

GREAT BARRINGTON PLANNING BOARD
THURSDAY, AUGUST 26, 2010 6:00 PM
TOWN HALL
334 MAIN STREET GREAT BARRINGTON, MA
SELECTMEN' S MEETING ROOM

SPECIAL MEETING
JOINT MEETING WITH THE
BOARD OF SELECTMEN

AGENDA

1. CALL TO ORDER

2. MASTER PLAN UPDATE

- A. Review of Plan Purpose and Statutory Authority (Discussion)
- B. Review of Proposed Process and Schedule (Discussion)
- C. Establish Master Plan Committee (Discussion/Vote)
- D. Appointment of Members by the Planning Board (Discussion/Vote)
- E. Appointment of Members by the Board of Selectmen (Discussion/Vote)

3. ADJOURNMENT



TOWN OF GREAT BARRINGTON
MASSACHUSETTS

OFFICE OF PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Christopher Rembold, AICP
Town Planner

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Planning Board
Board of Selectmen

FROM: Kevin O'Donnell, Town Manager *K.O.*
Christopher Rembold, AICP, Town Planner *CR*

DATE: August 23, 2010

COPY: - -

SUBJECT: Draft Scope of Services and Schedule
To update the 1997 Master Plan

Overview

This updates the Town Planner's July 7, 2010 memo to the Planning Board, and provides both the Planning Board and the Board of Selectmen with an overview of the Master Plan schedule.

This scope of services and schedule may be adopted by the to-be-established Master Plan Committee, as a way to guide the work.

It is recommended that a "Master Plan Committee" be appointed by the Planning Board as a way to include key members of the Planning Board, Selectmen, other boards and committees, and the general public in the process.

The Master Plan Committee would be charged with overseeing the entire process and delivering to the Planning Board a new Master Plan built on extensive public participation. The Planning Board would adopt the plan, and the Plan would be implemented by town staff, boards and by Town Meeting, as appropriate.

It bears reiterating that Massachusetts General Law Ch. 41, §81D, sets forth nine required elements of a master plan.¹ We recommend that these be expanded as needed, depending on issues particular to our town. These issues will likely arise during the public participation process, which is detailed in the scope of services below.

The greatest challenge of this Master Plan update will be engaging (not just seeking validation from) a variety of stakeholders and interest groups. Special attention must be paid to engaging the community. The community should be engaged as a full partner in the process, giving ideas, and vetting drafts of the plan. To be sure, community engagement is an intense process, and it should be a continuous process. This may make for a great deal of up front work on our part, but it helps to address, up front, big ideas as

¹ (1) Goals and Policies, (2) Land Use, (3) Housing, (4) Economic Development, (5) Natural and Cultural Resources, (6) Open Space and Recreation, (7) Services and Facilities, (8) Circulation, and (9) an Implementation Plan

well as controversies, so that the Master Plan becomes a sort of mandate. Through participation, implementation can come a little easier.

We want to be clear that we do not recommend a charrette-style approach where a draft plan is written in the space of a week's worth of intense work, after which the community is asked, "Did we get it right?" Short one- or two-day charrettes may be appropriate for key sites or topics (see step 9 below), but not for the entire plan.

Rather, engaging the community, and empowering it to make decisions, comes from weaving the public into each component of the technical work program. We recommend the following general approach:

PHASE 1: START UP AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

1. Consider ***key participants***, stakeholders, groups, demographics, etc. who should be involved in the planning process. These might include, for example, seniors, high school or college students, immigrant groups, historical societies, individuals, developers, key property owners, etc.

Team: Town Manager, Planner, Planning Board, Board of Selectmen
Schedule: July – August 2010

2. Develop a ***media outreach strategy***. We will use, to the maximum extent possible, radio and newspapers to publicize events and develop excitement about the planning process.

Team: Planner, Master Plan Committee
Schedule: September 2010

3. Establish a page on the Town ***website***, and/or a web log ("blog") in order to post key documents, discussion threads, and keep people informed about upcoming events and other ways to participate. Ideally the blog will be interactive, back and forth moderated discussion. For those who do not have internet access, a spiral bound notebook placed at the libraries would be an "old fashioned" substitute for the blog.

Team: Planner, Master Plan Committee
Schedule: September 2010

4. ***Exhibit*** old plans, maps, site designs, and other planning documents at the libraries, as a way to build interest in the planning process. Work with the Historical Commission and Society. On an ongoing basis, draft plan elements can be exhibited in the libraries, Town Hall and other public buildings, etc. to keep people up to date.

Team: Planner
Schedule: September 2010

5. Meanwhile, the Planner will begin to gather, review and analyze basic ***existing conditions*** data, with the assistance of BRPC. Research and data analysis will be performed by the Town Planner, with mapping assistance provided by the BRPC. Research and analysis will include:

- Regional and local population and household growth trends

- Regional and local housing trends (prices, sales, affordability, seasonal homes, types and tenure, etc.)
- Regional and local employment trends
- Regional and local office and retail trends (including market data)
- Regional and local building permit trends
- Land use and land consumption, including agriculture, housing, retail, office, and industrial analysis

Team: Planner, BRPC, Master Plan Committee
Schedule: September – November 2010

The Community Engagement process will continue throughout the life of the planning process. Ideally, community engagement will continue into the future, as the plan should be updated or reexamined every five years.

