associated historic landscape features; and
- Promotion of better and more efficient overall site planning.

Open Space Flexible Development requires that a minimum of 35% of the parcel being developed be preserved as contiguous open space. Developed residences may be single family or two-family and may be clustered on smaller lots on the remainder of the parcel. The number of allowable lots is determined by preparation of a yield plan that documents the number of lots that the parcel would be able to accommodate under base R-1A zoning with minimum one-acre lot sizes. A density bonus may be obtained allowing additional lots for the preservation of additional open space up to a maximum of 20% addition (55% of the lot total).

The contiguous open space may be dedicated to the Town, a non-profit organization, or a corporation or trust of the owners. The open space may be used for conservation, historic preservation, education, passive recreation, agriculture, forestry, or a combination of these uses. Wetlands may be included within the open space but must be excluded from the calculation for the required minimum 35% open space or any additional bonus open space.

The bylaw outlines a design process that is in accordance with best practices for open space development. Under this process inventory and evaluation of the site

PLANNING CONTEXT

is undertaken first; design of the contiguous open space is undertaken second; building sites, streets, and required infrastructure are located third; and lot lines are drawn last. There is no minimum lot size stipulated. Waiver for provisions of the bylaw may be granted for lots under ten acres in size to help make the process work.

The use of Open Space Flexible Development is the preferred way through which most of the remaining open land in Lenox will be developed in coming decades. Its use is compatible with Town goals for historic preservation, ecological health, and the preservation of landscape character.



Cranwell Spa and Resort – developed in accordance with the Estate Preservation Area bylaw with new residential housing, golf course, and amenities. The mansion is located in the lower center of the image above with its entrance landscape, key outbuildings, and southerly view preserved.

Estate Preservation Area

In 1984, Lenox adopted an Estate Preservation Area bylaw that has since been incorporated into Section 8, Special Regulations, of the Zoning Bylaw. The purpose of the Estate Preservation Area is to encourage the preservation and restoration of buildings and landscapes associated with the estate era in Lenox. The bylaw provides for flexibility in use and a density bonus system to encourage the preservation and appropriate reuse of specific qualified properties. Development of an Estate Preservation Area is undertaken through a Special Permit process as authorized by the Zoning Board of Appeals. The qualified properties include:

- Bellefontaine on Kemble Street,
- Belvoir Terrace on Cliffwood Street,
- Blantyre on East Street,
- Cranwell on Lee Road,
- Ethelwynde on Yokun Avenue,

- Elms on West Street,
- Shakespeare & Company/Springlawn on Kemble Street, and
- Wayside on Yokun Avenue.

Estate properties may be developed with planned single family, multifamily, and townhouse dwellings. The number of allowable dwellings is calculated based upon a base density of three acres per dwelling. The density may be increased with the preservation of additional permanently dedicated open space. In addition, any other use allowed by right within the R-1A residential district is permissible on the property. Development of a health clinic and/or a Great Estate Inn is permissible on the property as well.

Requirements of the bylaw include the preservation and rehabilitation of the original estate buildings as well as the open space, vistas, stonework, gardens, and other landscape features associated with them. The *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation* are used to guide the preservation work. Designated landscape areas for preservation must be a minimum of 25 acres in size or 75% of the size of the property, whichever is greater. No new building may be constructed within 200 feet of a designated estate building.

Since its adoption in 1984, the Estate Preservation Area bylaw has been used by a few of the eight qualified properties. Most prominently, Bellefontaine (Canyon Ranch) and Cranwell have been extensively developed with different combinations of uses that have preserved the historic mansions and their immediate associated landscapes.

Special Permit

Many uses listed under different zoning districts are only allowed through issuance of a Special Permit by the Zoning Board of Appeals. Special Permits may be granted when it is determined that the adverse effects of a proposed use will not outweigh the projects beneficial impacts to the Town or to the immediate neighborhood of the project.

