

# Pittsfield SDAT

Sustainable Urbanism in the Heart of the Berkshires



A Report by the Sustainable  
Design Assessment Team

**Pittsfield, Massachusetts**  
**September 26–28, 2005**



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Sustainable Design Assessment Team (SDAT) visit focused on:

- Natural resources
- Cultural heritage and preservation
- Managing and shaping growth
- Neighborhood conservation and sustainability
- Economic development.

In order for Pittsfield to achieve its goal of becoming more sustainable, it must integrate the goals articulated in each of these areas into a holistic vision for the city.

Pittsfield currently has a relatively strong foundation in terms of natural resources; however, that base is being challenged by brownfield issues, development pressure, and a lack of education on environmental issues. The SDAT's recommendations are summarized below:

- Leverage National Heritage Corridor designation of the Housatonic River
- Create a community consensus on greenway corridors, site design standards, and areas of growth
- Use a layered approach to public involvement
- Work with the YMCA to develop strategies for Pontoosuc Lake
- Develop a short greenway/trail connection
- Determine feasibility of a nonprofit group for fund-raising to ease the financial burden on the city parks department
- Use natural resources as justification for all efforts
- Connect and make accessible Pittsfield's natural resources
- Focus on water (rivers, lakes, and stormwater)
- Share strategies for development
- Promote awareness and education programs

Preserving the cultural heritage and built environment of a community are among the key acts that create a more sustainable community. Pittsfield is fortunate to have both a strong and diverse cultural heritage as well as a wealth of buildings that can accommodate the needs of the community. Pittsfield can leverage these resources if the city works to:

- Find the best fit when exploring new uses rather than rushing to redevelop
- Encourage diversity: mix building types and uses along with greenways
- Recognize intrinsic—sometimes hidden—value in historic building fabric
- Simplify the process of determining historic value for new and existing owners
- Explore the economic benefits of preservation; leverage cultural tourism, job opportunities, and homegrown businesses.

Pittsfield asked for assistance in creating strategies to welcome new development while making sure it meets the city’s long-term goals and contributes to a lively urban center and a sustainable city. The SDAT laid out a series of principles and specific recommendations to help achieve this end.

### **Principles**

- Growth should be directed to downtown and existing neighborhoods where possible
- New growth should be adjacent to existing development or one or two locations should be identified to cluster new development in “villages”
- A greenbelt stretching from the southwest to the west and north, connecting already preserved open spaces with the state forest, should be preserved

### **Recommendations**

- Use existing tools to meet current challenges (e.g., overlay districts and cluster ordinance)
- Plan with Dalton, Lenox, and other neighbors
- Work with advocates to end Approval Not Required (ANR) subdivisions
- Consider transfer of development rights (TDR) and other incentives to keep directing growth to downtown

To create a sustainable Pittsfield, the building blocks of the city must be functional. Neighborhood conservation and sustainability are key to achieving the goals of the city. The SDAT recommends that Pittsfield:

- Consider East Side, Morningside, and downtown as one great place
- Consider current initiatives as a model for all Pittsfield neighborhoods
- Seek opportunities in neighborhoods throughout Pittsfield to:
  - Develop and use geographic information system (GIS) analysis tools to better understand their potential and identify key opportunities for increased density
  - Build on past and current investments to acquire the leverage needed to create critical mass
  - Draw on the unique opportunities for neighborhood connections to nearby retail service, entertainment, civic, cultural, and employment centers
  - Be strongly connected to the natural resources that give the city and region its distinctive character.

Finally, without a plan for a sustainable economy, none of the other visions developed during the SDAT can come to fruition. The following strategies for creating a more sustainable economy were proposed by the SDAT:

- Redevelop first: capitalize and focus on existing infrastructure and primary economic assets in Pittsfield
- Integrate a mix of uses and concentrate, rather than disperse, development—Pittsfield is downtown Berkshire County
- Plan regionally
- Promote equitable sharing of benefits
- Foster sustainable businesses
- Create incentives and reduce barriers to downtown residential development
- Continue to build on downtown’s strengths as a walkable commercial center
- Combat negative perceptions and market Pittsfield as a place to live and work.

## Introduction

In March 2005, the city of Pittsfield, Mass., submitted a proposal to the American Institute of Architects (AIA) for a Sustainable Design Assessment Team (SDAT) to assist the town and its citizens in addressing key issues facing the community. The issues included economic diversification; cultural development; environmental restoration, protection, and development; and housing affordability and quality.

The AIA accepted the proposal and, after an initial scoping visit by a small group in July, the SDAT members arrived in Pittsfield on September 25. For three days, the team members, working closely with local officials, community leaders, technical experts, and citizens, studied the community and its concerns. During those three days, the team came to understand the issues and used its expertise to frame a wide range of recommendations, which were presented to the community in a public meeting on September 28.



This report is a more detailed version of the findings and recommendations that were presented to the community on September 28. After a brief overview of the SDAT program and process, and a short discussion of Pittsfield and the issues it is facing, the report covers the following areas:

- Natural resources
- Cultural heritage and preservation
- Managing and shaping growth

- Neighborhood conservation and sustainability
- Economic development.

A closing section offers some thoughts on how the community can best move forward to address the range of issues and recommendations covered in the report.

### **What is the SDAT Program?**

The SDAT program is an interdisciplinary community assistance program that focuses on principles of sustainability. Launched in 2005, the program represents an exciting new chapter in the AIA's history of supporting communities with volunteer design expertise. The Pittsfield SDAT is the third completed project under the new program.

The SDAT program is modeled on the AIA's R/UDAT (Regional and Urban Design Assistance Team) program. Although the R/UDAT program provides communities with specific design solutions, the SDAT program provides broad assessments to help frame future policies and design solutions in the context of sustainability and helps communities plan the first steps of implementation. The SDAT program is based on an understanding of design as a process that:

- Is integrative, holistic, and visual
- Is central to achieving a sustainable relationship between humans, the natural environment, and the place
- Gives three-dimensional form to a culture and a place
- Achieves balance between culture, environment, and economic systems.

The SDAT program is grounded in the AIA design assistance team values, which call for a multidisciplinary approach, objectivity of the participating team members, and broad public participation.

## **Why is the SDAT Program Valuable?**

Many communities are immobilized by conflicting agendas, politics, personalities, or even the overabundance of opportunity. Many communities have not yet taken stock of their current practices and policies within a sustainability framework, while others have identified issues of concern but desire assistance in developing a plan of action to increase sustainability. The SDAT process ensures that alternative solutions are given a fair hearing and that options are weighed impartially. The SDAT process:

- Informs the community of opportunities and encourages them to take action to protect local and regional resources
- Helps the community understand the structure of the place at various scales and contexts—from regional resources to the neighborhood scale
- Explores and articulates the larger contexts and interactions of ecological, sociological, economic, and physical systems
- Visualizes potential futures
- Recognizes and describes the qualities of a place by preserving the best elements of the past, addressing the needs of the present, and planning for the needs of future generations
- Identifies and describes choices and consequences
- Connects plans and actions
- Advances the principles of quality sustainable communities
- Helps the community define the roles of various stakeholders
- Develops a roadmap for the implementation of more sustainable policies and practices.

The key to SDAT success is diversity and participation; the process involves multiple disciplines and multiple stakeholders. The SDAT process includes not only the expert team but also government agencies and officials, private businesses, schools and students, community members, and other parties as appropriate.

## **Who are the Key Participants in the SDAT Process?**

SDATs bring a team of respected professionals, selected on the basis of their experience with the specific issues facing the community, to work with community decision-makers to help them develop a vision and framework for a sustainable future. Team members volunteer their time to be a member of the SDAT and agree to refrain from

taking paid work for three years from the date of completion of the SDAT project. A distinct team is assembled for each project based on the project's unique features. The team consists of a leader, five to seven members, and a staff person from the AIA Center for Communities by Design.

