

# North Adams Comprehensive Plan

Part II of III

2014





## 4

# OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION

The city is fortunate to have a scenic setting surrounded by open space with many outdoor recreation opportunities while also having many recreation facilities and parks in the downtown and neighborhoods. The goals and policies in this chapter focus on how the city can maximize economic and health benefits from these many assets through maintenance, connections, and marketing to improve access and use rates of city parks and recreation amenities and surrounding open space areas.

## GOALS, POLICIES AND ACTIONS

### GOAL OSR1: OFFER A HIGH-QUALITY AND DIVERSE RECREATION SYSTEM TO SUPPORT THE HEALTH, ENJOYMENT, AND ECONOMIC NEEDS OF THE CITY.

**Policy OSR 1.1: Make the parks and recreation offerings of the city more visible to residents and visitors.**

#### **Action A: Develop Comprehensive North Adams Recreation Guide**

While the city currently has a number of park and recreation amenities, some are less visible and therefore underused by residents as well as visitors. The City will work to develop a comprehensive guide of amenities and programs to facilitate access and use of these resources. This guide should be flexible to allow use in website, smart phone application, and other applicable technologies as well as paper hard copies. A trail map and guidance kiosk located in downtown will provide access to this information and help market it.

#### **Action B: Improve Recreation Amenity Wayfinding Signage**

There is a high degree of variation in the type and quality of recreation resource wayfinding signage, both to find resources and trail markers or other signage once on site. In order to promote increased use of the city's many recreation assets, a consistent system of signage should be developed to make use opportunities clear and inviting. Also, high volume recreation attractions like the Appalachian Trail should have clear guidance to local businesses and the downtown to promote visitation.

#### **Action C: Coordinate and Maintain Comprehensive Trail Map Data**

In addition to the City of North Adams, trails within the city's boundaries are managed by a number of different entities, including the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, Berkshire Natural Resources Council, and state Department of Conservation and Recreation. There is not a comprehensive and accurate map of trails in the city and surrounding lands. While upgrading this data is a regional priority, the city can work to help coordinate the data sharing and management for those players within its bounds to ensure we have the best quality information available.

**Policy OSR 1.2: Maintain a high level of service for different user groups across the city.**

#### **Action A: Maintain an Up-to-date Open Space and Recreation Plan**

The Open Space and Recreation Plan, which has been continuously updated since 1980, is a plan document defined and required by the state to be eligible to apply for certain state grants. Important components of this plan include a recreational demand survey to determine if all groups' recreation needs are being adequately met. It also conducts a facility assessment to identify a list of specific improvements needed at park sites. This makes the document very useful as a blueprint the city can use to plot and track maintenance and enhancement schedules for park and recreation assets. In order to be deemed current, this plan must be updated every five years. The city will ensure it



#### Related Maps

Map 2: Parks and Recreation Facilities

Map 3: Open Space and Outdoor Recreation

Map 4: Trails and Bike Paths

Map 5: Natural Resources

Map 6: Conservation Framework

*Located in Appendix C*

maintains a current document and employ it to drive incremental improvements to the park and recreation system, including regular pursuit of funding through the state to facilitate these improvements.

***Action B: Centralize the Organization of Recreation Facilities, Programs, and Outreach***

At present, the aspects of the city's recreational system – field maintenance, scheduling, anchor facility management, etc. – are managed by different departments and commissions. In order to increase efficiency and equity, enhance and promote programming, and develop strategic planning for future needs, these functions should be brought under one central recreation department or office. Many similar models in Berkshire County are non-profit organizations which work collaboratively with municipalities, such as Berkshire South, the Dalton CRA, and the Lenox Community Center.

***Action C: Prioritize Existing Facility Maintenance and Enhancement***

The City should use the comprehensive inventory of the needs at its existing recreational facilities contained in the Open Space and Recreation Plan, to establish a prioritized work plan for maintenance and improvements. To the best of the City's ability, it should dedicate municipal funding to reduce or eliminate significant maintenance backlogs before making new capital investments. The City should also look to improve and expand options at existing sites, such as diversifying equipment to increase users, and reinvesting in lesser-used neighborhood parks.

***Action D: Provide Safe Routes to Recreation***

Safe routes to recreation assets are an important component of a healthy parks and recreation system. The city will build on preliminary accessibility assessments conducted in the fall of 2012 and create a list of improvements and timetable for achieving them. Recommendations from this assessment can include physical improvements such as ensuring that there are well-maintained crosswalks and sidewalks around parks and facilities, or the addition of lighting or pedestrian crossing signs to foster a safer environment.

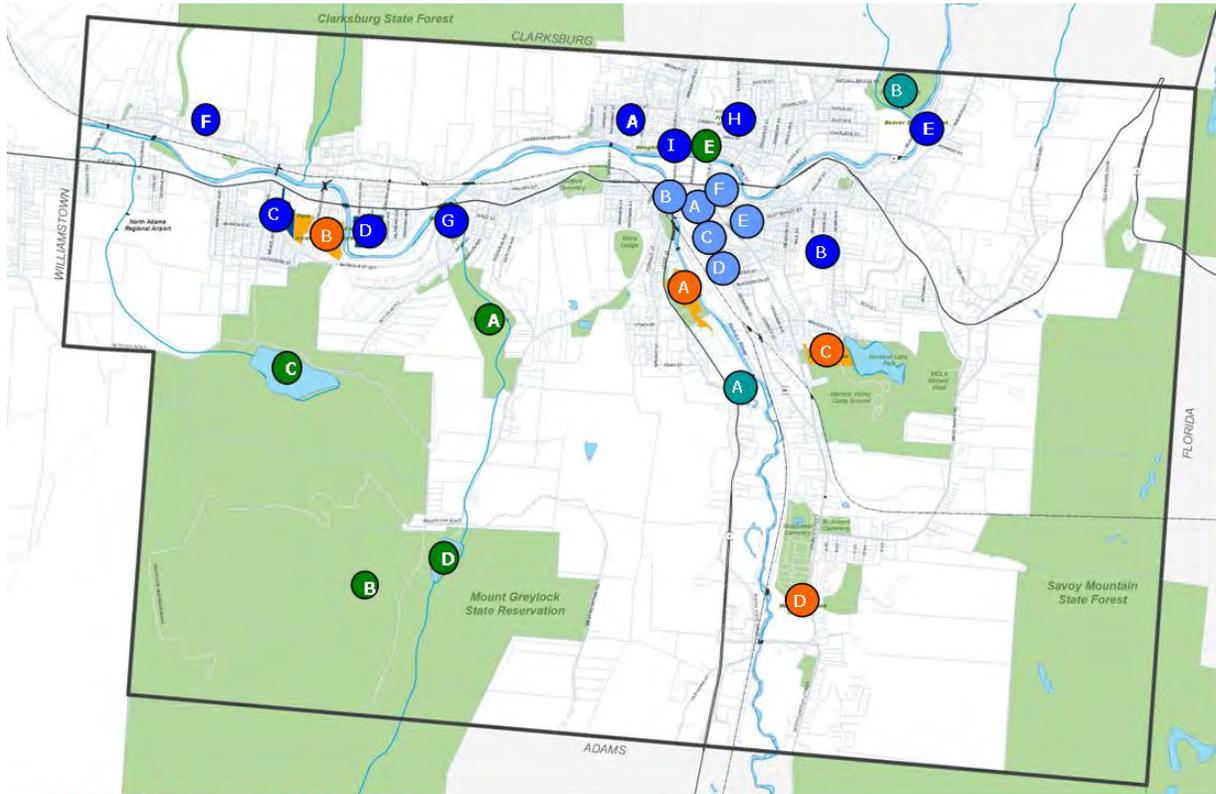
***Action E: Expand Use of Existing Recreational Facilities***

- **Joint Use Agreements:** Support and facilitate efforts of Mass in Motion to explore use of all school recreation facilities by local residents outside of school hours. Where possible, enter into joint use agreements to enable use of indoor and outdoor facilities to the public while still maintaining priority and safety for the school operations.
- **Streamlined Special Event Permitting:** Encourage use of park facilities for art and entertainment by providing necessary spaces, streamlined permitting processes, and low fees. Expanding the use of facilities in this way will encourage additional use and experience of these community assets by more people.
- **Seasonal Use Changes:** Consider using the Peter W. Foote Vietnam Veteran's Memorial Skating Rink for non-ice uses during the warmest-weather months. Given the high cost of energy to cool the facility for continued skating, and a reduction in the use, the facility could be better utilized for indoor court games.

***Action F: Catalyze and Coordinate Development or Protection of Priority Sites***

During the Open Space and Recreation outreach process a number of sites have been identified as high priorities or where an initiative is currently taking place, (see list, below). Creating connections between existing facilities has been noted as important to the overall future of the North Adams Open Space and Recreational system. There are areas where multiple initiatives have begun or are pending, indicating a need for the City to actively coordinate and plan these projects. Priority should be given to open space projects contiguous to already conserved land or contain high value resources, and projects which connect to other downtown assets or benefit underserved persons or areas.

Figure 5: North Adams Park and Recreation Facilities



**Athletic & Community Facilities**

- A** Noel Field Athletic Complex
- B** Alcombright Athletic Complex
- C** Windsor Lake
- D** Peter W Foote Vietnam Veterans Skating Rink

**Neighborhood Parks**

- A** Johnson School Playground
- B** Kemp Park
- C** Greylock School Playground
- D** West End Apartments Play Area
- E** Beaver Street Playground
- F** Blackinton Playground
- G** Brayton Field
- H** Freeman Playground
- I** Houghton Playground

**Pocket Parks**

- A** Colgrove Park
- B** Elderly Housing Recreation Area
- C** Senior Center Park
- D** Veteran's Park
- E** Monitor Park
- F** Downtown Pocket Parks: Eagle Street & Main Street

**Natural Parks & Facilities**

- A** The Cascades
- B** Mount Greylock
- C** Mt. Williams Reservoir
- D** Notch Reservoir
- E** Hoosic River, River Street Riverside Park and Girardi Park

**Historic Park Facilities**

- A** Western Gateway Heritage State Park
- B** Natural Bridge State Park

OPEN SPACE & RECREATION PRIORITY SITES		
<i>Linear and Connected Networks</i>	<i>Connections Desired</i>	<i>Individual Sites or Projects</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appalachian Trail</li> <li>• Ashuwillticook Rail Trail extension along Route 8, in particular between Hodges Cross Road and downtown North Adams</li> <li>• Shared use path development between downtown North Adams and Williamstown</li> <li>• Revitalization of the Hoosic River</li> <li>• Urban walking route in downtown</li> <li>• Avon/Alton Street river path to downtown</li> <li>• Bellow’s Pipe Trail conservation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Natural Bridge State Park to downtown</li> <li>• Bellow’s Pipe, Cascades, downtown</li> <li>• Windsor Lake to MCLA Forest, recreational fields, MCLA towers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Downtown green spaces, pocket parks</li> <li>• Natural Bridge State Park to downtown</li> <li>• Trail Information kiosk in downtown</li> <li>• Windsor Lake trail development</li> <li>• Mohican-Mohawk trail</li> <li>• Armory site amenities</li> <li>• Skateboard park (no site selected)</li> </ul>

**Policy OSR 1.3: Leverage local park and recreation amenities to support business development, tourism, and resident attraction and retention efforts.**

**Action A: Cultivate System of Mountain Biking Trails**

The Berkshire Chapter of the New England Mountain Biking Association (NEMBA) has great interest in creating a large network of trails throughout northern Berkshire County to serve as a location for races and a draw for avid mountain bikers. This is comparable to efforts in Vermont which served as the group’s inspiration. With current trail systems on Mount Greylock and in Savoy State Forest, the city could become a centerpiece surrounded on all sides with trails in Clarksburg State Forest, Florida Mountain State Forest. Berkshire NEMBA currently partners with the Department of Conservation on trail creation and maintenance.

**Action B: Increase and Leverage Presence of Winter Outdoor Recreation**

The Snowmobile Association of Massachusetts (SAM) has three active chapters in Northern Berkshire County – the Florida Mountaineers, Savoy CanaryKats, and the Adams Snowdrifters. The activity from these individuals and groups can make a positive impact on economic development in the City of North Adams. Marketing of existing amenities and exploration of expanding offerings (such as Bascom Lodge in limited capacity during the winter) will be facilitated by working directly with the three local groups and the state-wide organization. Other winter activities include hunting, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, and ice fishing. Each offers an opportunity to capture visits and customers to local lodging, restaurant and other businesses.

**Action C: Market North Adams Businesses to Outside Racing Events and Attractions**

Each year there are competitive races held locally and regionally which attract hundreds of visitors to or near North Adams. Take an inventory of such events and work with race organizers to market accommodations in North Adams to competitors and guests. One example is a cycling race up Mt. Greylock each year organized by the Northampton Cycling Club which boasts about 180 racers plus guests. Work with local businesses to incentivize visits by participants (i.e. % off a meal with race number).

NOTE: Also see the Economic Development chapter for additional actions related to marketing outdoor recreation in the city.

**Action D: Make North Adams a Trail-Friendly Community**

Working closely with entities such as the Appalachian Trail Conservancy’s AT Communities Program, make it easy for hikers to find and travel to local business and services.

