

NORTH ADAMS VISION 2030: NEIGHBORHOOD MEETINGS SUMMARY

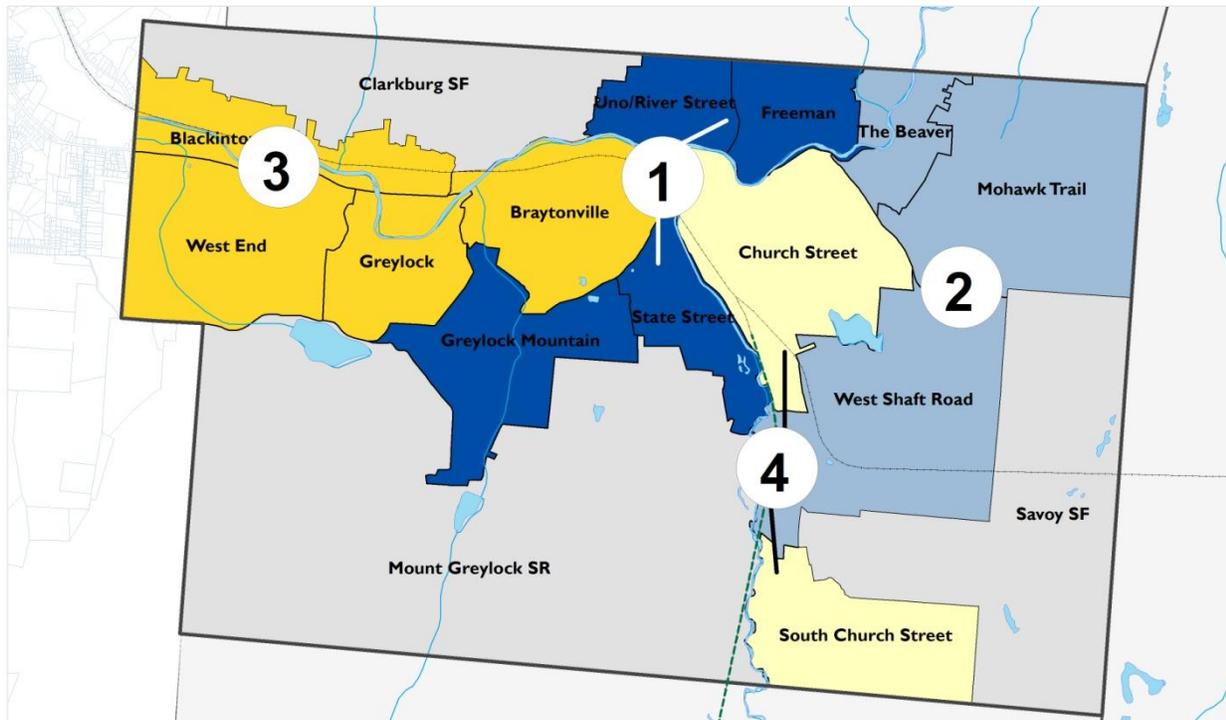
October 2-22, 2013

OVERVIEW

Four meetings were held in October 2013 to gather input from residents on their neighborhood – what it’s like and what could make it even better - for the city’s comprehensive plan, *North Adams Vision 2030*, was structured as a two-hour interactive event. The meetings grouped several neighborhoods together and asked residents to attend the meeting for their area, but the format was kept flexible, with materials from other neighborhoods on hand to capture comments as needed. Comments were received on twelve of the 13 neighborhoods in the city.

Eighty adults and approximately 20 children participated in the meetings, which were set up as a drop-in style open house to accommodate busy schedules and parents with kids. Pizza and sodas were served and kids had toys and art activities to keep them busy while their parents talked with neighbors and provided input. Mayor Richard Alcombright, Mike Nuvallie, Community Development Director and Mackenzie Greer, City Planner also attended. The meeting was organized and facilitated by a team of Berkshire Regional Planning Commission staff (Amy Kacala, Project Manager and Senior Planner and Gwen Miller, Planner) and Northern Berkshire Community Coalition staff (Annie Rodgers and Amanda Chilson).

Neighborhoods



OPEN HOUSE STATIONS AND FINDINGS

Three “stations” were available to capture input and ideas, with post-it notes and markers to write or draw ideas on posters and maps:

Station 1. What makes your neighborhood special?

