



# North Adams Comprehensive Plan

Part I of III

2014







# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## Mayor

Richard J. Alcombright

## City Council (2014)

Lisa M. Blackmer, Council President

Nancy Bullett, Council Vice President

Keith Bona

Jennifer M. Breen

Eric Buddington

Benjamin Lamb

Kate Hanley Merrigan

Joshua Moran

Wayne Wilkinson

## Planning Board (2014)

Michael Leary, Chairman

Lynette Bond

Robert Burdick

Joanne DeRose

Kyle Hanlon

Paul Hopkins

Brian Miksic

Paul Senecal

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## City Staff

Michael Nuvalle, Director of Community Development

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## Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee

Michael Boland

Amanda Chilson

Joanne DeRose

Steve Green

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Alan Marden

Brian Miksic

Donald Pecor

Jonathan Secor

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## Consultant Team: Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

Amy Kacala, Senior Planner, Project Manager

Gwen Miller, Planner

Mark Maloy, Data, GIS, and IT Manager

## MA Department of Housing and Community Development

This plan was funded through MA Department of Housing and Community Development's FY 2011 and FY 2012 CDBG Mini-Entitlement Program.

David Newton, Program Representative

*Acknowledgements*

**Community Partners**

*Initiative Partnership and Support*

Hoosic River Revival

Northern Berkshire Community Coalition

Partnership for North Adams

*Meeting Space*

All Saints Church

First Baptist Church of North Adams

Gallery 51

North Adams School District- Brayton  
Elementary

North Adams Public Library

Salvation Army

VFW Post 996

*Public Meeting and Plan Promotion*

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# 1 INTRODUCTION: A STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN FOR THE FUTURE OF NORTH ADAMS

*The city of North Adams is a small city with all of the ingredients a community could ask for:*

- *A world-renowned arts venue in MASS MoCA, a first rate college in MCLA, and hospital, together offering jobs and urban-level arts, culture and health care services;*
- *A scenic setting with open space amenities on all sides and a city with tons of character thanks in part to its historic downtown and surrounding historic districts, including a number of mill reuse projects;*
- *A community of people who love the city and are deeply committed to making sure it succeeds, with a number of active groups investing their own time, money and resources in urban improvement and economic catalyst projects along the river and in downtown;*
- *Leadership with a commitment to hearing and championing fresh ideas and with the energy to make it all happen.*

*Yet the city has faced, and currently grapples with, a number of challenges. This process, and resulting document, reflects the combined input and ideas from a wide array of stakeholders, best practice research, and community dialogue about how to move the city forward to make all these pieces gel and achieve their potential.*

## AN INITIATIVE BEGINS

In 2010, the city of North Adams, under the new leadership of Mayor Richard Alcombright, then in his first term and the first new Mayor the city had had in nearly 30 years, began a process to think critically about where the city was, where residents and businesses wanted it to go in the future, and what it would take to get there. In other words: a plan. The city's last comprehensive plan had been adopted in 1971 and, as a document with a 10-year shelf life, was woefully out of date.

The Mayor, Office of Community Development, and the City's Community and Economic Development Advisory Board (CEDAB), which advises the City's annual Community Development Block Grant process and investments, applied for a grant from Berkshire Regional Planning Commission to assess the role a plan could play in charting a fresh course for the city's future. This process led the group to conclude that a plan would be a valuable tool to help organize and align investments and activities by the City but also private and non-profit partners, to maximize benefits to the community.

In 2010, the City hired Berkshire Regional Planning Commission to continue their work and develop a new comprehensive plan. The BRPC had, at that same time, been awarded a HUD Sustainable Communities Planning Grant to create a new long-range plan for the region. The City decided to align their process with that of the new regional plan to enable them to maximize the benefits of analysis and mapping that would be done through that effort for the City's plan and to also ensure that there was consistency between the two plans. This means the city will be well positioned to capture benefits from initiatives done regionally because they already understand what is called for and how those regional ideas or priorities apply locally.



### Related Maps

Map 1: Location and Context

*Located in Appendix C*



*Windsor Lake, and surrounding parkland, is a popular recreation destination right next to some of the city's core neighborhoods and just a few miles from downtown. The park is the site for an outdoor concert series in summer as well as outdoor yoga classes.*

## THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING A PLAN

Just as any well-run business has a business plan, so must a city. A city is a business with a multi-million dollar budget, hundreds of employees, and “shareholders” in each and every resident. Having a plan in place accomplishes a number of things:

- Provides a vehicle through which the city can step back and take an inventory of its assets and challenges to then chart a smart strategy for how to achieve its goals.
- Engages the citizenry in setting those goals through an open and inclusive process where all voices are heard and considered rather than closed-door decision-making by a few.
- Expresses a vision and strategies in a document that is available for all, which serves as a communication tool to current and future residents and businesses as well as potential funders and investors.
- Catalyzes and supports community initiatives to bring more people, organizations and resources together to help accomplish the shared vision for the city as expressed in the plan.
- Ensures accountability to residents and businesses in its pursuit of plan strategies and reporting progress over time.

## THE PLANNING PROCESS

### THE STEERING COMMITTEE

A steering committee of 16 people met every 1-2 months throughout the planning process to guide and shape the plan. This group included current and retired educators, the Planning Board, City Council, municipal staff, and local business, economic development, outdoor, river restoration, health and neighborhood representatives. Their meetings involved a mix of group exercises, detailed data presentations, and careful review and thoughtful discussion of draft plan content.



*(Back row, from left) Amanda Chilson, Mike Nuwallie, Donald Pecor, Mayor Alcombright, Joanne DeRose, Steve Green (front row, from left) Alan Marden, Mackenzie Greer, and Judith Grinnell. Absent from photo: John Greenbush, Paul Hopkins, Glenn Maloney, Brian Miksic, Jonathan Secor, Jay Walsh, and David Willette.*

### STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

At the start of the process, BRPC worked with City staff to identify a list of stakeholders representing different agencies, businesses, services, and interests in the region. This included the senior center, hospital, airport, industrial park Commission, building inspector, North Adams Housing Authority, River Revival, Partnership for North Adams, MCLA, MASS MoCA, and more. This input helped to quickly focus the planning effort and identify a set of draft plan priorities which were then taken to the public and the vision workshop for review and discussion.

### PUBLIC WORKSHOPS AND OPEN HOUSES

Broad public involvement was a fundamental underpinning of the whole plan. Given that the community had not engaged in this type of civic dialogue on this scale in anyone's memory, it took a while to gain the trust and momentum for more and more new faces to join the conversation. We did, however, get there by using a variety of tools and allowing people to see their ideas appear in the plan as a result. They are summarized, below, in the order they occurred.

## Vision

### *Youth Visioning Exercise*

BRPC worked with the Northern Berkshire Community Coalition and the Mayor's Youth Council to conduct a photo visioning exercise with the teens taking pictures of what they like, would like to see change, and would like to see added to their community. Staff then met with the youth to discuss their findings and capture their input in writing as well. The same exercise was also completed by the steering committee.

### *Visioning Workshop*

The first workshop that was held provided an overview of the plan and initiated discussions on people's visions for the future of the city. This was a three-part event. First, an open house with posters of data and maps on the topics to be covered in the plan displayed at the edges of the room. Second, there was a formal presentation with a question and answer period. Finally, attendees broke into small groups and discussed their vision for the city and priorities for the plan to address.

## Historic Preservation

### *Historic Preservation Workshop*

A historic preservation workshop was held at the public library where there was a brief presentation before attendees broke into four small groups to discuss historic districts, landscapes, and neighborhoods, and cultural assets. This input was then used to help identify goals and policies in the plan.

## Economic Development

### *Local Business Forums*

High-volume, condensed input sessions were facilitated over a continental breakfast at both The Porches Inn (all of northern Berkshire) and Gallery 51 (North Adams only) to hear from local businesses what they need to thrive. This included labor, commercial space, business support services, municipal permitting and regulations, financial tools and services, and more. The results of these forums are contained in the appendix to this plan.

### *Economy Workshop and Open House*

A public workshop was held on the economy of the city, including an overview of small business input received at the forums. The discussion and exercises were broken down into four basic categories: the city overall, and what should happen in downtown, Route 8 Corridor, and Route 2 Corridor. Draft goals were presented for reaction as well as specific map-based questions about priority development sites, desired future uses, and needed tools or regulatory changes.

### *Downtown Walkability Study*

BRPC teamed with a Williams College Center for Environmental Studies community planning class to conduct a walkability audit of the downtown and three surrounding neighborhoods. The students were trained in how to conduct a walkability audit to learn what to look for and document in the pedestrian environment that may impede safe pedestrian travel such as cars parked on sidewalks or faded crosswalks. They then marked issues on maps and conducted pedestrian street surveys to gather user input from residents. These findings and recommendations were presented at a meeting in the public library and are now with the City to guide specific strategy development. Some are also incorporated in the downtown and infrastructure and services recommendations.

## Open Space and Recreation

### *Park Level of Service Study*

BRPC teamed with a Williams College Center for Environmental Studies community planning class to conduct an assessment of how well all parts of the city were served by current parks. The goal was to better understand the geography of current parks to see if there were in essence “gaps” in service where neighborhoods or sections of neighborhoods have no park within a certain distance of them. The distances used varied by the type of park – a small playground, sometimes called a “tot lot” having the smallest draw area and major recreation amenities like the skating rink or Alcombright Athletic Complex, having much larger draw areas. The students made some recommendations on potential new parks to fill service gaps as well as some potential improvements that could enhance amenities and use of current parks. These recommendations informed policy but are also intended to help inform the City’s updated Open Space and Recreation Plan.