The professional stature of the SDAT team members, their independence, and the pro bono nature of their work generate community respect and enthusiasm for the SDAT process which, in turn, encourages the participation of community stakeholders. The passion and creativity that are unleashed by a top-notch multidisciplinary team of professionals working collaboratively can produce extraordinary results.

**Local Steering Committee.** The steering committee is the key organizing group for an SDAT project. It is responsible for assembling local and regional information, organizing the preliminary meeting and SDAT visit, and generating local media coverage during the entire project. After the SDAT visits, the steering committee typically evolves into a group that is dedicated to implementing the SDAT recommendations.

**Local Technical Committee.** The local technical committee is the technical support group for the SDAT project, including locally based design professionals, environmental professionals, economists, and others whose skills and experience parallel those of the SDAT members and who bring with them detailed knowledge of local conditions, issues, and information resources. Their presence magnifies the effectiveness of the team.

**Citizens.** In the end, the citizens of the community are the critical players, both for their insights and observations during the team visit and for their support for the new directions that emerge from the SDAT process.

On behalf of the Pittsfield SDAT and the American Institute of Architects, it is hoped this report will be a useful guide to the Pittsfield community as it charts its future for the coming years and for coming generations.

## PITTSFIELD TODAY

Pittsfield, Mass., is in the heart of Berkshire County and currently has a population of approximately 45,000. Pittsfield serves as the primary engine for the county's traditional economy, the main location for manufacturing, educational, and medical services as well as a center for the region's retail, business, and financial services.

The city was once the hub of General Electric's large transformer manufacturing industry; this informed the city's identity to a large extent, but also resulted in water pollution and contaminated land in the heart of the city. Pittsfield is currently diversifying its economy through the redevelopment of brownfields sites, revitalization of the downtown into a cultural center, and revival of its waterfront and open space resources with the clean up of the Housatonic River and three lakes within its borders. Within this context, Pittsfield is currently focused on:

- Attracting new residents
- Welcoming visitors to a vibrant downtown
- Maintaining the integrity of the environment
- Expanding the city's cultural resources
- Diversifying job opportunities.

Pittsfield is a city in transition. By creating a more dynamic, diverse economic base that effectively integrates arts and culture into the life of the community, Pittsfield hopes to regain its premiere position as the heart of the Berkshires, but this time with a more sustainable foundation.

## NATURAL RESOURCES

Natural resources tends to be an all-encompassing term that can cover everything from air quality, lakes, rivers, parks, and open spaces to farms, soils, hydrology, fossil fuels, vegetation, and wildlife. While natural resources can be far reaching in scope, for a community of Pittsfield's size, it will be important to focus on key priorities for dealing with natural resources. By focusing strengths and energies on key elements locally, Pittsfield can leverage state and federal resources to deal with other natural resource issues on the state and national levels.

Pittsfield is fortunate to be blessed with great natural resources. Sitting in a valley within the Berkshires, three branches of the Housatonic River run through the middle of the community, and the city boasts great lakes and open space. Pittsfield has many strengths that other communities only dream about.

Pittsfield also has many challenges: existing brownfields, development pressures, and often a lack of awareness of how human activities have threatened Pittsfield's natural resources.

### **Workshop Observations**

To prioritize issues and strategies for natural resources, stakeholders and the public provided input on what were thought to be the strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities for natural resources within Pittsfield. Top issues that were mentioned included

- Natural resources that enhance the visitor experience and provide for local quality of life
- Rivers and lakes as key assets and the backbone of the community
- A need to preserve and enhance Pittsfield's natural resources
- The existing farmers' market as an important social fabric and community gathering center
- Existing parks and green space that should be connected
- Passion about the natural environment (but there is often not awareness or education amongst the public about Pittsfield's natural resources).

Stakeholders were asked to share their long-term vision for the natural resources of Pittsfield. A quote from one of the stakeholders summarizes the vision many others shared: “Pittsfield is a healthy community, whose water bodies and waterways are clean, and whose ridgelines are unspoiled and scenic. It’s a town where access to areas of natural beauty is plentiful.”

### **Challenges to Sustainability**

To reach the sustainability level that is inherent in the vision statement, several challenges exist, including

**Limited Funding.** Limited funding is a problem for communities throughout the country. Pittsfield is not alone with the challenge of providing city services with shrinking or limited revenue generators. Also, the state has decreased maintenance of its parks and natural resources due to budgetary constraints.

**Appropriate Intensity of and Location for Development.** Many areas of Pittsfield are feeling palpable development pressures. These pressures raise several questions: Where are the most appropriate areas for development? Where there is development, how is the development shaped? A balance needs to be found that preserves the existing natural character of Pittsfield while encouraging successful economic development.

**Limited Public Access to Rivers and Green Space.** One of Pittsfield’s strengths is its rivers and open space. In many areas, however, access to these places (physical and visual) is limited. Existing development at times borders directly on the Housatonic River (as in existing neighborhoods) and, in many areas, natural resource spaces are disconnected.

**Existing Site Development Standards.** Existing site development standards do not incorporate current sustainable standards that have been used successfully in other municipalities across the country.

**Lack of Awareness of Pittsfield Natural Resources.** Input from stakeholders and the public illustrated there is a lack of a greater community awareness of all the beneficial aspects of Pittsfield’s natural resources.

## Short-Term Solutions

To begin the process of achieving sustainability of Pittsfield's natural resources, it is vital to consider several strategies that may be implemented in the next one to five years.

***Leverage National Heritage Corridor Designation of the Housatonic River.*** The National Park Service's designation of the Housatonic River as a National Heritage Corridor will allow for additional grants, programs, and interpretive and educational opportunities along the river.

***Create a Community Consensus on Greenway Corridors, Site Design Standards, and Areas of Growth.*** The community has a great opportunity to create a shared vision on how growth should occur during the upcoming master planning and zoning updates. As part of this discussion of growth, greenways and site design standards should be an integral component of the process and must not be viewed as a secondary consideration or even as a separate planning topic. Greenways are a key link to economic development, community planning, and social capital, and provide access to Pittsfield's natural resources.

***Use a Layered Approach to Public Involvement During the Master Planning and Zoning Updates.*** A layered approach to public involvement would use several techniques to create a common and shared vision for Pittsfield. Large public meetings, a citizen advisory committee of 13–30 people, a technical advisory committee of 5–15 people, key stakeholder meetings, and small focus group meetings are all examples of ways to include the public in the process and ensure consensus. Although this layered approach can be extensive and time consuming, it is worth the effort because it allows the integration of natural resources with economic development, heritage preservation, community development, and growth issues—resulting in a holistic approach to a multifaceted endeavor.

***Work with the YMCA to Develop Strategies for Pontoosuc Lake.*** Discussions with stakeholders and the public cited Pontoosuc Lake as highly valued by the community for recreation. The city or a citizens' advisory committee should work with the YMCA to develop a strategy for the YMCA property that will continue to allow public access to the lake while meeting the specific goals the YMCA has for its assets.

***Develop a Short Greenway/Trail Connection.*** One way to educate the general public about the benefits of greenways and to end misconceptions about trails would be to develop a short greenway or trail within the city. The trail would not have to be a long route. A connection such as a neighborhood to a school, a park to another park, or a route that employees could take during lunch would be excellent opportunities for a

pilot effort. Wherever the location, careful attention should be made to the design of entry features and signage. A well-designed trail with attractive amenities will build support for additional trails and greenways.

***Determine Feasibility of a Nonprofit Group for Fund-Raising.*** A nonprofit dedicated to raising funds to build greenways would help ease the financial burden of the city's parks department. Many other cities have had success with public/private partnerships in dealing with parks, greenways, and other natural resources. Often, these nonprofits do very well in fund-raising because their results are visible to the public in terms of the amenities they provide. Recent events such as the strong community support for the new accessible playground indicates there may be a strong enough financial base to support such a nonprofit.