- What do you love about your neighborhood?
- What words would you use to describe your neighborhood?

Station 2. What would make your neighborhood even better?

- **Sense of community:** Are your neighbors friendly? Do you feel safe in your neighborhood?
- **Active lifestyle:** Is it easy to get around without a car? Is it easy to access fresh, healthy food in your neighborhood? Is there space to play or relax?
- **Housing:** Is there housing opportunity in your neighborhood? Are there more nice houses, or more houses that need help?
- **Amenities and Services:** Do you feel that your neighborhood gets the help it needs?
- **Transportation/Parking:** Is it easy to park in your neighborhood? Do you like to bike or walk to key destinations outside of your neighborhood? What are your streets and sidewalks like?
- **Other:** Is your neighborhood too quiet? Do you wish there were more neighborhood potlucks, etc?

Station 3. If you could have anything, or do anything, what would it be?

2. WHAT WOULD MAKE YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD EVEN BETTER?

The second station asked for more targeted input and suggestions on what residents thought would most improve their neighborhood. These fell into 10 general categories:

Top Ten Priority Topics	Suggested Solutions
<p>1. Amenities and options to foster more activity and interaction</p> <p>Residents had a multitude of ideas about amenities that would encourage more community interaction. The history and culture of the area is important to residents, along with carving out community spaces and places for physical activity.</p>	<p>Physical Activity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skateboard park • Water park • Create a dog park • Convert Olympia plaza into a park • Linear park utilizing levees on east and west bank with access to bridge at south of levees to make a loop • Track and field • Public pool • Bike lanes • Bike repair station • Scenic secondary bike path along river • Upgrade aging playgrounds and parks • Additional hiking trails • Create paths/walking areas through yards • More paid positions for activities, management, and personnel to provide structured recreational activities at our public parks • Create an open activity arena • Reservoir recreation walking loop • Appalachian Trail awareness • Extend Cascades trail up Greylock • Glamping sites • Use Windsor Lake as a skating rink in the winter <p>Arts, culture, & other recreation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walking tours through the area • Create a sculpture garden • Antique mall • NAPL offer tours to highlight history of Blackinton; create Blackinton History Week • Outdoor amphitheater • Museum of War History • Houghton Mansion history and ghost story/folk legend tours • Annual home garden tours, with proceeds supporting local gardening efforts • Historic house tours, with proceeds supporting historical society • Nature walks along the river with a naturalist • Community brick oven fire pit • Outdoor dance floor and band stand

Top Ten Priority Topics	Suggested Solutions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community gardens and compost • Street festivals • Support community kitchens and year-round farmers market • Science or children’s museum • Botanical garden • Wishing well/fountain with all donations going to community projects • Create an edible fruit and nut forest • Create restaurants along the Hoosic River • Pool hall
<p>2. Crime</p> <p>Residents concerned about home break-ins and the safety of city streets. In addition to greater street patrol, residents suggested a variety of other no- or low-cost alternatives (e.g. neighborhood crime watch groups, streetlights, and college intern programs)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Larger crime watch coordination among residents, organizations, and the city • Additional streetlights • Police sub-station • Street patrol; bike squad police • Youth/college internship to improve crime watch • Encourage residents to call police when they see suspicious activity • Make city unattractive to thieves • Increase awareness of locks, alarms, and safety. Encourage residents to take care of their property • Relocate Section 8 tenants to individual landlords
<p>3. Building a Stronger Sense of Community</p> <p>Though many residents consider their neighbors to be friendly, they admit rarely having the opportunity to interact. Neighborhood associations, community events, and potlucks were often mentioned. Residents expressed interest in watching out for their neighbors.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Block parties; regular neighborhood street parties; potlucks • Create neighborhood associations • Establish a neighborhood exchange (i.e. people wanting someone to rake leaves could find a neighbor to do this, either volunteer or for pay) • Reach out to shut-in/elderly neighbors. Setup daily neighborhood phone check-in • Neighborhood space for community meetings • Promote “no tech” weeks
<p>4. Sidewalk Condition</p> <p>Residents are concerned about the poor condition of sidewalks, particular in winter months, but also expressed a desire for creation of new sidewalks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create more sidewalks (near Natural Bridge) • Update unsafe sidewalks • Remove trees that are tearing up the sidewalk and replace with dwarf trees • Enforce sidewalk snow clearance law • Use Mike Deep’s land as an activity center for schools
<p>5. Speeding/Traffic Calming</p> <p>Again and again the complaint came up that people drive too fast on city streets and do not obey all traffic laws. Residents are interested in increasing law enforcement and implementing a variety of traffic calming measures.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear and direct signage • Speed bumps (near Houghton St playground) • Convert to one way streets (Brooklyn St) • Calm traffic on Route 2 • No texting and talking on the phone while driving • Police enforcement of traffic laws • Use cameras for speeding tickets? • Redesign monument square crosswalks • Install roundabout at Church/Main/East Main intersection • Add traffic flow sign at monument

