

This community development strategy was prepared by the Town of Greenfield, Department of Planning and Development, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for submitting its FY 2016 Mini-Entitlement CDBG application.

A community development strategy is not a plan in itself, but rather a summary of existing planning documents and initiatives, that serves to identify common issues, themes and action strategies, and provide a unifying vision.

Greenfield in Regional Context

Greenfield is a town of approximately 17,450 people and is the largest community in Franklin County, the most rural county in Massachusetts. It is situated in the Pioneer Valley of Western Massachusetts. Settled in 1686 and incorporated as a town in 1753, Greenfield's strategic location at the junction of the Connecticut and Green Rivers and at the head of navigation of the Connecticut River made it a natural crossroads. With the Multi-Modal Transit Center all bus services; local, regional and national; are available from one central location. Four rail lines run north-south and east-west out of Greenfield and a general aviation facility is only 7 miles away in neighboring Montague. High speed communications access is available in town.

Greenfield has always been the economic and employment center of Franklin County, as well as the seat of county government (celebrating 200 years as County Seat in 2011). Early access to water power and transportation influenced the development of the machine tool and cutlery industries for which the town is famous. Today, the medical and knowledge sectors are the prime economic activities in the town. At the same time, it retains thousands of acres of prime agricultural land still in active use and is the gateway to vacation areas in the Berkshires and to Vermont and New Hampshire to the north. Greenfield is the lead community in numerous county wide initiatives that promote housing choice, economic expansion and natural resource protection. Its high quality of life and low real estate values, together with a skilled labor force, make it attractive to new residents and businesses seeking to expand.

Planning in Greenfield

In 2002 the Town of Greenfield adopted a new charter establishing a city form of government with an elected mayor and council of 13 members.¹ The charter established the Department of Planning and Development as the city's chief planning agency, responsible for assessing community needs, preparing and implementing planning actions. The Department also provides staff support to the planning, zoning and conservation regulatory boards.

The purpose of planning is to assess alternative courses of action, gather relevant information, and identify options and their implications, in order to guide municipal actions. Following is a brief summary of key planning documents.

Key Planning Documents

The Town of Greenfield is committed to an ongoing comprehensive public planning process that assesses community needs and guides community development. Six major planning documents form the basis for the town's development. They are: the Downtown Master Plan (2003); the Community Development Plan (2004); the Bank Row Urban Renewal Plan (2006, updated 2008); the Open Space

¹ Although Greenfield uses a city form of government, the voters prefer to call their community a town. Hence, Greenfield is officially known as "The City known as the Town of Greenfield."

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and Recreation Plan (2012); the Town of Greenfield Local Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan (2014); and Sustainable Greenfield, Greenfield's Comprehensive Sustainable Master Plan (2014).

Bank Row Urban Renewal Plan (2006, updated 2008). The Greenfield Redevelopment Authority contracted with Hayes Associates to prepare this urban renewal plan under MGL 121B for the purpose of developing a strategic action plan for the re-use of abandoned and distressed properties along Bank Row in the center of downtown. The plan evaluated the re-use of an auto dealership for a regional transit center, proposed the acquisition and renovation of 6 buildings and the construction of a new parking facility on municipal property. The total cost for these tasks is projected to be in excess of \$14.2 million, with the transit center costing an additional \$12.8 million. Under this plan, three of the buildings along Bank Row have been purchased and renovated by a private developer. These buildings now hold small businesses on the street level and market-rate apartments on the upper floors. The regional transit center began construction in the fall of 2010 and was completed in May 2012. The Town is continuing to search for funding in order to build a Parking Facility directly across the street from the Transit Center.

Open Space and Recreation Plan (2012). This plan guides the town's decisions about how we use and invest in our parks, playgrounds, recreation and conservation areas. Equally as important, a current plan is required to apply for grant funds to maintain, upgrade and enhance our facilities. Without the plan, the town cannot apply for the grant funds. The most important part of the OSRP is the survey of the public. It is here that the residents and users tell the town what is important to them, what they value about Greenfield's recreation facilities, where the town needs to invest funds, and how the town can make the public's recreation experiences better.