PHASE 2: ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

6. Convene *Town Forum 1*, moderated by the Town Planner, and assisted by BRPC and the members of the Planning Board. This will be an important opportunity to educate participants about comprehensive planning, its importance, challenges, and the process itself.

Team: Planner, BRPC, Master Plan Committee
Schedule: November 2010

At the forum:

- a. A sign-in sheet will be provided. A “Check Here” box indicating participants’ interest in attending meetings, volunteering, or addressing certain topics would invite future involvement.
- b. The Town Planner will begin by presenting an overview of the Town history, demographics, development trends, challenges and opportunities (as we have already discussed). We will discuss the role and trends of planning in the 21st Century—regional connections, multi-modal transportation, smart growth and mixed land uses, climate change, etc. Finally, we will address any opportunities presented by this Master Plan update.
- c. We will then invite people to break out into smaller groups, moderated by the Planner and the Board members, to conduct brief “SWOT” sessions. In these small groups, people will be invited to consider the “strengths, weakness, opportunities, and threats” facing Great Barrington. Strengths and weaknesses represent current conditions and issues; and opportunities and threats represent what people view as the looming conditions and issues.
- d. Each group will then report back to the entire convocation. The moderators will write down the key considerations on large boards for all to see.
- e. Then, several key topics will be culled from the list, and folks will be invited to discuss each topic in small groups. Again, each table will be moderated by the Planner and the Board members. In this way, people can attend the “historic preservation” table, for example, raise specific issues or hopes, and then move on to, say, the “affordable housing” table. And so on.

- f. Each table will then report back. A brief discussion period will follow.
 - g. Next steps outlined for the participants, and the forum will be adjourned.
 - h. The moderators will collect the notes from each table/group. These notes and the results of the forum will become the backbone of the first draft of the Vision and Goals statement (see step 9 below).
 - i. We should realize that it may be more useful to hold follow up “mini forums” at different times and at different venues, in order to attract as many people as possible. These would either supplement or substitute for the larger Town-wide forum.
7. If more targeted input is needed, we could develop a series of surveys to be distributed around Town. All residents, property owners and businesses would be given an opportunity to respond to topics as appropriate. The survey could be distributed with a tax bill. There also an option to send e-surveys, perhaps monthly, using the Town’s CTY Blackboard Connect service. Resident and property owner surveys would ask for opinions regarding development and policy priorities. They would also delve into issues and opportunities presented by different business districts. Separate tabulations will be prepared for each. (Perhaps a high school civics class would like to participate and conduct in person, on-the-street surveys.)

Team: Planner, Master Plan Committee
Schedule: December 2010

8. The Planner and members of the board will conduct stakeholder interviews of key Town staff, regional agencies, and other public, civic and private stakeholders to follow up on the visions, goals, and concerns we heard at the Forum. Interviews will be scheduled either individually or in groups. A week of concentrated and organized of meetings is generally required; other interviews can be scheduled as needed.

Team: Planner, Master Plan Committee
Schedule: December – January 2011

PHASE 3: OPTIONS AND VISION

9. Depending on the results of the first forum, we would convene a series of topical workshops with the Board and public. These workshops would address key concerns and/or key sites. The workshops are often best run as brainstorming sessions, not formal presentations. This may be the time to utilize design charrettes that arrive at a draft set of recommendations that can then be deliberated upon later.

Team: Planner, Master Plan Committee, BRPC
Schedule: January – March 2010

10. Following each workshop, draft mini-reports will be prepared for each topic or site. Their frequent submission will keep momentum going. Their relative brevity will encourage a timely review. The reports will include existing conditions, key considerations, and recommendations.

Team: Planner, BRPC
Schedule: April – May 2011

11. After all of the topical reports are reviewed, the first draft of a **Vision and Goals** statement will be developed by the Planner, and reviewed by the Board and the public. This document will take input from the first forum and from the topical workshops and integrate it into coherent principles to guide the balance of the plan.

Team: Planner, Master Plan Committee
Schedule: June 2011

12. The Planner, working the Board, key staff and other boards, will draft **objectives and strategies** to be used to accomplish each goal. This, along with the Vision and Goals statement, will make-up the core of the Master Plan.

Team: Planner, Master Plan Committee, staff
Schedule: July – August 2011

13. At this point, we will convene **Town Forum 2**. Once the Board has reviewed the draft goals, objectives and strategies, there will be a second Town forum or another round of mini-forums to present the drafts. At this point, given the level of public participation at every step of the way, it is hoped that that draft is perceived as a consensus document, even in its draft form. The forum will be a good indication of community opinion regarding planning priorities for each plan component. The intended result is consensus and buy-in to a set of strategies for the future of Great Barrington.

Team: Planner, Master Plan Committee, BRPC
Schedule: September 2011

PHASE 4: WRITING THE PLAN

With the guiding principles established, and a consensus achieved, the backbone of the plan is in place, and the text and be filled in.

14. The Planner will prepare a **draft plan** that incorporates all of the above and that can be reviewed by the Board. Ideally it will include graphic layout and illustration for both the main document and for an Executive Summary.