Top Ten Priority Topics	Suggested Solutions
<p>6. Anti-blight</p> <p>Residents are quick to point out blighted properties. Through art and landscaping projects and neighborhood cleanups, residents hope to reclaim their city and make it a better place to live.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demolish blighted properties • Community gardens • General neighborhood cleanups • Neighborhood volunteer force to beautify public spaces and keep them clean • Adopt-A-Block program – work with city on graffiti removal, other repairs and cleaning • Open vacant lots to the public • Encourage more flowers and plantings along Route 2 • Place decorated “artist palette” sculptures on railroad beams around city • Place gnomes around city • Hire artist to paint old electrical boxes
<p>7. Transportation & Parking</p> <p>Certain neighborhoods have an abundance of parking while others struggle with parked cars blocking the pedestrian sidewalks. Similarly, different neighborhoods have varying levels of walkability.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a parking management study • Police enforce parking laws • Add bus stop at the YMCA • Ensure rental conversions have sufficient parking
<p>8. Kid/Family friendly spaces</p> <p>Families are interested in attending events and in having safe spaces for their children to play and learn.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage MCLA to have a greater role in providing structured recreational activities for neighborhood youth • Neighborhood playgrounds • More family-friendly events • Neighborhood branch libraries, small free libraries • Ensure playgrounds and parks are safe for children
<p>9. Improving housing stock/increasing investment in properties</p> <p>While residents believe that the city’s housing stock is in good condition overall, there seemed to be at least a few properties in poor condition in most neighborhoods. Residents desired responsive, local landlords and had creative ways to increase property investment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attract new young professional families who are inspired to fix up run-down houses • Curb out of town landlords • Communal living co-housing projects • Use houses of historic design as city cultural tourist attraction. Financial support to maintain and fines for not maintaining.
<p>10. Communications with City</p> <p>Residents desire to stay abreast of all neighborhood developments and to be a part of planning their neighborhoods. They want to be informed through a variety of outlets.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep public informed of everything happening in their neighborhoods (e.g. development plans, brownfield site status, crime statistics) using multiple channels • Engage in more outreach to community members for public input forums and planning meetings • Better use of automatic safety communication
<p><i>MISC – general health of the community</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make all amenities fully accessible to the entire community • Mobile outreach to improve access to key services (medical, food pantry, library) • Community health center • Dialogue with private housing sector regarding implementation of smoke-free apartment policy • Establish a building code for assisted living

Which priorities were raised most often?

The priorities listed above, are described in the order of frequency with which they were raised. The topic most discussed in neighborhood discussions as “what would make it even better” were new or enhanced amenities of social opportunities to help foster a stronger shared sense of community. The table below shows how different issues were more or less emphasized among the 13 neighborhoods.

		Blackinton	West End	Greylock	Greylock Mtn.	Braytonville	State Street	UNO/River	Freeman	Church St	Beaver	Mohawk Trail	West Shaft Rd	S. Church St
1	Adding new amenities and options to foster more activity and interaction	•	●			●	•	●	•	●	•	•	•	
2	Reducing crime			●	•	•		•		●			●	
3	Building a stronger sense of community where know and interact with neighbors more			•		●		●	•	●		•		
4	Sidewalk condition and maintenance (e.g., snow removal)	•	•	•		●		•	•	●	•	•	•	
5	Address speeding/traffic issues	•	•	•		•		•	•	●		•	•	
6	Reducing blighted conditions			•		●		•		●			•	
7	Address parking and transportation access issues	•				•		•	•	●		•	•	
8	Make areas more kid- and family-friendly		•			●		•	•	•			•	
9	Improving housing stock/increasing investment in properties	•	•	•				•	•	•	•	•	•	
10	Continue and expand communications with city			•		•		•		•			•	

