

FY09 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Town of Sunderland

Introduction

This Community Development Strategy summarizes the Town of Sunderland's relevant planning processes, identifies the town's most significant community development goals, and relates them to the Commonwealth's sustainable development principles. The identified goals will shape the town's future community development efforts with investment of federal, state and local resources. These goals are consistent with the priorities and needs identified through several local and regional community assessment and strategic planning processes.

Community Planning Entities

Town residents contribute to a variety of coordinated local and regional planning efforts. Needs assessments and strategic planning activities are conducted and/or facilitated by the Board of Selectmen, Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Economic Development Committee, Agricultural Commission, and other Town Boards and Committees. Various Town officials are also involved in needs identification and goal setting. A total of 35 area residents volunteer for these key boards and committees.

The Town is assisted in its planning and community development efforts by several regional organizations including the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG), UMASS Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning Program (LARP), Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority (FCRHRA) and other contracted experts.

The Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), the Department of Energy Resources (DOER), the Department of Business and Technology (DOBT) the Massachusetts Community Preservation Coalition (CPC), the Department of Public Health (DPH) and other state agencies and non-profits also assist the Town, providing guidance and funding to help meet community needs and goals.

Planning Processes and Documents

Community Development Plan (CDP): Sunderland's Community Development Plan, created under Executive Order 418, was completed in June 2004. The Plan emphasizes protection of source water, natural resources and open space including productive agricultural land, and encourages promotion of economic development, public transportation and affordable senior housing.

Housing Plan (HP): The Town of Sunderland Housing Plan was approved by the Department of Housing and Community Development on July 2, 2007. The Plan's Affordable Housing Goals and Strategies are designed to increase the amount of affordable housing in Sunderland with particular consideration given to current housing stock, while still maintaining the community's character.

Source Water Protection Plan (SWPP): A comprehensive Source Water Protection Plan was adopted in February, 2008. The Plan is designed to aid in the protection of the public water system for Sunderland's wellfields.

Tax Increment Financing (TIF): The Economic Assistance Coordinating Council's Tax Increment Finance plans for Sunderland were approved in December, 2004. Three 10-year TIF agreements were endorsed by Town Meeting on April 29, 2005.

Annual Town Report: The Town of Sunderland produces an Annual Report each year which contains reports from various Town boards, committees, commissions and departments. These reports detail information about town processes, highlight progress made on a number of community development and planning projects, and identify needs and priorities related to town governance, community development, health and human services, and public safety.

Regional Plans: The Town's priorities were taken into consideration during the development of the following regional plans:

- **Regional Policy Plan, 1998:** This policy document guides the growth and protection of the natural and cultural resources of Franklin County. Produced by the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) with significant input from a 23-member committee.
- **The Greater Franklin County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) 2007 Annual Report:** The CEDS program is operated by the FRCOG and guides economic development activities throughout Franklin County and neighboring communities. The program is directed by a committee of 45 business and community leaders.
- **Regional Transportation Plan, 2007:** This plan, coordinated by the FRCOG with input from all 26 towns, promotes ways to develop transportation alternatives to the automobile, while at the same time supporting the improvement and more efficient use of traditional facilities.
- **Connecticut River Scenic Farm Byway, 1998:** The purpose of this project, coordinated by the FRCOG with input from the 6 towns along the byway, is to balance historic, cultural, agricultural, and natural resources with travel-related economic development appropriate for each of the communities. The plan provides Sunderland and other Connecticut River towns with planning goals and strategies and access to Federal Highway funding for implementation of activities.

Consistency with Sustainable Development Principles

The Town of Sunderland is committed to all of the principles of sustainable development. The Town's activities, policies, and programs are consistent with these principles, including the following:

Protect Land and Ecosystems: The Sunderland Conservation Commission and Agricultural Commission continue to identify agricultural parcels for permanent protection. As an example of the work that's been accomplished, on June 9, 2008, the Town entered into an agreement to purchase an APR on 6.3 acres on Silver Lane in the Agricultural District. In addition to purchasing land, the Town also protects its land and ecosystems through its Transfer of Development Rights Bylaws.

Expand Housing Opportunities: The Town established a Housing Committee on March 24, 2008 pursuant to the Affordable Housing Goals and Strategies in the Town's Housing Plan. In

addition, the Town is currently revising its bylaws to contain inclusionary zoning provisions. These amendments will be presented at the 2009 Annual Town Meeting.

Increase Job and Business Opportunities: The Sunderland Economic Development Committee has spearheaded a land use inventory and commercial zoning initiative with the purpose of identifying parcels throughout the Town which could be zoned and developed for commercial use.