- Informational kiosks, maps and signage for both “Thru-hikers” and hikers starting or ending their hikes in North Adams should be provided at Trail entry points to town and at parking areas.
- Provide and maintain an updated list of local volunteer “Trail Angels” who can provide information and transportation to out of town foot travelers.
- Provide and maintain appropriate and safe parking areas for trail visitors’ vehicles. At present there is a need for safe parking for 1-3 day overnight visits. At present, a local business (Greylock Community Club) provides long term parking (several weeks or more). Should this generous policy change, other parking should be available for long term hikers. It should be noted that in addition to hikers on the AT, North Adams serves as the southern terminus for Vermont’s Long Trail, stretching the length of Vermont to Canada.

**GOAL OSR 2: IMPLEMENT WESTERN NEW ENGLAND GREENWAY COURSE THROUGH THE CITY**

**Policy OSR 2.1: Implement bike path as part of Western New England Greenway vision.**

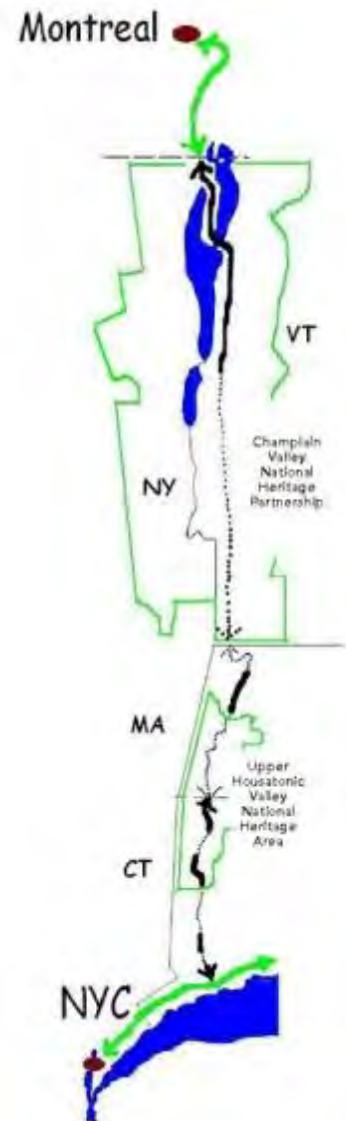
The Ashuwillticook Rail Trail has been incorporated into a large-scale vision for the northeastern US and Canada that would link bikepaths from New York City to Montreal into a continuous bikepath greenway. The city’s planned scenic rail and adjacent bike path course up from the Town of Adams will achieve a significant step forward. The city will now need to continue to coordinate with regional and city partners to devise a course through downtown and east to the section of bikepath currently under construction in Williamstown. This project has the potential to be further enhanced by the incorporation of scenic rail travel along the corridor between Adams and North Adams.

**Policy OSR 2.2: Cultivate riverway multi-use path as asset for recreation and enjoyment.**

**Action A: Focus on River Greening and Increased Access within Community Core**

The majority of the outdoor recreation assets of North Adams are located in the open space lands surrounding the community core in the larger scale park and recreation facilities to the south and west of downtown. The river creates a central focal point and is a unique opportunity to integrate recreation space within the community core and downtown, while also connecting to the other assets west and south. The city will collaborate with Hoosic River Revival and other partners to continue implementing greenspace creation, community access, and improvement projects along the flood chutes in the city’s core. Such projects should range from small, incremental improvements to provide access (such as fence locations) to larger, park-like developments in priority areas.

NOTE: Also see the Downtown section in Economic Development chapter for additional goals related to the Hoosic River.



**Action B: Secure or Create River Access Points for Recreational Use**

As bike path implementation moves forward, the city should ensure that the design incorporates the retention or creation of access points to the river for both boating and fishing. Trout Unlimited has been an active group locally due to the presence of cold water fisheries. The Hoosic River Watershed Association and Audubon Society both have been active in highlighting canoe/kayak routes for paddling and wildlife viewing. These partners can help inform designers about key spots on the river and then help highlight these assets after construction to various sport and wildlife groups.

**Action C: Recreation-Supporting Infrastructure**

Implement, as part of the blueway and bikepath design, a system of pockets for alternate activities such as:

- Educational kiosks highlighting natural species, habitat types, or other stories from the surrounding landscape.
- Performance spaces.
- Picnic spots with tables, garbage and possibly bathroom facilities.
- Benches placed in scenic locations for passive enjoyment of the river.
- Periodic garbage stations with dog bags to facilitate individual behaviors to maintain quality of trail environment.
- A born learning trail<sup>1</sup> segment for a family-friendly experience for young children.
- Outdoor exercise stations for using the path as a workout space (below).



Greenways along bike paths can be transformed into outdoor gyms with the inclusion of exercise guides (left) and equipment (right).

**Policy OSR 2.3: Employ the river corridor greenway as wildlife habitat and movement corridor.**

**Action A: Employ Wildlife-Friendly Landscaping**

The rivers and surrounding wetlands offer important habitat areas, including some for rare and endangered species. A greenway along the river can help keep these corridors open for shared use by humans and other species. This can be facilitated by ensuring that landscaping placed in these corridors as they are modified features context-appropriate native landscaping and the removal of any invasive species that may currently be present.

<sup>1</sup> Born Learning Trails provide young children with an opportunity to get active, have fun and boost language and literacy skills. The "trails" feature age-appropriate, simple-to-construct activities that can be set up outdoors or in, <http://www.unitedway.org/pages/kids-get-fit-cac-bornlearning>.

***Action B: Ensure Conservation Commission Involved In Development Review Process***

The Conservation Commission of the city, as with all municipalities, is in place to review development proposals that are within specified distances from protected natural features and habitats such as floodplains, wetlands, and waterways. The city will work to ensure that all proposals that should come before the Conservation Commission do so. Supporting activities could include better GIS capacity to map parcels and natural features for reference, flow-charts and process sheets to help volunteer board members, and periodic all boards meetings to improve communications flows and identify and address issues or challenges in a gradual and timely manner.

## **GOAL OSR 3: PROMOTE YEAR-ROUND HEALTHY LIVING AND ACTIVE LIFESTYLES FOR ALL AGES**

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### **Policy OSR 3.1: Promote healthy active living within the community.**

***Action A: Increase Healthy Activity in City's School System***

Support Northern Berkshire Community Coalition's Mass in Motion program efforts to incorporate outdoor activity into the school day in North Adams schools.

***Action B: Establish Network of Walking Routes and Trails***

Walking and running are two of the most popular recreational activities of local residents. The city will work to establish varied, safe and accessible options for all residents and abilities. A strong urban walking network, in collaboration with the Mass in Motion program will have positive implications for community health and wellness as well as local economic development. In order to create a culture of year-round outside activity, these routes will need to be a high-priority for snow clearing and regular street cleaning.

***Action C: Make More Healthy Heart Trails Locally***

The Healthy Heart Trails Program of the Department of Conservation and Recreation designated 70 trails across the state with the aim of promoting increased daily exercise. These trails are identified by a green heart symbol (see example, below), measure approximately 1.5 miles or less in length, and are easy to moderate in activity level. Currently the only designated Heart Healthy trail in the city is the Elder Trail in Natural Bridge State Park, although Ashuwillticook Rail Trail is also designated and so will count as a second trail as it is extended north from Adams. While the state may not designate any further trails, the city could develop a more local system using the same concept and similar signs.

***Action D: Mayor's Fitness Challenge***

Consider instituting an annual Mayor's Fitness Challenge. This type of program should tie into the existing recreational system, utilizing different sites and facilities. See the call-out box, right, for information about Mayor's Challenges in other communities.

*MAYOR'S FITNESS CHALLENGE*

Communities across the country have created a Mayor's Fitness Challenge, an event centering around healthy eating, improving cardiovascular and muscular health, and identifying healthy options in the community.

Program features include a length of 2-3 months, pre- and post-challenge health screenings, free exercise and lifestyle classes, and prizes at the event's end. Entrance fees range in cost, and there are usually special programs for youth and seniors. Program partners may include the YMCA, private gyms, news outlets, medical service providers, insurance companies, health care plans and local restaurants. Gardening can be an additional focus, promoting it as an activity combining healthy exercise and eating; one program held a gardening demonstration in the kick-off week and culminated the challenge event at the first Farmer's Market of the season.

Most Mayors initiate the challenge by making their own pledge to exercise a certain number of times in a week and make healthy eating choices.

## **GOAL OSR 4: RESPECT THE CITY'S PLACE WITHIN IMPORTANT HABITAT AREAS BY PROVIDING WILDLIFE CORRIDORS AND CONNECTIONS TO SUPPORT BIODIVERSITY**

### **Policy 4.1: Work with local conservation partners to implement the regional Conservation Framework within the city.**

#### ***Action A: Refine and Adopt Conservation Framework***

The conservation framework of the regional plan was intentionally general with the intent that local communities would each determine a more detailed approach to achieving the overarching intent of the framework. To achieve this, North Adams will convene a 'Conservation and Recreation Roundtable' comprised of local boards and commissions involved in aspects of conservation and recreation. This should include representatives from the Conservation Commission, Historical Commission, Planning Board, Community Development Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Redevelopment Authority, and the Parks and Recreation Commission. This group should take part in reviewing the proposed framework making recommendations on its final form and implementation steps.

#### ***Action B: Educate Landowners on Conservation Options***

Work with conservation partners active in the North Adams area, such as Berkshire Natural Resources Council and the Hoosic River Watershed Association, to communicate potential conservation options to landowners. This could include land donation or conservation easements, prioritizing those lands identified as important to wildlife, water quality, and community aesthetics.

### **Policy OSR 4.2: Develop appropriate tools and practices to support wildlife-friendly development, prioritizing important habitat areas as identified within the Conservation Framework.**

#### ***Action A: Facilitate Safe Wildlife Movement Across Route 2***

The Route 2 corridor west of downtown represents a strip of developed land between two large expanses of open lands offering important habitats. The river runs parallel to Route 2, providing an east-west movement channel, but north-south movement is more challenging due to the road and adjacent development. The city should work with Mass DOT to employ wildlife crossing best practices. The local organization Berkshire Environmental Action Team (BEAT) may be a strong partner in these efforts.

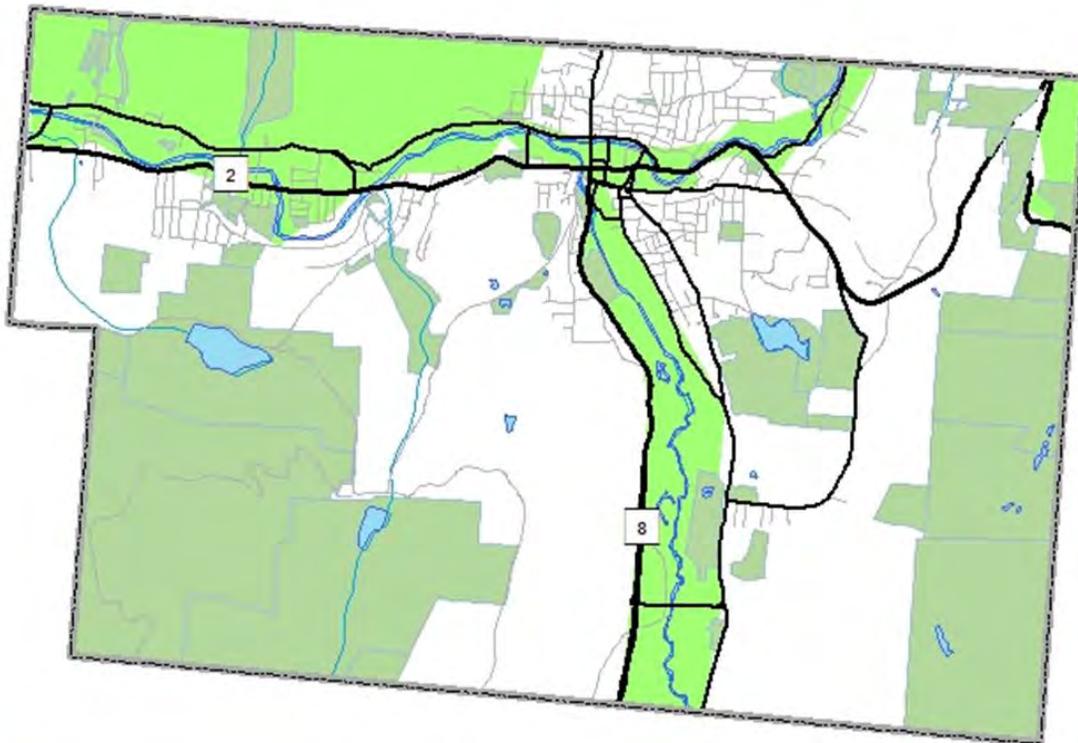
## GOAL OSR 5: CONTINUOUSLY WORK TO IMPROVE THE HEALTH AND INTEGRITY OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT IN AND AROUND THE CITY

### Policy OSR 5.1: Improve the data environment to inform decision-making around environmental quality and natural resources.

#### *Action A: Advocate for and Support a Hoosic Watershed Rare Species Survey*

A detailed survey of rare species in the Housatonic River watershed was recently completed through collaboration between the Housatonic Valley Association (HVA) and the state Natural Heritage Endangered Species Program. The City should work with surrounding municipalities and the Hoosic River Watershed Association (HoorWA) to solicit the state for a more detailed study for the northern portions of the county. Such survey work is critical to having a better understanding of what species are present where to inform conservation and maintenance activities to support biodiversity.