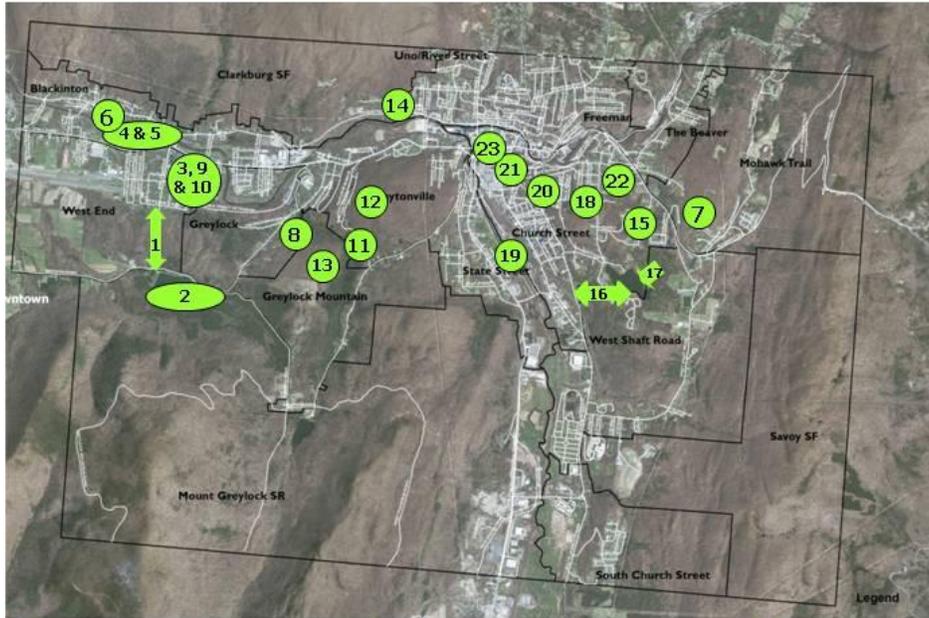
Key

- 1-2 residents mentioned topic
- 3-5 residents mentioned topic
- 5+ residents mentioned topic

STATION 3: LOCATION-SPECIFIC COMMENTS

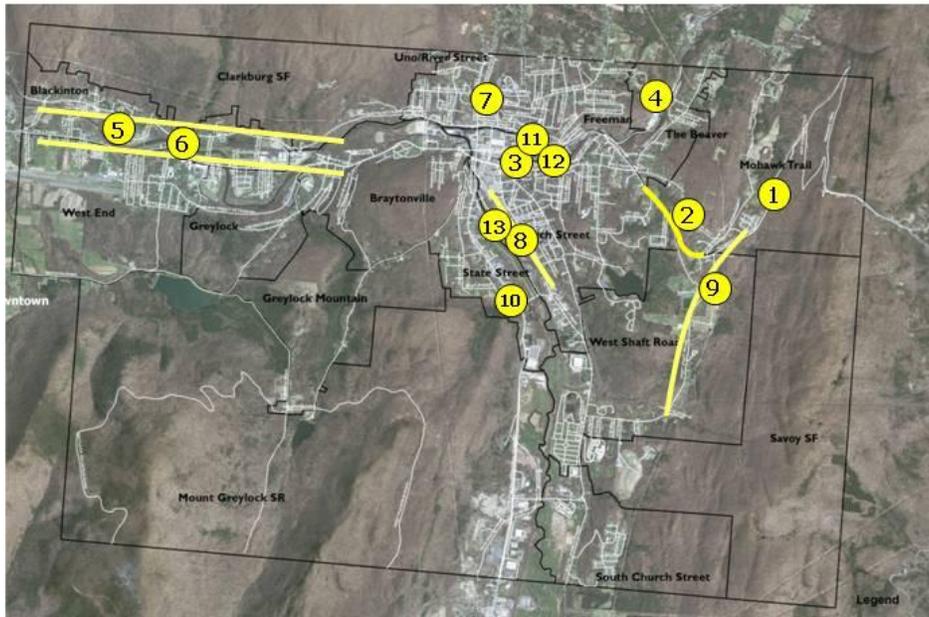
Station 3 asked residents to illustrate on a map, the things that would further enhance their neighborhood. These are described below by neighborhood.