Uses allowed by Special Permit are considered carefully by the Zoning Board for consistency with Town planning goals and any potential adverse impacts. If necessary, Special Permit applications may be denied. The Special Permit process allows the Zoning Board to set conditions to its approval that would otherwise not be possible under by right use. Conditions may mitigate an anticipated adverse impact; place limits on the proposed use; or enhance the project to the benefit of residents, neighbors, and/or the Town. The Special permit process, therefore, is a mechanism by which projects may be improved beyond the minimum standards of development.

Scenic Mountain Act

Lenox adopted the state-authorized Scenic Mountain Act in 1975 and amended it in 1985. The Town's 1999 Master Plan recommended adoption of regulations for the Act, and regulations and a map were subsequently adopted and approved in 2007/2008.

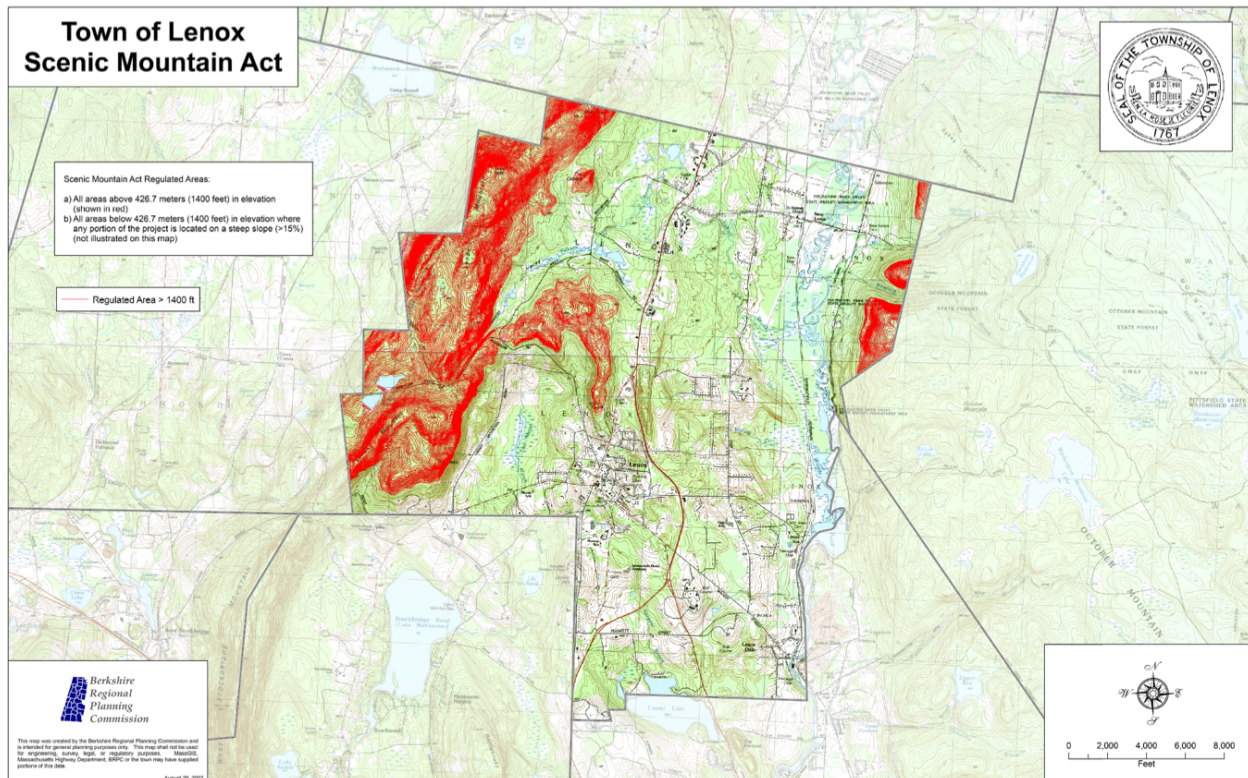
The purpose of the Scenic Mountain Act is to minimize negative impacts of development and other human activities on the water, ecological, and scenic

PLANNING CONTEXT

resources of mountaintops, ridgelines, and steep slopes. In Lenox, the Act applies to areas on Lenox Mountain, within Kennedy Park, and on October Mountain above the 1400-foot elevation as depicted on the official map as well as steep slopes over 15% in grade anywhere within the Town. The Act is reviewed under the jurisdiction of the Town's Conservation Commission.