Figure 6: Conservation Framework



- Conservation Framework:** The Conservation Framework was developed as part of the new regional plan, Sustainable Berkshires, using BioMap, CAPS map data, and local knowledge and input. The areas shown in bright green on the Conservation Framework reflect lands that have significant value as natural habitat. In the city, upland habitats are predominantly protected by Clarksburg State Forest, Savoy Mountain State Forest and Mount Greylock State Reservation. Lowland habitats, including the river and its floodway, are not as well protected. This map therefore expresses the city's interest in seeing the lands in bright green either protected or developed in an environmentally sensitive manner. This could include measures to reduce runoff, nativescaping, and maintaining connections for wildlife movement. A complete description of the conservation framework and the data that informed its creation is included in the Conservation and Recreation Element of the regional plan.

See Map 6 in Appendix C for a full size map of the conservation framework with parcels.

**Action B: Develop Comprehensive Understanding of Municipal Conservation Issues**

Explore ways the city's public works department can improve their procedures and facilities to ensure a high level of protection for resource areas. This might include upgrading culverts for improved stream crossings, ensuring safe removal of snow away from water sources, and properly managing hazardous materials.

**Action C: Continue Water Quality Analysis and Pollution Reduction Strategies**

Recent efforts of MCLA and the Hoosic River Watershed Association to track bacteria and other pollutants in the river helped to identify sources of pollution in the waterway. The city supports the continuation of these data gathering efforts and will facilitate efforts to address contamination sources as they are determined.

**Action D: Create and Maintain Comprehensive Brownfield Site Inventory**

The City sits on the committee for the Berkshire Brownfields Program operated out of the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission. In 2013, the program will develop its first comprehensive brownfield site inventory to better access and direct appropriate funds to address brownfield concerns. This includes determining if contamination is present and remediating any environmental concerns if found. The city can support this inventory creation, and then work to keep a current list of properties within its boundaries to continue advocating for its sites to access brownfield program resources.

**Policy OSR 5.2: Protect and enhance the water quality of rivers and lakes throughout the city.**

**Action A: Work with Army Corps of Engineers and other River Partners to Improve Water and Habitat Conditions in Chutes**

The southern, northern and main branches of the Hoosic River within North Adams currently provide or have historically provided cold water habitat, which has significant ecological as well as social and economic implications for the community and region. The City of North Adams should partner with the Army Corps of Engineers (who have jurisdiction over the chutes), the Hoosic River Revival organization, the Hoosic River Watershed Association, and other habitat supporting organizations to establish methods for mitigating in these water and habitat quality issues.

**Action B: Implement Urban Tree Program along River**

Shading provided to rivers from trees is one important tool for controlling water temperatures and thermal pollution impacts. The City should work with, or provide incentive for, community-based groups to plant appropriate tree species along the river to begin greening the river way and creating shade. Consideration should be given to the requirements for planting as required by the Army Corps of Engineers. If possible, collaborate with the Corps to determine the most advantageous locations for tree planting and redefine agreements as necessary.

**Action C: Address Dams and Other Sources of Stream Fragmentation**

Preserve and recreate coldwater habitats for Eastern Brook Trout and other species. The greatest disturbance to brook trout habitat in the region is stream fragmentation caused by dams, which prohibit movement of fish and other aquatic organisms. The city will work to inventory its dams and determine which ones can and should be removed, and which should be reengineered to reduce impacts on water flow and habitat while maintaining flood control.

**Action D: Engage in Local Education About Non-point Source Pollution**

Engage in local and regional efforts to educate residents and businesses about sources and mitigation methods of non-point source pollution. Such sources may include fertilizer and other agricultural and lawn treatments, urban pollution runoff such as oil and gas, bacteria and nutrients from septic and treatment facilities, and sediment from improper protections during construction and other disturbances.



Rain gardens (far left) are attractive ways to help capture runoff and absorb it on site, reducing the flow volumes infrastructure like the flood chutes need to be able to manage in a storm event. Another homeowner option is to use a rain barrel (near left) to capture water from downspouts and use for use later watering plants.

**Action E: Offer Programs and Incentives for Property-Owner Runoff Reduction**

The single largest problem for surface water quality in the city and region is the impact of stormwater runoff into waterways. This flushes pollutants into the water from yards, farms, and pavement. The topography of the city means that runoff can be particularly fast-moving, the reason the flood chutes were constructed in the first place. Runoff can be reduced or slowed through a number of easy tools and techniques such as rain gardens (left) and rain barrels (right). Programs such as rain garden workshops in partnership with local greenhouses or MCLA can help expand their use in local neighborhoods. Rain barrels, which capture water from roofs that would otherwise flow into the streets from downspouts, can be sold to residents at a discounted cost as a means of increasing use. In addition, municipal programs to improve water quality include oil recycling to offer an alternative to allowing it into the sewer system, composting to reduce and reuse waste materials, and encouraging use of porous pavement to help water infiltrate on site.

**GOAL OSR 6: BROADEN RANGE OF TOOLS AND PARTNERS TO ACHIEVE EFFICIENT RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE MANAGEMENT.**

**Policy OSR 6.1: Diversify funding and stewardship resources to benefit open space and recreation amenities.**

**Action A: Adopt Community Preservation Act**

Engage in a community discussion, with comprehensive education, about adopting the Community Preservation Act locally. This adoption can provide a consistent funding stream for acquisition and improvement of open space in addition to historic preservation and affordable housing.

**Action B: Pursue Corporate Sponsorship Arrangements**

While they remain the City’s responsibility, private organizations are taking on a renewed role of corporate community stewardship. Local banks, large employers, and major corporate entities with sites in the city are all potential partners to help sponsor parks and recreation improvements. This can include financial contributions as well as day-of-service events where corporate employees volunteer their labor for a day on a specific project.

**Action C: Gradually and Consistently Pursue Grants to Implement Improvements**

There are a number of state and other grants to help municipalities maintain and improve their recreation facilities. The City will work to consistently apply each year to successfully implement improvements as outlined in the OSRP.

**Action D: Encourage Community Members to Adopt a Park or Trail**

Encourage community groups, area businesses, and general residents to adopt a park or trail to perform general maintenance and monitoring. Connect this effort to the community volunteer day.

***Action E: Engage Local Youth to Care for their Recreation Facilities***

Provide opportunities specifically for youth to take ownership and greater use of their local recreational facilities. Work with the Youth Commission, Berkshire Natural Resource Council, Mass in Motion, the school system's service learning program and other groups to develop youth-oriented service programs. A model program may be "Greenagers" in Great Barrington. Such programs should include opportunities to care for the park and recreation system, experience more of the recreation options in North Adams, and provide opportunity for greater input about the future of parks, recreational facilities and natural sites.

**Policy OSR 6.2: Coordinate maintenance to maximize impact of scarce resources.**

***Action A: Coordinated Recreational Resource Management***

Combine priorities across disciplines and jurisdictions wherever possible. For example, preservation and conservation concerns are combined in heritage landscape conservation. Also consider incorporation of needed community facilities. Pooling resources and priorities will enable greater funding potential and encourage better engagement of the community in these efforts.

***Action B: Identify and Promote Financial Benefits for Private Owners***

Develop a toolkit for all types of owners and users providing clear information about funding sources and resources to enable conservation efforts, such as tax benefits for conservation restrictions.

## 5 HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOODS

*The city's neighborhoods range from quiet wooded spots to bustling downtown environments, all within a relatively small geographic area. Overall, topography has helped the city keep a very condensed development footprint, offering many walkable areas. The following chapter contains the goals, policies and actions the city will take to grow and strengthen its neighborhoods to meet the future vision for the city and needs of its current and future residents.*

### GOALS, POLICIES AND ACTIONS

#### GOAL HN 1: PROVIDE HIGH QUALITY HOUSING OPTIONS THAT MEET A VARIETY OF NEEDS AND LIFESTYLES

##### **Policy HN 1.1: Monitor housing supply and demand to proactively plan to meet needs.**

###### ***Action A: Maintain Up-to-Date Housing Needs Assessment***

The housing needs assessment works to anticipate housing demand now and in the future as demographics change or previously unmet needs are identified to ensure the city's housing is best meeting the current and future needs of its population.

###### ***Action B: Create a Municipal Affordable Housing Committee***

While the city has a housing authority, it does not have an affordable housing committee to track needs and work with a variety of public and private partners to facilitate the addition or improvement of housing units to better meet needs. They can also take a lead role in fundraising and doing some of the ground work to identify and secure sites (e.g., land banking) for future housing needs.

##### **Policy HN 1.2: Support public, private and individual reinvestment into housing and neighborhood conditions.**

###### ***Action A: Support Non-profit Housing Renovation Program Activity***

Non-profits can accept properties for renovation and either renting or resale. One program in Raleigh, NC called *Builders of Hope* accepts, or purchases for a low cost, older homes and performs a green gut rehabilitation of the interior to remove high costs to new owners for system repairs and upgrades while also removing potential health hazards like lead and asbestos. This model can help get market rate stock back up to quality after years of deferred maintenance and decay, while still keeping the exterior historic integrity in place and avoiding unnecessary demolition.

###### ***Action B: Update the Mill Revitalization District to Increase Flexibility***

The city has added mill revitalization district language into its existing industrial districts as a special permit activity. The uses listed are fairly narrow in focus and should be revisited to add other uses such as retail, agriculture, or other options to meet a wider range of mill sites and reuse potential.



*(Left) Three examples of mixed-income residential developments, more attractive and inclusive housing model than traditional all low-income housing developments (like the "high rise" on Ashland Street, below). Some of the more modern designs build on the precedent set by the MCLA Science and Innovation building (above).*



**Policy HN 1.3: Transition affordable housing stock to a mixed-income model.*****Action A: Prioritize Sites for New Mixed-Income Construction or Renovation***

New sites, either through demolition or reuse (such as a vacant mill site) offer opportunities to add new housing units that meet the needs of specific demographics. This could include young professionals, artists, or seniors. Either way, while the city has a relatively high supply of affordable housing both individually and within the region, there is still unmet need and specific quality concerns related to needing more units. New developments should be mixed income to offer a more integrated community.

***Action B: As Housing Authority Complexes Age, Rethink Their Shape, Location, and Function***

Much of the affordable housing in the city is developed as “projects” concentrated areas of subsidized units physically removed from surrounding neighborhoods and lacking transportation connections and socially isolated through stigma. These environments dampen opportunities offered to residents and can result in higher incidence of crime. Modern practice has gotten away from the “project” concept in favor of mixed-income developments that de-concentrate poverty, remove stigma, and yield better outcomes for low-income residents. As public housing ages and requires significant investment and upgrades, the city and Housing Authority should explore options to demolish and rebuild units in a more modern, energy efficient, and mixed income format.

**GOAL HN 2: ADDRESS BLIGHT AND IMPROVE PROPERTY VALUES****Policy HN 2.1: Empower neighborhoods and individuals to combat blight and disrepair conditions.*****Action A: Offer Creative Programs to Support Owner Action***

Create programs such as free “rent-a-tool” programs, paint drop-off pick up sites, volunteer project teams or help-a-neighbor programs to help elderly or lower-income property owners access the resources they need to bring their property into compliance or otherwise maintain their properties.

***Action B: Continue City Cleanup Days***

Continue city cleanup days to target larger issues of trash buildup on vacant lots and open space areas.

See also: Local Food and Health chapter.

**Policy HN 2.2: Improve identification and enforcement procedures for problem properties.*****Action A: Neighborhood Code Violation Monitors***

Neighborhood volunteers are trained to identify code violations and report them to city personnel. This helps keep more eyes on the street to find and report issues to free up some staff time.

***Action B: Strengthen and Enhance Vacant or Foreclosed Property Ordinance***

The goal of the ordinance is to achieve compliance so that the City is better able to manage and respond to concerns about vacant or foreclosed properties. Similar ordinances have been adopted in Springfield, Boston, Lawrence, Lowell, Methuen, and Albany, New York.

Under the ordinance, the maintenance of vacant or foreclosed residential properties would require the owners to:

- Register their property with the City at a cost (e.g.\$100 per year);
- Provide the owner’s name and mailing address (which cannot be a P.O. Box) so that the City has a good address for service of legal notices;
- Identify as part of the registration (and post on the property) the 24-hour contact name, number, and address for a local property manager (either a person or company) who is located within 30 miles of the property; and
- Maintain the property on a weekly basis including keeping it secured.

The ordinance also requires that a property be registered as soon as a foreclosing process commences (with the delivery of a mortgagee's notice of intent to foreclose). The ordinance defines a vacant property as one that has not been legally occupied for 60 days or more and/or a property that is not occupied and not properly maintained or secured. Failure to comply with the registration requirement, or failure to maintain a registered property, can result in fines (e.g., up to \$300 per week) for non-compliance.

***Action C: Use GIS to Track Geography of Code Violations and Police Calls***

As the City grows its GIS capability, efforts should be made to use addresses to track patterns of code violations and police calls to help identify and refine target areas. The use of police calls in addition to the code violation information can help draw the link between vacant and blighted properties and squatting or illegal activities that may gravitate to problem areas and vacancies. This can further help prioritize interventions where there is a social/safety and service impact as well as physical/aesthetic.

**Policy HN 2.3: Create progressive system to bring tax lien and delinquent properties back into productive use.**

***Action A: Maintain Property Inventory***

The City should work to be proactive about identifying and tracking its tax lien properties to understand and be able to communicate the economic impact of those properties, view them on a map in relation to other criteria or target areas to help set priorities for intervention activities, and to generally help guide a comprehensive strategy to dealing with them.

***Action B: Streamline Receivership***

The city has several options for receivership; the preferred option should be evaluated, selected, and communicated so that there is an organized method for pulling tax lien properties back into use.