Team: Planner, Master Plan Committee
Schedule: October 2011 – February 2012

15. The draft plan will be presented to the community once more, either at another town event, perhaps **Town Forum 3**, or a special Board meeting, or at mini-forums at different times and locations, to reach the participants who have contributed so much to date.

Team: Planner, Master Plan Committee
Schedule: March 2012

16. Then, based on comments and suggestions by the Board, we will finalize the text and graphics and produce a **Final Plan** with an executive summary, any appendices, and a clear

implementation timetable. The Town Manager and Planner will report the draft to all relevant Town boards and committees, including the Board of Selectmen, for their endorsement.

Team: Town Manager, Planner, Master Plan Committee
Schedule: April – June 2012

17. At this point, the Final Plan is ready for an official public hearing and approval by the Planning Board.

Team: Planning Board
Schedule: July 2012

Proposed Schedule

GREAT BARRINGTON MASTER PLAN UPDATE

August 23, 2010

Phase / Task	Month	2010												2011												2012											
		Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July												
Phase 1																																					
1 ID key participants																																					
2 Media strategy																																					
3 Website, etc																																					
4 Exhibits																																					
5 Existing conditions																																					
Phase 2																																					
6 Town Forum 1																																					
7 Surveys																																					
8 Interviews																																					
Phase 3																																					
9 Topical workshops																																					
10 Mini-reports																																					
11 Vision and Goals																																					
12 Objectives and Strategies																																					
13 Town Forum 2																																					
Phase 4																																					
14 Draft Plan																																					
15 Town Forum 3																																					
16 Final Plan																																					
17 Hearing / Adoption																																					



TOWN OF GREAT BARRINGTON MASSACHUSETTS

PLANNING BOARD

Town of Great Barrington Master Plan Committee

The Planning Board, under the requirements of Massachusetts General Law, is charged with making a Master Plan for the Town of Great Barrington. Such plans are designed to provide the basis for guidance, coordination and accountability to future decision makers regarding the long term land use and development of the community.

To that end, the Planning Board, at its joint meeting with the Board of Selectmen on August 26, 2010, voted to establish a Master Plan Committee with the following duties, membership, and term of office.

Charge of Duties

The Master Plan Committee shall work with the Town Planner as well as other Town staff, boards, commissions, consultants, regional agencies, and the citizens of Great Barrington, to formulate drafts of a new Master Plan to update and replace the 1997 Master Plan. The contents of the new Master Plan shall be in conformance with Massachusetts General Law and shall represent any other topics and issues specific to the needs of Great Barrington. When the Master Plan Committee has completed its work, it shall present a final draft of the new Master Plan for consideration by the Planning Board.

Over the course of its work, the Master Plan Committee shall ensure that it implements effective strategies for the meaningful involvement of the citizens of Great Barrington in shaping the vision, goals, and strategies set forth by the Master Plan.

The Master Plan Committee shall appoint a Chairman and Vice Chairman to guide its efforts. The Master Plan Committee shall appoint subcommittees as it deems necessary to the fulfillment of its duties. The Master Plan Committee and its subcommittees shall establish regular meetings and shall abide by the Massachusetts Open Meetings Law.

Membership

The Master Plan Committee shall consist of 15 members, as follows:

- Three (3) members of the Planning Board, appointed by the Planning Board
- Two (2) members of the Board of Selectmen, appointed by the Board of Selectmen
- One (1) representative recommended by the Agricultural Commission
- One (1) representative recommended by the Conservation Commission
- One (1) representative recommended by the Council on Aging
- One (1) representative recommended by the Historic Commission

- One (1) representative recommended by the Parks Commission
- Five (5) members at large, appointed by the Planning Board

The Town Planner shall be a non-voting advisor of the Master Plan Committee and its subcommittees.

Term of Office

The Master Plan Committee and any subcommittees shall dissolve after the Planning Board's adoption of a new Master Plan.

For the Planning Board: _____
Donald O. Goranson, Chairman

DRAFT



TOWN OF GREAT BARRINGTON MASSACHUSETTS

OFFICE OF PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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Town Planner
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MEMORANDUM

TO: Planning Board
FROM: Christopher Rembold, AICP, Town Planner
DATE: June 24, 2010
COPY: Kevin O'Donnell, Town Manager
SUBJECT: Reexamination of 1997 Community Master Plan

This memo's purpose is to briefly discuss how well the 1997 Community Master Plan anticipated the Town's needs and development trends, and to identify particular changes and new components necessary to bring the Town's plan up to date, in order to implement a cohesive vision for the next 20 years. This memo addresses the following:

- A. Challenges at the time of the last master plan.
- B. Objectives of the last master plan.
- C. Extent to which problems and objectives have been addressed (including analysis of implementing actions) since the last master plan.
- D. Significant changes in data, trends, assumptions, etc.
- E. Current development issues, such as key vacant sites and town-owned buildings, and whether the Town is adequately positioned to respond to prevailing trends and shape its future growth.

A. Challenges at the time of the last Master Plan

The 1997 Plan was begun in 1994, completed in 1996, and published in 1997. It was formulated in the midst of a great deal of development pressure, and on the cresting wave of skyrocketing property values in most parts of Town. In the span of time between the December 1973 Town Plan and the 1997 Plan, several significant developments had occurred or were proposed, causing significant changes to the character of Town. Additionally, national and regional economic shifts led to severe shrinking or closure of the region's major manufacturing and industrial employers, including the mills in Housatonic and the Log Homes factory downtown. Significant issues over this period included:

- Construction of single family homes—subdivisions constructed off of Route 23 (State Road), North Plain Road, Division Street, among others. Christian Hill Commons and Forest Row developments are built.