Parks and Recreation



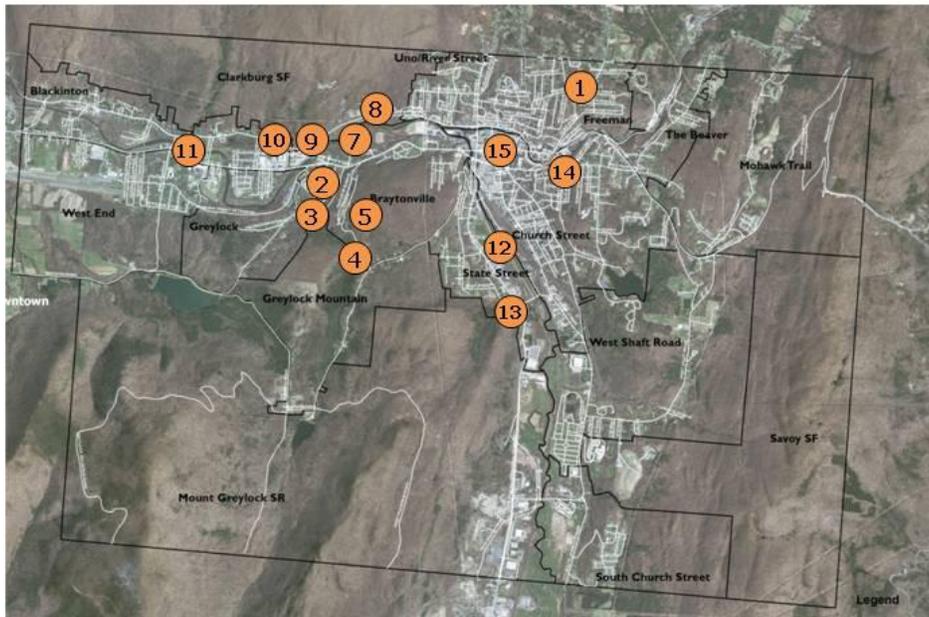
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| 1 Improve awareness of Appalachian Trail | 8 Outdoor public hot tub | 15 Public pool | 22 Rehab basketball court |
| 2 Recreation walking loop | 9 Bike repair station | 16 Improve access and trail conditions | 23 Trampoline area |
| 3 Concert series; party in the park | 10 Neighborhood space | 17 Outdoor skating rink | |
| 4 Scenic secondary bike path along river | 11 Access to a bike path | 18 Make a "3-on-3" basketball court | |
| 5 Linear park along river | 12 Dog park | 19 Park; open space | |
| 6 Dog park | 13 Advance Cascade Trail up to Greylock | 20 More monkey bars | |
| 7 Hiking trails | 14 Water park; dog park | 21 Playground | |

Mobility and Traffic Safety



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|---|---|
| ① Reduce truck noise | ⑧ Vehicles drive too fast; slow traffic |
| ② Vehicles drive too fast; slow traffic | ⑨ Vehicles drive too fast; slow traffic |
| ③ Install roundabout | ⑩ Needs sidewalk |
| ④ Needs sidewalk | ⑪ Re-design monument square |
| ⑤ Pedestrian access across river | ⑫ Turn Miner St into a one-way street |
| ⑥ Vehicles drive too fast; slow traffic | ⑬ Bicycle police squad |
| ⑦ Streets and sidewalk maintenance | |

Site-Specific Use Suggestions



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|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| 1 Block party | 8 Solar farm | 15 Communal co-living; antique mall; plaza |
| 2 Community space | 9 Community garden | |
| 3 Brick oven fire pit | 10 Outdoor amphitheater | |
| 4 Coffee shop; neighborhood market | 11 Restaurants along river | |
| 5 Coffee shop; neighborhood market | 12 Community garden | |
| 6 Glamping sites | 13 Community garden | |
| 7 West End Market | 14 Edible fruit and nut forest | |