Town of Greenfield Local Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan (2014). The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) define Hazard Mitigation as any sustained action taken to reduce or eliminate long-term risk to people and property from natural hazards such as flooding, storms, high winds, hurricanes, wildfires, earthquakes, and other disasters. Mitigation efforts undertaken by communities will help to minimize damages to buildings and infrastructure, such as water supplies, sewers, and utility transmission lines, as well as natural, cultural and historic resources. Planning efforts, like the one undertaken by the Town of Greenfield and the Franklin Regional Council of Governments, make mitigation a proactive process. Pre-disaster planning emphasizes actions that can be taken before a natural disaster occurs. Future property damage and loss of life can be reduced or prevented by a mitigation program that addresses the unique geography, demography, economy, and land use of a community within the context of each of the specific potential natural hazards that may threaten a community. Preparing a Local Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan before a disaster occurs can save the community money and will facilitate post-disaster funding. Costly repairs or replacement of buildings and infrastructure, as well as the high cost of providing emergency services and rescue/recovery operations, can be avoided or significantly lessened if a community implements the mitigation measures detailed in the Plan. Many disaster assistance agencies and programs, including FEMA, require that a community have adopted a pre-disaster mitigation plan as a condition for both mitigation funding and for disaster relief funding. For example, the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP), the Flood Mitigation Assistance Program (FMA) and the Community Rating System (CRS), are programs with this requirement.

Sustainable Greenfield, Greenfield's Comprehensive Sustainable Master Plan (2014). In 2012, Greenfield embarked on a journey that many communities undertake: development of a Comprehensive Master Plan. Having already made a commitment to principles and practices of sustainability, Greenfield wanted more than a traditional Master Plan. The Town wanted to create a Plan that

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established a path towards a more Sustainable Greenfield. Over 12 months, a passionate, committed group of residents, Town staff and other community stakeholders worked to craft a pathway for the future sustainability of Greenfield. The driving forces behind this Comprehensive Sustainable Master Plan are rooted in a commitment to preserving the small-town heritage of Greenfield while embracing changes that will allow sustainable renewal of the Town as the economic and cultural hub of the region. Greenfield's commitment is to preserve the richness of small town life by restoring some of the lost economic vitality to its downtown, by supporting its farming and food production and distribution economic sectors, protecting its natural environment, providing housing and educational opportunities for diverse groups of people, and by seeking to attract jobs and industry sectors compatible with both small town life and the economic realities of the 21st Century. The Comprehensive Sustainable Master Plan is the means for creating a sustainable town. The strategy for moving the Town of Greenfield toward sustainability focuses first on changes the Town has control over. The Town has the most control over its internal operations. In addition, the Town has jurisdiction over changes to the built environment (land use, infrastructure, and building permits) within its boundaries. The Comprehensive Sustainable Master Plan is the means for creating a sustainable Town. Sustainable Greenfield will be a tool to guide future operational, programmatic, and policy decisions. This summary introduces the Comprehensive Sustainable Master Plan, the collaborative planning process Greenfield followed, and the ultimate vision for each of the seven Elements of the Plan for achieving a Sustainable Greenfield.

The Town has also completed two “targeted neighborhood” planning initiatives.

The Deerfield Street Corridor Neighborhood Planning Initiative (1995-2007 and 2014-current). The first neighborhood planning effort was targeted to the Deerfield Street Corridor, a largely residential area south of downtown that includes Deerfield, Washington, Meridian and Mill Streets, Carpenter Lane, Power Court and Power Square. A series of public meetings led to the development of an action plan for improvements and investment. In subsequent years, the town targeted CDBG funds, municipal revenues, highway improvements funds, EPA Brownfield clean up grants and loans to the neighborhood. Perhaps the most prominent project was the demolition and environmental clean-up of the former Greenfield Tap & Die (GTD) factory site. Late in 2005, the town entered into an agreement with a developer to construct a 75-bed assisted living facility on the site; the project (The Arbors) was completed in June 2007. Also, in 2005, the Town received an EPA Clean-up grant to deal with environmental issues at a site (former Food & Fuel) located on Deerfield Street. The site has been cleaned, monitored and is now a “green” space within this densely populated area. The Town's FY 2013 CDBG grant went back to this Target area to begin replacing old worn sidewalks and to introduce a Housing Rehabilitation Program. Included in the Town's FY 2013 CDBG grant and the FY 2015 grant was funding to purchase condemned properties, located in this area, with the plan to building low income Veterans housing in the future.