The Scenic Mountain Act helps protect land in the immediate vicinity of the Town reservoirs on top of Lenox Mountain. The Act requires submission of plans for proposed development and use activities to the Conservation Commission for a Certificate of Compliance that the proposed activities minimize negative impacts on clearing, soil erosion, and scenic qualities along ridgelines and steep slopes. Where impacts are anticipated, mitigation measures must be proposed and approved.

The Act seeks to minimize disturbance, retain natural vegetation, preserve the treeline along ridgetops, minimize piped stormwater systems, and disperse rather than concentrate stormwater flow to prevent erosion. For projects larger than one acre in size, the peak rate of post-development stormwater flow leaving the site must not exceed pre-development flow for 25-year storms. Forestry practices must be in compliance with and permitted in accordance with state standards.



Official map for Lenox's Scenic Mountain Act with the upper elevations of Lenox Mountain on the west and small portions of October Mountain on the east.

Subdivision Regulations

In 2003, Lenox adopted *Rules and Regulations Governing the Subdivision of Land* to institute a process and standards for subdivision and the design and construction of new infrastructure within the Town. They were updated in 2007. The Subdivision Regulations are a companion to the Zoning Bylaw. While applicable to both commercial and residential subdivisions, it is particularly relevant to the R-1A zoning district, where much of the future subdivision can be expected to occur. Under the regulations, proposed subdivisions are reviewed by the Planning Board as opposed to the Zoning Board of Appeals, which reviews most land development projects as regulated by the Zoning Bylaw.

The Subdivision Regulations seeks to promote a high standard in the design of sites being developed to enhance the natural character and appearance of the Town. Best practices in site design, vehicular and pedestrian circulation, building siting, services, and landscaping are encouraged and required. Review seeks to ensure that new structures and facilities protect the design of buildings or places of historic or architectural significance.

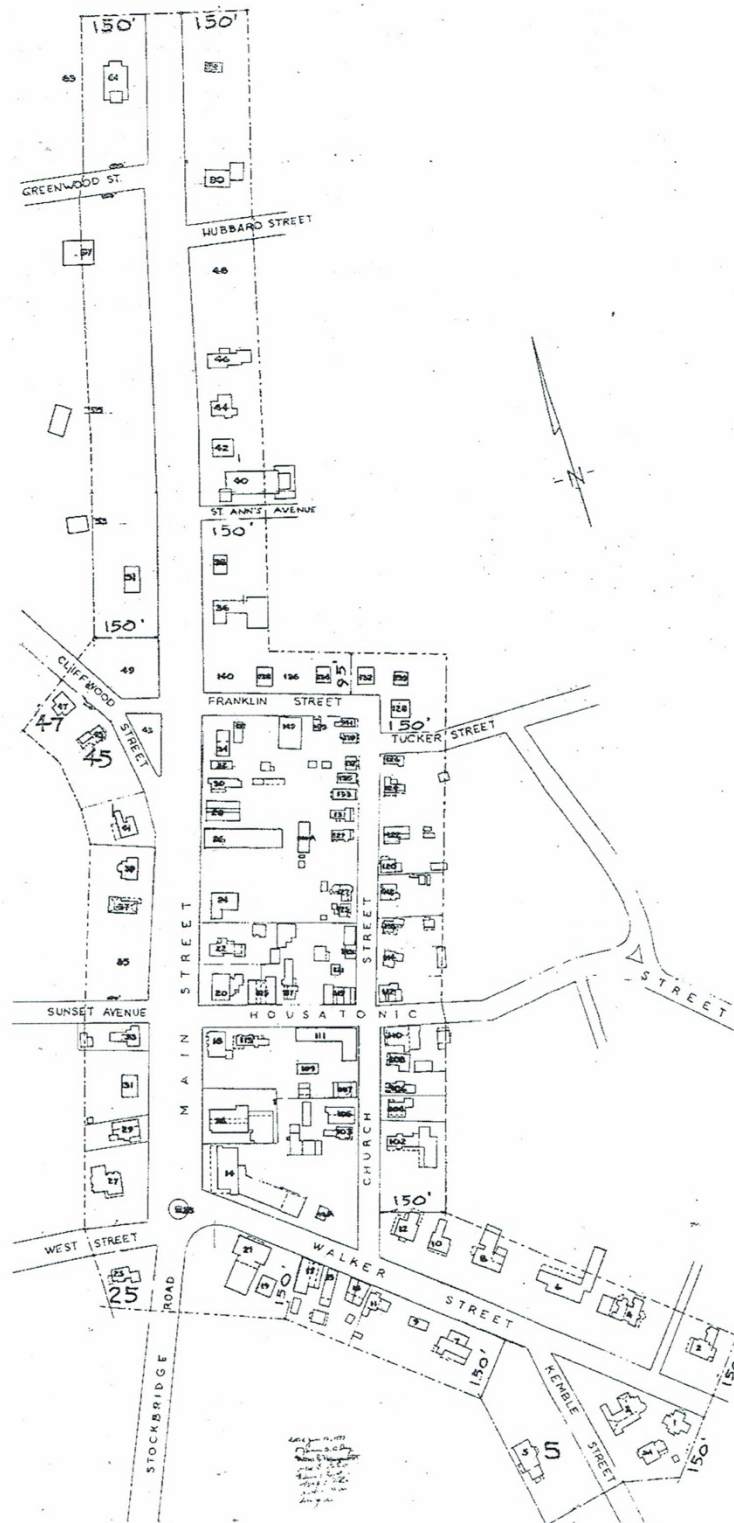
The subdivision review process requires the submission and review of plans in two stages, Preliminary Plans and the final or Definitive Plan. The requirements for submissions for each stage of review are outlined.