### *Open Space and Recreation Workshop*

An open house style workshop was held on Main Street to allow people to come through the display as their schedule allowed and the storefront space made it easy to capture street traffic and people who might not come to a formal two-hour workshop. There were multiple displays including a set seeking detailed input on desired improvements to existing parks as well as new parks. River Revival was there with their river greenway concept diagrams to gather input. Northern Berkshire Community Coalition (nbCC) was on hand via their Mass In Motion program to present draft urban walking loop ideas. A skate park survey and information poster was on display with the goal of gathering votes on a preferred site. Finally, maps and goals for parks and recreation, including bike path extension and connections to current trails were available for review and interactive comment.



*The use of a Main Street storefront space allowed for a comfortable, casual space for people to interact with the posters and each other, spending as little or as much time as they liked during the 2-hour window.*

## Local Food and Health

### *Keep Farming Surveys*

A regional Keep Berkshires Farming initiative was part of the regional planning process, but broke down the county into groupings of communities with northern Berkshire as one group. There was strong participation from North Adams residents on that volunteer working group and much of the work and meetings were conducted in the city. This included a number of surveys of farms, restaurants, schools and institutions, food banks and community meal sites. The findings helped inform the goals and strategies in this plan.

### *Food Fest Outdoor Open House*

The draft goals and strategies for local food and health were displayed at Food Fest in summer 2013 for attendees to review and comment as they worked their way through the different food booths. Comments received helped refine the draft goals.

## Neighborhood Meetings

### *Neighborhood Surveys*

At the start of the planning process, the city did not have a map of any neighborhoods. A principal goal was therefore to try to define boundaries against which we could organize strategies and outreach. The first step was to work with the nbCC and a long time city resident and community advocate to drive around the city with maps and try to delineate where one neighborhood stopped and another began. This resulted in 13 neighborhoods, which were then displayed at events over the summer (e.g., Windsor Lake Concert, Steeplecats baseball game) to gain public reaction and input. A survey was also conducted to gain input on neighborhood priorities.

### *Four Neighborhood Meetings*

Once we felt comfortable with the neighborhood boundaries, BRPC worked with the nbCC neighborhood program coordinator to promote and co-host four neighborhood meetings, organizing the 13 neighborhoods into four groups. These open house pizza party meetings were intentionally social but also gathered input from residents on what they liked best about their neighborhoods, ideas for how to see to make the neighborhood even better, and any trouble spots that they'd like to see addressed.

### *Citywide Meeting*

The cumulative input from the four neighborhood meetings was compiled and turned into draft goals and strategies for the plan. A citywide meeting was then held to display this content for reaction.



*The final citywide workshop on housing and neighborhoods included a presentation followed by an open house where people could view the policies that emerged from the four prior neighborhood meetings.*

## **Land Use, Infrastructure and Services**

### ***Land Use, Infrastructure and Services Workshop***

A public open house was held at the public library to provide a venue for people to review and comment on draft goals and policies for land use and infrastructure and services. A separate display and worksheet were also available for people to consider land use plan choices for crafting a future land use plan.

### **Public Hearing**

A public open house and public hearing was held at North Adams City Hall. Attendees were able to review key elements of the plan, and identify implementation priorities. In the public hearing, attendees were invited to comment on the plan, or ask questions. Over fifty members of the community attended.

## FROM KEY PRIORITIES TO STRATEGIES FOR ACTION

As described in the section above, community visioning exercises and stakeholder interviews were where the plan began. From those early conversations, combined with a comprehensive review of data, trends, and conditions in the city, there emerged a set of 10 key priorities – what the city hopes the plan will address. While the full planning priorities summary is in the appendix, the key thoughts are summarized below.

### OVERARCHING THEMES OR VALUES

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#### **Retain Core Community Values in The Face of Change**

North Adams, like many Berkshire communities, has a long history of residents with strong ties to and pride in their city. While the pace of change in the county as a whole has been slow, the city has experienced a steady population decline over the past decades. This population decline, however, does not mean that the population hasn't seen new residents move to the area. Recent years have seen an influx of new residents from outside of the area with new ideas and perspectives on the city. The city wants to ensure that old-timers and transplants each have a place at the table to successfully build a new future without losing the rich history and community character valued by residents.

#### **Rebrand The City**

The city is in a period of rebirth but faces an uphill battle against a decades-old image as a “run-down mill town.” The vision developed through the plan will serve as the basis for communicating this new identity. As the vision is a first step in the planning process, rebranding actions will be set out and move towards implementation in the next several months.



*The downtown is very much the heart of the city. Recent streetscape, lighting and signage have helped beautify the downtown. While many storefronts once sat vacant, the city has seen vacancy rates drop and new businesses come in, including on the side streets on the north side of Main Street.*

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

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*The Economic Development chapter of the plan contains the goals and actions for building a strong economy in the city. This includes actions addressing the planning priorities raised at the start of the planning process:*

### **Address Conditions That Make Employer and Employee Recruitment and Retention Challenging**

Major employers and attractions in the city, including MASS MoCA and MCLA note that blighted conditions throughout the city are a major obstacle to student, visitor, and employee attraction and retention. The visual impact of blighted and condemned buildings upon entry to the city, concrete flood chutes and chain link fencing blocking off the river, vacant storefronts in the Downtown, and the lack of aesthetic and other pedestrian and bike amenities present marketing challenges. Housing conditions and school quality were also discussed as other conditions that influence prospective student, business, and employee decision-making. The plan identifies numerous strategies for combating these conditions and creating attractive gateways, corridors and spaces throughout the city.

### **Facilitate Economic Growth and Transition**

A common storyline in discussing North Adams is one of economic decline tied to the loss of major manufacturing employers. The addition of MASS MoCA in 1999 drew a mark on that timeline and signaled brighter days ahead linked to new tourism and creative economy activity. The next big wave of positive change occurred when North Adams State College, rebranded in 1997 as Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, began to gain momentum and recognition as a top public liberal arts college in the country. The City is now working to generate the third wave by investing public dollars to leverage private investment in projects like the Greylock Market, collaborative relationships with local and regional business and economic development groups, targeting investments in prioritized economic corridors and the downtown, and a comprehensive economic strategy as contained in this plan.



*North Adams is a compact city built in a river valley surrounded on all sides by state lands and mountains, including Mount Greylock, the state's highest peak and the largest recreation draw in the region.*

## OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION

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*The Open Space and Recreation policy chapter contains the goals and action steps the City plans to take to maintain and add recreation amenities for residents and visitors to enjoy. The actions focus on how open space and recreation assets support a high quality of life in the city, healthy lifestyles, and economic development. This includes actions addressing the planning priorities raised at the start of the planning process:*

### **Maintain High Quality Recreation Options**

The city has many park and open space offerings including regional recreation destinations like Noel Field, the Alcombright Athletic Complex and the Peter W. Foote Vietnam Veterans Memorial Skating Rink as well as smaller neighborhood and pocket parks. In addition, the city has been working to plan for and implement a skateboard park to provide another option for northern Berkshire youth. Maintaining the equipment and grounds at facilities, however, is a challenge given limited fiscal resources.

### **Leverage Presence of Open Space and Wild Lands**

In addition to in-city parks, there are also open lands on all sides for residents and visitors to enjoy. The high quality of life amenities offered in the city – livable scale, interesting historic architecture, nearby colleges, and traditional downtown – are all further enhanced by the fact that the city is surrounded by vast areas of open space with two significant long-distance trail routes running through. There is a great opportunity to further enhance and “package” these assets as a year-round draw for visitors and residents. Beyond marketing, this also entails structural ways of highlighting the city’s natural assets through river enhancements, trail connections, and maps and signage. The rerouting of traffic from Mount Greylock into the downtown is a key opportunity for which the downtown can start now to prepare.

### **Offer Recreation Options for All Ages**

Seniors today enjoy active retirements and the city needs to be prepared to offer enough recreation options to meet the needs of different ages and abilities. On the other side of the spectrum, youth are the future of the city and having quality and diverse options for them is important to kids and their parents.



*Events, such as the Eagle Street Beach Party, are great examples of the strong community spirit of the city.*

## HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOODS

*The Housing and Neighborhoods policy chapter contains a number of strategies for improving neighborhood conditions and fostering connected communities of people engaged with making their own neighborhood and the city a fun, attractive, safe, and social place to be. This includes actions addressing the planning priorities raised at the start of the planning process:*

### **Address Widespread Neighborhood Blight**

There are few neighborhoods in the city not impacted to some degree by vacancies and blight. While the pervasiveness of blight appears on the surface to be a negative and daunting condition, in reality there are few areas where blight has completely taken over. What this means is that many neighborhoods can be stabilized with targeted actions to a smaller number of properties. This is much easier than addressing consolidated areas of blight.

### **Foster Residential (re)Investment**

A major contributing factor to the decline of neighborhoods is the lack of investment in residential properties. This is particularly pronounced in rental properties throughout the city where landlords and slumlords do not always reinvest in their properties. Disinvestment is blamed on the relatively low rents. Blight and unsafe conditions in low-income rental units is a serious concern. While recent inspection and enforcement changes will help address some concerns, the plan identifies additional tools and strategies to promote investment and upkeep of properties.