- Major housing development on North Plain Road, Mansfield Crest, State Road, Simon's Rock, and other areas, including Searles Castle and West Avenue.
- Route 7 traffic increases significantly, as development sprawls out of the downtowns. Belcher Square intersection traffic reaches dangerous levels.
- High school relocated out of downtown, to a new regional campus.
- Proposition 2 ½ adopted statewide, in 1981.
- Unemployment rates increase to near and above 10 percent in mid 1970s. Rates increase again in late 1980s and early 1990s, topping 10 percent and outpacing national averages.
- Zoning amendments restricting proximity of fast food restaurants, restricting development near public water supplies, and rezoning portions of Stockbridge Road were passed. Major zoning code amendments failed in 1989.
- Downtown commercial revitalization efforts begin to take hold, with tax incentives implemented. Taconic lumber burns; the former site is redeveloped into a movie theater and public parking lot.
- Town Manager form of government adopted.
- Restoration of the Housatonic River in downtown begins. River Walk emerges.
- Memorial Day tornado, 1995. Fairgrounds, Mahaiwe cemetery, and Eagleton area leveled.¹

B. Objectives of the last Master Plan.

The Plan that emerged in response to these issues and opportunities is an excellent document. It represented the collective thinking of the Great Barrington community on its growth and development as well as its vision for the future. The Plan anticipated implementing actions would occur from 1996 through at least 2000. Six Basic Principles that underlined the actions the Town intended to pursue in order to guide its growth. These were:

1. Manage regulations and the pattern and capacity of Town services so that development contributes to the viability and traditional character of the village centers while sustaining the Town's rural countryside and agricultural base.
2. Encourage economic growth that is appropriately scaled to the Town that supports, rather than detracts from, the Downtown and Housatonic Village. Encourage economic growth that is balanced among a variety of commercial activities, serving the needs of all sectors of the economy, and creating skilled jobs at higher wages for Great Barrington's young people.
3. Direct efforts to support the special places and features of Great Barrington that contribute to its unique character.
4. Direct future growth toward the villages—Downtown and Housatonic Village. Guide growth away from the fragile wetlands and hazard-prone floodplain areas between the River and Route 7.

¹ Many thanks to Bernie Drew and his book Great Barrington: Great Town, Great History. His book provides a substantially more detail than is included in this severely abbreviated list.

5. Discourage development with potential for high traffic impact in order to lessen traffic congestion, assure safer traffic access, parking, and pedestrian access in the Downtown and along the Corridor, and to discourage strip development.
6. Encourage site and building development design that is harmonious with the Town's traditional, existing buildings and development patterns.

In my opinion, these continue to be excellent guiding principles for Great Barrington. These principles formed the core of a "smart growth" plan for Great Barrington. With its 1997 Plan, the Town recognized that compact growth is the most efficient way of promoting the viability of the village centers, protecting fragile environmental and historic resources, ensuring the viability of farms and promoting open space, and efficiently utilizing limited Town funds for infrastructure and redevelopment.

C. Extent to which problems and objectives have been addressed since the last Master Plan

A number of the goals of the 1997 Plan have been addressed, most of the time through zoning and regulatory amendments. Some goals have fallen by the wayside, either for lack of public support, governmental leadership, funding, or all of the above.

The chart on the next several pages addresses each of the "action items" from the last Master Plan.

**Reexamination of the 1997 Great Barrington Community Master Plan
Status of Implementing Actions**

June 24, 2010

Action		Plan Element	Lead Agency	Timing	Status and Recommendations
A. ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE					
A1	Develop a public/private partnership organization such as CDC	III C	Selectmen	1996-1997	Local CDC active in GB projects. Continue PPP strategy, especially with Chamber and Business Improvement District
A2	Develop an organization to finance and develop Downtown Housatonic	IV A	Selectmen	1996-1997	Local CDC active in GB, but not Housatonic. Include same or similar strategy in new plan.
A3	Develop ombudsman, guidebook, pre-develop conferences to assist business	III C	Planning Bd	1998-1999	Completed, 2009 and staff DRT active. Guidebook developed and published June 2010. Continue efforts.
A4	Develop promotional materials	III C, IV A	Chamber	1998-1999	Not completed. Include same or similar strategy in new plan's Economic Development element, continue efforts with Chamber and possible BID
A5	Foster "friendly" Town attitude to business	III C	Selectmen	1996-2000	Ongoing. Continue with new plan.
A6	Pursue "Certified Local Government" status for historic preservation	III D	HC	1997	Unknown, however local HDC active.
A7	Establish Technical Review Committee to screen telecommunication sites	III C	Selectmen	1996-1997	Completed. WTOD bylaw in place.
B. ZONING AND REGULATION					
B1	Explore "growth center" bylaw	III A	Planning Bd	1999-2000	Not done. Recommend investigating for new plan. Corollary is restricting growth on the fringes.
B2	Create "Village" zoning district	IV B	Planning Bd	1998-1999	VCOD complete 2009 for GB downtown. B3 zone also completed for GB downtown. Investigate "village" zoning for Housatonic, and transitional zones for village edges
B3	Prepare package of "village zoning" refinements	IV A	Planning Bd	1998-1999	Implementation has been mixed. Mixed-use is now more widely allowed by right. Multi-family units by