A key component of the nonprofit would be its mission to focus on building greenways, thereby creating greater awareness and understanding of Pittsfield's environmental strengths.

### **Long-Term Solutions**

Longer-term strategies have also been considered. These longer-term solutions are often more complex and require more coordination among different groups, but work toward establishing legacy strategies.

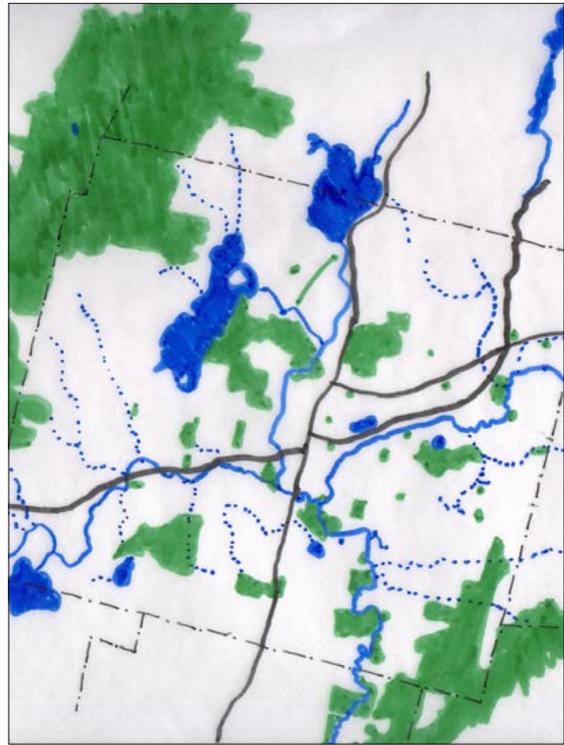
***Use Natural Resources as Justification for All Efforts.*** One of Pittsfield's greatest strengths is its natural resources, whether it is its lakes, rivers, vistas to the Berkshires, parks, or vegetation. Pittsfield's natural resources provide a great quality of life for its residents and serve as an attraction for its cultural tourism. The city should leverage its strength in natural resources by ensuring that all future growth enhances and respects the environment.

For example, industrial development is a necessary component of economic development. However, the development of the site can be done in a sustainable manner. Opportunities such as green roofs can be a proactive way to deal with stormwater while allowing for potential greater densities and long-term maintenance savings for the developer.

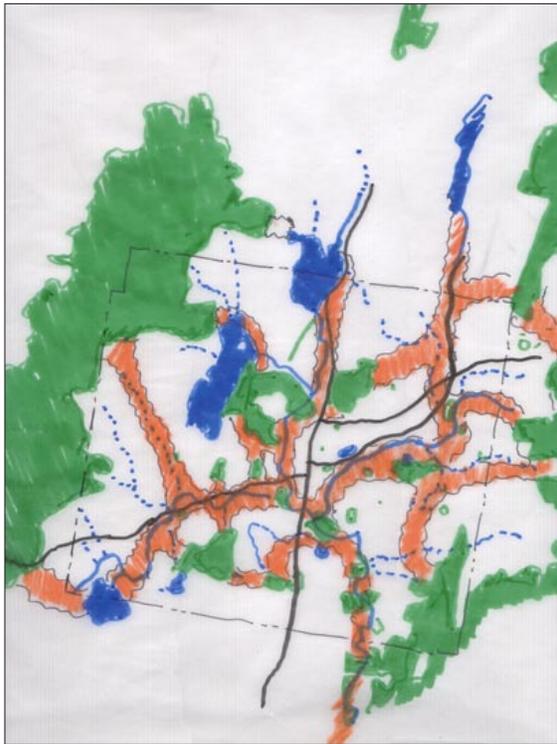
***Connect and Make Accessible Pittsfield's Natural Resources.*** A key item that was mentioned by stakeholders was the lack of education and awareness by the public of Pittsfield's natural resources. A way to begin to change the public's awareness is by connecting Pittsfield's natural resources, especially the rivers and lakes. Connecting Pittsfield's parks and open space through a series of greenways would allow the pub-



Pittsfield's natural landscape



Existing greenspace



Proposed connections

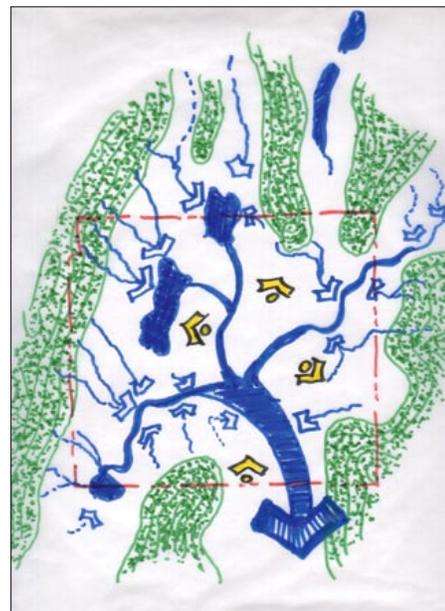
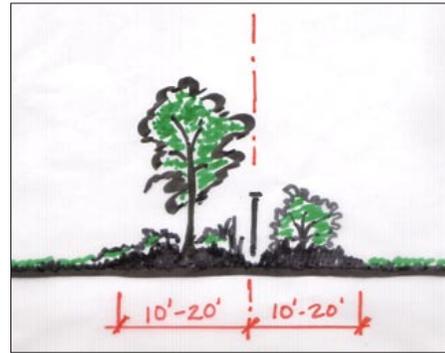
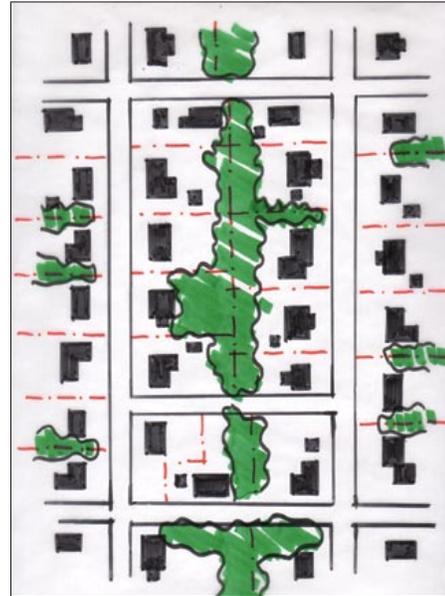


A connected system

lic to gain physical access to its natural resources. An important component to the connections would be to expose the public to both the scenic and non-scenic areas of Pittsfield's natural environment. By seeing both the "good" and the "bad," greater awareness and attention will be made in fixing problem areas.

In areas where public connections cannot be made, vegetation/wildlife corridors should be developed between open spaces to allow for continued diversity and connections of plant and animal life. A vegetation/wildlife corridor can be as simple as a 10- to 20-foot width of native plantings along a property boundary. For new developments, especially commercial, site development and landscape standards could require such a corridor to be established. For existing developments, educational programs could target homeowners and businesses. An advantage for both existing and proposed developments is that less maintenance is required when a vegetation/wildlife corridor is established.

**Focus on Water.** Water and water quality are important in every community, but especially in Pittsfield where the Housatonic River is the backbone of the community. Where possible, the Housatonic River should be accessible with a series of greenways. Riparian areas along both the rivers and lakes should be enhanced and maintained. Riparian areas are a key component in dealing with site runoff and water quality.



Finally, proactive stormwater strategies should be enacted for site development. Many proven techniques, such as best management practices and low-impact development, can be used in Pittsfield. Specific examples of techniques include vegetative swales, permeable pavements, infiltration trenches, and microdetention. Also, nationally it will be likely that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will continue to issue stricter requirements for dealing with stormwater such as NPDES (National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System) Phase II. Communities that are proactive in dealing with stormwater may save on future infrastructure work due to changing requirements and regulations.