The Hillside Neighborhood Revitalization Plan (2007–2014). In October 2007, using CDBG funds, Dodson Associates was selected to complete a “Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy” for the Hillside Neighborhood. This neighborhood is approximately 64 city blocks located adjacent to “Downtown” Greenfield and is home to approximately 6,155 residents living in late nineteenth and early twentieth century single and multifamily homes. This area also has some of the oldest water, sewer and drainage infrastructure within the Town. Over the past 7 years, this area has been the recipient of additional funding through the Town's Community Development Block Grant Mini-Entitlement Program. With the use of CDBG funding, the Town refurbished the Hillside Park, located within this neighborhood, giving the park a new basketball court, updated playground equipment, renovated soft-ball field, additional trees, picnic tables and benches. With additional funding from an “Our Common Backyard” grant, the Town has added a “Splash Pad” to this park. Along with Town funds, the CDBG FY 2011

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grant was used to replace one of the oldest sanitary sewer systems located within this area. The FY 2012 CDBG grant was used to replace decaying sidewalks on many streets in this area. Housing Rehabilitation has been a major activity within this area since 2007 and will continue in future years.

The town also actively contributes to and participates in regional planning efforts. Chief among these is the *Greater Franklin County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) 2010*. The CEDS Program is a fundamental component of the greater Franklin County region's economic development planning efforts. The CEDS Program examines the current economic situation and identifies important economic development goals and projects in the region. The CEDS Region encompasses the twenty-six towns of Franklin County, plus Amherst in Hampshire County, and Athol and Phillipston in Worcester County. The process is guided by the CEDS Committee and the Economic Development District (EDD) Governing Board. Seven goals have been identified to guide the work of the CEDS Program. These goals reflect the themes outlined in the CEDS Program vision statement and the promise of the existing and emerging clusters operating in the region. These goals address many important issues as they relate to the CEDS Program and to creating greater economic opportunity for the region. Infrastructure improvements, Brownfield redevelopment, economic initiatives to promote natural resources and enhancing public services are some of the topics addressed. To guide the activities and evaluation of the CEDS Program, an Action Plan has been created. Individual action items are evaluated on an annual basis. The entity responsible for completing the action item and the evaluation criteria are specifically identified for each action item. It is important to note that many of the tasks are multi-year in nature.

Common Themes

With such diverse planning documents, it is important to identify common themes and elements that run through and provide a unifying framework for an overall plan of action. Some common themes we have identified are:

- *Quality of life* is a key to both the heritage and the future of Greenfield. Affordable housing opportunities, economic competitiveness for businesses (both locally-owned and nationally-based), strong educational opportunities, a well trained and healthy workforce, caring for citizens in need, transportation improvements and cultural and recreational attractions are the strengths upon which Greenfield's future quality of life will depend.
- *Concentrate development in the established neighborhoods and the business core to make better use of existing infrastructure and preserve undeveloped open space, farmlands and historic assets for future generations.* Concentrating development capitalizes on the town's prior investment in its roads, sidewalks, and utility lines and controls costs for expansion and maintenance of new facilities. It conserves land, integrates uses and helps foster a sense of Greenfield as a "special" place.
- *Maintain and enhance Greenfield's traditional position as the economic, employment and transportation center of Franklin County.* Greenfield has a traditional and historic town center that provides local employment, educational, cultural, religious and recreational opportunities and has continued to have immense potential to be a vibrant hub of economic and cultural activity for Franklin County and beyond. Local businesses and in-town shopping areas must be supported. New growth in appropriate areas must be promoted. Preservation of the pedestrian-friendly urban fabric and the many diverse residential neighborhoods is important as is the ongoing maintenance and upkeep of existing roadways and infrastructure systems.
- *Enhance Greenfield's position in Franklin County as the leader for sustainable design/clean and renewable energy.* As the economic center and largest town of Franklin County, Greenfield has taken a prominent role in promoting sustainable design and renewable energy throughout the region that includes promoting "green buildings." Greenfield actively pursued and was awarded

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the designation as a “Green Community.” Greenfield entered into a purchase power agreement with AXIO Greenfield, LLC for development of a solar array on the Town’s capped landfill. This project was completed in June 2012. It is estimated that this project will save the residents of Greenfield \$225,000 per year.

