



SUSTAINABLE

Franklin
County

What is the Regional Plan for Sustainable Development (RPSD)?

The RPSD is a long term guide for Franklin County municipal governments, regional organizations, businesses, non-profits, and individuals. Through extensive public participation, individual residents and representatives of many organizations have contributed to the creation of this Plan.



What is Sustainability?

and why do we care?

Sustainability is the ability of Franklin County to meet its current and ongoing environmental, social, and economic needs without compromising the future for succeeding generations.

A sustainable Franklin County would have: affordable housing, jobs with livable wages, transportation options that would save money and improve the environment, reduced energy costs, enough farmland to feed ourselves and others, good schools, equal access to services, a vibrant community, and much more.



PLAN CHAPTERS

- INTRODUCTION & DEMOGRAPHICS
- VISION & GOALS
-  PUBLIC PARTICIPATION
-  HOUSING
-  TRANSPORTATION
-  ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
-  ENERGY
-  NATURAL RESOURCES
-  CULTURAL RESOURCES
-  LAND USE & INFRASTRUCTURE
- CONCLUSIONS

Franklin County's Challenges and Opportunities:

Franklin County is a rural region. Providing infrastructure, transit, and an equitable distribution of jobs is difficult and expensive with a small, widely dispersed population. Fortunately, regional cooperation is a norm for Franklin County. Continuing to think regionally will be imperative in the future since resources go beyond municipal borders, such as watersheds, roads, economy, culture, and more.



Regional Plan for Sustainable Development Goals:



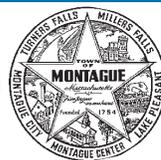
- Increase and improve the housing stock, while focusing on affordability;
- Provide additional options for alternative transportation;
- Encourage economic development, by redeveloping vacant sites;
- Promote energy conservation and efficiency;
- Protect natural resources, including farmland and drinking supplies;
- Foster the growth of arts and culture;
- Concentrate new growth near town centers and focus on infill development; and
- Improve infrastructure, particularly broadband

In 2010, the Franklin Regional Council of Governments, along with its Project Partners (Community Action, Franklin County Regional Housing & Redevelopment Authority, Franklin County Community Development Corporation, North Quabbin Community Coalition, and the Towns of Deerfield, Greenfield, Montague, and Orange) were selected as one of 45 regions across the U.S. to receive a Sustainable Communities Planning Grant.

This project is made possible through a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Sustainable Communities Grant. For more information about the project please contact Mary Praus, FRCOG Land Use Planner, by phone (413-774-3167, ext. 131) or e-mail (mpraus@frcog.org) or visit the FRCOG website at (http://www.frcog.org/landuse/landuse_HUD.php).



Sustainable Communities Planning Grant Program funded through US HUD, EPA & DOT





PLAN VISION

Where are we headed?

“The Regional Plan for Sustainable Development’s 20-year vision for Franklin County is one in which economic vitality and social equity will thrive in balance with our natural and cultural resources. Our region’s agricultural, forestry, and manufacturing heritage and history of innovation and creativity will provide a strong foundation for increased local living-wage jobs, more affordable and energy efficient housing, increased utilization of locally grown and produced wood products, greater availability and security of locally-grown food, locally-produced clean energy, and revitalized town centers. Reduction of fossil fuel use, sound infrastructure, and sustainable transportation options that support mixed use development and reuse of historic structures in our town centers are essential to increasing the sustainability of our region.

Sustainable development decisions and long-term planning policies that include energy efficiency and conservation as well as climate change adaptation and mitigation will effectively and equitably meet the needs of all current and future generations of Franklin County.”



Public Participation Summary

- Steering Committee Members: 74
- Needs Assessment Survey Respondents: 416
- Franklin County Goals Survey Respondents: 180
- Workshop Facilitators and Scribes: 22
- Workshop Participants: 102

Primary Goals

- Educate residents about principles of sustainability and planning issues in the region;
- Encourage an open and inclusive dialogue across populations;
- Gather information regarding the region’s present and future needs; and
- Increase participation in the planning process across populations.

Types of Public Participation Utilized

Needs Assessment Survey

The Needs Assessment Survey was developed by the Consortium member Community Action, in partnership with Sustainable Franklin County to ensure that the needs of people with lower incomes, people with disabilities or minorities were well represented in the planning process.