***Share Strategies for Development.*** The community needs to create a shared vision on where growth should occur. In areas where development does occur, site development standards should be developed that promote sustainable site design. A tool box of proven techniques already exists that can be used such as conservation by design, low-impact development, best management practices, and the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program. These existing techniques and guidelines can be used to shape stormwater, landscape, and natural resource enhancements when sites are developed.

***Promote Awareness and Education Programs.*** Strategies should be developed to raise awareness and education of Pittsfield's natural resources to its citizens. Three initiatives can accomplish this goal:

- For children, programs in schools, especially during fifth through eighth grades, should focus on Pittsfield's natural resources, including its river heritage and the regional connection of the Berkshires.
- For adults, reaching significant audiences can be problematic with typical programming. A more passive approach can yield significant results, such as getting the public to experience Pittsfield's natural environment, both scenic and non-scenic, through better access (e.g., greenways and trails). Physical connections to Pittsfield's natural resources will raise greater awareness of areas of strengths and areas that need improvement.
- For property owners and developers, sustainable site design standards can be a tool for education. Although some sustainable site design techniques may require a slightly higher initial development cost, the long-term operating costs of the site are significantly less due to less maintenance and use of energy.

## Cultural Heritage and Preservation

Preservation is perhaps the greatest act of building sustainability. In the context of wishing to develop a regional plan for sustainable growth, Pittsfield is fortunate in that it contains a wealth of heritage buildings that may serve as its foundation for cultural identity within the Berkshires, job growth, tourism, and housing. It is interesting to note, too, that its building stock is as diverse as the population it seeks to accommodate.

The SDAT's variety of interchanges with the citizens of Pittsfield—via public hearings, workshops, and day-to-day conversations—revealed an innate sense of pride in their community. The physical inventory of cultural building sites also revealed a complex, complementary pattern of buildings interspersed with greenways, of overlapping neighborhood, and of a potentially vibrant central business district comprising grand civic structures, shops, restaurants, hotels, and medical services.

Recent successes at converting buildings to new uses, such as providing elderly housing within the former Capitol Theater, are helping to maintain diversity. Current projects that focus on celebrating the city's rich architectural heritage, such as the restoration of the Colonial Theater, signal the creation of distinct cultural nodes within the city center, each focusing on a specific type of activity (e.g., theater, film, restaurants, shopping, artists' lofts).

Even in the face of some negative activity, including demolition of the former General Electric (GE) plant and the economic difficulties stemming from GE's severe downsizing here, it is abundantly clear that Pittsfield is on the cusp of a more prosperous future. Given the vicissitudes of its history since its founding in 1761, along with its active desire to plan for sustainable growth, Pittsfield seems poised to serve as a model community within the region and beyond.

### **Workshop Observations**

The SDAT made good use of the “SWOT” formula, analyzing the city's features by first defining its “strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.” This approach proved to be a useful tool both in understanding intrinsic value and potential as well as in developing effective strategies to protect—and celebrate—the best the city has to offer.

A combination of neighborhood tours, shared meals, and candid discussions with Pittsfield’s leaders and citizens offered the team some striking first impressions. Those that seem most prevalent in their relationship to the city’s cultural heritage and preservation include

***Abundant Civic Pride.*** Pride in one’s community is especially important as it represents the very foundation of developing projects and approaches that are enduring, identifiable, and sustainable.

***Thoughtful Consideration of Desirable Development.*** The operable words “thoughtful” and “desirable” have been the source of development projects—both on the boards and already completed—that reflect the both the uniqueness and diversity of the city, projects that seem true to the nature of Pittsfield.

***A Resurgent Economy Provides Benefits and Challenges.*** Economic hardship can be a historic site’s best friend: the money required for demolition is not readily available and preservation becomes second nature. With the infusion of new money, it is vital that Pittsfield take stock of its heritage buildings and protect them so they do not become inadvertent casualties of new development.

***“Company Town” Means Economic Eggs are in One Basket.*** The idea of a company town used to mean something good, a unifying factor within a community. With the decline of manufacturing in recent decades, team members have observed the economic devastation that can undermine the vitality of cities, towns, and villages once their principal employer has left. Pittsfield’s long history speaks well to its ability to overcome—even triumph from—the economic legacy of General Electric’s downsizing. Hardly a lasting blow, the lessons learned from this experience will most certainly lead to the incorporation of continued diversity, both culturally and economically.

***Strong Neighborhood Identity.*** The best cities are characterized by their neighborhoods. Pittsfield’s residents clearly identify with their neighborhoods, which tend to have clearly identifiable boundaries. It was interesting to note that these boundaries often tended to be more colloquial in nature, not necessarily mirroring the “official” maps of neighborhoods. In many cases, one neighborhood seemed closely aligned to the next—either through physical attributes or culturally—and many are contiguous with, or within easy walking distance to, the central business district.

## Short- and Long-Term Strategies

Historic preservation offers many symbiotic benefits, enhancing not only the physical fabric of a place, but also its underlying cultural, social, and economic bases. Planning for a sustainable future represents an important threshold for Pittsfield, and its adherence to a strong program advocating the preservation of its heritage buildings will serve it well in many related endeavors. Following are some specific insights in that regard.

***Find the Best Fit When Exploring New Uses.*** Expedient solutions are often not sustainable solutions. As described, there presently is a wide variety of buildings suited to both restoration and adaptive uses. Finding a good match between the owner/tenant and the site, though, is perhaps the most critical aspect of developing a worthwhile project. New uses that must be shoe-horned into a site can have a devastating effect on a historic property, leading at times to projects that are spatially incomprehensible or, worse, to results such as “facadism” (leaving the facade in place while removing everything behind it). When buildings are handled in this fashion, the resulting streetscape can take on the appearance of a stage set. Pittsfield’s history is real, and its buildings are real. Its buildings should never be denigrated by being forced into service for a use that does not work. It would be much better to have the means available through local building codes to “mothball” buildings—protecting their value—until a suitable use or owner can be found.



***Encourage Diversity: Mix Building Types and Uses Along with Greenways.*** Diversity is a part of many discussions about Pittsfield; it is a community underpinning that needs to be continually nurtured through building development projects. Pittsfield’s zoning code is now approximately 30 years old. Revisiting this critical planning tool is well advised, especially in this context of new growth. Through it, diverse uses can be identified that may allow for greater opportunities: artists’ lofts and galleries mixed within the central business district, increased mixed-use sites, and a new campus zone for such institutions as hospitals, schools, and research centers. Given the abundance of green spaces throughout the city, a revised zoning code can also encourage development that creatively weaves its rich heritage of natural resources alongside its equally rich stock of historic buildings.

***Recognize Intrinsic—Sometimes Hidden—Value in Historic Building Fabric.*** Mayor Ruberto, in his opening statement to the SDAT, said Pittsfield has “good bones,” referring to its buildings and neighborhoods. That’s true. The underlying message is that the appearance of the buildings may not always reflect their innate quality. This is one of the most important messages to be disseminated throughout the course of the future development of the city. It is easy to overlook a building’s attributes when it has been neglected and abandoned for many years. Aided by a very active historical commission, the present inventory of historic sites needs to be expanded and updated so that important buildings are not inadvertently torn down. The Samuel Harrison Homestead presents a vivid case study of just such a site that—however humble—was identified in time. Many other case studies exist, no doubt.

***Simplify the Process of Determining Historic Value for New and Existing Owners.*** We cannot expect that building owners and developers are able to ferret out the attributes of a historic property without assistance. Currently, it appears that a great deal of useful information resides within several organizations and individuals, and in many forms. A central repository housing such data would aid greatly the discovery and appreciation of Pittsfield’s heritage of buildings. Also, this could be a clearinghouse of information related to the appropriate planning and development of sites, as well as about materials and craftspeople trained in the various trades related to historic preservation and adaptive use.