Promote Clean Energy: The Town promotes clean energy in many ways. It has equipped most town buildings with motion light sensors and programmable thermostats. It has also installed mechanical seal pumps in its wastewater treatment plant to conserve water. The Sunderland Public Library, built in 2004, is powered through a 14-well geothermal system, which is designed to significantly reduce the building's energy consumption. The Town is also currently pursuing designation as a Green Community in order to create a Clean Energy Plan.

Provide Transportation Choice: Sunderland has placed bicycle racks at strategic locations in town to encourage bicycling as a primary means of non-motorized transportation. The Town has also completed a major one-mile sidewalk construction project to facilitate walking to the Sunderland Elementary School and to connect a pedestrian way with newly constructed sidewalks serving Rt. 116 businesses and residences.

Resources

Sunderland will address its community needs and priorities using a variety of local, regional, state, and national resources including:

- Local property taxes
- State aid through school programs, lottery funds, library programs, and special status exemption funds
- Technical assistance and grants from regional organizations including the FRCOG, Franklin County Community Development Corporation, Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority, and Franklin County Solid Waste Management District Federal, and state highway and other transportation programs
- State grant and loan funding through the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, and other state agencies
- Federal grant and loan funding through the US Department of Agriculture, US Department of Housing and Community Development, Environmental Protection Agency, Federal Highway Scenic Ways program, and other federal agencies
- Private foundations
- Volunteer labor and donated materials
- Community fundraising activities

Strategic Action Plan

The planning processes described above have resulted in specific goals and recommendations that the Town will undertake in the next 3-5 years. Priorities, projects, and resources are described in the relevant planning documents. The following Priority Project List describes some of the Town's specific goals and the methods to meet them.

Sunderland Community Development Strategic Action Plan – Priority Project List					
Priority	Timeline	Location	Project	Project Description	Funding Sources
1	2008-2009	Town wide	Commercial District Study	Perform land use inventory and commercial zoning initiative with the purpose of identifying parcels throughout the Town which could be zoned and developed for commercial use.	Town funds
1	2009-2010	Town wide	Revise zoning to encourage economic development	Revise zoning bylaws to identify parcels throughout the Town which could be zoned and developed for commercial use.	Town funds, State funds, FRCOG
1	2010-2012	Town wide	Revitalize commercial properties	Revitalize established, underutilized commercial properties to attract business and promote economic development opportunities.	Town funds, State funds, CDBG funds
1	2009-2010	Town wide	Revise zoning to encourage affordable housing	Draft inclusionary zoning provisions and explore methods for 40B acknowledgement of existing affordable housing stock.	DHCD Peer-to-Peer Grant, Town funds, FRCOG
1	2009-2010	Town wide	Revise zoning to encourage affordable housing	Revise zoning bylaws to offer density bonuses for flexible developments which include deed-restricted affordable housing units. Revise zoning bylaws to explicitly allow accessory apartments.	Town funds, State funds, FRCOG
1	2009-2011	Town wide	Create Affordable Housing Units by conversion	Pursue the conversion of one or more of the Town's large apartment complexes to affordable housing as they come up for sale.	Town funds, State funds, CDBG funds
1	2009-2011	Town wide	Energy Conservation and Efficiency	Contract with Energy Services Provider to increase energy efficiency and conservation in Town buildings	Town funds, Green Communities Act, private funds
1	Ongoing	Town wide	Energy Conservation and Efficiency	Provide education and promote weatherization and energy-smart home renovations for Town residences.	Green Communities Act, private funds
1	2010-2011	Town Center	Repair Failing Stormwater Drains	Repair collapsing stormwater drains along Rt. 47 in Village Center. Project cost estimated to be \$750,000.	CDBG funds, State funds, Federal funds, Town funds
1	Ongoing	Town wide	Open Space Connection	Connect current open space areas to create continuous wildlife corridors.	APR funds, Town funds, private funds
1	Ongoing	Town wide	Land Protection	Protect certain land for conservation, recreation, forestry, and agricultural purposes.	APR funds, Town funds, private funds