Action	Plan Element	Lead Agency	Timing	Status and Recommendations	
				special permit. Continue to investigate as this relates to economic development, housing, and village centers	
B4	Explore alternatives to strip commercial development	III C	Planning Bd	1996-1997	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Planning Commercial Devel. – not implemented - Mixed-use – becoming more flexible in villages, but not along village edges or main highways - No extension of business zoning along highways – some pressure against this. - More to be done
B5	Revise zoning and map to not allow retail in industrial districts	IV B	Planning Bd	1998-1999	Needs revisiting. Build out analysis precipitating this goal no longer holds true. Revisit use table and map
B6 (a)	Prohibit retail in excess of 50,000 sf	IV B	Planning Bd	1996-1997	Done. Maintain policy as way to reinforce villages
B6 (b)	Allow existing shopping ctr. redevelop. only by special permit	IV B	Planning Bd	1996-1997	Done.
B7	Develop business performance controls, broaden use categories	III C, IV B	Planning Bd	1998-1999	Some band-aids over time. Recodification introduced broader service categories. Revisit.
B8	Translate Design Guidelines Workbook into specific regs.	IIIC, IV B	Planning Bd	1998-1999	Limited success. Revisit.
B9	Adopt bike and pedestrian access regs.	III B	Planning Bd	1999	Goals still hold true. Implementation was only possible on special permits. Revisit performance standards.
B10	Develop non-business design guidelines	III D	Planning Bd	1999-2000	Not done. Revisit, particularly for new residential PURD or subdivisions
B11	Establish trip generation density controls	III B, IV B	Planning Bd	1999-2000	Not done. Extremely complicated ratios would result. Revisit, particular in light of build out analysis obsolescence, and new potentials for mixed-uses, walking, and biking.
B12	Establish curb cut controls	III B, IV B	Planning Bd	1999-2000	Limited controls or guidelines. Shared inter-parcel access is very rare.
B13	Establish incentives for non-auto access	III B, IV B	Planning Bd	1999-2000	VCOD and B3 enacted parking reductions. Explore further

Action		Plan Element	Lead Agency	Timing	Status and Recommendations
B14	Allow fee as alternative to on-site parking	III B	Planning Bd	1996-1997	Not done. Consider, but in cooperation with potential Business Improvement District
B15	Adopt village parking rules	IIIC, IID, IVA	Planning Bd	1996-1997	VCOD and B3 enacted parking reductions. Explore further
B16	Reduce cases requiring special permits	III C	Planning Bd	1998-1999	Revisit, with consideration to new zoning strategies and the newly enacted site plan review authority.
B17	Clarify, speed special permit process	III C	Planning Bd	1998-1999	Revisit, with consultation of Board chairs. Two-tier process bears consideration
B18	Make historic protection a special permit criterion	III C	Planning Bd	1998-1999	Not done / not explicit. It is generally included as part of new SP criteria
B19	Improve regulations on home-based businesses and cottage industries	III C	Planning Bd	1996-1997	Revisit. Some improvements made to zoning, including use of accessory buildings.
B20	Explore transfer of development rights	IV B	CC, GBLC	1998-1999	Revisit, particularly in light of new key sites, e.g. Fairgrounds, and sensitive resource areas.
B21	Revise zoning setbacks and screening for historic character consistency	III D	Planning Bd	1999-2000	Contextual setbacks are in place. Also VCOD and B zones allow 0' setbacks, 5' max setbacks
B22	Allow "starter homes" on small lots	III E	Planning Bd	1999-2000	Revisit. Rear lots provision enacted. OSRD enacted. R-3 is smallest lot size available.
B23	Broaden range of permitted elder housing options in zoning regs.	III E	Planning Bd	1998-1999	Few by-right options available. New assisted living bylaw enacted. OSRD enacted, may be beneficial.
B24	Allow accessory housing units	III E	Planning Bd	1999-2000	Allowed (but only in primary structure; revisit this)
B25	Provide incentives for affordable housing; mandate it in large developments	III E	Planning Bd	1999-2000	B3 zone mandates it, and provides bonus incentives for additional units. Establish a municipal Affordable Housing Trust and/or reconsider the CPA
B26	Refine cluster and PURD laws	III E	Planning Bd	1998-1999	Some refinements made. New OSRD enacted.
B27	Develop regs encouraging adaptive re-use of existing buildings	III E	Selectmen	1996-1997	Limited implementation. Revisit
B28	Prepare hazardous materials bylaw	III F	Planning Bd / Cons Comm	1998-1999	Status? Revisit