**Explore the Economic Benefits of Preservation.** Preservation is not more expensive than new construction. This myth, though, seems to pervade the city. While the genesis of this “belief” is not clear (nor does it necessarily need to be identified here), preservation may be shown in a number of objective studies to be highly cost-effective. Although the benefits of lasting materials, comfortable and well-proportioned spaces, and enhanced community identity are sidebar elements of an appropriately conceived and executed preservation project, there are other benefits. For instance, preservation projects put more money into the pockets of local labor (approximately 70 percent of the cost of historic preservation projects is attributable to labor, versus 40 percent for new construction). This increase in income results in a more dynamic local economy. Preservation projects also may be seen as instruments of job training, providing fertile ground for learning a variety of marketable skills, especially in building trades.

**Leverage Cultural Tourism, Job Opportunities, and Homegrown Businesses.** Clearly, cultural tourism in the midst of the Berkshires is a growth opportunity for Pittsfield. Heritage preservation can provide avenues to allow this to happen as a natural outgrowth of work in progress. Walking tours and special events held at some of the city’s best—and least—known historic sites and neighborhoods showcases efforts that are unique to Pittsfield, or that may serve as a model throughout the region. Similarly, events that celebrate cultural diversity in food, arts, and lifestyle are reasons for both inhabitants and visitors to experience neighborhoods and the downtown. Supporting homegrown businesses that relate to these events (such as theater and arts groups) also strengthens the economic base, allowing for greater diversity of economic opportunities that benefit the community directly.

## Managing and Shaping Growth

Why should Pittsfield think about “managing” growth? Is growth management only for communities overwhelmed with development pressures? How much and what kind of growth is Pittsfield seeing? How can the city welcome new development while making sure it meets the city’s long-term goals and contributes to a lively urban center and a sustainable city?

### Current Development Trends

Pittsfield is experiencing development interest in two kinds of locations: the downtown core and the undeveloped, “greenfield” areas in the outer edges of the city. Downtown investment is taking the form of rehabilitation of buildings for restaurants and shops, apartments, and cultural institutions. This investment is the result of concerted efforts on the part of Pittsfield to put downtown Pittsfield on the cultural and tourism map of the Berkshires. It would not be happening without the long-time efforts of government and many local organizations and residents, but it taps into a nationwide trend that is bringing new residents and new excitement to downtowns in both small and large cities.

Development interest in the periphery of Pittsfield results from powerful trends and pressures that originate outside the city. Pittsfield is becoming the lower-cost alternative for people seeking vacation or summer homes in the Berkshires. Along the Route 7 corridor, from the north and the south, developers are proposing resort, time-share, and second-home projects on greenfield sites. Country clubs are building golf course subdivisions. These developments are not targeted at the year-round market in Pittsfield. In contrast, the second kind of development activity in the greenfield areas does have a local market component, but its character reflects the statewide trend toward large, expensive homes on large lots along country roads.

### Workshop Observations

**Discussions at the SDAT.** One of the roundtable discussions in the SDAT focused on managing and shaping growth. Participants’ comments included

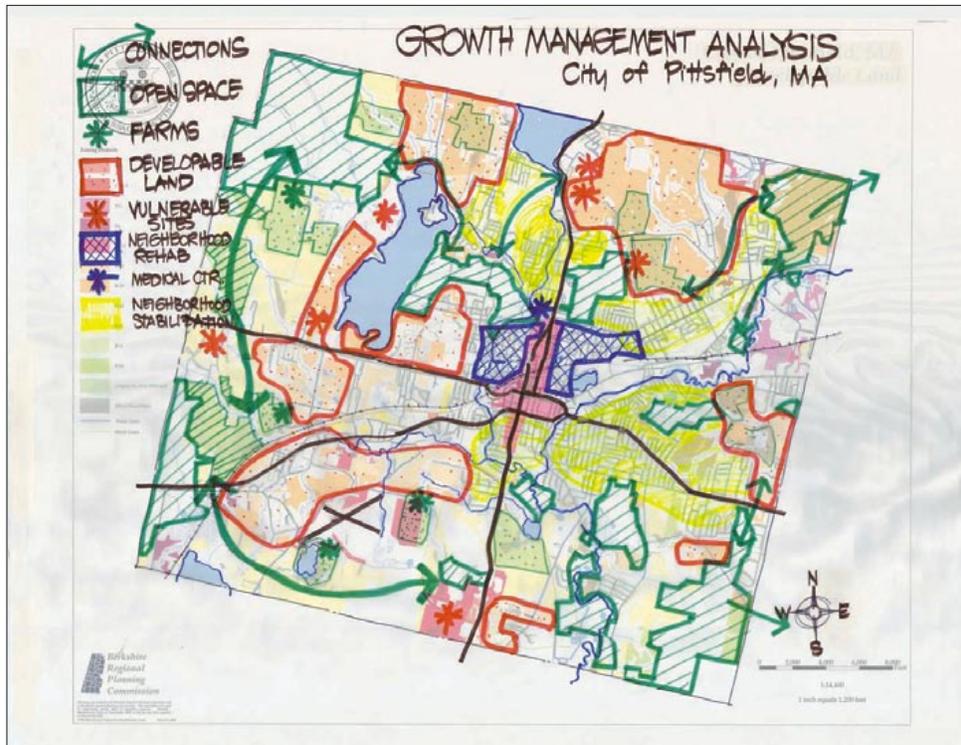
- People are the critical ingredient for a revitalized downtown
- Improving the West Side and Morningside neighborhoods is essential for downtown success
- The city needs to have more housing for young professionals

- Empty-nesters who want to leave their family homes but stay in Pittsfield need condominium alternatives
- Pittsfield’s cluster subdivision ordinance is not getting good results
- People wonder about potential future impacts of allowing time-share and resort development
- Thirty-year-old zoning ordinance needs to be rewritten
- Minimal design guidelines can shape development
- “If you are famished, you take anything...” After years of no growth, there is a reluctance to make demands on developers.

Much of the discussion reflected three related issues: the importance of downtown revitalization; how making downtown and adjacent neighborhoods attractive places where people want to live is essential to revitalization; and the need to ensure a variety of housing types for people of different ages, incomes, and household sizes so that people who live in Pittsfield now will not be displaced by redevelopment. Except for concerns about resort and time-share developments currently being proposed, the question of how to shape and manage growth within the entirety of Pittsfield—not just downtown and nearby neighborhoods—was not a primary focus of interest.

***Growth Management Analysis.*** Today Pittsfield is seeing more new investment and development interest than it has in years. After a long period of losing jobs, population, and business activity, the city has the opportunity to grow its tax base, enhance its role as the economic engine of the Berkshires, and attract new residents. Having crossed the threshold for new growth, the city also has the opportunity to make sure this growth enhances Pittsfield’s long-term quality of life.

The Growth Management Analysis diagram shows the pattern of developed, developable, and preserved land in Pittsfield. At each corner of the town there are significant areas of preserved land. Part of the city’s attraction can be urban vitality interspersed with the green fingers of forests and other open landscapes. While the downtown core and adjacent neighborhoods are properly the focus of revitalization and redevelopment efforts, there are also a number of stable city neighborhoods (shown in yellow) that are doing reasonably well today. Many residents of these neighborhoods are GE retirees and a generational turnover in ownership is beginning. Depending on Pittsfield’s economic condition and its success in revitalizing downtown as a center of culture and entertainment, these neighborhoods could remain stable or begin to deteriorate. Finally, Pittsfield still has opportunities for development on greenfields



that will become increasingly attractive, despite wetlands or other obstacles, as land in neighboring towns becomes more and more expensive. This is already happening as resort and second-home development is beginning to appear in the city’s peripheral areas. With 2005 (through August) median single-family house prices at \$275,000 and median condominium prices at \$675,000 in Lenox, while the corresponding prices in Pittsfield are \$148,650 for single-family homes and \$127,450 for condos, the attraction of Pittsfield is clear.<sup>1</sup>

Everyone understands the success of downtown Pittsfield and the Pittsfield Economic Development Authority (PEDA) site is critical to Pittsfield’s future. It is also important to think about emerging patterns of development outside the city’s urban neighborhoods. A successful Pittsfield will regain some or all of the population it lost in the last third of the 20th century, but as households have become smaller and housing preferences have changed, the city’s existing housing stock will not accommodate all of this new population. How and where this growth occurs within Pittsfield will affect the character of the city for decades to come.