The final survey was distributed throughout Franklin County with assistance from Project Partners. A total of 416 surveys were completed by Franklin County residents in this demographic, far surpassing the number needed to obtain a representative sample.

Goals Survey

As a precursor to the Sustainability Workshops, a set of potential goals for Franklin County was compiled from past regional plans for each of the topic areas. The surveys were distributed across the County prior to the Workshops. The survey was available both in electronic form as well as hard copies. Survey respondents were asked to identify the three most important goals for Franklin County with respect to each of the Plan topic areas. Input was received from 180 respondents and nearly all Franklin County towns were represented. Top ranked goals are presented in each of the Plan’s chapters to guide the recommendations and strategies.

Sustainability Workshops

The Sustainability Workshops were designed to be a hands-on, interactive way to get people involved in the planning process. The goals of the workshop were to educate residents on the principles of sustainability, identify the current and future needs of the region, and to establish a regional vision for sustainable development. Three Sustainability Workshops were held in Franklin County in each part of the County (east, west, central).

Workshop participants were presented with a set of housing flags which represented the projected amount of new housing that will be needed to accommodate the 3,500 households expected over the next 25 years. These flags also represented the current composition of housing—mostly single family. Participants could assume “business as usual” and use the provided flags or participants could exchange these housing types for others, such as additional multi-family housing or redevelopment of vacant mill buildings for housing. The participants were then asked to place the housing on the map.

The mapping exercise challenged participants to envision a more sustainable future by presenting them with housing choices and the trade-offs associated with each selection. The choices that were made helped provide important information that was used throughout the Plan.

Sustainable Franklin County Steering Committee

The Steering Committee was created in the early stages of the project to oversee the creation of the Regional Plan for Sustainable Development. The Steering Committee provided critical feedback regarding the development of the Sustainability Workshops as well as with the development of individual chapters. Participation on the Steering Committee was open to anyone who was interested. In total, 74 residents, municipal officials, students, and business owners served on the Sustainable Franklin County Steering Committee during the life of this project and provided a wide array of valuable perspectives.

Public Art Display

As a capstone to the public participation efforts, a public art display was commissioned with the goal of visually demonstrating the vision statement and goals of the Regional Plan for Sustainable Development. The public artwork is meant to illustrate the outcome of the public participation efforts, but the creation of the art itself involved the public – particularly local youth. Community Action organized a youth group that helped select the winning artist and participated in the creation of the art. The selected artist, Cynthia Fisher, created a mosaic design, which incorporated the handprints of many residents, including the youth group.



Major Findings

Many in Franklin County are burdened with housing costs that are higher than they can afford. The population is aging rapidly and many elders are faced with large single family homes that they can no longer maintain or afford. Forty percent of the County's housing stock was built prior to 1939, which means that much of the region's housing is energy inefficient. Franklin County has a very small amount of rental housing stock. Roughly seventy percent of the housing stock is composed of single family homes and there are few alternatives for those that may desire more affordable housing options or less maintenance.



What about housing?

Issues & Constraints



Limited public funding

The scarcity of public funding has severely challenged the housing landscape in the region. Specifically, it has made providing new affordable housing and renovating current subsidized housing very difficult. The waiting list for housing vouchers has been closed due to overwhelming demand and insufficient supply. In addition, there is very limited public funding available to spur redevelopment of Franklin County's many vacant or underutilized historic buildings. These buildings would be ideal for conversion to mixed uses including residential uses because of their central locations in employment centers and the need for additional housing in the region, particularly market rate and affordable rental housing.

Zoning can support infill opportunities

Many Franklin County communities have zoning that reflects the predominance of large lot single family homes that are in the region. In downtowns and village centers, zoning that allows mixed use development including residential and commercial uses should be adopted. Additional housing should be located in areas close to existing services, transit and other public amenities. Allowing lots with reduced road frontage can also encourage infill in town centers.

Insufficient infrastructure to accommodate additional housing

Besides funding, sewer and water infrastructure is the most common and critical constraint in the region's ability to construct additional housing in or near downtowns or village centers. An analysis of the current state of the County's infrastructure is detailed in the Land Use & Infrastructure Chapter.