Action		Plan Element	Lead Agency	Timing	Status and Recommendations
B29	Prepare stormwater and erosion controls	III F	Planning Bd / Cons Comm	1998-1999	New state stormwater standards in place. Cons. Comm and Cons. Agent oversight now stronger. Consider new models of Low Impact Development guidelines
B30	Add environmental protection criteria for Site Plan review and special permits	III F	Planning Bd / Cons Comm	1998-1999	Both Special Permits and Site Plan Reviews consider these items
B31	Prepare bylaw protecting environmentally critical locations	III F, III G	Cons Comm	1996-1997	WQPD enacted. Scenic Mountain Act enacted; but limited enforcement. Consider steep slope prohibitions. Revisit areas and reconsider controls
B32	Create local Environmental Impact Review bylaw	III G	Cons Comm	1998-1999	Not enacted. Revisit, keeping in mind Cons. Comm, subdivision, and site plan review regs. may all apply
B33	Review Scenic Roads	III G	Cons Comm	1996	Not enacted. Consider
B34	Expand Historic Districts Downtown and elsewhere	III D	HC	1996-1997	Not enacted. Consider. (national district for Taconic -- West Aves. established 1998.)
B35	Strengthen flood plain zoning rules	IV B	Planning Bd/ Cons Comm	1998-1999	Revisit. Consider revisions.
B36	Replace rigid R-2 and R-4 rules with performance based ones	IV C	Planning Bd	1997-1998	Some density reductions available in R2, I, and B2 on water and sewer. OSRD enacted for R2 and R4
B37	Restrict major trip generators outside of Downtown	III B	Planning Bd	1999-2000	Big-box over 50,000 prohibited. Consider other provisions if necessary, but not precluding hotel-conference-entertainment destinations
B38	Emphasize low trip generators in economic development	III B	Planning Bd	1999-2000	Limited implementation. Revisit.
B39	Develop uniform traffic impact policy	III B	Planning Bd	1999-2000	Not done. Revisit.
B40	Develop "red flag" system for development affecting historic resources	III D	Plan. Bd/ HC	1996-1997	No system in place
B41	Pursue use of preservation easements	III D	HC	1997-1998	Limited. State tax provisions such as 61 are useful to an extent. Continue PPPs with land conservancies and historic preservation orgs.

Action		Plan Element	Lead Agency	Timing	Status and Recommendations
B42	Make historic preservation a design criterion in subdivisions, PURD, and cluster regulations	III D	Planning Bd	1999-2000	Subdivision regs revised 2008, with this provision. Special permits and site plan review could consider it
B43	Make further Sign Bylaw refinements per design study	III D	Planning Bd	1996-1997	Unknown. Entire sign code deserves a revisit
B44	Consider Demolition Delay bylaw	III D	HC	1996-1997	Not done. Revisit, consult with Mass Historic
B45	Make subdivision regulations context-sensitive	III F	Planning Bd	1999-2000	New subdivision regs, 2008, consider this, in part through §240-12. Review form B-1 and update it.
B46	Require developer contributions to trails and paths	III G	Planning Bd	1998-1999	New OSRD. Limited consideration in subdivision regs.
B47	Develop context-sensitive street standards	III B	Planning Bd	1999-2000	Revisit subdivision regs street design. Consult with DPW on upgrades to existing roads
C. FACILITIES PROPOSALS					
C1	Explore linking CIP to permitting	III A	Manager	1996-2000	Revisit. Town Planner – DPW cooperation provides a ready avenue for this linkage
C2	Make consistency with this Plan a CIP project consideration	IV A	Manager	1996-2000	Not done. Revisit.
C3	Continue streetscape improvements in Housatonic and GTB Villages	IV A	Manager	1996-2000	Main St and downtown side streets on the docket. Housatonic street improvements recently implemented through CDBG. Sidewalks in other areas improved. Revisit and tie to walkability policies.
C4	Implement village supporting recreational area provisions	IV A	Manager	1997-2000	Revisit and tie to new canoe access, bike path, and trail and walkability efforts
C5	Increase percentage of capital outlays for non-auto travel (sidewalks, bike trails, etc.)	III B, III G, IV A	Selectmen	1996-2000	Revisit. This is in line with 2010 Selectmen's priorities. Integrate into CIP planning.
C6	Assure that all street construction includes provisions for bikes and pedestrians	III B	Selectmen	1996-2000	Town policy not in place. Consider. Mass Highway policy exists.

Action		Plan Element	Lead Agency	Timing	Status and Recommendations
C7	Town support for River Walk	III G	Selectmen	1996-2000	Federal grant for Riverway south to Brookside was never utilized. DPW makes in-kind contributions to River Walk maintenance. Continue this policy as well as planning assistance. Tie with C5 above
C8	Provide for recreational uses such as Old Maid's swimming, Div. St. canoe access	III G	Selectmen	1996-2000	Some improvements made. Revisit, and link walkability/sidewalks/trails to connect with rec. areas
C9	Explore Town liability insurance for private trails	III G	Manager	1996-1997	Revisit. May not be necessary; check Mass. law
C10	Scheduled program for better utilization of public areas	III G	P&R Com	1997-2000	Revisit. Parks Commission planning needed
C11	Increase Downtown parking including parking directions and signage	III C, IV A	Selectmen	1998-2000	Limited implementation. BRPC parking study 2005 supported these recommendations. Revisit in light of Main St reconstruction, Log Homes, Searles, etc. and potential Business Improvement District
C12	Secure and extend trails, providing uniform signage	III G, IV A	Selectmen	1998-2000	Ongoing walking and bike path efforts
C13	Carry out program to increase solid waste recycling	III A	Manager	1996-2000	Limited success, difficult to measure. Revisit
C14	Make improvements to communications network	III C	Selectmen	1996-1997	High speed internet should be a priority, relating to jobs, youth retention, etc.
D. STUDY AND PLAN					
D1	Update the Open Space and Recreation Plan	III G	Cons Comm	1996-1997	Updated in 2007. Needs update every 5 years. Consider as an element of the master plan
D2	Great Barrington Fairgrounds study and redevelopment committee	III G, IV B	Selectmen	1997-2000	Not done. Strongly consider in a "key sites" element of the master plan
D3	Lake Mansfield Improvements Plan	III G	Parks Comm	1997-2000	Ongoing. LMITF established and active
D4	Explore plans for additional water supply and distribution improvements	III A	Selectmen		In 2006 a Committee studied issues. No consolidations or expansions