***Action C: Develop Reuse Strategy to Help Target Efforts***

The city can build on the work of the plan and, with ongoing input from residents and other stakeholders, identify reuse options for specific areas. This could include preservation of single-family units, rental units, and transition of buildings to another use or demolition to allow for redevelopment or the creation of supportive spaces (e.g., parking) for adjacent properties.

**Policy HN 2.4: Work with landlords to maintain their properties.**

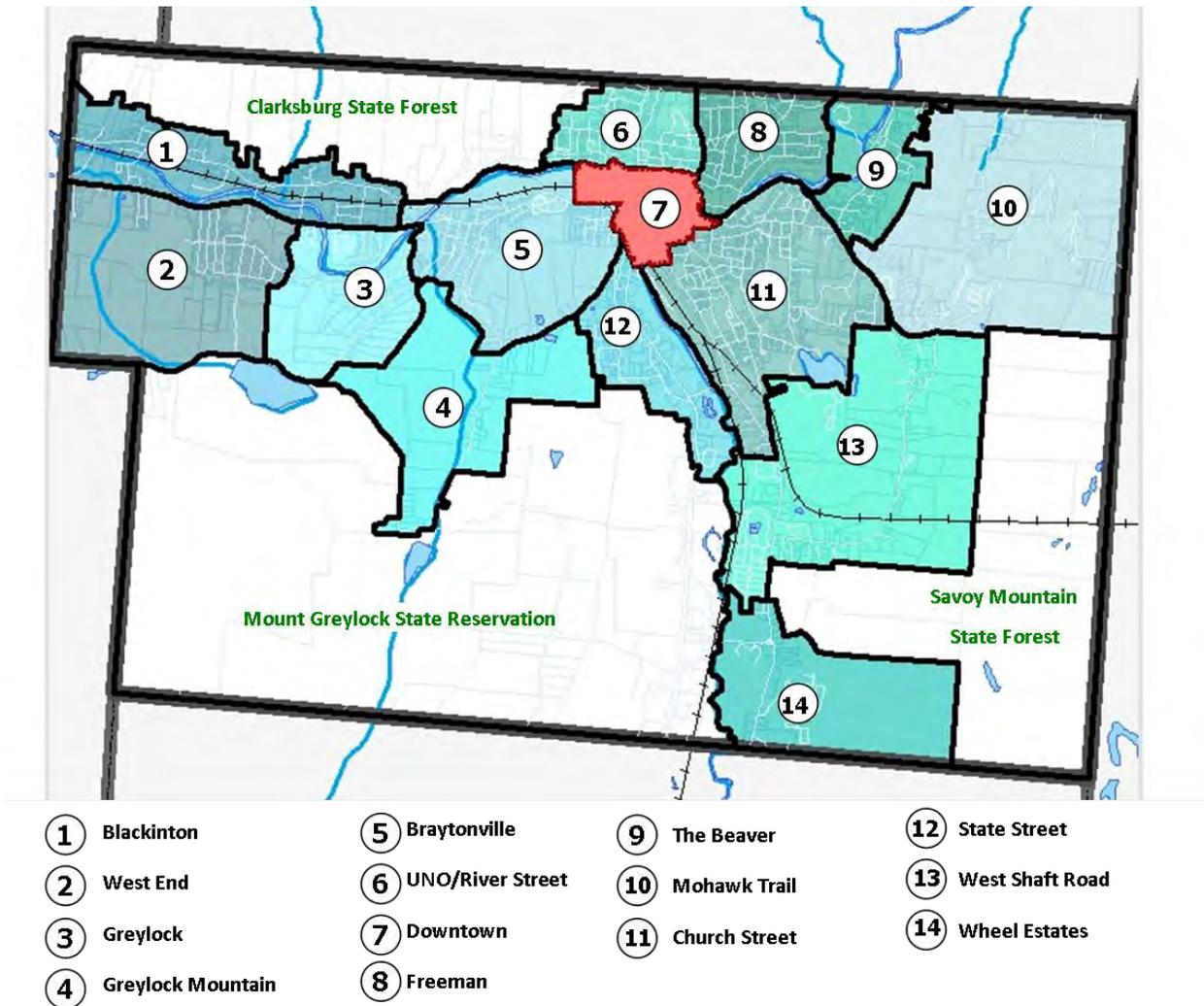
***Action A: Rental Property Registration and Inspection***

Require landlords to register all rental units with the City. The City can inspect units prior to occupancy to ensure they are up to building and health code standards. The City can also offer incentives for landlords who have a track record of no findings such as reduced inspection fees and more time between inspections. In the case of landlords with repeated violations, the timeframe can be shortened. Once notified a unit is not up to code, landlords have a timeframe to bring the unit back into compliance before fines are issued.

***Action B: Create Meaningful Incentives and Penalties to Support Action***

Review and revise code enforcement penalties, with a focus on compounded penalties for inaction.

Figure 7: North Adams Neighborhoods



### GOAL HN 3: SUPPORT STRONG COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS WITHIN NEIGHBORHOODS

#### Policy HN3.1: Collaborate to reduce crime in neighborhoods.

##### *Action A: Neighborhood Watch*

Work with interested neighborhoods to start a neighborhood watch program and install street signs to help make crime awareness more visible.

##### *Action B: Property Security Trainings*

Partner with private business to create a grant-based community safety program that can educate owners and renters about how to make their homes more secure and less attractive to thieves. This could include a short class or demo and then free or reduced cost items such as safety lights, locks, window locks, etc.

##### *Action C: Neighborhood Beat Officers*

Work to create stronger alignment between patrol officers and neighborhoods. In urban neighborhoods, this could include some bike or walking patrol. In more dispersed neighborhoods, this could simply be making sure all areas are patrolled with a certain frequency.

***Action D: Prioritize Safety Lighting Needs***

Work with neighbors to identify areas where dark spots create a sense of insecurity or potential danger from poor visibility.

**Policy HN 3.2: Support neighborhood groups and neighborhood activities.**

***Action A: Create a Standing Neighborhoods Committee***

Create a city neighborhoods committee with representatives from each neighborhood and relevant city department staff to have a clear and ongoing means of communication between neighborhoods and the city.

***Action B: Provide Annual Support for Community-Driven Neighborhood Initiatives***

Ensure that annual city grants include competitive grants for neighborhoods to support special projects or community events such as a neighborhood block party.

**Policy HN 3.3: Work to create stronger physical and social connections between affordable housing projects and surrounding neighborhoods.**

***Action A: Bike Path and Walking Connections***

Prioritize safe routes between current affordable housing developments and jobs and essential services. This could include building the planned bike path through the Barbour Street connection, sidewalk improvements along Route 2, and maintenance enforcement to ensure those routes stay open year-round.

***Action B: Continue to Support Programs and Efforts to Create Broader Concept of Neighborhood***

For several years, “neighborhoods” in the city referred to affordable housing developments. The new boundaries delineate neighborhoods, of which the developments are one part. This will be supported by creating opportunities for interaction between neighbors of these larger areas, including clean-ups, neighborhood watch, and block parties.

**Policy HN 3.4: Ensure each neighborhood has quality local recreation options and easy connections to city or regional amenities.**

***Action A: Focus Project Priorities on Increasing Variety and Balancing Supply of Recreation Options Across Neighborhoods***

Develop a framework for monitoring and prioritizing community recreation options across neighborhoods. This could include classifying types (trails, bike path, pocket parks, community parks, etc.) and inventorying for each neighborhood. Condition issues and new projects could then be considered against this list to focus on adding options and ensuring that those options are improving level of service to each neighborhood in a way that is context and population appropriate (supply versus demand but also age demographics of different portions of the city).

See also: Open Space and Recreation chapter and the City’s Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP).

## 6

# HISTORIC PRESERVATION

*The city of North Adams has many historic structures and neighborhoods which tell the story of our community's heritage. The city's historic fabric is laced with church steeples, industrial buildings, and compact neighborhoods. While significant aspects of North Adams' physical history were lost to Urban Renewal and disinvestment, many layers of history remain which will benefit from community stewardship.*

*In many instances, historic structures and cultural features of the community have been shown to have economic benefit. During the past two decades, the city has supported and encouraged the adaptive reuse of historic mills for artist lofts and galleries, a museum, business incubator space, and a community youth center. The City aims to continue working with property owners and partners in the community, to be mindful of preserving the structures, landscapes and other aspects of the city's historic fabric.*



## Related Maps

Map 7: Historic and Cultural Resources

*Located in Appendix C*

## GOALS, POLICIES AND ACTIONS

### GOAL HP 1: PROVIDE THE HISTORICAL COMMISSION WITH THE SUPPORT AND RESOURCES NEEDED TO ACHIEVE THE CITY'S HISTORIC PRESERVATION GOALS

The North Adams Historical Commission is the group of residents who work on behalf of the city to identify, protect, and highlight important historic resources. They do this through the historic survey and nomination process, providing comments about certain development projects, and by helping with broad engagement of residents and visitors in appreciating historic sites or districts. This group, however, sometimes works in relative isolation from other city processes and with little to no resources to support their volunteer work. Moving forward, the city will work to integrate historic preservation and the Historical Commission into the work, trainings, and awareness of related boards and departments such as the tourism office, public works department, and planning and zoning boards. It will also better support the work of the Historical Commission as it relates to the successful implementation of the goals and policies of this comprehensive plan.

#### **Policy HP 1.1: Maintain and expand historic inventory and listing activity.**

Historic resource inventories are the foundation of preservation planning for any community. Only after resources have been identified can they be prioritized, listed, and protected through a variety of means. The city will work to update, expand and make widely available inventory and survey information by pursuing the following actions.

##### **Action A: Bring All Existing Surveys Up-to-Date**

The city has numerous surveys completed for historic sites, most of which were completed in the mid-1980s. While there is no exact expiration, thirty years is almost certainly too far out-of-date. It is considered good practice to update the inventories to capture changing conditions such as modifications, demolitions, or additional properties that would have become age-eligible for surveys. The North Adams Historical Commission has is conducting survey updates. This work should continue to be supported.

##### **Action B: Identify and Prioritize Additional Survey Areas or Resource Types**

The city has many areas that likely have historic properties which have never been surveyed. This includes many neighborhoods or sites from the turn of the last century as well as post-WWII era construction which may now be eligible for historic listing.



*Natural bridge State Park (left) and MASS MoCA (right) are both great examples of how historic resources can become quality of life amenities and tourism draws to increase economic activity.*

**Action C: Identify Ongoing Revenue Sources to Fund Survey Work**

Identify and pursue resources to support new and updated survey work on an annual or biennial basis. This should include pursuing grants such as the Mass Historical Commission matching grant for survey work, among others, to defray the cost. In the recent past it has been challenging to provide required matching funds for state grants to conduct inventories; a consistent funding source for this activity will ensure it proceeds on a regular basis.

**Action D: Make Historic Inventories Available Online**

Support the North Adams Historical Commission's efforts to make inventories available electronically. This will make information readily accessible to property owners and community members. A lack of understanding about the significance of a property may lead to the loss of its integrity and value.

**Action E: Map Historic Resources**

Incorporate inventory information into city Geographic Information Systems (GIS) as that capability is developed. Mapping available information can help plan for historic resources in a comprehensive manner, by providing tools to identify under-recognized neighborhoods or types of buildings, or areas which are most in need of updated inventories.

**Action F: Pursue Regional Survey Partnerships**

Collaborate with other local historical commissions or historical societies to identify multi-jurisdictional or regional survey needs and jointly pursue survey applications. Such efforts can help streamline the process to hire consultants, reduce cost, and allow the city to link and discuss resources by type across municipal boundaries. This broader thinking can help support the area's heritage tourism development.

**Policy HP 1.2: Integrate the Historical Commission into larger city government functions and decision-making.**

The reuse, modification, and maintenance of historic properties and landscapes in the city involves and impacts the work of numerous agencies, departments, boards, and commissions. The city will work to strengthen channels of communication across all impacted parties and cultivate a common preservation ethic in the city.

**Action A: Increase the Capacity of the North Adams Historical Commission**

Ensure that commission appointments include persons with appropriate skills and professional experiences including architects, restoration contractors, historians, archivists, and also overlapping membership with the North Adams Historical Society, Inc. The commission's most important goal is the preservation of the community's historic places. The purpose of a local historical commission is to work toward this goal by planning and implementing programs for the identification, evaluation, and protection of its community's historical resources.

Allocate municipal staff time to support appropriate efforts of the North Adams Historical Commission. Depending on the specific needs of the Commission, the Office of Community Development or the Building Department can provide support. Professional assistance and internal coordination, and information sharing among municipal departments can help advance the work of the Commission in an efficient manner. This may require in-house education on linking and supporting efforts.

**Action B: Historic Preservation Tools and Techniques Education and Outreach**

Develop targeted education for the public and municipal leaders about measures for protection of historic resources. Introduction of demolition delay, local historic districts and other protective measures will certainly require multiple levels of education. Any efforts should underscore the broad historic resources and the benefits of preservation.

## **GOAL HP 2: RETAIN AND MAINTAIN THE HISTORIC FABRIC OF THE CITY TO THE GREATEST EXTENT FEASIBLE**

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The protection, promotion and enhancement of the physical historic and cultural resources throughout the city require a coordinated effort. The following are policies and actions which address the needs and opportunities to maintain the city's existing historic fabric.

### **Policy HP 2.1: Implement municipal bylaws and policies to protect historic resources from irrevocable harm.**

There are a number of historic preservation bylaws and municipal practices which can be employed to help retain the historic fabric over time. A number of these should be considered as the city moves forward to revise its zoning ordinances.