### **Integrate Public Housing Developments With their Larger Neighborhoods and Community**

The historical and current approach to affordable housing development in the city is to develop specific housing developments for affordable housing. Initially begun in the 1960s in the US, this approach has fallen out of favor as the detrimental outcomes of “projects” became clear. Current affordable housing redevelopment best practices have shifted now toward a mixed-income neighborhood approach where affordable units are interspersed among market rate housing. This eliminates challenges that can develop in segregated areas of poverty, such as blight, crime, and general disinvestment.



*The Berkshire Food Project, operated out of the First Congregational Church, has ramped up its programming to meet growing food insecurity in the city, including growing some of their own food in a community garden plot.*

## LOCAL FOOD AND HEALTH

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*The Local Food and Health policy chapter builds on work in northern Berkshire around health and food planning and initiatives and commits the City to new roles as an active partner in community health and wellness. This includes actions addressing the planning priorities raised at the start of the planning process:*

### **Ensure Access to Local Healthy Food**

Poverty rates are high in the city and hunger has increased because of the national economic crisis. Hunger particularly impacts those on limited or fixed incomes including the disabled, elderly, and low-income workers. Some initiatives have arisen to help address food insecurity – including community gardens, feeding sites, and fresh food subsidies – but more is needed to address hunger in the community.

### **Retain Local Health Care Service**

The closing of North Adams Regional Hospital was a real shock to the northern Berkshire community and highlights the immediate and long-term need to retain local health care services in the city. While the pace of change in post-closure negotiations is too quick and variable to capture or react to in this long-range planning document, it does not change the need and priority of retaining right-sized health care services in northern Berkshire. Even before the closure, a number of health care issues and service gaps emerged in stakeholder discussions including what the future of the hospital will look like, a shortage of primary care providers, a need for urgent care clinic as an alternative to an ER visit, critical health challenges like mental health and substance abuse, and responding to growing language needs in health care provision. Any new health care service system in the future will still need to address these needs.

### **Support Healthy, Active Lifestyles**

Obesity and obesity-related illnesses are a primary health challenge facing the community. The obesity epidemic is the result of the culmination of various factors including diet, lifestyle, socio-economic status, culture, and genetics. Between public, private, and non-profit actions, there is a broad range of opportunities and initiatives that can be undertaken to combat obesity. Schools can also play a key role in providing prevention programming on nutrition, alcohol, tobacco, and drug use.



*The Silvio O. Conte Middle School renovation will bring more activity to the downtown while also enacting a forward-thinking practice of having schools located within the community core rather than at the outskirts as was common for schools constructed in the last 50 years. This is “green” in that it brings the school closer to the city’s core neighborhoods and reuses an existing building and grounds.*

## INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES

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### **Improve Mobility Through Viable Multi-Modal Options**

While the city itself has a compact footprint, there are a number of multi-modal system challenges posed by poor street and sidewalk connectivity, narrow roadways, and limited parking space in certain neighborhoods or streets. There are also areas difficult for non-natives to navigate. Pedestrian connections within the downtown and between the downtown and local neighborhoods are a critical component to improving mobility both for those without a car and those who would prefer to walk or bike. Simple amenities like bike racks, benches, signage, and safe sidewalks can go a long way in improving the pedestrian environment. These have the added benefits of increased exercise, reduced energy use and emissions, and making a more lively and interactive community setting.

### **Rectify Issues Resulting From Past Deferred Maintenance and Investment in Infrastructure and Services**

Over the past several years, the City has been working to proactively inventory and quantify the backlog of capital investment projects which will require significant resources to address. After years of deferred maintenance and “duct tape” solutions rather than true fixes, this price tag is likely significant. However, the City intends to take a methodical and strategic approach to gradually address needs in a fiscally responsible manner.

### **Reduce Dependence on Energy from Non-Renewable Sources**

The City has taken major strides in the last two years to improve its renewable energy portfolio, including solar PV projects at the high school, airport, and landfill. This will provide immediate and long-term energy savings for the City and school district. In addition, the City is working towards its Green Communities designation which will enable the City to apply annually to a restricted grant pool to fund additional energy efficiency and renewable energy projects.

## LAND USE

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### **Comprehensive Update of Zoning Code**

The City's zoning code was originally drafted and adopted in 1956. There has been no comprehensive rewrite of zoning ordinances since that time. Modifications to the zoning code have been reactionary in nature – targeted edits to respond to some project-specific need. Over time this has had the cumulative impact of creating internal inconsistencies within the code. It also means that the tools the City has to shape and direct development have not kept pace with changing market trends and best practices. There are many opportunities to improve the code to be more user-friendly for property-owners and developers, such as clear rules, guidance for City officials, and streamlined, clear approval procedures. The plan identifies new tools to be included in a revised zoning ordinance and sets the basis for a comprehensive rewrite of the City's zoning ordinances. In the meantime, development will proceed under the existing code and zoning amendments will continue to be made to address issues as they emerge, in order to ensure projects can continue to move forward.

## 2

## VISION

*The vision conveys what residents want the city to be like; our desired future. The following vision was developed in collaboration with the Steering Committee, a youth leadership group, and the public at workshops. Together, these vision statements form the basis for the rest of the goals and policies contained in the plan. It is the cumulative picture of what the City, non-profits, residents, businesses, and others will be working towards now and in the years to come.*

## IN 2030, THE CITY OF NORTH ADAMS IS A PLACE WHERE...

- The city is regarded throughout the northeast, country, and world as the high-energy center for creative entrepreneurs, contemporary and digital arts and artists, higher learning, and outdoor enthusiasts in the Berkshires – a destination that juxtaposes innovative edge with a distinct natural and historic fabric.
- Residents and visitors of all ages enjoy the natural scenery through a connected parks and recreation system with strong links to the downtown along the river and to the vast open spaces, including Mount Greylock, that surround the city in all directions.
- The built environment reflects the community’s pride and identity as a richly creative and diverse community, where that artistic sense is woven into the fabric of the physical environment – its homes, gardens, parks, signs, businesses, and community spaces.
- The city is a local food and healthy living hub for northwestern Massachusetts, southern Vermont and eastern New York where farms and community gardens thrive, locally-made products are available year-round, active lifestyles make use of the vast outdoor recreation options, high quality health care is readily accessible, and healthy food is attainable by all residents.
- City government, residents and businesses emphasize the importance of education from early childhood to advanced degrees or training as a cornerstone for economic stability and opportunity for the city and its residents.
- The city cultivates its relationship and proximity to institutions of higher learning and professional training – starting with MCLA and other colleges in the region – to build and grow a strong and diverse workforce to support economic development and enhanced opportunity for current and new residents now and in the future.
- Renewable energy and energy efficiency options have been integrated into the landscape and built environment in a way that maximizes local benefit, enhances financial stability in the community, and balances energy and ecological interests against a myriad of other needs and interests.

- The city will continue to address its long-term infrastructure needs in a manner that considers potential climate-related impacts, uses innovative practices, and is both fiscally and environmentally responsible.
- City government has employed a range of financial management and service delivery approaches to achieve high quality government services and public infrastructure and still allow the city to adapt to changes in state and federal budget transitions with stability.
- The City, all community residents, and stakeholders openly collaborate and engage new ideas, pursue initiatives that further achieve the city's vision, and draw new investment in an open and community-focused manner that respects and seeks the input of those who may be impacted.
- The city, as it has attracted new residents, has successfully melded the old with the new. The city remains a close community that respects and welcomes new residents and celebrates diversity and differences as important assets.

## 3

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The city of North Adams has three primary economic activity areas: the downtown, the Route 2 corridor west of downtown and the Route 8 corridor south of downtown. Each area has its own character in terms of business mix and development style. The downtown character, while somewhat compromised by the lingering impact of urban renewal, has a historic fabric with traditional mixed-use main street style and businesses. The Route 2 corridor businesses tend to be more focused on essential goods and services like supermarkets, veterinary, and auto repair. Route 8, on the other hand, is defined by the presence of Robert Hardman Industrial Park and surrounding vacant land as current and potential future space for major employers to locate. The following chapter presents the goals, policies and actions for the city and its partners to implement to advance economic development in the city. This includes general economic development tools and practices as well as more targeted actions specific to each of the three activity areas.

## GENERAL ECONOMIC GOALS AND POLICIES

### GOAL E 1: EFFECTIVELY REBRAND AND MARKET THE CITY

#### Policy E 1.1: Develop a rebranding package to effectively communicate the city to residents and visitors.

##### *Action A: Rebrand and Market the City*

Hire a marketing consultant to create a rebranding package for North Adams to guide a unified approach to communicating about the city to effectively reach the right audiences. Once the strategy is complete, implement recommendations, which may include launching a local, regional, and national marketing campaign to promote attractions and happenings in North Adams.

##### *Action B: Offer a Central Platform for North Adams and Northern Berkshire Tourism and Events*

Create a website for the North Adams Tourism office to take the lead in implementing the city's marketing strategy. This should highlight the full range of attractions locally, including historic, arts, cultural, and outdoor activities and destinations.

#### Policy E 1.2: Work with local, northern Berkshire and regional entities to market the city.

##### *Action A: Increase Local Use of Northern Berkshire Events and Attractions*

Enhance local appreciation and use of sites and destinations through enhanced promotion of destinations, trails, and activities. This could include special rates or days for locals and students to encourage use.

##### *Action B: Coordinate Unified Messaging and Reciprocity*

Foster strong linkages between the North Adams Tourism Office and the newly formed North Adams Chamber of Commerce to offer a unified and coordinated planning and promotion platform for the city. The North Berkshire Industrial Park & Development Corporation can also provide assistance.