Action		Plan Element	Lead Agency	Timing	Status and Recommendations
D5	Convene task force to explore how to sustain agriculture, such as creating Agricultural Districts and agri. tax relief	III G, IV C	Selectmen / Task Force	1996-1997	Limited implementation. Ag. Committee now active. Right to Farm enacted. Consider as an element of new master plan.
D6	(no entry / misnumbered)	--	--	--	--
D7	Study parallel road to relieve congestion	III B, IV A	Planning Bd	Opportunistic	Never considered. Expense of a parallel road likely makes it a nonstarter. Older idea of bypass long since ruled out
E. OTHER CONTINUING EFFORTS					
E1	Support Housatonic River water quality improvement efforts	III G	Various	1996-2000	Town is active with HVA and others
E2	Broaden public awareness of recreational resources	III G	Various	1996-2000	Active efforts include historic walking tours and GB trails events.
E3	Work to develop and offer appropriate jobs skills training	III C	Various	1996-2000	Limited implementation. Consider PPPs, efforts with colleges, and business incubator space. Relates to youth retention as well
E4	Support actions for open space and agriculture	III C, IV B	Various	1996-2000	Strong efforts include Berkshire Grown, farmer's markets, Ch 61 APR programs. Consider the CPA and other state enabling laws. Work with Chamber and BID on agricultural / restaurant events
E5	Promote lower interest financing for first-time buyers	III E	Hsing Part	1996-2000	Limited implementation. Consider trust fund and revenue sources such as CPA or revolving loans
E6	Identify, publicize inexpensive homes	III E	Hsing Part	1996-2000	Revisit. Likely out of Town capacity but a good fit with CDC and other partners.
E7	Seek authority for real estate transfer tax for APRs	IV C	Selectmen	1996-2000	Revisit CPA

D. Significant Changes in Data, Trends, and Assumptions since the last Master Plan

A great deal of change has occurred since the 1997 Plan. As noted above, the 1997 Plan was written after a flurry of residential subdivision activity. It turned existing land use practice on its head, advocating for denser, more mixed, and more controlled development. It also assumed that residential and commercial growth would continue apace, when, in fact, growth has occurred only on a limited basis. The most valuable and easily developed lands were utilized, national and regional trends shifted, and the development boom leveled off.

The 1997 Plan estimated a population of 8,100 in 2020, this by assuming a “moderate” growth scenario (the low growth estimate was 7,000, and the high growth estimate was 8,860). The actual number is probably much less. According to the annual Town census, the population for 2010 is 6,977, and preliminary Census figures estimate 7,360. Table 1 below summarizes the estimated and actual population.

Table 1: Comparison of Estimated Growth Scenarios, 1990-2020

Year	Estimated Total Population				Town Clerk
	1997 Master Plan Projections			Census	
	Low	Moderate	High		
1990	7,725	7,725	7,725	7,725	7,725
1995	7,670	7,670	7,670	7,605	7,586
2000	7,578	7,765	7,877	7,522	7,254
2005	7,469	7,857	8,100	7,386	7,287
2010	7,330	7,950	8,340	7,360*	6,977
2015	7,192	8,036	8,588	7,340*	6,940*
2020	7,026	8,122	8,856	7,300*	6,900*

* Estimates only. Actual data not available.
 Sources: US Census 1990, 2000. GB Master Plan 1997. GB Town Clerk 2010.

The 1997 Plan was organized around ten major elements, some dealing with town-wide issues of government services, housing, and open space, and other elements geographically specific. The following summary, organized around several of these ten elements, lists some of the significant changes since the last plan:

1. Town Services and Facilities

Since 1997, several significant efforts have been made to improve Town services and facilities. Town Hall renovations were completed, Mason Library was renovated and expanded, the Police Department relocated to new a new facility on South Main Street, and a new Fire Station was completed on State Road. Memorial Park was renovated, with a new skateboard park and improved ballfield. Railroad Street Youth Project now uses the building as its youth/teen “drop in” center. New regional elementary and regional middle schools were opened in 2005. The Housatonic school closed in 2003, and the Searles-Bryant schools were closed and transferred to the Town in 2006. The Rising Mill ceased major operations, cutting the flows to the wastewater plan in half, and leading to an increase in sewer rates.

Also, while Bard College at Simon's Rock is not a town facility, it bears noting that the college has expanded significantly over the last decade, completing its new arts and sciences building, new dormitory, new student union, a new recreational center, and the new Daniel Arts Center.