**Action A: Adopt a Demolition Delay Bylaw**

Adopt a strong demolition delay bylaw for historically-significant structures in order to investigate and promote options for reuse prior to removal. The elimination of significant properties can cause irrevocable harm, as was evidenced during the period of Urban Renewal. Instituting a review process will provide opportunity to more comprehensively understand a building's contributions to the city and neighborhood and investigate alternatives to demolition. *Note: During the course of this plan's development, the City of North Adams enacted a 12 month Demolition Delay bylaw as an early implementation step. The City will need to continue education about Demolition Delay and its significance in historic preservation.*

**Action B: Adopt an Affirmative Maintenance Bylaw**

Reduce loss through demolition by neglect. When owners fail to maintain their property, the neighborhood, residents, and property values suffer. Support the city's current efforts to establish a type of affirmative maintenance bylaw to provide local regulatory authority over threatened buildings, including historically-significant ones, and mandate that owners take necessary actions toward stabilization. An affirmative maintenance bylaw provides local regulatory authorities with the ability to identify threatened buildings and have owners take necessary actions to stabilize and secure a building. Lowell, Massachusetts has an active affirmative maintenance bylaw. These can be tailored to specific districts or neighborhoods.

***Action C: Identify Buildings with Maintenance Concerns Early***

Encourage the North Adams Historical Commission to work with the Building Department to facilitate identification of early code violations in historic properties, and particularly in historic districts. Flagging sites of concern as early as possible may slow or stop the harmful process of neglect. Education and financing may be necessary to incentivize improvements.

***Action D: Identify Priority Areas to be Protected through a Local Historic District***

The strongest tool for preserving historic properties and districts is a local historic district. Local historic districts can protect the character of important areas through the use of design guidelines that seek to foster preservation and ensure compatible infill development projects. These can be applied to both residential and commercial areas, such as traditional Main Street downtowns.

***Action E: Identify Priority Areas to be Protected through Architectural Preservation Districts, aka Neighborhood Conservation Districts***

Less rigorous than a local historic district, a Neighborhood Conservation District establishes project review on additions, major alterations, demolition and new construction, for properties within a designated district. The ultimate goal of such a district is to ensure that defining characteristics of the neighborhood remain while allowing for sensitive change and development. A neighborhood conservation district offers greater range and flexibility than a locally designated historic district. They can be administered not just by historic preservation officials, but also planning or zoning personnel.

**Policy HP 2.2: Develop and make available financial incentives supporting historic property reinvestment in the city.**

Developing financial assistance mechanisms, particularly for private landowners, has been noted as a strong desire and need in the community. Though some private owners may recognize the significance of their historic properties, attaining the financial resources for their maintenance is challenging for many.

***Action A: Establish a Revolving Loan Fund***

Support current regional efforts to establish a Revolving Loan Fund for privately owned historic properties. Investigate the potential to establish a North Adams specific fund and consider expanding to cultural institutions and locally-owned commercial properties. Such an option would provide a direct funding source at low- or no-interest to encourage historic building reinvestment projects, facilitate their financing, and reduce the overall project cost.

## Key Tools and Techniques

Two key tools municipalities can pursue are Demolition Delay and Local Historic Districts. The Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) is the State Historic Preservation Office, which recommends that at a minimum, municipalities have a Demolition Delay ordinance to protect the most vulnerable historic assets. A local historic district is probably the strongest tool a community can enact for historic preservation; often local historic districts are confused with National Register Districts. The differences are described below.

### Demolition Delay – *The Details*

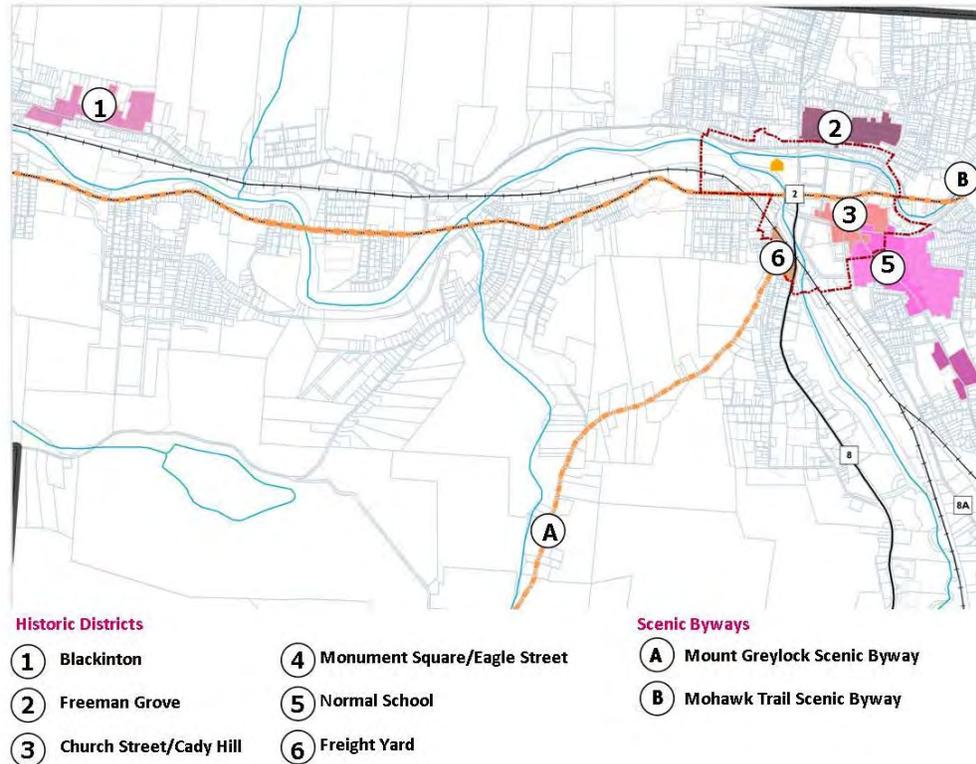
North Adams has a demolition delay bylaw, with a delay of twelve months. When a municipality has a Demolition Delay ordinance in place, it creates an opportunity to find alternative solutions to demolition. For example, in some places where Demolition Delay exists, property owners did not understand the building’s historical significance and importance to the community until their plans for demolition were publicly reviewed. During the delay period, the building owner, historical commission members, and appropriate municipal officials can explore opportunities to preserve or move the threatened building. A Demolition Delay ordinance should be specially tailored to the community. Established as a general ordinance requiring a simple majority vote of the City Council, it can be tailor-made to suit the municipality’s specific needs and wishes. The length of delay typically ranges from 6-12 months. The ordinance may apply to buildings of a certain age, those that are listed on the state or national historic register, or a combination of requirements. The delay is enacted if the Local Historical Commission determines that the building is preferably preserved. The Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) recommends an age-based requirement, in order to ensure comprehensive application, and a delay of at least 12 months.

### Local Historic Districts and National Register Districts – *What’s the Difference?*

In general, local historic districts are more effective at preventing inappropriate changes than National Register Districts. Local historic districts can protect the character of important areas through the use of design guidelines that seek to foster preservation and ensure compatible infill development projects. These can be applied to both residential and commercial areas, such as traditional Main Street downtowns.

<b>National Register District</b>	# in Massachusetts	<b>Local Historic District</b>
900+ (North Adams has 6)		200+ (North Adams has 0)
Federal designation process through the MHC. Won't pass if majority of property owners object.	Establishment	Specific steps outlined in MGL Ch. 40C; require 2/3 majority of City Council vote.
Massachusetts Historical Commission (State Historic Preservation Office)	Oversight	Local Historic District Commission
No state or federal involvement in the project (\$ or permitting) = no protections or limitations changes.	Property rights	Reviews exterior architectural changes visible from a public way for respect to historic character of district.
Promotion and appreciation of architectural heritage; minimal protections. Potential tax benefits for income-producing properties.	Benefits	LHD's have saved historic structures, neighborhoods and villages from inappropriate alterations and demolition.

Figure 8: Historic Districts and Scenic Byways in and Around Downtown



See also, Map 7 for a complete citywide map of historic and cultural resources.

### GOAL HP 3: MAXIMIZE THE BENEFITS OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION TO THE CITY'S ECONOMY

The protection, reuse, and promotion of the city's historic resources can positively contribute to the local economy. Zoning and tourism strategies which acknowledge and enhance historic resources should contribute to economic development. These efforts will rely on partnerships with the North Adams Historical Society, Inc., Office of Tourism, Office of Community Development, the North Adams Historical Commission, Berkshire Cultural Resource Center, and organizations and non-profits.

#### Policy HP 3.1: Promote and facilitate the sensitive and robust reuse of historic residential, commercial and industrial properties throughout the city.

The city's zoning code is in need of a comprehensive reiteration. Amendments have been made regularly to address immediate needs without the opportunity to holistically evaluate how effective or appropriate the zoning bylaws are. Conflicts exist where there is a mismatch between current zoning and development which occurred prior to that zoning. Ensure that historic preservation is a consideration in the development of updated zoning.

#### Action A: Include Up Zoning and Down Zoning in a Comprehensive Zoning Rewrite

A comprehensive zoning rewrite should consider the uses and required parcel dimensions of each zoning district in order to protect historic patterns and properties, as well as to allow for uses which contribute to more vibrant and active neighborhoods. The zoning processes are called up zoning and down zoning. See the call-out box, right, for more information on this process.

### **Policy HP 3.2: Integrate historic tourism into the city's overall culture and tourism strategy.**

Tourism can be for both the out-of-towner and the local resident – tourism activities in North Adams should support both user groups. There are many diverse offerings and organizations in the city that are engaged in cultural activities attractive to tourists. However, there is a lack of coordination and support which makes it difficult to sustain these efforts.

#### ***Action A: Make the Historic Fabric of North Adams Part of a Wayfinding Campaign***

Develop a wayfinding campaign throughout the city, incorporating attractions such as MASS MoCA which helps to tell the story of North Adams' industrial heritage to its present-day cultural development. Underscoring the important roles historic properties play in defining the character of North Adams is vital in this effort to help visitors navigate the city in a meaningful way and to encourage residents to experience their community more profoundly.

#### ***Action B: Maintain and Enhance a Historical Museum***

The North Adams Historical Society, Inc. currently maintains the North Adams Museum of History and Science at the Western Gateway Heritage State Park. The city will ensure that a venue for local history remain, and explore ways to expand and enhance its reach. Expansions should include multi-media options such as video stations, digital tour companions, and virtual tours. Continue to promote current and future activities, including Berkshire Scenic Railway's train rides.

#### ***Action C: Support Efforts to Designate Downtown North Adams as a Cultural District***

Through an act of the State legislature in 2010, the Mass Cultural Council established a process for designating Cultural Districts. The intent of this designation is to strengthen the sense of place, stimulate local economic activity, and improve the personal experience of visitors and residents. The

#### *UP ZONING & DOWN ZONING*

These modifications are best implemented following a comprehensive planning process.

*Up Zoning:* Intensifying uses, decreasing dimensional requirements, allowing-mixed use (i.e. a building with retail, offices and housing) is called up zoning. This can help preserve historic resources if the new zoning requirements more closely align to the historic pattern of the area. Up zoning should permit positive adaptive reuse of buildings (i.e. conversions of large homes to Bed and Breakfasts), and provide for sensitive infill development.

*Down Zoning:* Modification of a zoning district to encourage less intense use and increasing the dimensional requirements of a parcel are part of down zoning. This approach can be used to protect historically sensitive areas from detracting development.

#### *Implementing Zoning Changes:*

Any change to zoning, including increasing or decreasing intensity requires a 2/3 affirmative vote of the City Council, following a report of the planning board and a public hearing.

historic fabric of North Adams contributes significantly to its potential as a Massachusetts Cultural District. This designation will bring attention to the City of North Adams as a tourist destination, rather than one or two individual sites. It will also build a case for applying to grant programs and focusing investment.



*The North Adams Public Library, a LEED Silver building, is a shining example of how historic buildings, including civic buildings, can be retrofitted to be energy efficient while retaining the historic integrity of the structure,*

**Policy HP 3.3: Support preservation and robust use of local landmarks and institutional uses.**

The city has a rich inventory of historic landmarks which create interesting spaces. These sites provide settings for local events, and when linked together (i.e. through tours), they can tell the larger story of the city or the region. The city should work to maximize the benefits of having these notable places.

***Action A: Develop Zoning to Protect Landmarks and Civic Uses***

Develop overlay districts where landmarks are clustered to protect their character-defining attributes and promote active uses in the surrounding areas. Areas such as the juncture of Church, Ashland, Eagle and Main Streets, offer a cluster of historic buildings, landmarks and vistas, which should be protected and enhanced where appropriate.

***Action B: Locate Cultural Activities within and around Historic Properties***

Encourage the location of cultural activities and events at historic properties (i.e. existing Eagle Street Beach Party); consider relocating popular events to such locations (i.e. Saturday Farmer's Market). Bringing as much foot traffic to these sites and encouraging residents and visitors to have a positive experience there will help build appreciation and stewardship.

***Action C: Call Attention to Lost or Hidden Historically Significant Sites***

There are a number of historic sites in North Adams which have been lost to time or development, or are obscured by existing conditions. Calling attention to these sites, such as Monitor Monument, where iron for parts of the Civil War ship, The Monitor, were made, or former Fort Massachusetts, offers additional opportunity to identify what makes North Adams distinctive. In particular, Monitor Park could serve as a linkage between MASS MoCA, downtown, and the Western Gateway Heritage State Park. Directly across the West Main Street from Monitor Park is the Scenic Byway kiosk which could be enhanced and used as a linkage between the sites.