##### *Action C: Cultivate Local Business Referral Practices*

Work with local inns and businesses, as well as information booths, to support customer referral to city restaurants, inns, and attractions. This should be done within the city itself, but can also be pursued with other northern and southern Berkshire sites to help drive increased day trips to the city from elsewhere in the region.

##### *Action D: Maximize Benefit to City of Regional Marketing and Business Development Efforts*

Work to strengthen representation of the city and its attractions within the regional marketing platforms in collaboration with Berkshire Visitors Bureau, Berkshire Chamber of Commerce, and

Berkshire Creative, as well as regional media such as the Berkshire Eagle's In the Berkshires and events pages.



*The Center for Science and Innovation at MCLA opened its doors for the 2013-2014 school year.*

## GOAL E 2: LEVERAGE THE CITY'S MANY ASSETS INTO ECONOMIC CATALYSTS

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### **Policy E 2.1: Capitalize on the proximity of local colleges to grow new business and link graduates into the workforce.**

#### ***Action A: Grow Innovation Challenge Events***

MCLA recently began an innovation challenge event, an event that has the potential to grow as the new Center for Science and Innovation opens and becomes established. Work with the College to support the continuation and expansion of innovation challenges at MCLA and between MCLA and other colleges and universities in adjacent regions.

#### ***Action B: Offer Local Start-up Financing to Grow or Support Clusters***

Create a seed capital fund for research and development related to programming at Berkshire Community College, Greenfield Community College, MCLA, and McCann to support local entrepreneurship and new business start-ups that directly link to courses of study and economic clusters in the region.

#### ***Action C: Continue to Partner with MCLA On Mutually Supportive Projects and Investments***

Support MCLA investment in the downtown, potentially including the Mohawk Theater, to enhance the city's arts and cultural offerings.

#### ***Action D: Maximize Economic Impact of New Center for Science and Innovation***

Develop an Ashland Street Corridor study to explore ways for the city to enhance this corridor as a main gateway between MCLA and the downtown with significant potential for housing and economic activity.

***Action E: Expand Degree Programming to Meet Economic Development Goals***

Explore the potential for place-based economic activity that could be supported through new programming at McCann, BCC (at McCann or other North Adams location) and MCLA such as historical preservation trades, sustainable agriculture, and high-tech manufacturing.

***Action F: Alumni Business Recruitment Events***

Develop a program to target MCLA and Williams College alumni to build or relocate businesses locally by marketing the city to them through targeted events and providing incentives.

**Policy E 2.2: Grow the region as a premier active outdoor recreation destination in the northeast.**

***Action A: Increase Visitor Capture From Mount Greylock***

Capitalize on the high volume visitation to Mount Greylock to draw people into the city through marketing, gateway redevelopment and signage, particularly in light of planned investments into Furnace Street and Heritage State Park, to draw people into the downtown. Ensure Furnace Street and Reservoir Road improvements provide a safe and attractive route to Mount Greylock.

***Action B: Promote Active Outdoor Recreation Business Development***

Leverage the proximity to Mount Greylock and other state forests to grow economic activity related to active outdoor recreation options including equipment design and manufacturing, outdoor adventure tours, river recreation, and rentals.

***Action C: Increase Number of Outdoor Race Events***

Cultivate a range of outdoor race events throughout the year to highlight the outdoor opportunities of the city, make healthy lifestyles more visible, and draw in new visitors.

***Action D: Create Better Connections Between City and Surrounding Trails Systems***

Improve connectivity and access to trails on Mount Greylock and other parks from the downtown and local neighborhoods, creating new trails as appropriate to ensure connections and improving wayfinding for residents and visitors through signs and maps. See also Parks and Open Space Chapter.

***Action E: Achieve Appalachian Trail Community Designation***

Designate North Adams as an Appalachian Trail Community to enhance marketing opportunities via that national platform.

**Policy E 2.3: Strengthen health services in the city to support the economic vitality of the northern Berkshire region.**

***Action A: Restore and Enhance Health Care Delivery to Fit Community Needs***

As the northern Berkshire community demographics shift over time, the City and region should work to ensure that health services are in place at the right scale and mix of services to meet community needs in collaboration with other regional health services in southern Vermont and Pittsfield.

***Action B: Enhance Preventative Health Programming***

Promote community wellness through supportive programming regarding insurance, preventive medicine, and healthy lifestyle options.

***Action C: Highlight Local Health Care Services as an Important City Asset***

Increase the visibility of health care services within the city through signage, advertising, and wellness messaging to highlight its importance and assist in the seamless transition from North Adams Regional Hospital to new health care delivery options.

***Action D: Support Medical Workforce Needs***

Work with medical service providers to identify employee retention factors related to community-based needs and develop a process for addressing them.

***Action E: Evaluate Potential and Desire for Health Industry Cluster***

Support continued exploration of a health cluster in the city as one component to a larger multi-faceted economic strategy. Such a cluster could include medical R&D and/or a diversification of health to include holistic medicine approaches. The former would capitalize on the relatively low costs of doing business in the city and proximity to MCLA. The latter would link local educational offerings for healing arts curricula and build on the region's role for wellness as exhibited through Kripalu Center for Yoga and Health, Canyon Ranch and others.

**GOAL E 3: WORK EFFECTIVELY WITH BUSINESS, THE COMMUNITY AND INVESTORS TO ACHIEVE A CONTINUAL CYCLE OF INVESTMENT AND IMPROVEMENT IN THE CITY**

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**Policy E 3.1: Make permitting and city processes a model of business-friendly best practice.**

***Action A: Streamline and Modernize Development Permitting and Review***

Conduct a comprehensive assessment of the development services offered through the city to evaluate ways in which departments, staff, and processes can be co-located and integrated to offer streamlined, customer-focused services. At a minimum, the city should work immediately to:

- Update the permitting guide to include flowcharts, timelines, contacts and other features to improve the clarity and transparency for developers.
- Increase the number of forms and city services available on-line.

***Action B: Advance Ways to Quickly Connect Small Businesses to Appropriate Resources to Improve Success Rate***

Facilitate one-stop process for small-business development to ensure the right connections are made from the start. The city should encourage owners to take advantage of available business counseling services from outside support agencies, such as the Small Business Development Center.

**Policy E 3.2: Make optimal use of tools and incentives to attract and leverage investment.**

***Action A: Pursue New Market Tax Credits to Leverage Investment***

Actively pursue New Market Tax Credits to make financially marginal projects feasible and spur investment in the downtown and adjacent neighborhoods.

***Action B: Designate Key Sites for Financing Tools and Incentives***

Facilitate the navigation of Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits and Tax Increment Financing on commercial reinvestment projects by ensuring designations are in place for key sites. (See also historic preservation chapter.)

***Action C: Work With North Adams Chamber of Commerce on Business Improvement District***

Explore the potential for establishing a Business Improvement District in the downtown through the North Adams Chamber of Commerce.

***Action D: Develop Package of Small Business Programs***

Work with small business community to identify and then develop small business incentive programs to help advance business success. This could include a small business ownership class to cover the basic steps of business planning, importance of savings, and making realistic growth forecasts. Participation in the class could be required in order to access other programs, such as a façade program or specific loan pools (see Action E, below), to incentivize participation. The city

could also explore the creation of a small business tax increment financing (TIF) program linked to the addition of employees and/or increase or relocation of business square footage to support business growth.

**Action E: Explore Ways to Meet Full Range of Small Business Financing Needs Locally**

Explore creative solutions to small business financing needs, such as a bank pool-funded revolving loan fund for small business start-ups, a city or northern Berkshire angel network, and community-based funding pools. Select and implement the right tool or package of tools in collaboration with the business community.

**Action F: Leverage Investment Through Public-Private-Non-Profit Partnerships**

Maximize the use of public-private-non-profit partnerships to leverage investment into the city. This could include working with groups such as the Partnership for North Adams or other parties interested in investing in new development or redevelopment projects in the city offering a public benefit.

## **GOAL E 4: ENCOURAGE JOB GROWTH AND BUSINESS RELOCATION IN THE CITY**

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**Policy E 4.1: Actively recruit new businesses to the city.**

**Action A: Offer a Clear and Coordinated Business and Resident Recruitment Platform**

Develop a web-based platform to communicate about the city, including sites, cost of living, available incentives, market connections, and community amenities to potential future businesses looking to relocate. This could either be through the city's website, North Adams Chamber of Commerce website, or other suitable entity.

**Action B: Designate Single Point of Contact for Business Recruitment**

Designate a single point of contact for potential businesses looking to relocate, to help answer questions and arrange a tour. This point of contact should be clearly identified in any applicable media or materials for the city, tourism office, North Adams Chamber of Commerce, Northern Berkshire Industrial Park and Development Corporation, and other entities as appropriate.

**Action C: Expand and Improve Technology Infrastructure**

In order to capitalize on opportunities for business development and resident attraction, continue to support broadband and other supporting technology infrastructure improvements.

## **GOAL E 5: GROW A SKILLED WORKFORCE TO MEET ECONOMIC NEEDS NOW AND IN THE FUTURE**

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**Policy E 5.1: Offer a diverse range of internship, apprenticeship, and on-the-job training opportunities in the city.**

**Action A: Strengthen Internship Network**

Work with local businesses to identify potential internships for high school and college students in the area to provide support to local businesses, provide learning opportunities for youth, and help forge professional linkages between graduates and area employers. Identify methods to encourage businesses to transition internships to jobs.