<sup>1</sup> Data from [www.thewarrengroup.com](http://www.thewarrengroup.com)

***Growth Management Principles for the Downtown of the Berkshires.*** As Pittsfield faces choices about redevelopment and new development, the city seeks to attract new private and public investment, jobs, residents, and visitors. At the same time, it must provide a better quality of life and economic opportunities for the people who live in Pittsfield now.

Pittsfield needs growth and investment to enhance its place as the downtown of the Berkshires, but sustainable growth has to be located in the right places, balancing “growth infrastructure” with “green infrastructure.” The city should keep in mind a set of growth management principles to guide decision-making on development in order to promote the efficient and sustainable use of resources, including land, existing buildings, and infrastructure:

- Growth should be directed to downtown and existing neighborhoods where possible
- New growth should be adjacent to existing development or one or two locations should be identified to cluster new development in “villages”
- A greenbelt should be preserved, stretching from the southwest to the west and north; connecting already preserved open spaces with the state forest.

***Pittsfield’s Future: Questions and Recommendations for the Master Plan.*** Pittsfield’s upcoming master plan process will create an opportunity for city residents to create a blueprint for the future city. As noted earlier, a successful Pittsfield will have more people. Who will they be: retired baby boomers, new young professionals, or Pittsfield natives who stay to take advantage of new opportunities? Where will they live and work: in an exciting, culturally rich downtown, in strong traditional neighborhoods near downtown and the PEDAsite, or in new development clustered in walkable village centers? Will there be new housing types: live/work, lofts, young professionals, empty-nester condos in elevator buildings, and assisted living?

As the city proceeds in its revitalization efforts, it is necessary to make strategic choices in order to get the best results from limited resources. Strategic recommendations to shape and manage growth effectively include

- Creating a critical mass of improvements in downtown and adjacent neighborhoods to make a visible difference that attracts attention, rather than a number of scattered efforts that have less impact because each one is relatively small compared to the need:
  - Focus downtown efforts first between Housatonic Street and Linden and Maplewood streets

- In Morningside and West Side, focus efforts and investment to make a visible difference and identify and pursue development opportunities, not just rehabilitation.
- Maintaining and enhancing stable neighborhoods through timely public improvements and homeownership programs designed to encourage successful generational transitions.
- Preserving and creating open space connections. Although Pittsfield already has considerable open space, a green network of trails, paths, stream corridors, and parks directs the location of new development and creates value for that development.
- Promoting clustered development adjacent to existing development on greenfield sites. Effective cluster developments will connect both to the existing urban network and to the open space network, effectively accommodating new growth in a way that is efficient in terms of land use and transportation demands while giving the residents access both to the city and to open space.

***Tools to Move Toward Sustainable Growth.*** As the city develops its master plan, it is important to rewrite the 30-year-old zoning ordinance and other land use regulations to make sure they reflect the city’s goals and policies as well as efficient and sustainable land use practices. Tools that can help Pittsfield shape new growth and redevelopment include

- Design guidelines in words and pictures to let developers know what the city expects, e.g., urban design and transportation impacts. Developers generally respond well to design guidelines. They like to know what a community is looking for because permitting time is likely to be shorter if they can meet community expectations earlier rather than later.
- Entrance corridor overlay districts to create attractive city gateways and enhance the image of the city.
- Large-project special permit review with design criteria for commercial projects of 20,000 or more square feet and residential projects with 25 or more housing units will help the city shape development more effectively both in the urban neighborhoods and the greenfield areas. Pittsfield’s moderate urban densities require careful siting and management of impacts for projects that are relatively large for the scale of the city. This kind of special permit review is becoming common in cities in Massachusetts. The ordinance should be written with clear performance criteria and require the permit-granting authority to make written findings.

- Planned development districts can ensure vulnerable large sites like camps must be developed through a master planning process. The zoning can require a mix of land uses, a certain percentage of open space, performance standards, and other measures to meet city goals.

### **Short-Term Solutions**

***Use Tools to Meet Current Challenges.*** New or improved regulatory tools to meet current concerns about resort and time-share developments and an inadequate cluster development ordinance could be advanced now. To begin shaping new growth more effectively:

- Create a floating resort/time-share overlay district. Similar in type to the successful existing downtown mixed-use and arts and cultural overlay zones, this zoning tool would allow the city more control over where and how these kinds of projects should be built. First a project proponent must request the floating zone “land” on a particular parcel or even a single building downtown, based on criteria in the overlay ordinance. If the Community Development Board grants the request for the zone, then the project would go through a special permit process with the Community Development Board based on written criteria and performance standards.
- Create an improved cluster development ordinance based on sophisticated models available from other Massachusetts communities. Among the elements that could be included are requirements to ensure usable open space by excluding most unbuildable land from the open space requirement; criteria to shape site location and design, for example siting to fit community goals (along the road, to connect with existing open space and habitat corridors); and requirements to ensure maintenance of open space into the future.

## Long-Term Solutions

Pittsfield, like every other municipality in Massachusetts, is embedded in economic, transportation, environmental, and social systems that are bigger than any one community. The city can enhance its future sustainability by working to solve problems jointly with its neighbors, using resources efficiently, sharing benefits, and preserving critical landscapes.

***Plan with Dalton, Lenox, and Other Neighbors.*** Dalton is creating an industrial park close to Pittsfield and both communities are seeking to attract new nonresidential investment. While this may create competition between Dalton and Pittsfield, there are also opportunities for cooperation. Similarly, there is considerable retail development in Lenox along the Route 7 corridor going into Pittsfield which contributes to Lenox's tax base, but is less appealing as an entryway to Pittsfield. Communities that plan together have the potential for joint zoning and tax sharing.

***Work with Advocates to End Approval Not Required (ANR) Subdivisions.*** This action will enable the community to shape development that occurs on county roads. Like every other municipality in Massachusetts, Pittsfield has no control over land subdivisions along public roads that meet zoning requirements. Part of the state zoning law (Chapter 40A), ANR development promotes sprawl and makes it more difficult for communities to direct growth toward urban areas.

***Consider Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) and Other Incentives to Keep Directing Growth to Downtown.*** TDR can be a useful tool to transfer development rights from greenfield sites to provide additional height downtown when downtown's market gets stronger to make it economically appealing.

# Neighborhood Conservation and Sustainability

## **The “What” and “How” of Sustainable Pittsfield Neighborhoods**

The framework for the “what” of a sustainable Pittsfield has been outlined by the natural resources, heritage and preservation, and the managing and shaping growth subteam members. The “how” is perhaps most fundamentally embedded in the work of the economic development subteam. A viable neighborhood and vital centers strategy is at the sum of those vectors.

The SDAT advises the citizens of Pittsfield to create urban mixed-use centers related to adjacent neighborhoods in order to:

- Achieve the sustainability goals of full connectivity to natural resources
- Acquire the full economic and cultural benefits from efforts to preserve Pittsfield’s built heritage
- Anchor strategies to manage growth such that it enhances its place as the economic engine of the Berkshires, balancing “growth infrastructure” with “green infrastructure”
- Become the great place to live that promotes economic development and secures good living near employment centers.

Pittsfield’s neighborhood revitalization strategy is well positioned to help deliver this vital urban center to downtown and can serve as a model for other mixed-use commercial and neighborhood centers within the 40 square miles of the city. The current efforts focus on two initiatives flanking the northern end of downtown from Fenn Street to the hospital and area of Morningside north of Tyler Street. The East Side and Morningside initiatives should continue what they are doing as they fix some of the basics related to their quality of life in the neighborhoods and as they build on their assets.