Franklin County's Top Housing Goals

1. Improve the energy efficiency of housing
2. Improve the quality of existing housing
3. Locate housing near employment and town centers



Future Housing Needs for Franklin County

35,500 Total Housing Units Needed by 2035*

4,300 of these units need to be affordable for low income households

(based on the current 12% of the population that is considered very low income)

8,500 of these units need to be able to accommodate households over the age of 65

(based on the projection that 24% of the population will be over the age of 65)

3,100 of these units need to be accessible for the disabled

(based on the current Census estimate that 9% of the population under the age of 65 has a disability)

*There are currently 33,536 units already in the County.

Selected Housing Recommendations & Strategies:

Increase energy efficiency of all housing stock

- ✓ Educate renters, landlords, and homeowners about programs that offer financial assistance for home energy upgrades.

Promote housing affordability

- ✓ Encourage the creation of accessory apartments.

Promote residential infill in downtowns and town centers

- ✓ Revise zoning to facilitate the creation of various housing types and densities.

Provide housing options for elder and disabled populations

- ✓ Construct traditional senior housing complexes in or near town centers served by public transit.

Increase rental housing stock

- ✓ Convert vacant or underutilized mill buildings to residential uses.

Prevent homelessness and assist with homeless

- ✓ Provide incentives and support for landlords to rent to low & moderate income families.

What Can YOU Do?

- Ask for a FREE energy assessment of your home
- Improve the energy efficiency of your home by adding insulation.

This project is made possible through a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Sustainable Communities Grant. For more information about the project please visit the FRCOG website at (http://www.frcog.org/landuse/landuse_HUD.php).



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Major Findings

Franklin County residents are dependent on their cars. Almost 80% of Franklin County residents drive to work alone. Only 10% carpool and a much smaller amount (1%) took public transit. While most residents drive, bicycling is very popular in the region for both recreation and commuting. The Franklin County Bikeway is an on-road and off-road 240-mile network that connects town centers across the County. There is a sizable proportion of the population (10%), mostly composed of low income households, that have no access to a vehicle. The availability and effectiveness of the public transit system is critically important for this population group, as is the need for more walkable downtown areas. Currently, the transit system only serves the largest population centers and runs only on weekdays during the daytime. Increased public transit including more frequent service and east-west passenger rail and bus service is needed. Funding is a major constraint to expanding public transit.



What about transportation?

Issues & Constraints



Limited availability of transit services

The most frequently mentioned transportation constraint for Franklin County is the limited availability of transit services. Currently, the region's transit service only has funding to operate during the day on the weekdays with several hour intervals (a few routes run more frequently at once an hour). In addition, the transit service only connects a portion of the communities within Franklin County. For someone dependent on public transportation, this lack of transit services is a serious obstacle to obtaining a living wage job, having children in daycare, running basic errands, and more. The scarcity of public funding for additional transit is the primary reason for limited service. Expansion of service to evening and weekends is needed to increase sustainability.

Lack of passenger rail

The lack of passenger rail enabling Franklin County residents to travel longer distances without having to depend on a car is a major constraint. A north-south passenger service is returning to the region over the next year and stopping in Greenfield, but an east-west route to Boston is also very important to residents in the region.

Growing elder population

Population projections show that over the next 30 years, the size of the elder population in the County will grow by 77%. This trend has important consequences for transportation planning as people drive less as they age. Demand for public transit and demand response services will increase and meeting this demand in a rural region with scarce public funds will be difficult.



Franklin County's Top Transportation Goals

1. Increase availability and use of public transit
2. Restore passenger rail service
3. Increase bicycle/pedestrian facilities and promote walking and biking

News Flash!

Did you know that passenger rail is returning to Franklin County?

Amtrak will begin stopping in Greenfield at the John W. Olver Transit Center by 2014.



Selected Transportation Recommendations & Strategies:

Encourage integrated planning activities that support sustainable development

- ✓ Increase frequency and extend bus service hours during evenings and weekends, in addition to expanding bus services between town centers and dense residential neighborhoods.

Promote transportation activities and technologies which conserve energy and reduce travel congestion and vehicle emissions

- ✓ Promote improved bicycle and pedestrian connections between the towns of Greenfield and Montague.