## **GOAL HP 4: SET HISTORIC PRESERVATION PRACTICE AS A CORNERSTONE FOR AN OVERALL HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOODS STRATEGY**

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North Adams has ample historic resources within its boundaries, including homes, commercial buildings, monuments and public spaces. But the city was built for a much larger community, nearly twice its current population. There is an excess of housing, contributing to a high vacancy rate, and more infrastructure to maintain. Economic constraints of the population over recent decades have led to blighted buildings which are now difficult, if not impossible, to bring up to state building code. Residents and city administrators acknowledge these conditions require a balance of reinvestment and relinquishment (ex. demolition) of residential and institutional resources. Engaging in a deliberate process of prioritizing preservation and reinvestment will best utilize funding and protect valuable physical resources.

### **Policy HP 4.1: Facilitate Homeowner Access to Information on Historic Properties and Preservation Options**

Owners of historic homes may be unaware that their property is listed, particularly as ownership changes over time. Additionally, property owners may not be aware of sources of information on how to appropriately care for their home to maintain or even enhance its historic significance. This is especially challenging as new materials for historic renovations are constantly being developed to offer better appearance and performance.

#### ***Action A: Promote Publicly Available Information on Historic Properties***

Work with the North Adams Historical Commission and the North Adams Historical Society to make information available about historic properties throughout the city. Distributing existing inventory forms and promoting expanded, electronic versions when available will help owners understand, and hopefully protect, the historic value of their properties.

### **Policy HP 4.2: Promote and facilitate the purchase of and investment in historic properties in foreclosure or owned by the city.**

The city has a number of vacant and foreclosed properties within its neighborhoods that contribute to blight or are slated for eventual demolition. In some cases, these properties were seized for tax delinquency and are now the responsibility of the city. The city will work to highlight the historic merits of and promote private investment into these properties, where appropriate.

#### ***Action A: Create a Catalogue of Historic Homeownership Opportunities with a Financial Incentive***

Develop a catalog of vacant historic buildings available for renovation into homes. Feature pictures, critical information, and historic attributes. By utilizing marketing tools, the city can promote the redevelopment potential of these priority properties to local banks, real estate agents, and individuals. A financial incentive per unit (i.e. \$5-10,000) can further entice the purchase of these buildings.

#### ***Action B: Offer a Guide to Historic Housing Rehabilitation***

Develop and distribute a guide to the intricacies of historic home rehabilitation. This guide should address issues of maintaining key historic details, lead paint, energy efficiency, and specialty contractors. If North Adams designates one or more local historic districts, an additional guide should be developed to help owners understand the designation and make appropriate choices about their renovations.

## **GOAL HP 5: MAXIMIZE SOCIAL BENEFITS OF HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCE BENEFITS FOR THE COMMUNITY**

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### **Policy HP 5.1: Build community awareness and support for historic preservation.**

Because so much of the built environment in slow growing New England communities is historic, residents often take for granted the historic and architectural values that surround them. These can serve as a resource for education of all ages, job creation, and rebranding the city. The city will work to highlight and build community awareness and pride for its history and the great potential preservation offers the future of its built environment.

#### ***Action A: Encourage Local History in Elementary and Secondary Schools***

Expand and support efforts to teach local history in elementary and secondary schools. Continue to Provide a combination of bringing students to sites and providing materials and support for teachers to bring into the classroom. This will serve a two-fold purpose: it will enhance existing lessons (creating a 'tangible' history), and cultivate an appreciation of North Adams at an early age.

#### ***Action B: Support Local History at Institutions of Higher Learning***

Encourage continued and additional public history classes taught through MCLA, Berkshire Community College, and Williams College. There has been positive response to classes including local history taught at MCLA, and programs are expanding to offer education for teachers through these institutions. These are important opportunities to maintain for residents interested in developing a deep understanding of their local history and its connections to historic events and time periods.

Offer continuing education credits for professionals utilizing local architecture and other aspects of the built environment. Work with area educational institutions such as MCLA and Berkshire Community College to offer professional requirements locally in order to educate architects, planners and others about North Adams.

#### ***Action C: Offer Glimpses of City History on a Daily Basis***

Create opportunities for residents to learn about local history and culture through modest efforts such as signage and newspaper articles, historic building and home visits, and lectures. Integrating the history of North Adams into the daily lives of residents can help enrich lives and experiences. Utilizing many types of media and outlets will allow the message to reach a broader audience.

#### ***Action D: Continue and Enhance Historic Tours***

Continue to offer historic tours (walking and trolley) and support their enhancement. As part of a broader city branding and marketing strategy, enhancement and variation of the tours should be considered. A tour linking the historical resources, cultural developments, and natural resources of the community may be a model to consider. Incorporation of technology to supplement and expand existing tour options should be utilized.

#### ***Action E: Develop a Clearinghouse of Information about North Adams History***

There have been numerous projects developed (many at the college level) studying the history of North Adams. Often students or groups recreate past work because there is no central location for projects specific to the city. Developing a site where such information or links to it can be accessed would benefit future study and reduce the burden on residents or people acting as information resources.

#### ***Action F: Promote the Connection of Historic and Cultural Resources***

Connect historic and cultural resources within promotional materials and tours wherever possible; harness the broader audience for cultural attractions to provide information about the historic resources of the area. Making explicit the connections between cultural developments and the historic fabric of a place will enhance the visitor's and resident's experience and deepen their appreciation for North Adams.

## GOAL HP 6: SUPPORT REGIONAL PRESERVATION INITIATIVES AND ENSURE CITY IS WELL REPRESENTED

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### Policy HP 6.1: Support efforts to coordinate historic preservation initiatives and programs at the regional-scale.

Regional-scale historic preservation planning initiatives have begun to gain momentum over the past decade. The city has already benefited greatly from programs such as the federal Scenic Byways program which highlight Route 2 and the tour over Mount Greylock. The recently designated Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area, while stopping just south of the city, provides a regional resource and partner (Housatonic Heritage) to help link the city to regional historic tours and trails, such as the paper trail.

#### *Action A: Encourage a Revolving Loan Fund for Private Homeowners*

Participate in and support current regional efforts to establish a Revolving Loan Fund for private owners investing in historic properties. Research along the Mohawk Trail Scenic Byway showed that private homeowners hold responsibility for a majority of its historic resources, yet they have the fewest available financial resources. A feasibility study is underway for the development of a Revolving Loan Fund to offer low- or no-interest loans to these owners to support reinvestment along the byway. Route 2 in North Adams is one of the areas included in this pilot project.

#### *Action B: Participate in Scenic Byway Planning*

Continue and enhance involvement in scenic byway planning to make best use of this tourist activity and draw. The Mohawk Trail Scenic Byway and the Mount Greylock State Reservation Scenic Byway both have segments traveling through North Adams. The development of the Mount Greylock access trail from downtown North Adams will help capture these visitors.

#### *Action C: Support a Regional Historic Preservation Organization*

Participate in efforts to establish a regional organization dedicated to historic preservation in Berkshire County. Local Historical Commissions and local history organizations across the county support the creation of a group which would represent the regional interests of historic preservation organizations, providing technical assistance and coordination efforts. North Adams representatives should participate in this process to the extent possible.

## 7

# FOOD AND HEALTH

While the Berkshires as a region have a long tradition of agriculture, there is very limited agricultural activity remaining in North Adams. Some of this is due to the terrain, which affords limited opportunities; agricultural producing lands occupy only three percent of the total land area. This limited agricultural land supply has resulted in two trends in local food production: a strong relationship between farms in surrounding communities as the foodshed for the city through the farmers market and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) shares and a keen interest in urban gardening within city neighborhoods. The existing urban fabric of North Adams offers opportunities for creative reuse of old mill, church or school buildings and related infrastructure for the production, processing and distribution of food. Institutions and local non-profits have been active in identifying and promoting spaces for community gardens. North Adams is working as a community to actively address food access and equity through such efforts as the community garden program, Berkshire Food Project, Hoosac Harvest, and Northern Berkshire Community Coalition's Mass in Motion program. This section establishes goals for building a strong local food system in the city that facilitates access to healthy food for all residents.



## Related Maps

Map 8: Urban Agriculture

Located in Appendix C

## FOOD AND HEALTH GOALS, POLICIES AND ACTIONS

### GOAL FH 1: STRIVE TO INTEGRATE A ROBUST, LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM (PRODUCTION, DISTRIBUTION AND ACCESS) INTO EXISTING URBAN FABRIC

#### Policy FH 1.1: Promote urban farming and community gardening as a way to produce and distribute local, healthy foods in North Adams.

##### **Action A: Identify Viable Spaces for Urban Farming or Community Gardens**

Use existing property databases and develop additional site criteria to identify vacant or underused parcels suitable for urban agriculture or community gardens. Water access, for example, is very important for a community garden or urban farm to be productive and successful. Identify city-owned vacant lots that are viable spaces for community gardens or farmers without farms. Create an inventory of available parcels or lots accessible and searchable to the public. These spaces could be listed on match-making farmers websites to help highlight their availability and suitability for food production.

##### **Action B: Facilitate Use of City-Owned Vacant Parcels for Garden Spaces**

Use land holding techniques (e.g., land bank, land trust) to make city-owned vacant spaces affordable for food production. Cities such as Detroit have found success in land banking as a way to take ownership of vacant properties and encourage uses that offer community benefits, including community gardening and urban agriculture.

Create a process to proactively identify spaces owned by the city and suitable for community gardening and manage use, lease or purchase agreements between the City and community gardeners. Formulate standards of use (i.e., requiring raised beds, soil tests and organic maintenance) and use or lease agreements for these city-owned parcels. The Detroit Food Policy Council has helped identify best practices in terms of what such a process should look and feel like to community members. Other cities and towns have developed programs that encourage gardening and farming activities on city owned properties, including: The purchase of a lot; the purchase for nominal price of

vacant lots adjacent to an interested party's property; bid sales; or through a garden permit/Adopt-A-Lot Program. (See also Housing and Neighborhoods Chapter.)

**Action C: Align Regulations with Local Food Goals**

Ensure city regulations support neighborhood food production, such as front yard gardening, rooftop gardening or farming and beekeeping. Sometimes, existing zoning regulations make agricultural production challenging or impossible within town or city limits. Current zoning regulations in North Adams are relatively flexible in terms of food production—livestock, for example, is permissible with a lot size of two acres or larger and enclosure for the animals. The two acre lot size could be a challenge for neighborhoods with higher density and less space and residents who would like to keep a few chickens.

**Action D: Link Gardens to Education to Empower More People to Grow and Eat Fresh**

Identify partnerships between health and wellness organizations, community gardens, schools and institutions and food sites. Pursue ongoing and pilot projects that partner institutions with gardening and healthy food programs to North Adams food sites to ensure that all North Adams residents have access to healthy and local food from a variety of sources. Consider reuse of old mill or church buildings as a community kitchen to provide processing and cooking capacity to community partners.

**Action E: Incorporate Food Production in Affordable Housing Site Plans**

Incorporate productive food spaces into affordable housing opportunities as they are proposed and potentially developed in or around North Adams. Food Works at Two Rivers Center, in Montpelier, Vermont, helps to manage and maintain gardening programs at affordable housing communities in Central Vermont, providing residents with educational programs focused on food production and nutrition education. A similar concept applied locally could increase access to healthy, local food in some of North Adams' lower-income neighborhoods and increase access to food education throughout the year. Potential sites include Clark Biscuit, Mohawk Forest, Brayton Hill and Greylock Valley.

## GOAL FH 2: STRENGTHEN THE NORTH ADAMS ECONOMY THROUGH ITS FOOD SYSTEM

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**Policy FH 2.1: Encourage the growth of businesses that grow, distribute, process and sell local and healthy foods—especially those that offer healthy food access to low-income neighborhoods or areas designated as USDA Food Desert.<sup>1</sup>**

**Action A: Market and Site Analysis to Understand Business Development Options**

Value-added processing is a key way farmers can raise their profit margins, but the county currently lacks the infrastructure to support commercial-scale procession. The city and its partners should conduct a market study for local/regional food processing facility and community kitchen, cold storage and other food related infrastructure in northern Berkshire and southern Vermont area. Explore mill buildings and old church reuse as potential sites for these types of businesses, and promote these types of businesses as opportunities to promote North Adams as a great place to open and maintain a local business.