## **Workshop Observations**

The initiatives’ work in progress involves developing safe, clean, and friendly homes and communities; great schools; and a full range of jobs. It also should involve setting priorities for future investment in the neighborhoods focused on key natural and built assets as well as economic development opportunities. These investments include setting up a system of key streets that link vital commercial and employment centers to walkable neighborhoods, natural resources, and park land.

The priorities for investment in the initiatives should also cluster around key institutions and amenities, both giving them the energy of residential life and supporting such life with residential services, entertainment, employment, and the full enjoyment of the resources that define Pittsfield as the urban lifestyle choice in the natural setting of the Berkshires.

The current work in progress on the neighborhood initiative should certainly be continued. It enjoys realistic and inspirational action plans, clear measures of success, and a solid base of support from the communities they are to serve.

**Urban Centers.** There is no city that people have come to love that doesn't have vital urban centers where people live. Pittsfield is no exception. Currently downtown Pittsfield as defined by the central business district (CBD) has relatively few residents and, even with a substantial downtown housing initiative, it will not create the vitality a downtown needs with only central business district residents. Every effort to add new residents in the core remains important but the real energy in Pittsfield's core will be found in the abutting neighborhoods connected to the CBD.

The sustainability of the Berkshires also lies, in part, in assuring that its existing neighborhoods are connected to vital urban centers. As such, good neighborhoods and their centers are part of a regional environmental strategy. At the same time the unique neighborhoods of Pittsfield are clearly not amenable to "one size fits all" strategies. The heritage and preservation subteam outlined the need to celebrate authenticity, which translates to celebrating the unique opportunities available in each neighborhood. Thus far, Pittsfield has a great start in doing just that in its current initiatives in its most distressed communities.

**The Natural Wonder of the Berkshires.** Most people who want an urban lifestyle have to give up strong connections to natural landscape amenities. Part of what makes Pittsfield unique and a wonderful place to live is the way the land forms, lakes, rivers, and natural ridgelines are integrated into the fabric of its settlement patterns. In the same way Pittsfield residents need to live in vital and dense urban centers, they also have the opportunity to be well connected to the natural features of the city and region.

**Past and Current Investments.** No city can afford an investment strategy that only puts a little of limited resources everywhere. In the face of multiple problems and opportunities, cities need a strategic focus for their investments that addresses past and current expenditures, key employment centers, key civic institutions, and commercial centers. Such a strategy adds strength to initial investments and builds critical mass. In addition to investing in adjacent patterns of previous and current investment, cities

must also connect such places, each to the other and to related residential enclaves. This connection will contribute to the walkable and bikeable environment that is essential for sustainability.

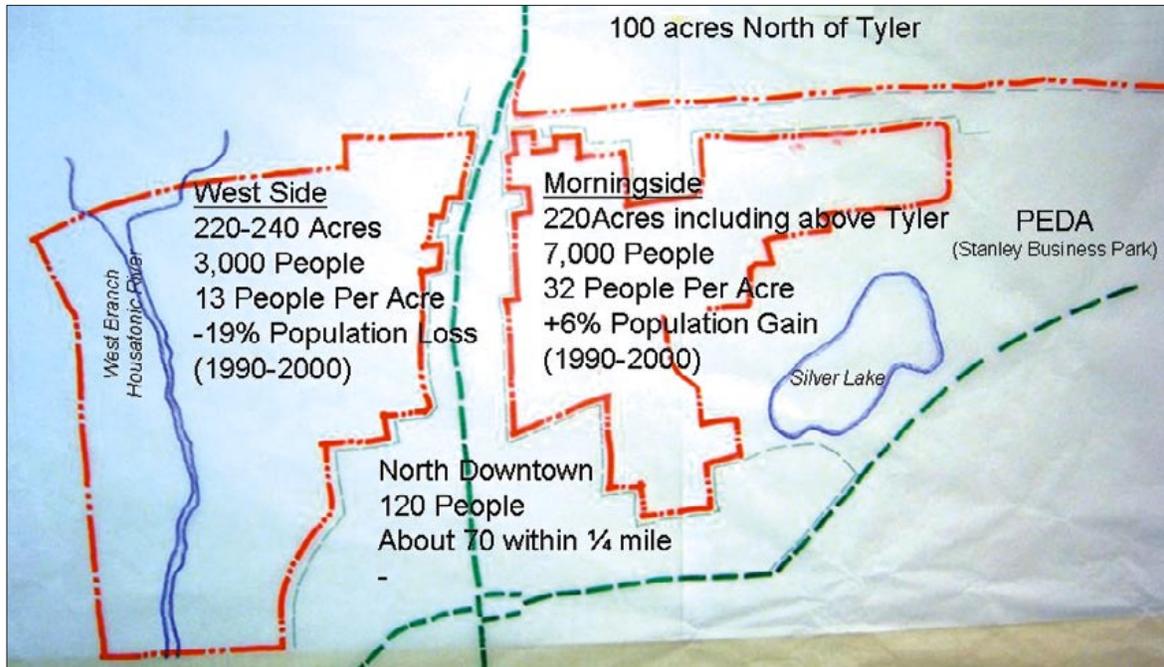
***The Right Tools.*** Making these connections and finding the opportunities related to each of Pittsfield's neighborhoods will require mapping and analysis tools designed to see the patterns of disinvestment; relate them to valuable resources; and define priority streets that link the resources, distressed neighborhoods, and opportunity areas in graphic information systems (GIS). These tools enable both citizens and civil servants to start the hard work of creating new imaginations of places that have been neglected or transformed by shifts in the economy. They also enable those same citizens and planners to map and propose ways to build on their strengths.

For example, a graphic identification of heritage resources throughout the community would be a great asset. Imagine the map pinpointing their location, then draw quarter-mile circles around each one suggesting the importance of their context. Do the same with schools, major employers, parks and quality green structure, and other key institutions. Then identify vacant and underused land areas and property in public ownership or tax arrears. The resulting patterns will begin to reveal priority areas of investment opportunity where a city reinforces several assets with one gesture even as it repairs distressed neighborhoods.

To this family of maps and resulting overlapping areas, one then looks at brownfields, distressed neighborhoods, natural systems like river corridors and lakes, and finds again the areas of opportunity or amenity that need to be connected. All of this mapping creates new imaginations and identifies new possibilities for economic and cultural development.

### **Short-Term Solutions**

***Consider East Side, Morningside, and Downtown as One Great Place.*** A modest version of the previously mentioned exercise was done with the West Side, Morningside, and downtown areas of Pittsfield as part of the team's visit. Starting at Park Square and the several cultural resources that surround it, the team drew the quarter-mile circle (a five-minute walk) and then a half-mile circle. The team then went to sites like the west branch of the Housatonic in the West Side and Silver Lake to the east, including the PEDDA development site on the old GE brownfield.



A quick look at trying to understand the dynamics of potential for a quality neighborhood and vital center strategy revealed a West Side neighborhood of between 220 and 240 acres, housing 3,000 people at about 13 people per acre. This area lost 800 people (19 percent) of its population between the 1990 and the 2000 census. It has several vacant lots, empty buildings, and underused facilities with many of them in tax arrears, city ownership, or potentially acquired with relative ease. The mix of these sites and their pattern suggest a strong potential for land assembly on the west branch of the Housatonic with city parks both immediately north and south to Columbus Ave. All this disinvestment is a 10-minute walk to downtown along Linden Street or Columbus Avenue and less than a five-minute walk to either park along the west branch of the river.

In Morningside we find 220 acres, this time with 7,000 people and 32 people per acre. The area gained 6 percent in the last census but continues to exhibit the symptoms of a distressed community. It also is within a 5- to 10-minute walk to downtown and is adjacent to the emerging Stanley Business Park and the east coast of Silver Lake.