Promote economic development

- ✓ Promote and market the County's Scenic Byways and Bikeways.

Improve transportation safety

- ✓ Advance the Route 2 East Safety Improvements.
- ✓ Implement Complete Streets and Safe Routes to School

Support the preservation of existing transportation infrastructure

- ✓ Maintain roadway pavement condition in "good" status when possible.

What Can YOU Do?

- Walk or bicycle when possible.
- Use public transit as much as possible.
- Drive less by combing errands into single trips and carpooling.
- Buy the most fuel-efficient vehicle possible.

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Major Findings

Franklin County residents have incomes much lower than the state average, although they are comparable to the national average. However, the higher cost of living in Franklin County, due to transportation and housing costs, creates a very challenging reality for many residents trying to survive economically. Addressing underemployment and creating jobs with “living wages” is critical. Manufacturing is the largest employment sector in the County and also has some of the highest wage rates. Fortunately, precision manufacturing and food processing are poised to grow further. The percentage of manufacturing jobs in the County is twice the state and national rates. In addition, the region is increasingly recognized for its strong arts and cultural community, and is a growing destination for natural resources-based tourism. In the downtowns and village centers, there is strong interest in redeveloping underutilized properties for productive use. However, the high cost of redevelopment is an obstacle to support economic growth.

What about economic development?

Issues & Constraints

Workforce Development

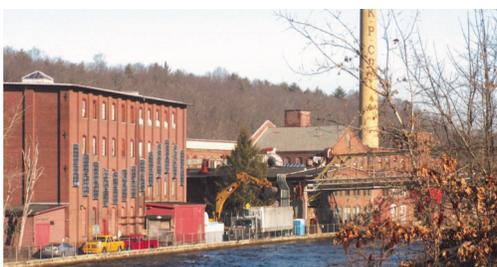
The population in Franklin County is getting older. Older members of the workforce may need training to transition to new work opportunities or to remain employable. Due to the high demand for jobs in the region, youth are not getting their “first jobs” and gaining experience. This makes it more difficult for them to be hired as young adults. There is a gap between the growing number of skilled manufacturing jobs and the availability of skilled workers. More training opportunities are needed to develop “middle skills” for individuals who have completed high school but are not pursuing college degrees.

Difficulty in developing/redeveloping property

There are a number of vacant or underutilized historic structures and mill buildings throughout Franklin County that would be ideal for redevelopment as commercial and/or residential properties. However, the high cost to redevelop these properties often cannot be recouped through market rate lease or rental rates and there is very limited public funding to assist with redevelopment. This difficulty is sometimes compounded by the cost of upgrading or expanding sewer and water infrastructure or the stormwater management needed for redevelopment.

Factors that limit business development and growth

One factor limiting business development is the lack of funding to expand businesses technical assistance programs, support local/regional business associations, and to implement marketing initiatives. Access to venture capital funding and alternative capital for start-ups is scarce. In terms of space, there is limited availability of shovel ready industrial park land for manufacturers to locate or expand on. In addition, there is little commercial and office space in village centers that is accessible.



Franklin County's Top Economic Development Goals

1. Redevelop vacant or underutilized industrial and commercial buildings or sites
2. Support sustainable economic development in the region
3. Promote and invest in specific business sectors including manufacturing, agriculture, and clean energy

Did you know...

That 95% of all private sector businesses in Franklin County have fewer than 50 employees? And that half of all employees in the County are employed by small businesses?



Western Mass. Food Processing Center (Photo: FCCDC/Beth Reynolds)

Selected Economic Development Recommendations & Strategies:

Support activities that enhance job skills and access to jobs in manufacturing and other significant industry clusters

- ✓ Promote career awareness of growing industries.
- ✓ Create middle skills training programs.
- ✓ Explore the feasibility to develop more childcare facilities in employment centers, industrial parks, and near transit centers.

Support activities that revitalize and more intensely use downtowns & village centers

- ✓ Support zoning for mixed use development.
- ✓ Targeted investments to expand or upgrade water, sewer, and/or stormwater management infrastructure systems.