2. Land Use, Economic Development, and the Downtowns

Great Barrington downtown

- New England Log Homes closed in 1995. Initial brownfield grants in 1999. Burned in 2001. Remediation studies completed and a mixed-use redevelopment plan developed. Site is still waiting for additional funds to complete cleanup.
- Hillside Avenue affordable housing, 40B, 10 units, opened in 2009.
- Searles Bryant task force FY 2005
- Searles Bryant closure, B3 mixed use zoning, multiple proposals
- EOA adopted for Searles Bryant 2005
- Cumberland Farms gas station redevelops, 2000
- Downtown Parking Study 2005

Housatonic Village

- Housatonic School closed 2003, school re-use study issued March 2004
- Housatonic Village Common study issued Dec 2004
- Slum and Blight study 2006
- Monument Mills subdivision
- Rising Mill closes, 2007 Hazen Paper buys Rising Mill from Neenah Paper (having acquired Fox River Paper) in 2008
- Rising Mill EOA passed 2007, TIF approved 2008
- CDBG infrastructure improvements
- Ramsdell architectural barriers study
- All mills now up for sale

The Route 7 Corridor

- Jenifer House redeveloped
- McDonald's redevelopment, 1999
- White House Square development, 1998-2001
- Chrissy Road and the Community Center (2001)
- Holiday Inn, 60-units, 2002
- Fountain Pond State Park
- Blue Hill Commons. 40B (approved 2003)
- Chrissy Farm catering facility 2006
- Pete's Ford closes
- Comfort Inn expansion, 2009

Other

- Brightside / Copper Beech PURD 1996-1998
- Burning Tree subdivision, 2002 onwards, Christian Hill Road

- Fairgrounds closed. Development proposed 2006. Subdivision proposed 2008
- WTOD bylaw passed
- WQPD bylaw passed 2006
- EOA adopted for Big Y and Fairgrounds, 2005. TIF approved 2007
- Highfield mixed-use proposal
- Big Y expansion approved 2007, completed 2008
- Town Planner hired 2009
- Development Review Team established

3. Cultural and Historic Resources

- Mahaiwe renovations
- Wheeler Farm acquired by Historical Society
- WEB Dubois Homestead renovated. Friends of Dubois very active advocacy group
- Taconic-West Avenue National Historic District
- Downtown Local Historic District properties

4. Housing

- Burning Tree, 160 acres, began in 2002
- Blue Hill Commons 40B approved 2002, 96 units, 24+ affordable
- Accessory apartments bylaw considered, 2001

5. Natural Resources

- Scenic Mountains Act passed 2006
- WTOD bylaw passed
- WQPD bylaw passed

6. Open Space and the Riverway

- State purchase of Ward's property, annexed to Fountain Pond State Park
- Housatonic River Greenway plan, October 1996, Federal ISTEAG grant awarded
- Fairgrounds closed. Development proposed.
- Development of trail system in Lake Mansfield Forest
- River Walk completed and in 2009 designated a National Recreation Trail
- OSRP adopted 2006, revised 2007
- Lake Mansfield Plan and 319 grant proposals
- GB Trails and Greenways issues trail map
- GB is designated an Appalachian Trail Community

E. Current development issues, including key sites, and considerations for next Master Plan

The above summary underscores the maxim “change happens, whether you plan for it or not.” While the 1997 Plan anticipated only a few of these issues, and only some of the 1997 Plan’s action items were fully implemented, Great Barrington has fared relatively well. Population growth has declined, but not precipitously. Town services have continued to be adequate, with roads in generally good repair, two operational libraries, low operational budget increases, and an excellent municipal bond rating.

The Town and the region have fared relatively well despite the recent economic crash that began two years ago. Unemployment rates are under 10 percent, foreclosures are limited, and the tax base remains stable. But it has been difficult, if not impossible, for the private and public sectors to move forward on new development. Additionally, the regional trends over the past decade have left prominent buildings and sites vacant after years of productive use. Trends in government service, including education and regionalization, have had the same effect.

In the face of these trends, the new Master Plan should continue “smart growth” policies similar to those of the recent past, particularly those that call for concentrated development and protection of the open space and scenic qualities that underpin our stable tax and population base. Some key sites might merit special consideration. These include the Fairgrounds, Pete’s Ford and other Stockbridge Road sites, Housatonic Village (particularly the mills), Searles Castle, and Town-owned land and buildings (particularly Housatonic School, the old Fire House, and the Dewey Courthouse). However, well-planned and strategic development as well as open space preservation will ensure a firm foundation for the Town’s next two decades.

To be sure, national and international trends will affect our town. Economic woes may deepen and a “new normal” will emerge that is unlike the recent boom times. Climate change will quicken and petroleum prices will increase. This will force regions to become more and more locally-sufficient, and thus, citizens to be more engaged in their communities. Thus the new Master Plan must take its policies directly from an open and communicative public input process. Our job as government officials and volunteers is to craft a Master Plan strategy that will invite public participation at every stage, will respond to local, regional, and national trends, and will set forth implementation actions with tangible results.

Our next steps are to iron out a “scope of services,” including a Public Participation Strategy. I very much look forward to this process.