**Action B: Consider Growing and Recruiting Food Related Anchor Businesses**

Continue partnering with 1Berkshire to identify and offer North Adams building stock as potential homes for business, specifically food and agriculture related businesses such as value added food

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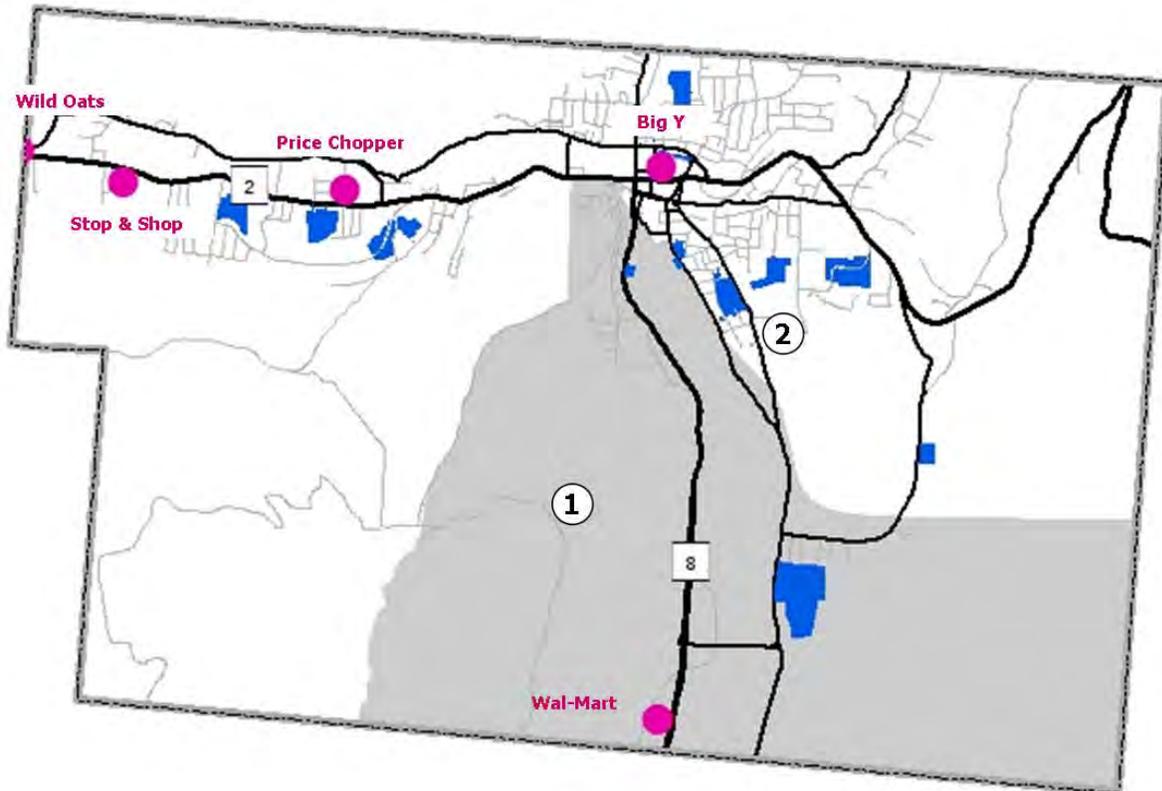
<sup>1</sup>USDA defines a "food desert" as an area where at least 500 people and/or 33% of the census tract population reside more than one mile from a supermarket or grocery store.

processing, production and distribution and composting. A food hub business that aggregates and distributes local produce, is one business identified as a missing piece in the food system.

**Action C: Encourage the Location of a Local Foods Market in North Adams**

Locating a health food store or a coop like Wild Oats Market in Williamstown or Berkshire Organics in Dalton would increase access to healthy, local foods. A pedestrian-friendly location would further enhance access. Potential locations already exist, identified as the area surrounding Heritage Park.

Figure 9: Food Desert and Community Garden Sites



**1 Food Desert**— A food desert, as defined by the USDA, is a low-income census tract in which a large number or share of residents have low access to a supermarket or large grocery store. At least 500 people, and/or 33% of the census tract population must reside more than one mile from a supermarket or grocery store. This low access can have negative health implications, as it can impede the purchase and consumption of fresh fruits, vegetables and whole, healthy foods. The North Adams neighborhoods of South Church Street, West Shaft Road, Church Street, State Street and Braytonville are shaded as a food desert. However, the recent location of a Super Wal-Mart may have resolved the food desert status by providing grocery access to that area of the city.

**2 Community Gardens**—there are a number of community gardens across the city. Some are tied to community kitchens to support meals, others are linked to a neighborhood to provide grow-your-own options for residents. These programs can be very valuable to enhancing nutrition and hunger, as well as providing space for hobby recreation and social interaction.

## GOAL FH 3: PROVIDE ACCESS TO HEALTHY, LOCAL FOOD FOR ALL NORTH ADAMS RESIDENTS

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**Policy FH 3.1: Promote pedestrian friendly locations for food outlets, including healthy food retail, farmers markets and community gardens within easy walking or cycling distance of low-income neighborhoods, work places and other gathering points.**

***Action A: Safe Routes to Food***

Work with regional and local entities to include proximity to food access points as a priority evaluation criterion in transportation planning considerations, including pedestrian improvement planning. Regional and local planners could either consider the potential to increase food access on a case-by-case basis, or create a toolkit or criteria matrix to help guide the inclusion of food access into transportation plans and projects, planning transportation for health. The Nashville, Tennessee Metropolitan Planning Organization, for example, prioritizes project investments with a 100 point criteria system. Sustainable Development, Multi-Modal Options and Health and Environment are 10 and 15 point categories, with food access falling into the health and environment category. They award points based on the proximity and number of food outlets in the area surrounding the proposed transportation system investment.

***Action B: Eliminate Food Desert***

Use incentives for businesses to site healthy food access points in neighborhoods identified as Food Deserts. Incentives can include expedited permitting or gap funding opportunities for businesses committed to increasing food access and promoting community health and wellness through their enterprise. This kind of effort could be in conjunction with economic development efforts.

***Action C: Relocate North Adams Farmers Market***

Identify a site for the North Adams farmers market that promotes pedestrian access for all North Adams residents, but especially low-income neighborhoods or areas identified as Food Deserts. Incorporate food and nutrition education into the new Farmers Market site through training workshops and food demos.

***Action D: Encourage Healthy Options in all Food Retail Sites***

Support Mass in Motion's Healthy Market initiative to make available and promote healthy options in "convenience stores" throughout North Adams.

**Policy FH 3.2: Enhance affordability and access of local, healthy food options for all North Adams residents.**

***Action A: Expand Retailer Options for Food Subsidy Program Recipients***

Enable and encourage use of Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT)/Women, Infants and Children (WIC) use at North Adams Farmers Market. While some vendors already accept EBT/WIC resources, not all do. It is also important that everybody with EBT/WIC benefits know that the North Adams Farmers Market does accept EBT/WIC, so marketing and outreach is a key element in further promoting healthy, local food access through outreach and communication. Work with the North Adams WIC office to encourage the use of these benefits at the Farmers Market when consulting with users.

***Action B: Continue to Offer and Promote Healthy Food Purchase Incentives***

Investigate dollar stretching programs to incentivize the purchase of local, healthy food products at farmers markets and other food outlets (i.e., Double value coupon program or 'Fresh Bucks' – multiplies value of federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits). Wholesome Wave is one example of a doubling program for farmers markets.

***Action C: Offer 'Fruit and Vegetable Prescription Program'***

With health care shifting increasing focus to preventative health programs, the city and hospital should look for opportunities to forge a collaboration to promote healthy eating as a health care step. Local health care providers could encourage the purchase of fresh fruit and vegetables through coupons, cost-sharing or subsidizing and partnerships between health clinics and food outlets.

***Action D: Continue to Support Subsidized CSA Share Programs***

There are good examples of subsidized or donated community supported agriculture (CSA) shares in the region, such as Berkshire Grown's 'Share the Bounty' program and its north Berkshire presence Hoosac Harvest. Community service groups could partner to support this program and expand its ability to provide shares to city residents.

***Action E: Create Mobile Food Options***

Explore mobile food access opportunities, such as a Veggie Mobile, a Farm-to-Family drop-off system, or a work-place delivery system such as that piloted through Berkshire Organics and North Adams Regional Hospital before its closure. The Capital District Community Garden Veggie Mobile brings fresh and local (as available) produce to neighborhoods throughout the Albany, NY region. They offer food and cooking demos using ingredients available from the veggie mobile. Each of these should accept SNAP/WIC benefits in North Adams, and should be sure to address need and demand in all neighborhoods.

***Action F: Healthy Cooking Training for Food Service Employees***

Increase food and nutrition education and training opportunities at pantries, schools, and in elder service programs such as Meals on Wheels and senior meal program at All Saints Church. There are many resources for cooking locally and seasonally, including a Mass Farm to School cookbook that helps take the guesswork out of meeting food requirements in a school setting. Vermont FEED also has existing resources that could be of use and value in North Adams Public Schools. Trainings could be an activity in a processing and/or community kitchen facility.

***Action G: City-MCLA Garden Partnership***

Pursue collaboration with MCLA to integrate larger North Adams community into its garden program through work shares or other agreements. Cultivate a partnership that benefits MCLA staff and students as well as North Adams residents through the sharing of a community garden. Identifying a "summer care" agency to transition gardens through vacation months will enhance sustainability and capacity.

***Action H: Promote Food Education to Facilitate Healthy Eating Behaviors***

Education is a critical element in promoting healthy, local eating behaviors. Incorporating activities and projects into school curriculum is a way to introduce it; parallel efforts in the cafeteria and at home reinforce healthy food behaviors. Vermont FEED (Farm to School Education Every Day!) is a good example of how federal agencies, non-profits and schools can collaborate to integrate farm to school and food education into the classroom and cafeteria.

### **Policy FH 3.3: Support food assistance sites, such as pantries and meal locations, in providing local, healthy foods.**

***Action A: Increase Presence of Local Food in Emergency Food Options***

Coordinate gleaning partnerships between area farms and local pantries and meal sites and the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts. Gleaning is the collection of left over product from agricultural fields after harvest.

- Partner with Hoosac Harvest to strengthen existing program with colleges and churches and identify new opportunities.
- Promote 'grow an extra row' partnerships – identify new opportunities for such programs.
- Partner with Mass in Motion and Hoosac Harvest to recruit volunteers for a 'grow an extra row' program.

- Consider school gardens as sources for pantry or meal site foods.
- Assist food pantries and kitchens with the sourcing of local food products, emphasizing fresh vegetables or fruit.
- Encourage pantries or food sites to purchase a CSA share, or enter into a purchasing contract with a farmer, or accept donations by individuals and businesses.
- Facilitate subsidized shares or direct contracts between farms and food assistance sites.

***Action B: Increase Exposure to Healthy Food***

Promote food and nutrition education at food assistance sites: Provide tasting samples and recipes to those waiting for food at pantries and meal sites, or food demos. Coordinate efforts with food pantries to encourage and raise awareness for healthy donation options during Postal Food drive as well as other food drives.

***Action D: Season Extension***

Promote seasonal extension methods to ensure year-long access to fresh fruit and vegetables—i.e., mobile fruit and vegetable processing unit for flash freezing bulk items for institutions and food pantries or kitchens. This can be done in bulk at the food processing facility in Greenfield. Also, consider partnerships that provide storage opportunities to enhance capacity for keeping and serving fresh, local foods at food assistance sites in North Adams.

**Policy FH 3.4: Enhance existing opportunities for healthy and local foods at local restaurants, stores and other market outlets.**

***Action A: Partner with Northern Berkshire Community Coalition’s Mass in Motion Program to Assist Local or Neighborhood Stores in Stocking Fresh, Healthy Foods***

Identify ongoing programs and funding opportunities to assist smaller stores in stocking healthy foods, and promoting the purchase and consumption of healthier foods through signs, coupons and in-store promotions. Capital District Community Gardens, in Albany, New York, has a program called the Healthy Convenience Store Initiatives, in which they install refrigerator units in neighborhood stores, and stock with healthy food options twice a week, and work with owners to limit price mark-up. Partner with Northern Berkshire Community Coalition and Mass in Motion (MiM) to enroll convenient stores in MiM activities, including the provision and promotion of healthier foods and consumer food and nutrition education. This should be prioritized in low-income or food desert areas.

***Action B: Augment Awareness of and Use of SNAP or WIC Benefits at the North Adams Farmers Market***

Partner with Northern Berkshire Community Coalition’s Mass in Motion (MiM) Program to increase benefits utilized and spent at the North Adams Farmers Market by increasing awareness and resources. Encourage outreach and information campaigns, and provide assistance where applicable.

***Action C: Encourage Healthy and Fresh Food Options in Local Restaurants—from the local pizza shop to higher end or specialty restaurants.***

Work with local restaurants to offer and promote healthy dining out options. In the central Berkshires, Tri-Town Health is responsible for the Healthy Dining Program. This program includes 60 eateries and institutions that create menus focused on encouraging healthy eating habits. Through this program, restaurants commit to designating nutritional information for each menu item, making salt shakers available by customer request, banning trans fat,, reducing portion size, offering gluten free substitutions and providing low fat or non-dairy options when milk is offered as a beverage.

## GOAL FH 4: INCREASED OPPORTUNITIES FOR HEALTH AND WELLNESS IN NORTH ADAMS SCHOOLS AND INSTITUTIONS

### Policy FH 4.1: Promote health and nutrition through better eating and other wellness activities in and around North Adams schools and institutions.

#### *Action A: Promote Partnerships for Healthful Eating in City Institutions*

Collaborate with dietitians and local health care providers to design healthier menus in the hospital cafeteria, as well as in other institutional cafeterias, including day care sites and senior centers.

#### *Action B: Support Education and Career Development Focused on Agriculture and Food Systems, including Food Preparation, Value-added Processing, Nutrition and Hospitality*

Explore partnership or collaboration potential with McCann Technical School, specifically its Culinary Arts program. Find out whether they use local food, emphasize healthy cooking and if a pilot program in which Culinary Art students teach community members how to cook with local, healthy food could be a viable pilot project. Other potential partners include Louison House, Turner House, and correctional community service.

#### *Action C: Encourage Opportunities for Youth Training and Participation with Local Partners*

Identify opportunities for ‘Guest Chefs’, ‘Guest Farmers’ or Junior Iron Chef Competition at institution cafeterias, including MCLA and North Adams schools. Identify fundraising and other resource opportunities.