Support activities to expand the amount of planned industrial park land available

- ✓ Support the development of new "planned industrial parks."
- ✓ Prepare parcels to become "shovel ready."

Support growth of information technology cluster.

- ✓ Support investments that connect MassBroadband123 network to homes, businesses, and institutions.

What Can YOU Do?

- "Buy Local" when possible.
- Support local artists and attend cultural events.
- If you own a business, become involved in your chamber of commerce or business association.

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Major Findings

The Franklin County region has been a leader in the nation in terms of a growing clean and renewable energy movement. Over half of the County's towns are designated Green Communities and the nation's first net-zero energy transit center was recently constructed in downtown Greenfield. However, much more needs to occur to make the region more sustainable and to mitigate climate change. It is projected that U.S. energy demands will increase by more than one-third by 2030, with electricity demand rising by more than 40%. Franklin County's carbon emissions per capita are the highest in Western Massachusetts and higher than the statewide average—largely because of the amount of driving residents do in the region. Franklin County has more than enough hydropower to meet the County's electric needs, but much of it is consumed by users outside the region. The County has also recently sited more than 18 MW nameplate capacity of renewable energy in the form of solar and wind projects.

What about energy?

Issues & Constraints



Reliance on vehicles for transportation

In Franklin County, between 1975 and 2010, there was a modest increase in population by 3,085 people. During the same time period, the number of vehicles registered increased 3.5 times the rate of the population increase. This large increase can be attributed primarily due to rural development located away from employment centers leading to an increased reliance on vehicles. The growth of women in the workforce and more common use of personal automobiles for single occupancy travel have also contributed to the growth of the number of vehicles.

Difficulty in siting large-scale renewable energy facilities

There are limited areas in Franklin County zoned for large-scale industrial facilities including renewable energy electric generating facilities. For communities wishing to support renewable energy, they will need to identify suitable locations and appropriate siting standards for large-scale solar and/or wind facilities.

Implementing energy recommendations in residences

A surprising, yet common challenge is getting residents to sign up for one of the many available energy efficiency programs and in executing the recommended improvements. Requirements to remediate existing issues such as the presence of knob-and-tube wiring and asbestos are often cost-prohibitive and prevent households from seeking weatherization services.

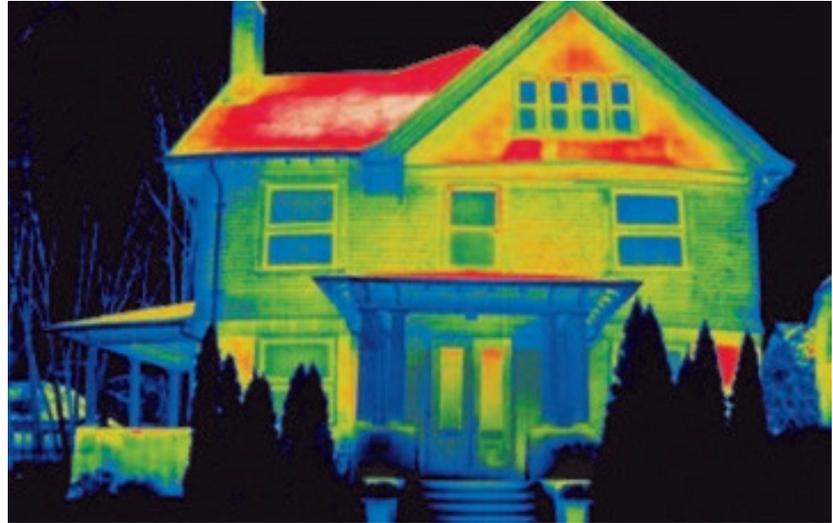
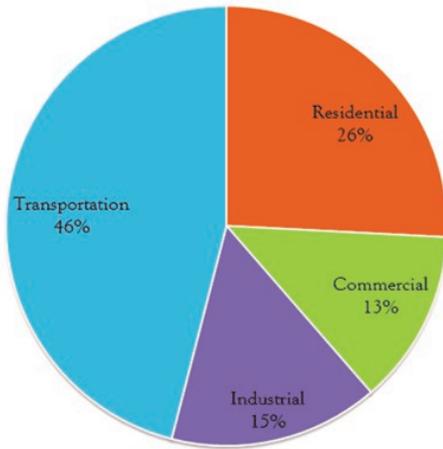




Franklin County's Top Energy Goals

1. Promote energy conservation and efficiency
2. Increase the quantity of locally-produced clean energy
3. Reduce the use of fossil fuels

Franklin County Energy Consumption, by Sector (2010)



Selected Energy Recommendations & Strategies:

Reduce energy consumption across all sectors – transportation, residential, commercial, and industrial – without sacrificing quality of life or economic opportunities

- ✓ Implement an Alternative Transportation Marketing Campaign to reduce vehicle miles traveled.
- ✓ Expand an efficient transit service in the County.