**Action B: Utilize Technical High School for Emerging Workforce Training Opportunities**

Leverage the presence of McCann as a key workforce development component in the region through enhanced programming, apprenticeship programs and other venues. Consider emerging vocational interests and opportunities, such as an agricultural training program (utilize neighboring farm land) and historic preservation construction techniques (given the existing building stock needs in the city).

**Action C: Enable Additional Higher Education Opportunities**

Pursue a stronger BCC presence in the city to make technology and professional classes more accessible to north county and local residents in a way that complements and expands, rather than duplicates or competes with, those opportunities already available at MCLA.

Work with MCLA’s Graduate Dean as the department identifies growth opportunities in the area of continuing education. Encourage the creation of additional evening degree programs, as needed.

**Policy E 5.2: Ensure that the City’s Pre-K-12 education system is one of the best in the region.**

**Action A: Focus on Early Childhood to Improve Kindergarten Readiness**

Engage the entire community, including businesses, to promote early childhood education experience. Glean lessons learned from the Pittsfield Promise initiative and the Berkshire Compact on Education to make positive educational change in the city.

**Action B: Set Targets for School Performance and Then Meet or Exceed Them**

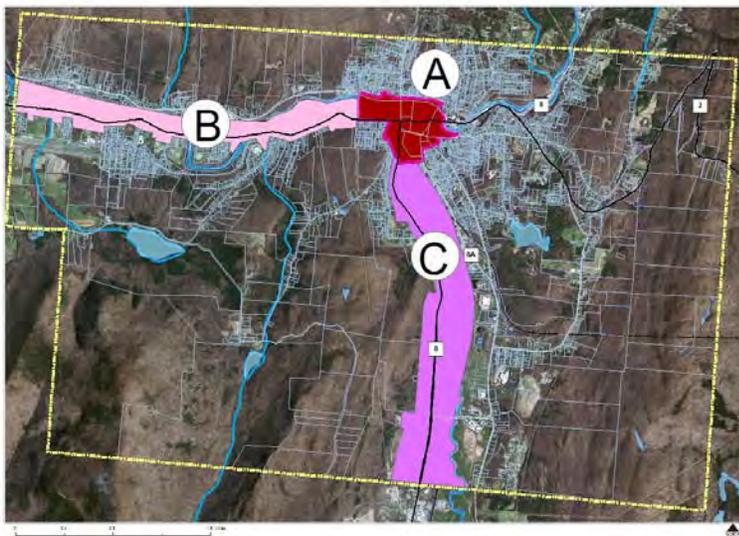
Develop performance based targets for each school in the district to drive improvement and accountability to the taxpayers. This could be as simple as a standardized test score improvement or 4-year graduation rate, but should be accompanied by a realistic strategy for achieving progress in collaboration with the city, community groups and or social service providers.

**Action C: Offer a Multi-faceted Curriculum that Maximizes Benefit of Context**

Encourage the public schools to offer innovative and attractive programs of study such as music, theater, science, and place-based learning. This should include enhanced use of the city’s natural and cultural assets for field trips.

**ECONOMIC ACTIVITY AREA GOALS AND POLICIES**

The following goals and policies highlight three economic activity areas in the city:



- A. Downtown
- B. Route 2 Corridor
- C. Route 8 Corridor

**A. Downtown**

## GOAL E 6: IMPLEMENT A STRATEGIC REDEVELOPMENT STRATEGY TO RECONNECT AND REBUILD THE DOWNTOWN TO SUCCESSFULLY ELIMINATE THE SCARS LEFT BY URBAN RENEWAL

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### Policy E 6.1: Build upon strong anchor points within the downtown, expanding and connecting destinations until the cycle of reinvestment impacts the entire downtown.

#### *Action A: Develop Zoning to Better Support Redevelopment*

Revise downtown zoning to remove barriers for site reuse or expansion. This could include creating a mixed-use district within the downtown to encourage flexible and lively reuse of historic and underutilized buildings.

#### *Action B: Ensure Future Development Improves Downtown Fabric*

Develop downtown design guidelines to ensure that future reinvestment helps recreate the historic community fabric and that new development makes a positive contribution to the physical attractiveness of Main Street.

#### *Action C: Assess Parking Needs and Distribution*

Conduct or commission a parking utilization study to determine how well the existing parking supply meets the current and projected demands. Identify sites where parking may be excessive and redevelopment potential is high. Include key information such as the type of ownership (public or private).

#### *Action D: Create a Tool to Market Downtown Spaces for Rent*

Develop an inventory of downtown (and overall city) spaces available for lease, including details about cost and amenities available. Make the inventory centrally available and market downtown spaces as a priority.



*Traditional storefronts along Eagle Street add to the commercial space and historic character of Main Street and the Downtown.*

#### *Action E: Plan for Future Needs of Downtown Commercial Occupants*

Develop a plan for lower-rent occupants as storefront vacancy is reduced. These spaces may currently be filled by galleries, artists, or non-profit organizations. Ensure that displacement due to positive market forces does not eliminate opportunities entirely. These individuals, businesses or

organizations may be well-suited to some second floor office-type spaces, or non-traditional spaces still available. Alternatively, redevelop downtown space and dedicate it to artists and creative entities.

***Action F: Develop Key Partnerships to Advance Private Investment Efforts***

Systematically work with the Partnership for North Adams and private business and investment entities to achieve the successful redevelopment and reuse of critical priority development sites within the downtown. (See downtown Priority Redevelopment Sites map.)

***Action G: Utilize New Cultural District Designation***

Designate a Cultural District in the downtown to recognize and support the role of arts, culture and artists in the city's revitalization. Consider developing an arts council to facilitate projects and initiatives.

**Policy E 6.2: Target key pedestrian and bicycle improvements to foster safe and easy movement throughout the downtown and between the downtown and adjacent neighborhoods.**

***Action A: Plan for Long-Range Municipal Improvements to Bike and Pedestrian Infrastructure***

Build bike/pedestrian improvements into the annual Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) of the city to ensure that incremental progress is made. Begin with priorities and improvements identified in the walkability audits of the downtown and adjacent areas, as well as trail plans to connect sites within the downtown. Monitor or assess needs regularly thereafter to maintain a safe and connected pedestrian system.

***Action B: Utilize Best Practices to Make Streets Safe for All Modes of Travel***

Enhance the sense of bike/pedestrian safety through the use of speed control mechanisms, enhanced lighting, and police patrol routes to ensure that residents and visitors are comfortable traveling by foot by day or night.

***Action C: Reduce Excessive Pavement in the Downtown***

Reduce excessive pavement in downtown, especially where parking is underutilized. Large areas of parking lot are a detriment to pedestrian activity and can prove dangerous for crossing.

***Action D: Develop Bike Routes in Key Locations***

Capitalize on the shared use path development, and interest in alternatives to vehicular transportation, by planning multi-modal road design throughout and adjacent to downtown. Include bike lanes between MCLA and downtown. Take a Complete Streets approach to accommodate three modes of transportation (car, pedestrian, bicycle) on every street, whenever possible. Green the roadway corridors as much as possible to make travel appealing for all modes.

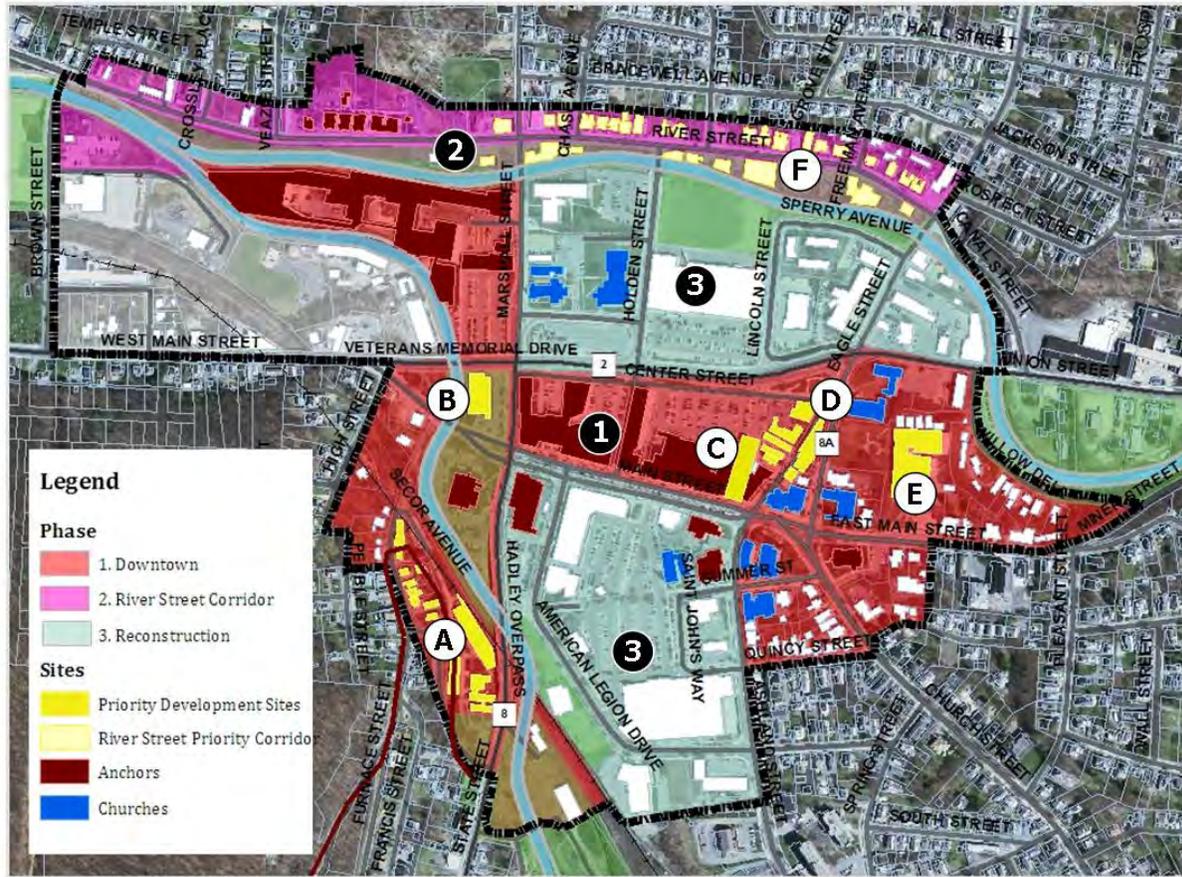
***Action E: Address Problem Intersections for Pedestrians and Cyclists***