1	2010-2013	Town wide	Wellhead protection	Delineate Zone II Wellhead (WHPA) protection areas.	Town funds, State funds
1	2009-2011	Town wide	Senior Housing Needs Study	Assess the needs of seniors, whether they cannot stay in their current housing situations, either because of physical or financial reasons.	Technical Assistance funds
2	2009-2011	Town wide	Encourage economic development	Encourage design standards and site plan review for new development.	Town funds
2	2010-2012	Town wide	Encourage economic development	Streamline the permitting process.	Town funds, State funds
2	Ongoing	Town wide	Housing Rehabilitation	Provide resources to assist low and moderate income residents to improve conditions in existing housing.	CDBG funds
2	2010-2012	Town Center	Design & Construct Riverfront area	Design and Construct boat ramp and pedestrian friendly area along a portion of the Connecticut River, as a destination in the Town center.	Town funds, State funds, CDBG funds
2	2010-2013	Town wide	Extend Town Sewer Service	Add sewer line along Commercial Districts to promote economic development opportunities	CDBG funds, State funds, Town funds
2	2012-2014	Town Center	Water System Improvement	Water lines along Old Amherst Road are aging (near 100 years old) and will need to be replaced in the near future.	Town funds, State funds, CDBG funds
2	2010-2012	Town wide	Install Photovoltaics	Purchase or contract with 3 rd party to install photovoltaics for Sunderland Elementary School and the Public Safety Complex, Highway Garage, Wastewater Treatment Plant property.	Town funds, Green Communities Act, private funds
3	2012-2014	Town wide	Increase Affordable Housing	Promote the UMass Home Sharing Program among residents to defray housing costs for senior citizens and students.	Town funds, State funds
3	2012-2014	Town wide	Revise Zoning	Establish a Scenic Byway Overlay District to protect scenic vistas and corridors.	Town funds, State funds
3	2010-2011	Town Center	Create a covered bus stop in Village Center	Create a covered PVRTA bus stop with bench in the Village Center District to encourage riders to walk around the downtown.	Town funds, State funds
3	2010-2011	Town Center	Establish Park and Ride Lot	Establish a formal Park and Ride Lot in the Village Center.	State funds

Sustainable Development Principles

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts shall care for the built and natural environment by promoting sustainable development through integrated energy and environment, housing and economic development, transportation and other policies, programs, investments, and regulations. The Commonwealth will encourage the coordination and cooperation of all agencies, invest public funds wisely in smart growth and equitable development, give priority to investments that will deliver good jobs and good wages, transit access, housing, and open space, in accordance with the following sustainable development principles. Furthermore, the Commonwealth shall seek to advance these principles in partnership with regional and municipal governments, non-profit organizations, business, and other stakeholders.

1. Concentrate Development and Mix Uses

Support the revitalization of city and town centers and neighborhoods by promoting development that is compact, conserves land, protects historic resources, and integrates uses. Encourage remediation and reuse of existing sites, structures, and infrastructure rather than new construction in undeveloped areas. Create pedestrian friendly districts and neighborhoods that mix commercial, civic, cultural, educational, and recreational activities with open spaces and homes.

2. Advance Equity

Promote equitable sharing of the benefits and burdens of development. Provide technical and strategic support for inclusive community planning and decision making to ensure social, economic, and environmental justice. Ensure that the interests of future generations are not compromised by today's decisions.

3. Make Efficient Decisions

Make regulatory and permitting processes for development clear, predictable, coordinated, and timely in accordance with smart growth and environmental stewardship.

4. Protect Land and Ecosystems

Protect and restore environmentally sensitive lands, natural resources, agricultural lands, critical habitats, wetlands and water resources, and cultural and historic landscapes. Increase the quantity, quality and accessibility of open spaces and recreational opportunities.

5. Use Natural Resources Wisely

Construct and promote developments, buildings, and infrastructure that conserve natural resources by reducing waste and pollution through efficient use of land, energy, water, and materials.

6. Expand Housing Opportunities

Support the construction and rehabilitation of homes to meet the needs of people of all abilities, income levels, and household types. Build homes near jobs, transit, and where services are available. Foster the development of housing, particularly multifamily and smaller single-family homes, in a way that is compatible with a community's character and vision and with providing new housing choices for people of all means.

7. Provide Transportation Choices

Maintain and expand transportation options that maximize mobility, reduce congestion, conserve fuel and improve air quality. Prioritize rail, bus, boat, rapid and surface transit, shared-vehicle and shared-ride services, bicycling, and walking. Invest strategically in existing and new passenger and freight transportation infrastructure that supports sound economic development consistent with smart growth objectives.

8. Increase Job and Business Opportunities

Attract businesses and jobs to locations near housing, infrastructure, and transportation options. Promote economic development in industry clusters. Expand access to education, training, and entrepreneurial opportunities. Support the growth of local businesses, including sustainable natural resource-based businesses, such as agriculture, forestry, clean energy technology, and fisheries.

9. Promote Clean Energy

Maximize energy efficiency and renewable energy opportunities. Support energy conservation strategies, local clean power generation, distributed generation technologies, and innovative industries. Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and consumption of fossil fuels.

10. Plan Regionally

Support the development and implementation of local and regional, state and interstate plans that have broad public support and are consistent with these principles. Foster development projects, land and water conservation, transportation and housing that have a regional or multi-community benefit. Consider the long-term costs and benefits to the Commonwealth.