Improve energy efficiency so as to reduce wasted energy

- ✓ Extend and enhance financing for energy efficiency improvements for homes, and rental housing, businesses.

Reduce the impacts of emissions and related extreme weather events

- ✓ Adopt Low Impact Development Bylaws in Towns.

Site new green energy and support the local economy

- ✓ Adopt a “buy local” purchasing policy in schools and municipalities.

What Can YOU Do?

- Improve the energy efficiency of your home using funds from Mass Save or Community Action.
- When replacing a vehicle, look for the most fuel-efficient vehicle.
- When moving, consider moving closer to work and play.
- Install solar electric and/or hot water panels.

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Major Findings

Franklin County has abundant natural resources which support its residents in many ways. A recent study shows that the County could have enough active farmland to grow all its own food if needed. Complete food self-sufficiency is not necessarily practical, but Franklin County could strive for food self-reliance, in which all its own vegetables, dairy and meat, and much of its grain and fruits could be grown locally. Protecting farmland and keeping it affordable is a key strategy to help ensure the region's sustainability. Currently, only 25% of the region's farmland is permanently protected.

Forests dominate the region, covering about 77% of Franklin County. While a large portion of the forests are permanently protected, the vast majority could be vulnerable to development and fragmentation. While it is important to protect forests, it is also important to maintain some as working forests to provide significant wood products and employment.



What about natural resources?

Issues & Constraints



Lack of food processing infrastructure and affordable farmland

For local farmers, a constraint to growing more food for the region and for export is the lack of infrastructure for food aggregation and processing. Infrastructure needs include meat and poultry slaughter and processing facilities; dairy processing facilities; cold storage and freezer facilities; expanded facilities for aggregation, basic processing, freezing and packing; and grain processing facilities and equipment. Another barrier is the lack of affordable farmland and farm buildings, especially for new-entry farmers.

Effect of climate change on the region's forests

Climate change could greatly impact New England's forests. These impacts could include changes in forest structure, more frequent forest fires associated with droughts, and more invasive species and diseases. These changes could have negative impacts on local resources such as a decline in maple syrup production and the deterioration of the Eastern Hemlock.

Vulnerability of drinking water supplies

A regional approach to protecting drinking water supplies is vital to Franklin County's sustainability. Currently, there are gaps in protection at the local level because some existing water supplies were approved prior to DEP source regulation protection. Further, there is a lack of knowledge about the extent and condition of aquifers that supply private existing wells. Because of these issues, existing and potential drinking water supplies could be vulnerable to contamination throughout Franklin County.



Franklin County's Top Natural Resource Goals

1. Protect farmland and local food supplies
2. Protect forests
3. Protect drinking water supplies and reduce water usage

Did you know...

Much of the County's best farmland is located in floodplains and are vulnerable to damage? Tropical Storm Irene dumped up to 10.6 inches of rainfall and caused an estimated \$5 million in damage to 6,300 acres of farmland in the Pioneer Valley.



Selected Natural Resources Recommendations & Strategies:

Support town, regional, and state policies that help make farms and farming economically viable

- ✓ Help increase access to fresh food at farmers markets by all residents in the region including those with limited income.

Support the expansion of food and farming related infrastructure and services

- ✓ Expand the County's capacity to process locally raised meat, grains, and other products.

Support initiatives that protect large areas of unfragmented forestland and that promote local forest products.

- ✓ Promote town forests for the purpose of education, forest products, recreation, and conservation.

Encourage regional and local initiatives that identify and protect existing and potential drinking water supplies

- ✓ Inventory existing public water supplies, identify gaps in protection and encourage towns to adopt DEP standards or other model bylaws for aquifer protection.