Address key problem intersections for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles by reducing crosswalk length, number of crosswalks to cross one street, modernizing pedestrian signals to include count-downs and audible beeps, and offering a refuge island in the case that road width cannot be reduced. Consider prohibiting turning right at a red light where pedestrian visibility is an issue, or there is a perpetual conflict between vehicles and pedestrians. Enact mechanisms for the ongoing identification of problem intersections so they can be addressed.

***Action F: Support Multi-modal Culture in the City***

Gradually build a multi-modal culture in the city by launching a public education and awareness campaign on the rules and safety practices for all modes of users to employ to safely share roads.

Figure 1: Downtown Investment Phases and Priority Development Sites



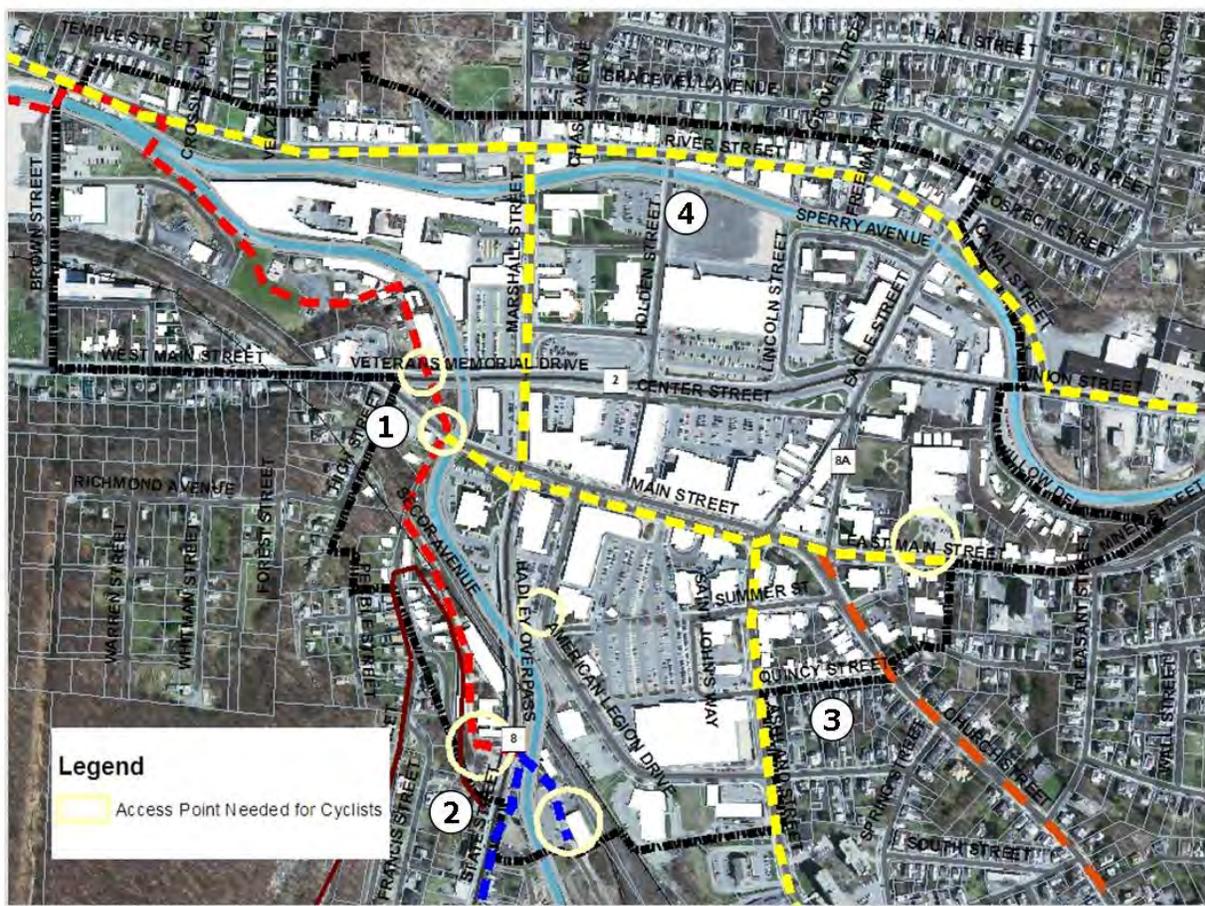
**A Phased Approach**

- 1 Strengthen and Connect the Downtown Core** — Build on current downtown core activity areas by focusing early reuse or redevelopment projects in this target area. This will help drive the critical mass for additional projects while supporting existing downtown businesses.
- 2 River Street Revitalization** — The River Street Corridor is an opportunity area for local businesses to locate along a bike route and potential future river greenway across the river from downtown proper. It is also an important connection between MASS MoCA and Route 2 east travel to the Scenic Byway and mixed use artist developments or west to Williamstown.
- 3 Urban Renewal Reconstruction** — These two portions of the downtown were demolished by urban renewal activities decades ago and are now predominantly big box retail with large parking lots. Redevelopment of these areas to reconstruct the historic block pattern with pedestrian-oriented mixed use development is a priority as the real estate market strengthens over time.

**Priority Development Sites**

- A Western Gateway Heritage Park**—The city-owned site should be positioned to be developed by the private sector to best take advantage of its location and context as the gateway to Mount Greylock State Park.
- B Marshall and Main** — The recently vacated property on Marshall street between City Hall and MASS MoCA and with frontage along the river.
- C Mohawk Theater** — This historic theater has been discussed as a redevelopment project to add a performance venue with strong ties to MCLA.
- D Eagle Street**— This historic street is rich with character but in need of restoration investment and addressing vacancies.
- E School Reuse Project** — The planned establishment of an elementary school will add significant activity to the downtown once completed.
- F River Street Corridor**— The 30+ structures along this corridor are a mix of residential and commercial uses with a number of vacant parcels. This is a key reuse and redevelopment opportunity to add local business space.

Figure 2: Bike Framework for Downtown



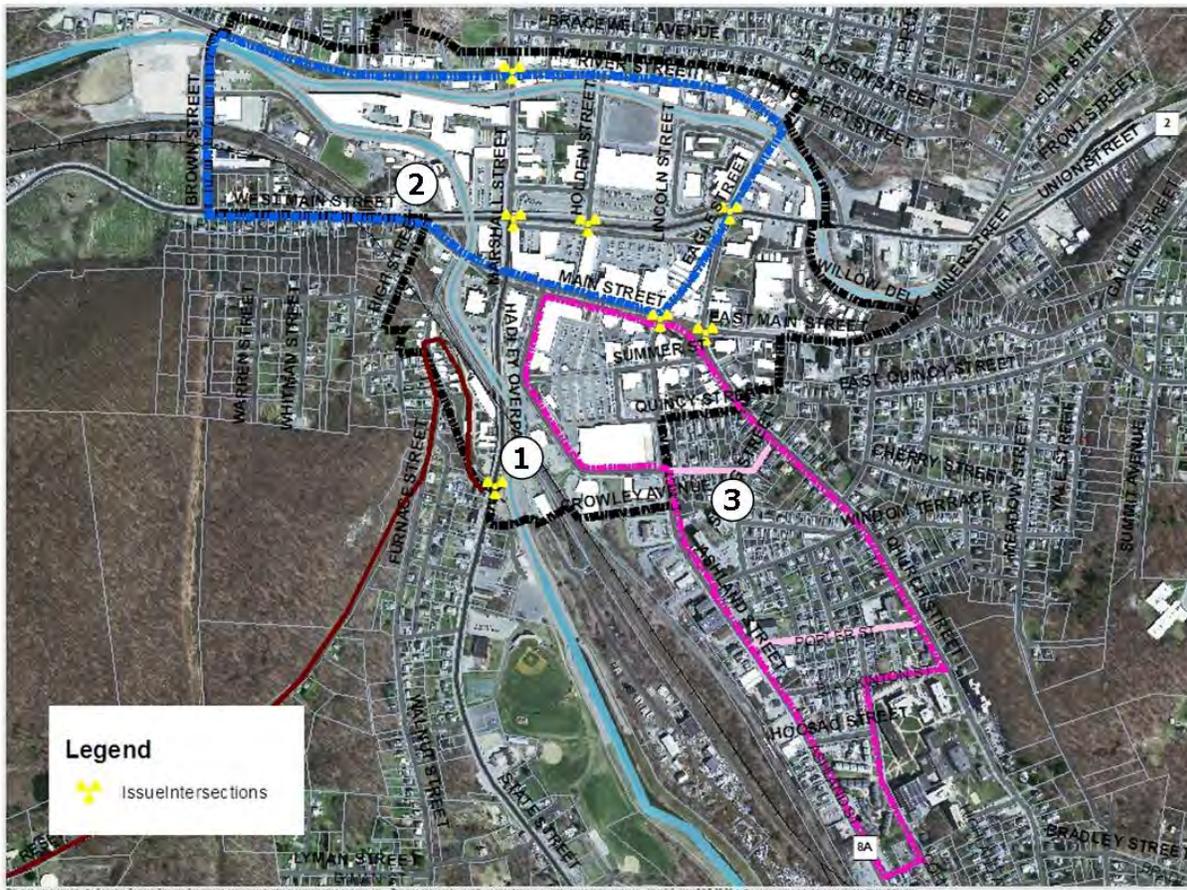
**1 Mohawk Trail Bike Path**—Connects downtown North Adams with Williamstown to the west. With some bike access improvements, this route will provide strong connections into Main Street and on-road bike routes in the city. The route will also connect to the north-south Ashuwillticook Rail Trail.