#### *Action D: Encourage Healthy and Local Foods in Cafeteria Settings*

Create a ‘Veggie or Fruit of the Month’ program to introduce healthy and local food products in cafeteria settings – highlight the product, distribute recipes.

#### *Action E: Explore Municipal Purchasing Arrangements between City Programs and Local Food Suppliers*

Expanding food options and enhancing local economic relationships between the City and food suppliers.

#### *Action F: Provide Municipal Support for School Wellness Programs*

Assist the Northern Berkshire Community Coalition’s Mass in Motion program with coordinating school wellness programs, including nutrition, with the school wellness committee.

### Policy FH 4.2: Promote local foods in the North Adams education system, and reduce non-healthy food options.

#### *Action A: Provide Municipal Support where Possible for School Gardens*

Promote school gardens as opportunities for education and food production. Make school gardens a dedicated budget line. Consider ways to ensure that the garden programming remains active even in summer months, like Project Sprout at Monument Mountain High School. Consider low-cost tools for weather

#### *From Farm to School*

Two organizations in Massachusetts assist in bringing food and agriculture into the cafeteria and classroom.

[The Massachusetts Farm to School Project](#) facilitates sustainable purchasing relationships between local institutions and local farms. It offers trainings to institutional food services and farm-to-institution matchmaking. The organization already works with the Northern Berkshire Community Coalition Mass in Motion program to help connect community to healthy food and bring more local foods to North Adams schools. Through a USDA grant, the organization was able to work with Crosby Elementary School in Pittsfield to launch a school garden program, and work with the food services director to purchase and provide local foods in the cafeteria. This grant was targeted to assist low-income school districts.

[Massachusetts Agriculture in the Classroom](#) is a non-profit organization that provides agricultural education training for teachers and other educators, helping students identify the connections between foods, fibers and other agricultural products they use. Massachusetts Agriculture in the Classroom connects these lessons to state curriculum frameworks. The organization provides mini-grants, skills workshops and demonstrations for teachers and other educators to bring new lessons and skills into their classrooms and schools.

protection and season extension, such as hoop houses.

***Action B: Encourage Healthy Local Food Options in Schools through Both Cafeteria Service and Curriculum Development***

Increase in-class and at-lunch food education in North Adams schools, and encourage in-school curriculum that promotes the value of horticulture and nutritional value of fruit and vegetables. Work with the school district and independent or charter schools to integrate activities and lessons into curriculum that emphasize healthy eating and food production.

***Action C: Continue Provide Technical Assistance for North Adams Schools Interested in School Gardens***

Identify schools with an active interest and suitable site for a school garden. Develop a toolkit for schools interested in hosting a school garden: what is needed to start and maintain a successful school garden? What are good site characteristics? Explore partnership opportunities so that the space remains maintained during vacation periods, and the fruit or vegetables not wasted. Potential partners include the Massachusetts Farm to School Project, Northern Berkshire Community Coalition's Mass in Motion program, the Massachusetts Agriculture in the Classroom group, and the North Adams School District.

***Action D: Encourage Schools to Identify Funding Opportunities for School Gardens from a Variety of Funding Sources, including Public and Private Entities***

Identify funding opportunities for school gardens within North Adams. Actively seek opportunities to fund school gardens, in the form of grants as well as technical assistance or in-kind donations.

***Action E: Promote Healthy Vending Opportunities in North Adams Schools and MCLA***

Identify opportunities for fresh and healthy vending opportunities, including vegetables, fruit, and dairy products around the MCLA campus.

***Action F: Help Connect North Adams with Partners to Increase the Range of Snacks Available within City Schools***

Encourage North Adams schools to offer healthy food options along with or instead of conventional vending machine snacks. Potential partners include Massachusetts Farm to School.

***Action G: Encourage Sharing and Promotion of Nutrition and Physical Activity Best Practices at North Adams Schools***

Partner with local health care providers and experts to bring best practices into schools through class room visits, field trips and integration into curriculum.

***Action H: Establish a Working Group of Food Service Directors, Superintendents and other School Stakeholders to Address Farm to School Opportunities and Challenges***

Coordinate working meetings with food service directors to share ideas, challenges and solutions to getting more local food in schools, in partnership with Massachusetts Farm-to-School.

***Action I: Implement a Pilot Farm to Cafeteria Project: Identify a Grower and Institution Interested in Testing out Contractual Growing***

Assist school system in reviewing options and testing priority 'local first' sourcing for cafeteria food. Work with Massachusetts Farm to School to develop a pilot farm to cafeteria program at a North Adams school to encourage other schools to participate.

***Action J: Include Garden Mosaics Service Learning Program as a Fixed Item in the School Budget to Encourage Sustained Capacity***

***Garden Mosaics***

A collaboration between North Adams Public Schools, the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts, and the Growing Healthy Gardening program, Garden Mosaics has coordinated curriculum, teachers and students to build community gardens through North Adams: Drury, Brayton, Sullivan and Greylock. There are also community sites at Sperry Avenue, River Street and the Berkshire Food Project. Students use skills learned in class to design raised beds, plant, maintain and harvest the gardens. Other activities include rainwater harvesting and composting. They also have helped prepare and serve food from the gardens at community meal sites

Dedicate school budget item for Garden Mosaics service learning gardening program.

***Action K: Promote Healthy Eating and Living through a Variety of Media***

Use public resources, like Channel 22 (public access television) to promote healthy food behaviors. Offer information about healthy eating behaviors, and how to prepare local, healthy foods as part of Channel 22 programming. Support initiatives such as the Mayor’s Fitness Challenge.



*Community gardens are a great way to make productive use of otherwise vacant parcels in the city while also contributing more local food into the food system.*

**Policy FH 4.3: Integrate food and agriculture planning efforts into broader policy and governance conversations.**

***Action A: Be an Active Advocate in Ongoing Work of the Massachusetts Food Policy Council***

Participate in the upcoming statewide food and agriculture plan to be led by the Food Policy Council. The Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs is leading efforts, through the Massachusetts Food Policy Council, to develop a statewide strategic food systems plan. North Adams should explore opportunities for participation and eventual implementation items that develop from the planning process.

***Action B: Develop Working Group, such as a North Adams Food Policy Council or North Adams Health and Wellness Council, Representing a Full Cross-section of Local and Regional Government***

The council could include members of the planning department, health department, community and economic development departments, recreation, school districts, and institutions or organizations working with food or agriculture related projects to continue and prioritize food and agriculture action items and implementation.

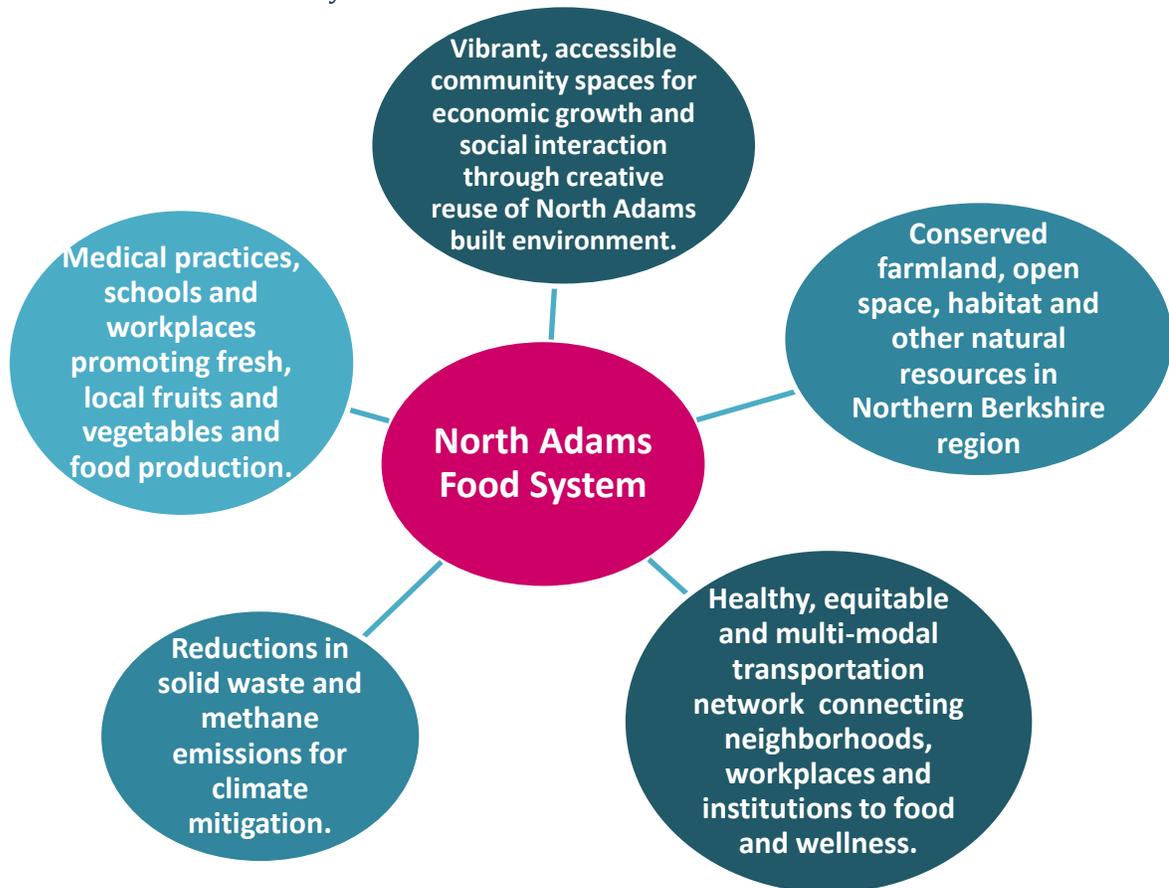
***Action C: Leverage Local and Regional Assets to Grow and Sustain Community Food System Initiatives***

Actively collaborate with local foundations to support community engagement, evaluation activities and longer-term coordination of food system strategies. Actively seek funding opportunities and partnership opportunities through State agencies and regional foundations and non-profit organizations.

**Action D: Use Food System-related Actions to Help Achieve Open Space, Transportation, Land Use, Community and Economic Development, Housing, Natural Resource and Solid Waste Goals of Comprehensive Plan, and Vice Versa**

When implementing strategies from other comprehensive plan elements, consider how these actions will enhance or detract from the North Adams food system. When implementing food related strategies consider how impacts could extend beyond the food system and offer cross-cutting solutions. For example: a pedestrian and bike path between North Adams and Williamstown slated for 2014 will increase safe food access for low income residents in North Adams lacking independent transportation while also increasing access to recreation and transportation.

Figure 10: North Adams Food System



## GOAL FH 5: PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE METHODS OF FOOD PRODUCTION AND FOOD WASTE MANAGEMENT

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### Policy FH 5.1: Encourage sustainable gardening and agriculture practices through community education opportunities and outreach.

#### *Action A: Partner with Local and State Institutions and Organizations to Provide Gardening Workshops*

Many organizations and institutions within Berkshire County provide training and education related to sustainable gardening and agriculture. Partnering with interested groups provides opportunity for broad community exposure to workshops, seminars and other valuable resources. Local colleges, Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR), Berkshire Grown, Berkshire Botanical Garden, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), UMass Extension, 4-H, etc. offer such resources.

#### *Action B: Consider Possible Partnership with Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts*

Ongoing efforts continue to promote community engagement through food producing gardens. A partnership with MCLA could provide opportunities for community outreach and education, and student opportunities for service learning and wider integration into the city and community of North Adams.

### Policy FH 5.2: Reduce food waste.

#### *Action A: Synchronize Local Efforts to Address and Meet State Regulations Regarding Food Waste*

Work to implement regulations such as the proposed Department of Environmental Protection policy requiring hotels, food waste processors and large institutions generating large volumes of food waste to compost – proposed regulations targets diverting at least 35% of source separated organics from disposal by 2020. Identify largest producers of food waste, and facilitate the siting and regulation of composting facilities where suitable. Look to other cities that have implemented composting programs, including curbside compost pick up. Conduct education and outreach so that residents understand the benefits of composting and best composting practice. Consider a city-wide, public and private pick-up enterprise.

#### *Action B: Work with Schools and Institutions to Implement Composting Program*

Publicize existing projects and build on past efforts of local institutions who are trying to implement sustainable practices. North Adams Regional Hospital, for example, and its 'Green Team' provided positive and realistic examples of institutions implementing sustainable practices. Berkshire Health Systems has made similar strides with Berkshire Medical Center in Pittsfield.

#### *Action C: Consider Food Waste as a Potential Energy Resource within the City of North Adams*

Work to identify other uses of food waste besides composting: Energy generation via anaerobic digestion is one example of an alternative use for food waste, and feasible at facilities such as the waste water treatment plants like the one in North Adams.

***Action D: Support Investment in Organics Infrastructure—for the Collection and Hauling of Organic Materials.***

The city of North Adams can look for and pursue funding or technical assistance opportunities to implement an organics infrastructure throughout the city, and partner with organizations already committed to food waste reduction and recycling, such as MCLA. A start-up business in Pownal, Vermont, TAM Waste Management could also provide capacity.

***Action E: Support Targeted Business Development to Create New and Green Jobs in Food Waste Reduction and Recycling***

Promoting entrepreneurial opportunity in food waste reduction and recycling (like the Pedal People in the Pioneer Valley, or the Vermont Composting Company) could lead to employment opportunity and job development for residents interested in organic, sustainable horticulture and agriculture practice.