Encourage regional and local initiatives that ensure the protection of wetlands and important flood storage areas

- ✓ Support the adoption of floodplain bylaws or floodplain

What Can YOU Do?

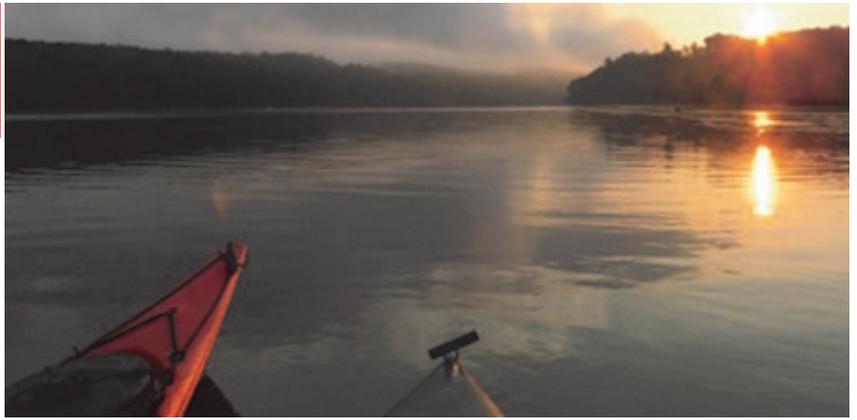
- Shop at a local farmers market.
- Have your well water tested regularly for contamination and make sure that your septic system is functioning properly.
- Replace older woodstoves with newer models that are much more efficient at burning wood.

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Major Findings

Franklin County has a rich cultural heritage and a thriving artistic and cultural community. Cultural resources include places (such as village centers), objects (such as artifacts), and creations (such as festivals). Development pressures, lack of upkeep, and environmental threats, such as flooding and acid rain, are endangering many of the region's cultural resources.

The County has several geographic concentrations of artisans (also called creative economies) in the region, including Turners Falls, Shelburne Falls, and the North Quabbin. Not only do these creative economies create a lively and interesting community, but they also provide employment and mentoring opportunities.



What about cultural resources?

Issues & Constraints



Environmental threats to cultural resources

Many of the County's cultural resources could be vulnerable to damage due to flooding, which is anticipated to increase due to climate change. Village centers and Native American sites, many of which settled on rivers, are especially vulnerable to flooding. The buildings and other structures within village centers, which are also frequently designated as historic districts, are often older and of historical significance. They can contain historic archives, maps, and other objects which serve as a record of a town's history. Franklin County towns are challenged to find funding to help flood-proof older buildings and/or move cultural resources to areas less prone to flooding.

Scarce funding for protection and promotion of cultural resources

There is limited funding available for both the preservation of existing cultural resources and the support of emerging cultural resources. There is a great need in Franklin County for funding to restore and reuse the region's historical buildings and to protect them from threats, such as flooding. In addition, funding is needed to inventory and map cultural resource locations throughout the region before they become endangered. Lastly, funding is needed to support the vital sector of artists who make up the creative economy.

Difficulty in reusing/rehabbing historic structures

Franklin County has many historic vacant or underutilized buildings located in its village centers. Reusing or rehabilitating these buildings would be ideal for many reasons. However, retrofitting these older structures to meet current building codes and requirements for access are difficult and expensive. In addition, rehabilitating these structures to meet energy efficiency goals can be challenging due to the time period in which they were built and the manner of construction.



Franklin County's Cultural Resource Goals

1. Foster the growth of arts and culture
2. Support our agricultural heritage
- 3 (tie). Preserve rural and scenic landscapes
- 3 (tie). Revitalize and preserve historic town centers

Did you know...

That cultural organizations contributed \$20 million to the Franklin County economy in 2003.



Selected Economic Development Recommendations & Strategies:

Encourage regional and local initiatives that identify and protect existing cultural and historic resources

- ✓ Provide technical assistance to towns for assessing, inventorying, mapping, and planning for cultural and historic resources.
- ✓ Support the development of a safety net for professional artists in the event of a disaster and/or emergency (such as Craft Emergency Relief Fund in Vermont).