**2 Mount Greylock and Heritage State Park**—The two bike paths will connect at Heritage State Park, right near the North Adams entrance to the Mount Greylock Scenic Byway. This area is a key connection point for the bike and pedestrian traffic on all three of these routes. Some safety improvements and wayfinding within this area will help facilitate safe enjoyment of the whole system and nearby attractions.

**3 MCLA Connections**—the MCLA–downtown connection is a high priority for the college and downtown businesses. The students tend to use Ashland Street (yellow) but Church Street is an alternate route (orange). Improvements to both, including lighting, will make it easier and safer for students to travel during day or night.

**4 On-Road Bike Movement**—Recent street improvements on Main Street and Route 8 made bike travel much safer. Continued improvements to River Street and Massachusetts Avenue can provide a nice alternative to Route 2 for cyclists west of downtown. East of downtown, improvements along Route 2/Mohawk Trail Scenic Byway can facilitate safer travel of this narrow, challenging route.

Figure 3: Pedestrian Circulation and Designated Walking Loops



- 1 Connecting to Mount Greylock**—Planned improvements on bike paths, Heritage State Park, and at the entrance to the Mount Greylock Scenic Byway could help make walking to and from this route from downtown a more viable option that it feels today. This will be an important connection between the community core and adjacent open space and trails.
- 2 Downtown Walking Loop** &
- 3 Southern Walking Loop** —these short, and relatively flat walking loops were recently designated to help promote healthy lifestyles in the city. The southern loop is also a frequent student route between downtown and campus.

**GOAL E 7: IMPROVE THE LIVABILITY AND LIVELINESS OF DOWNTOWN**

**Policy E 7.1: Increase the number and variety of people living and working in the downtown.**

**Action A: Diversify Housing Options in Downtown**

Encourage a diversity of housing options in the downtown to meet a wide range of residents, and their preferences and needs. Ensure that there remain affordable housing opportunities. Offer tax incentives for private interests to develop appropriate housing, i.e. reinvesting in existing structures. Reduce municipal barriers to private residential investment in the downtown (i.e. incompatible zoning regulations or ordinances) to encourage growth.

**Action B: Coordinate Development of Artist Housing**

Develop an arts district in or adjacent to downtown to encourage the redevelopment of underutilized structures for affordable artist housing and arts-related businesses (from which art can be sold), through a mixed-use, housing and commercial space model.

***Action C: Encourage Student Housing in Downtown***

Develop student housing opportunities in the downtown in collaboration with MCLA and other educational and cultural institutions.

***Action D: Provide Transit Options to Connect Students to Downtown***

Encourage transit to better connect local students with downtown. Support continued enhanced bus service between Williamstown and North Adams. Work with MCLA to increase shuttle service between their campus and downtown.

Note: See also the Housing and Neighborhoods chapter.

**Policy E 7.2: Develop attractive gateways and critical capture points to draw people into the downtown.**

***Action A: Utilize Signage to Market Key Destinations***

Identify key points along major roadways into the city where additional signage or gateway enhancements could help direct traffic into the downtown, such as from Route 2 to Main Street or directing north from Furnace Street. Examine the potential to designate Route 2 in the downtown for truck traffic only.

***Action B: Support Transit to Better Connect Local Communities***

Support the continuation of enhanced bus service between Williams College and the downtown.

**Policy E 7.3: Diversify and expand the range of activities and attractions in downtown.**

***Action A: Connect Key Anchor Points in the Downtown***

Encourage programmatic connections between MASS MoCA, MCLA and downtown. Grow and support existing efforts such as MCLA's Cultural Resource Center.

***Action B: Link Special Events to the City Core***

Link special events in the city with those at the colleges, MASS MoCA and city anchors such as homecoming, parents' weekend, and music festivals to draw people into the downtown. This could include special store hours on those select weekends to ensure stores and restaurants will be open later.

***Action C: Streamline Permitting for Special Events***

Ensure permitting and regulations are user-friendly and supportive of continued Main Street-based events. Use regularly held events to attract people into the central core. For example, the Saturday Farmer's Market is a popular event, but is held on the edge of downtown, rather than in the center. The city should facilitate street closures and collaborations between private and public entities. In addition, offer education and streamlined permits for food vendors and facilitate the process as much as possible.

***Action D: Encourage Visitation of Downtown Through Food-Related Events***

Encourage and support agricultural- and food-based activities such as events using the community pizza oven, farmer's markets, nearby community gardens and food-related festivals which happen in the downtown.

***Action E: Leverage Downtown Proximity to Mount Greylock***

Develop recreational opportunities stemming from the heart of downtown, such as a gateway to Mount Greylock and other natural attractions, and an urban walking trail system appropriate for all levels of mobility, and encourage supporting business development.

### **Policy E 7.4: Integrate accessible and interactive community spaces for all ages throughout the downtown.**

#### ***Action A: Increase New Green and Public Spaces in the Downtown***

Encourage new green and open public spaces in the downtown, whether individual sites (i.e. a park), or linear (i.e. shared use path).

#### ***Action B: Improve Existing Community Spaces***

Enhance the usability and attractiveness of existing downtown community spaces, such as Veteran's Park and Colgrove Park.

#### ***Action C: Reconnect the Community to the Hoosic River***

Work with the Hoosic River Revival and other community stakeholders to make physical and programmatic connections to the Hoosic River to elevate it to a signature feature and destination in the downtown. Develop green spaces and activity centers along its length to reconnect residents and visitors to the river, while maintaining or improving the same levels of flood protection. Wherever feasible, reduce or eliminate the physical barriers created by the concrete flood chutes and their surrounding land treatments.

#### ***Action D: Continue Art Displays***

Integrate interactive art throughout the downtown to make the pedestrian experience more compelling and encourage more street activity.

#### ***Action E: Utilize Bike Path Development for the Benefit of Downtown***

Support the implementation of bike path extension through the downtown to connect the existing Ashuwillticook Rail Trail in Adams to the bike path under construction in Williamstown.

## **GOAL E 8: ENHANCE BUSINESS ACTIVITY IN THE CITY CORE**

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### **Policy E 8.1: Coordinate and promote existing businesses in the downtown.**

#### ***Action A: Enhance Retail and Business Options for Residents and Visitors***

Work with business membership organizations to encourage extended business hours and use city marketing vehicles to promote them. Provide marketing support and encourage a more robust evening and nightlife in downtown.

#### ***Action B: Develop an Internal Scheduling Process***

Refine a central scheduling process and calendar in order to encourage event clustering while avoiding significant overlap among events both for city and larger region.