Impact statements are required for projects of ten or more lots and may be required for smaller projects if deemed appropriate by the Planning Board. Impact studies must identify existing conditions on the sites, including natural resources; built resources; unusual geological, scenic and historic features; trails; open space links; and wildlife. The study must describe how the project will affect these resources. In reviewing the impact statements, Town boards will consider the preservation or promotion of wildlife refuge, historic sites, unique geological, botanical and archeological features, existing or potential trails, access to open space, and other factors.

Design standards within the Subdivision Regulations require that applicants show how proposed plans relate to Town and regional land use plans. They state that all natural features such as water bodies, flood prone areas, wetlands, scenic points, and historic sites shall be preserved to the greatest extent feasible. Due regard shall be shown for all natural features such as large trees, water courses, scenic points, historic spots, and similar community assets which if preserved will add attractiveness and value to the subdivision and the community. The subdivision review process is an essential tool in the preservation of historic building and landscape resources in Lenox.

Historic District Bylaw

Lenox adopted the Historic District Bylaw in 1975 creating a local historic district in Lenox Village to preserve historic buildings and character within the village in accordance with the state Historic District Act. The bylaw was revised in April 2017.



Historic District Map of Lenox Village



Representative building types within the Lenox Village local historic district

As depicted in the Historic District Map, the local historic district includes the core of the historic village around Main, Church, Franklin, Housatonic, and Walker Streets and extends north up Main Street to include the Church on the Hill.

Main Street is the location of some of the oldest and most significant buildings within the district, including the Lenox Library, Lenox Academy, Church on the Hill, and a number of early 19th century Federal style homes once belonging to prominent residents. Walker Street includes the Town Hall, Curtis Hotel, and several Cottage Era mansions among other buildings.

Church, Housatonic, and Franklin Streets (along with a portion of Main Street) comprise the commercial core of the Historic District and include a variety of interesting historic buildings, some of which are former residences adapted to commercial use. A number of contemporary buildings have been introduced within the commercial core of the district as well.

The Historic District Bylaw requires that proposed construction or alterations that affect the exterior appearance of a building or structure within the historic district first undergo review by the Lenox Historic District Commission to receive a Certificate of Appropriateness certifying that the proposed changes or new construction are in keeping with the historic character of the building and the district.

In the review of proposed projects, the Historic District Commission considers, among other things, the historic and architectural value and significance of the site, building or structure; the general design, arrangement, texture, material and color of the features involved; and the relation of such features to similar features of buildings and structures in the surrounding area.