Support the growth of creative economy

- ✓ Help sustain the North Quabbin Woods program and Turners Falls RiverCulture, projects that promote and enhance cultural activities.
- ✓ Seek funding to create and maintain a cultural resource database which captures information on artists and events in the region.

Support education and outreach related to cultural and historic resources

- ✓ Pursue funding to digitize historic photos and documents for the purposes of preservation and sharing.

What Can YOU Do?

- Attend local festivals and events.
- Purchase local art and craft items.
- Become involved in your local historic society.
- Encourage and/or participate in the collection of oral history narratives to capture important stories from elders.

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Major Findings

Historically many population centers in the region were settled along rivers, with houses clustered around town centers. In the last forty years, land use patterns have changed and new residential development has mostly occurred in dispersed areas, strung out along rural roads. The consequences of this type of development include fragmentation of forests and loss of farmland, increased municipal costs for road maintenance, infrastructure, and services, and increased climate change emissions due to more driving to outlying areas.

Because the majority of development in the region has historically occurred along rivers, things such as buildings, infrastructure, and farmland may be at risk from more frequent flooding as a result of climate change. Much of the public water and sewer infrastructure in the County is old and some facilities are operating near capacity. Few municipalities have the resources to complete the needed upgrades to this infrastructure. Some town centers lack any water or sewer infrastructure.



What about land use and infrastructure?

Issues & Constraints

Residential development patterns are fragmenting forests and farmlands

Residential development in outlying rural areas is due, in part, to large lot zoning and the Approval Not Required (ANR) provision of the Subdivision Control Law, Chapter 41 of the Massachusetts General Law. The ANR provision allows land owners to develop land for residential use without Planning Board approval as long as it meets frontage and access requirements.

Climate change may pose significant challenges to infill and redevelopment

Some of the areas identified as Priority Development Areas in the Plan are also located nearby rivers. More severe and frequent flooding events are expected to occur as a result of climate change. Infill and redevelopment should occur in locations outside of floodplain areas since buildings and infrastructure may be unable to withstand repeated flooding.

Water and sewer infrastructure may not support infill in recommended areas

Much of the public water and sewer infrastructure in Franklin County municipalities was constructed over 100 years ago. In order to support more infill and redevelopment of structures served by water and sewer lines, upgrades and expansions of infrastructure will be necessary.

Proposed Priority

Development Areas

- ◆ South Deerfield Village Center
- ◆ Downtown Greenfield
- ◆ Downtown Orange
- ◆ Turners Falls
- ◆ Shelburne Falls Village Center

Emerging Development Areas

- ◆ Bernardston Village Center
- ◆ Northfield Village Center
- ◆ Sunderland Town Center
- ◆ Millers Falls/Ervingside

Franklin County's Top Land Use Goals

1. Prioritize redevelopment of vacant or under-utilized structures & properties
2. Locate new businesses in town centers or near transit services
3. Coordinate new development with existing transportation, water & sewer infrastructure

Franklin County's Top Infrastructure Goals

1. Protect and expand green infrastructure to reduce flooding, purify air and water, and decrease energy used for cooling
2. Improve broadband internet access
3. Maintain or upgrade sewer and water infrastructure

Selected Land Use Recommendations & Strategies:

Promote infill and redevelopment of Priority Development Areas, Emerging Development Areas, and all town centers

- ✓ Promote mixed use development (residential, commercial, light industrial, retail) in town centers and encourage rooftop and other low-impact siting of alternative energy as part of redevelopment.

Assess the impact climate change could have on vulnerable areas and infrastructure

- ✓ Update floodplain mapping using predictive modeling to help identify at-risk facilities and structures.

Encourage the adoption of sustainable development and redevelopment techniques

- ✓ Increase resilience of infrastructure, restore wetlands and maintain flood storage capacity of floodplains.

Support the deployment of broadband infrastructure

- ✓ Support investments that connect the MassBroadband123 network to homes, businesses, and institutions.

What Can YOU Do?

- Use green infrastructure techniques such as rain gardens, downspout disconnection, and tree planting around your home.
- Encourage your town to adopt bylaws that better protect flood storage areas.
- Get involved with your town's planning board or conservation commission to support sustainable development.

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