- *Plan and implement in a regional context.* Greenfield is part of a larger county-wide community. Greenfield is home to the County Jail, County Court House and several Federal, State and County offices. As the largest town and the economic engine of Franklin County, Greenfield should take a prominent role in devising regional solutions to common problems.

Guiding principles

Greenfield has identified principles to guide its community development strategy based on these planning studies and within the framework of these common themes. They are:

- Practice infill development. Preserve valuable agricultural lands, forests and recreation areas, and historic assets by supporting development in targeted areas of town where the existing transportation and utility infrastructure can serve development, rather than develop in un-serviced areas.
- Reuse and invest in existing facilities and buildings for new purposes.
- Incorporate environmentally-friendly techniques and materials wherever possible to lessen energy costs and dependency and preserve natural resources
- Use municipal funds, tax incentives and regulatory efforts to leverage grant funds and private investment.
- Support investment that enhances the tax base and hence tax revenues and retains or creates jobs especially in the medical and knowledge sectors as well as the “green” building and renewable energy sectors.
- Target municipal community development efforts to the neediest neighborhoods to achieve greater lasting impact and the most noticeable physical change.
- Support transportation alternatives such as biking, walking, rail, vans and busses.
- Promote “green” buildings, sustainable design and clean/renewable energy throughout town and throughout Franklin County.
- Develop Public-Private Partnerships.

The “Neighborhood First” Initiative

Beginning in 2005, the Town launched a new initiative called “Neighborhoods First,” by which the town targets its public investment to strengthen its established neighborhoods. The town does this by investing in the existing infrastructure (roads, sidewalks, water, sewer and drainage utilities); neighborhood facilities (parks and playgrounds); and by using public funds, regulatory relief and incentives to leverage private investment in residential and commercial property (housing rehab, commercial façade improvements and upper story conversions). This initiative is Greenfield’s effort to encourage development and investment in existing neighborhoods, and complements the Sustainable Development Principles “Redevelop First,” and “Concentrate Development.”

Prior Accomplishments

Over the past five years; utilizing CDBG funds, other State and Federal funds and “Special Article” funding; the Town has completed the following:

- Relined or replaced 9,721 linear feet of water and sewer lines - \$1,125,003
- Replaced 20,726 linear feet of sidewalks - \$1,359,072
- Replaced windows at Town Hall (\$108,694) and ventilation system at the DPW yard (\$49,114)
- Repaired or replaced 7 schools within the Town – in excess of \$70,000,000

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- Reconstructed 2 Town parking lots adding electric charging stations - \$723,564
- Improvements to 7 playgrounds through out the Town - \$499,490.87
- Upgrade and repair four tennis courts - \$176,309.45
- Replaced approximately one-third of the Town's streetlights with LED's - \$49,000
- Partnered with Sun Edison to install a Solar Farm on the Town's capped landfill
- Funded the creation of a Sustainable Master Plan for the Town
- Assisted a local not for profit housing association with the purchase of a 4 unit property to be rehabbed and rented to low-moderate income families.
- Funded 2 rounds of Façade Improvements for properties in the Downtown area.
- Funded a "First-time Homebuyers Acquisition Program" assisting 12 families with the purchase of their homes.
- Funded a Housing Rehabilitation Program that has brought approximately 70 housing units into compliance with State and Federal Health and Building Codes. All units were occupied by low-moderate income persons - over 1.3 million dollars.
- Using \$819,375 in CDBG funds, the Town was able to assist 13,270 low-moderate income persons with various activities such as; emergency food, literacy programs for adults, dual enrollment programs for high school students, education and support for immigrants, refugees and migrants, support for returning and current veterans and others with "lived experiences", etc.

A list of anticipated projects and potential funding sources is shown in the following tables.
This document along with the attachments has been presented to the public at a hearing on November 30, 2015.