#### ***Action C: Continue to Encourage Buy Local Campaign***

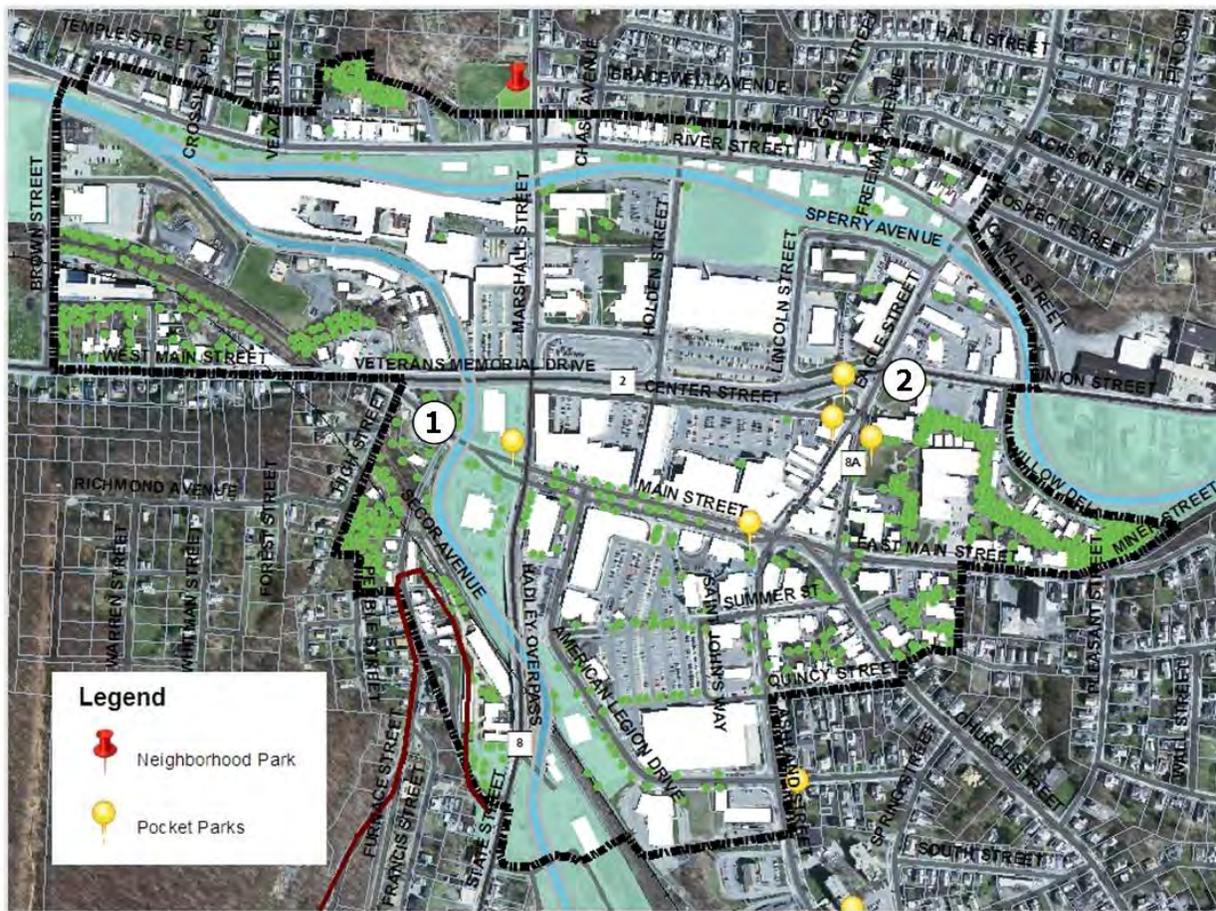
Establish a buy local campaign with supporting promotion. Include a focus on resident education about the economic impacts of buying local. Work with retailers to ensure there are local options with a range of price points.

### **Policy E 8.2: Support programmatic connections between downtown and anchor attractions such as MCLA and MASS MoCA.**

#### ***Action A: Strengthen Programmatic Connections from MCLA to Downtown***

Focus on developing programmatic connections from MCLA to downtown. While the distance between is walkable, it is far enough to require some incentive for students. For example, cultivate and promote downtown jobs and internships appropriate for MCLA students. Encourage and support location of MCLA's fine and performing arts and arts management program to the Mohawk Theater.

Figure 4: Riverway and Downtown Greenspace



**1 Greening the Riverway**— Hoosic River Revival has championed an effort to make the river an accessible focal point within the downtown. Recommendations include adding green space along the riverway with options for active (walkway) and passive (benches) enjoyment along the river.

**2 Adding and Retaining Park Space Within Downtown** — The lack of a City Green, prominent green space within the downtown, was noted in the planning process. Finding some site within the downtown, as well as adding smaller pocket parks interspersed within the denser mixed-use setting will provide community spaces for people to linger and interact.

**Action B: Make North Adams More of a College Town**

Work with an MCLA focus group to determine ways to make North Adams a “college town,” with the ideal range of retail offerings, locations, and business hours appealing to college students, staff and faculty.

**Action C: Address Physical Barriers Around Anchor Institutions**

Work with MASS MoCA to reduce and eliminate the isolating effects on their visitors, and particularly on-campus businesses and their customers, which prevent or discourage many from leaving the site to go downtown, such as the fencing which surrounds their parking lot. Seek municipal infrastructure improvements to facilitate improved physical connections from the downtown to the MASS MoCA campus.



*Hardman Industrial Park on Route 8 defines the southern entryway into the city and is important land base for current and future job creation.*

## **B. Area Focus: Route 8**

### **GOAL E 9: DEVELOP SOUTH ROUTE 8 AS A KEY EMPLOYMENT AREA AND STRENGTHEN ITS CONNECTION TO THE REST OF THE CITY**

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#### **Policy E 9.1: Target specific priority sites along the Route 8 corridor for redevelopment and supporting infrastructure improvements.**

##### ***Action A: Route 8 Corridor Study***

The city will pursue the creation of a corridor study for Route 8 focused on land use patterns and infrastructure improvements. A number of variables to be considered in this study and resolved through its recommendations include:

- Safe routes to work for employees at Wal-Mart and other businesses in the Industrial Park or elsewhere in the corridor from downtown and neighborhoods in south North Adams.
- Ashuwillticook Rail Trail route north from Adams to and through downtown, given the complexities of wetlands and the scenic railway along the existing rail bed.
- Land use strategy and needed infrastructure improvements and financing options for the western side of Route 8 across from the current industrial park.
- Connections from businesses and attractions just south of downtown to the downtown, including some re-envisioning of land uses adjacent to Noel Field.

##### ***Action B: Safeguard Southern Route 8 Corridor as an Employment Hub***

The Hardman Industrial Park on the eastern side of Route 8 provides industrial/business park space that is rare in the region. Designated industrial park sites in the city, formerly operated by the Northern Berkshire Industrial Park and Development Corporation, are now all in private ownership.

The recent addition of Wal-Mart across the street and speculation of additional big box or chain franchise development elsewhere in that section of the corridor would spell a gradual shift from employment to retail as the primary land use pattern. The city will work to safeguard this land, currently zoned industrial, for living-wage job creating employment opportunities. This can be achieved by ensuring future zoning decisions consider this intent if or when requests for special permits emerge.

***Action C: Support Key Investments at Noel Field***

Support and coordinate improvements at Noel Field between the current site master planning and the City's Vision 2030 Plan. Encourage reorientation and improvements to pedestrian access points. Identify ways the Hoosic River access can be enhanced at this site, and how Noel Field will be a key node along a future greenway. Consider holding more events at Noel Field, beyond sports.

***Action D: Reposition Heritage State Park as a City Attraction***

Encourage redevelopment and reinvestment in Heritage State Park buildings and site infrastructure. Support appropriate private investment strategies to enhance the site's viability. Reposition the park as a physical and programmatic connection to the Mount Greylock State Reservation. Identify ways to improve physical connections between Heritage Park and downtown.

**Policy E 9.2: Cultivate and connect Route 8 gateway district to serve as an attractive gateway and extension to the downtown.**

***Action A: Business Façade and Streetscape Beautification***

Target investment or program tools to improve facade appearance for businesses in the vicinity of Noel Field and Western Gateway Heritage State Park to offer an attractive gateway to the downtown. This could include a façade program through the city, a business improvement district for that area, or a combination of the two.

***Action B: Traffic Calming and Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvements***

There is considerable foot traffic across Route 8, where Child Care of the Berkshires and Noel Field are on one side and businesses and neighborhoods on the other. This section of the corridor, immediately before the bridge to downtown, also serves as a gateway to the downtown. Slow traffic as it approaches this section of road and then work to make safety improvements for bike and pedestrian traffic. (Reference call-out on traffic calming and pedestrian improvement options/photos).

***Action C: Gateway Signage and Treatments***

Extend signage improvements needed in the downtown to the northern section of Route 8, particularly to strengthen the connections between Noel Field, Mount Greylock, future expansion of the Ashuwillticook Trail, Western Gateway Heritage State Park and the downtown.



*The Harriman-West Airport is a major economic asset for the city. Route 2 improvements such as the cultivation of related use activities around the airport and enhanced signage can help establish an attractive and productive gateway corridor for the city.*

### **C. Area Focus: Route 2**

## **GOAL E 10: BUILD AN ATTRACTIVE GOODS AND SERVICES CORRIDOR ALONG ROUTE 2 BETWEEN WILLIAMSTOWN AND NORTH ADAMS**

### **Policy E 10.1: Make physical improvements to improve appeal and usability of the Route 2 Corridor.**

#### **Action A: Reduce Unnecessary Signage Along Route 2**

Identify and seek ways to reduce and remove visual clutter throughout the corridor, including billboards, excessive signage and potential consolidation or underground placement of utility lines.

#### **Action B: Target Pedestrian Improvements at Key Locations**

Implement physical improvements in the area around the Price Chopper shopping area to provide safe and appealing pedestrian access while improving the overall appearance of the area.

### **Policy E 10.2: Target specific priority sites along the Route 2 corridor for redevelopment and supporting infrastructure improvements.**

#### **Action A: Continue to Support Airport Improvements**

Maintain communication with and support of Harriman-West Airport as they continue implementing a multi-year expansion and improvement strategy. This will likely include airport renaming, enhanced special events, addition of a flight school, and a new terminal building – all of which can hold significant benefits for North Adams.

#### **Action B: Determine Potential Future Uses of Fairground Site**

Conduct a reuse plan for the former Fairground site; explore potential future uses in the Conservation & Recreation chapter. It has been noted as a good site for a dog park and for its ability to provide a physical linkage to MASS MoCA.

#### **Action C: Address Needs for Redevelopment of Mills**

Conduct a mill reuse plan in collaboration with current owners of the Cariddi Mill and other mills along the corridor. Encourage mixed-use in redeveloped mills wherever possible. Identify municipal infrastructure improvements, zoning changes, and complementary funding sources to facilitate their robust reuse.

***Action D: Reuse Remediated Sites***

Identify future low-impact uses of the remediated site at Avon and Alton Streets. This site has the potential to provide access to viewing the Hoosic River.