In the case of new construction or additions to existing buildings or structures, the Commission considers the appropriateness of the size, scale and shape of the new building or addition in relation to the land area upon which it is situated, to adjacent buildings and structures, and to buildings and structures in the surrounding area. In taking action on an application, the Historic District Commission may make a determination to issue one of three possible certificates:

- Certificate of Appropriateness – the construction or alteration for which an application has been filed will be appropriate for, or compatible with, the preservation of protection of the Historic District;
- Certificate of Non-Applicability – an application does not involve any exterior architectural features, or involves an exterior architectural feature which is not subject to review by the Commission;
- Certificate of Hardship – owing to conditions especially affecting the building or structures involved, but not affecting the Historic District generally, failure to approve an application will involve a substantial hardship, financial or otherwise, to the applicant and such application is without substantial detriment to the public welfare and substantial derogation from the intent and purposes of the bylaw.

Should the Commission determine that a Certificate of Appropriateness should not be approved but does not involve non-application or hardship, it should record the reasons for its disapproval and may make recommendations of changes to the applicant's proposal that, if made, would make the application acceptable. Further discussions may then ensue, hopefully leading to ultimate approval acceptable to both the applicant and the Commission.

Building interiors and features not within public view are not subject to the bylaw. Work related to ordinary maintenance and repairs, issues related to public safety, landscaping, walks, driveways, paint colors, roof colors, temporary structures and signs, and storm windows and doors are also not reviewed.

Community Preservation Act

Lenox adopted a Community Preservation Act Bylaw in the Spring of 2008 as mentioned previously in this chapter. The Community Preservation Act (CPA) enables Lenox to participate in the state program by which state funds are provided as an incentive for raising local dedicated local funds for open space preservation, preservation of historic resources, development of affordable housing, and the acquisition and development of outdoor recreational facilities. The bylaw is an important to historic preservation initiatives within the Town.

CPA funds are raised locally through imposition of a voter-authorized [surcharge](#) on local [property tax](#) bills of up to 3%. Local funds are matched by annual distributions to the community from the state's Community Preservation Trust Fund, a statewide fund held by the Massachusetts Department of Revenue. In 2017, \$342,587 were raised at the local level and matched with \$115,076 from the Commonwealth.

The Town's Community Preservation Committee, with nine appointed members, administers the CPA in Lenox, vetting applications from applicants and recommending projects for approval at Town Meeting. In 2017, two historic preservation projects were approved for building rehabilitation work at The Mount and Ventfort Hall. An application was submitted by the Berkshire Natural Resource Council for the Parson's Marsh Trail and Board Walk. Additional monies were approved for the CPA's administration, purchase of the Lenox Library, and funds Historic Preservation, Community Housing, and Open Space and Recreation.

The CPA specifically requires that Preservation Restrictions be established for properties purchased using CPA funds. Municipalities may also require a Preservation Restriction when any amount of CPA funds are awarded for rehabilitation or restoration of an historic property. Preservation Restrictions on historic properties are reviewed and approved by the Massachusetts Historical Commission.



CPA funded rehabilitation work at The Mount's historic stable will facilitate the buildings adaptive reuse for offices and public programming.



Masonry restoration work being undertaken on the exterior of Ventfort Hall, a project that was identified as of high priority in the building's 2016 architectural master plan.



A trail and boardwalk will be constructed to the edge of Parson's Marsh off of Undermountain Road.

Other Bylaws, Standards, and Regulatory Requirements

The bylaws and regulations noted above are those considered most directly to affect decisions that might need to be made with respect to historic buildings and landscapes in Lenox. Other bylaws, standards, regulatory requirements, and review processes may also have relevance and are included in the General Bylaws of the Town of Lenox and other bylaws that have been adopted.

They include the roles of the various boards, committees, and commissions of the Town (in addition to those discussed above), use of the State Building Code for public safety, public and private water and sewer requirements, and state environmental regulations, especially those related to water resources and wetlands. Where appropriate, these other bylaws, standards, regulatory requirements, and review processes are discussed in other sections of this preservation plan.