Both neighborhoods meet at North Street in the downtown where about 120 people live. Development patterns or employment centers in this part of downtown appear to be emerging in clusters related to the cinema complex, the new artists' enclave and cultural attractions, and the employment center at the hospital. These centers of current and future investment downtown also define adjacent places in adjacent residential areas that represent good sites for residential work that would reinforce the existing downtown investments.

With the Downtown Spine investment strategy in tack, the adjoining neighborhoods then build connections to it as well as to the PEDA development and a restored Silver Lake to the east and to the west branch of the Housatonic River and its adjoining parks and vacant or underused property to the west. The next step is to make Linder, Columbus, Fenn, and Tyler great connector streets that bring residents to downtown or to the river and lake, and to the employment centers at the hospital or Stanley Business Park in a 5- to 10-minute walk.

All of this is about a new imagination of downtown at North Street that includes the west branch of the river and Silver Lake and all the residents between these natural features. It is a new downtown that is even larger than we think of when we consider the central business district, yet really smaller (walking distance) than we often imagine. It makes a downtown with more than 10,000 residents (not just 120) who are served by a vital center that also retains and enhances its regional reach as the urban destination of the Berkshires. It makes neighborhoods that retain their Morningside and West Side identities linked to a dense urban center as well as to quality natural resources and green infrastructure.



## Long-Term Solutions

***Consider Current Initiatives as a Model for all Pittsfield Neighborhoods.*** A comparable analysis of any of Pittsfield's neighborhoods would seek where they are now or need to be served by residential retail services, where their best natural resources are, and where the nearest employment centers and cultural and civic institutions are. It would also seek to connect these areas with a hierarchy of great pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly streets.

Throughout Pittsfield, neighborhoods should seek opportunities to:

- Develop and use graphic information system (GIS) analysis tools to better understand their potential and identify key opportunities for increased density
- Build on past and current investments to acquire the leverage needed to create critical mass
- Draw on the unique opportunities for neighborhood connections to nearby retail service, entertainment, civic, cultural, and employment centers
- Be strongly connected to the natural resources that give the city and region its distinctive character.

The spatial analysis and aspiration for dense walkable neighborhoods are key to a sustainable city. When the basics are in place to deliver such a settlement pattern, then the broad array of social and technological approaches to recycling, stormwater management, erosion control, energy conservation in buildings, and renewable resource energy generation strategies are far more likely to deliver on their full potential.

## Economic Development

Five of the 10 principles of sustainable development articulated by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Office for Commonwealth Development relate to issues of economic development in Pittsfield:

- Redevelop first; support revitalization and reuse of existing infrastructure
- Concentrate development; integrate uses and create walkable communities
- Plan regionally
- Be fair; promote equitable sharing of benefits of development
- Foster sustainable businesses.

These principles should inform economic development decisions—from allocation of resources and incentives to development of programs and policies. Decision-makers should recognize the interrelatedness of economic development decisions with conservation of natural resources and neighborhood preservation.

### Short-Term Solutions

***Redevelop First.*** Capitalize and focus on existing infrastructure and primary economic assets in Pittsfield. The primary assets would be the central business district and Stanley Business Park. Economic development decisions, particularly those that affect locational decisions, should not promote sprawl or construction of unnecessary infrastructure.

***Integrate a Mix of Uses and Concentrate, Rather than Disperse, Development.*** Pittsfield is downtown Berkshire County. Pittsfield can provide the most authentic urban experience in the Berkshires—not just a small town experience such as Lenox or Great Barrington, but an urban one, with gracious architecture, an extensive and walkable central business district, and a mix of housing choices.

For the downtown to become the vibrant center the city rightly envisions, it should become a desirable place to live as well as visit. Why is this as important as economic development? Businesses care about a range of housing and living options, and residents support more businesses that visitors also want, such as restaurants and bars.

- Create a downtown Pittsfield that will be a vibrant residential as well as commercial center.

- Increase focus on bringing residents as well as businesses into downtown Pittsfield. This effort will create and support a range of housing options for the city and region as it supports new businesses downtown.
- Improve the pedestrian experience, linking medical center and cultural venues to the commercial core.

**Plan Regionally.** Pittsfield’s role in the regional economy should be recognized. The community should play to its strengths and not over-invest to overcome weaknesses. Be realistic about what can be accomplished at a municipal as opposed to a regional or state level. Collaboration with regional organizations, e.g., the Berkshire Economic Development Corporation (BEDC) and the Berkshire Chamber of Commerce, to promote Pittsfield for business location where appropriate might prove useful.

In addition, the community should recognize that not all economic uses may be appropriate for Pittsfield because more appropriate facilities are located elsewhere in the region. The BEDC has identified four sectors of the economy that are likely areas for growth in the Berkshires: advanced specialized manufacturing; tourism, culture, and hospitality; financial services; and education/knowledge creation. Pittsfield is in a position to capitalize on all of these growth sectors. Although Pittsfield may not be able to provide space for every kind of business that might want to come to Berkshire County, it can provide critical housing, recreational, cultural, and service options to support businesses that might locate outside the actual boundaries of Pittsfield.

**Promote Equitable Sharing of Benefits.** All citizens should believe economic growth will serve them, not just visitors and the already affluent. Neighborhood strategy is integral to supporting the revitalization of downtown. Connections rather than barriers between downtown and adjacent neighborhoods should be emphasized.

One of the most serious issues raised in the community sessions was the inadequacy of workforce development initiatives. A sustainable economic development strategy must also focus on alleviating the mismatch between available jobs and current workforce. It was reported that regional employers have hundreds of jobs that are unfilled.

Enlist all existing educational resources, such as the Community College, the United Way, and the public school system, toward growth sectors. For example, one participant suggested the creation of a new high school focused on the creative/cultural fields that would support the development of this sector in the Berkshires and produce graduates who are prepared to work in the region. In all these efforts, the city must ensure opportunities are communicated well.

**Foster Sustainable Businesses.** Build on clusters already identified as growth sectors for the region as noted above. Businesses in these sectors are most likely to capitalize on existing assets.

Growth of local entrepreneurship should also be encouraged. Local entrepreneurship builds a base of people already committed to the region and may also minimize the “race to the bottom” of competition among communities to provide tax incentives.

Businesses should be encouraged to use sustainable design, energy efficiency, and, where appropriate, renewable energy systems in building and operation. Energy-efficient installations will reduce the costs of doing business in Pittsfield over the long term. A focus on these initiatives will further enhance Pittsfield’s reputation as a community that is serious about sustainable development.

### **Long-Term Solutions**

***Create Incentives and Reduce Barriers to Downtown Residential Development.***

We did not review specific incentives that are available but, to the extent feasible, construction and development incentives should address both residential and retail redevelopment, particularly for the reuse of existing structures.

***Continue to Build on Downtown’s Strengths as a Walkable Commercial Center.***

Potential spin-off benefits of new cultural venues should be maximized. The community can use such strategies as strategically placing parking to encourage walking through downtown and creating signage so that visitors know they can walk a short distance to shops and restaurants.

***Combat Negative Perceptions.*** Pittsfield should be marketed as a place to live and work. Target markets might include empty-nesters and younger professionals.

## MOVING FORWARD

This report has outlined an extensive roadmap for the future of Pittsfield, designed to enable Pittsfield to build a new economy to replace the industrial economy that has sustained it for many of the city's 214 years while continuing to improve environmental and social conditions. Although no one can predict the future, the goal in outlining this roadmap is to try, to the extent possible, to suggest the directions that will provide for the community's long-term sustainability and vitality rather than offer "quick-fix" solutions for tomorrow.

Creating and implementing a long-term vision for a community is difficult and requires the sustained commitment from the local government, the business and civic leadership, and the community as a whole. Four themes are suggested to help focus that commitment as Pittsfield moves forward in the years to come:

- Communicate an integrated and holistic vision for the future
- Take the initiative
- Tackle the problems
- Leave a legacy behind.

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