

Meeting Notice and Agenda

Town of Sandisfield Master Plan Steering Committee Meeting Wednesday January 27, 2016 6:00 p.m. Old Town Hall, Silverbrook Road

1. *Approval of Minutes:*
 - a. *January 13, 2016*
2. *Previous Items*
 - a. *None*
3. *New Items*
 - a. *Revised MP chapters 1-13*
 - b. *Draft Article for Sandisfield Times*
 - c. *Complete Streets Funding Program Training – Thursday, Feb. 4th @ Crowne Plaza (1 West St.) in Pittsfield 1:00-4:00pm*
4. *Next Steps*
 - a. *Joint MPSC/BOS meeting –February?*
 - b. *Public Forum – Weds. March 23*
 - c. *Draft Plan Distribution*
5. *Other items not reasonably anticipated by the Chair 48 hours in advance of the meeting.*
6. *Next Meetings*
 - a. *????*
7. *Adjournment*

MASTER PLAN

Town of Sandisfield,
Massachusetts

DRAFT

Prepared by:
The Sandisfield Master Plan
Steering Committee &
The Berkshire Regional
Planning Commission

MASTER PLAN

2016

Town of Sandisfield,
Massachusetts



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Planning Process and Plan Creation Was Spearheaded by The Following:

Planning Board

Master Plan Steering Committee (A Subcommittee of the Sandisfield Planning Board)

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

Thanks to Those Who Provided Review, Comments, and Assistance Along the Way!

Town Boards, Departments, and Staff

Other Entities

Citizens of Sandisfield

Public Survey Respondents

Public Forum Participants

Berkshire Natural Resources Council

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Executive Summary

During late 2015 and early 2016, the Town of Sandisfield developed a Master Plan, a strategic document that helps direct decision-making in the town for the next 10-20 years. A Master Plan considers all aspects of a community to create a consistent strategy for how each should progress in the future – including land use, housing, economy, natural and cultural resources, open space and recreation, services, infrastructure, and transportation.

The development of the Master Plan was the work of the Sandisfield Master Plan Steering Committee, formed as a subcommittee of the town’s planning board. This group was comprised of members of other town boards, and interested citizens of Sandisfield. The planning process also incorporated broad community input through the development of a public opinion survey, two public informational meetings or forums, and many stakeholder and personal interviews. This valuable input has helped to shape the content of the plan—thank you to all who devoted time to the creation of this plan for the town’s future.

VISION

This plan creates a strategy to help the town achieve its vision for its desired future. Components of Sandisfield’s vision include establishing the town as local and regional recreation, environmental, and heritage or historic destination. Additionally, the town will work to improve transportation and reduce its expenses.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Our vision serves as the basis for a number of more-detailed goals and policies that define how the town will achieve its vision. In some cases, the successful achievement of the goal and policies depends on the collaboration of one or more other parties. Where this is the case, the likely collaborators are identified in the implementation strategy (Chapter 13). The goals and policies are organized into chapters by topic, as described in the following sections.

Population and Demographics

The Town of Sandisfield has a population of around 930 year-round residents according to the 2010 US Census. The median age of a Sandisfield resident is 48 years old. Between 2000 and 2010, the number of residents below the age of 45 decreased, while the number over the age of 45 increased. The town is also predicted to grow by around 125 new year-round residents over the next two decades, and is one of a handful of municipalities in the Berkshires predicted to do so. This chapter also looks briefly at the Farmington River School. Enrollment data indicates that the number of students has decreased by about 25% since 2003, particularly in the number of students from Sandisfield and school choice students. In terms of race, ethnicity, and diversity, US Census data shows that the number of African American and Latino residents decreased in Sandisfield between 2000 and 2010. However, the number of multiracial residents and the number of Asian residents has increased. The population and demographics chapter is the only topic chapter that does not contain goals, objectives, and actions.

Economy

Sandisfield’s local economy is comprised of small local businesses and independent entrepreneurs. Roughly half of all year-round residents are considered in the “civilian labor force”, meaning they are either employed, or unemployed and above the age of 16. Those not in the labor force are not employed, not laid off, and not seeking employment. Early in the Master Plan process, BRPC looked at “Doing Business As” (DBA) records held by the town. These records show that around 80 businesses registered in the town between 2010 and 2015. Many of these businesses are small farms or belong to the forestry, logging, and wood products industry.

The Master Plan sets the goal that the town will work to improve the local economy and daily life in the town through a variety of means. These include working to support local business through training and business development, as well as conducting outreach to encourage local businesses to join regional business networks, such as the Southern Berkshire Chamber of Commerce. A range of promotional activities and possible improvements such as beautifying town “gateway” areas are also suggested. The plan also sets



the goal of improving daily life in the community. This will be pursued through the development of cooperative business models in town, such as a store or grocery.

Economy Goals

- Improve the Local Economy
- Improve daily life through additional services and amenities.

Infrastructure

The Master Plan Infrastructure Chapter examines a few key aspects of infrastructure in Sandisfield, including town buildings and facilities, drinking water wells, the proposed Kinder Morgan and Tennessee Gas Pipeline “Connecticut Expansion” Project, and town technology infrastructure (computers, phones, and the town website). The town has done significant planning related to its town buildings, which has been spearheaded by the Sandisfield Strategic Planning Committee. A consultant hired by the town recommended that the towns buildings are in need of replacement and do not currently meet the towns needs. Additionally, the town has recently undertaken efforts to address its technology needs, and improve the town website.

The Master Plan makes the recommendation that the town improve its public facilities through a continuation of its current efforts. Through this, the town will work to develop a specific plan and process for replacing its public buildings, including how this effort will be funded. The town will also work to improve its technology infrastructure and explore potential development of alternative sources of energy in Sandisfield. This will include pursuing alternative energy development on town lands, as well as promoting energy saving programs and small scale energy development with town residents through existing means like Mass. Saves or the Solarize Mass. Program.

Infrastructure Goals

- Improve town facilities to meet current and future needs.
- Improve town technology infrastructure.
- Develop alternative sources of energy in Sandisfield.

Services

Sandisfield provides many services to its residents including law enforcement and fire protection, senior programs through the Council on Aging, waste collection through the transfer station, a town library, and road maintenance, to name a few. This chapter also examines town finances and taxes. In 2015, the tax rate in Sandisfield was \$13.00 per \$1,000 of assessed property value. Revenue from property taxes provides around 85% of the town’s total revenue (\$3.28 million in 2015). Road maintenance and public works, as well as school expenditures are the towns major expenses. The town has roughly \$1.5 million between its available free cash and its stabilization funds, which gives it some flexibility to address unanticipated expenses or to invest in other projects.

The Master Plan makes suggestions for streamlining town costs while offsetting them through grant writing or the potential sale of town property (among others). The plan also sets goals to enhance services for Sandisfield’s senior citizens and families, as well as a variety of measures to better inform and engage its volunteer boards and citizens.

Infrastructure Goals

- Provide efficient and fiscally responsible services.
- Better inform and engage residents, boards, and committees.

Housing

Roughly 56% of the 671 housing units in Sandisfield are used year round, and 40% are used seasonally. The small remaining percentage (3.6%) belongs to housing units considered vacant. This category includes unoccupied homes for sale or rent, sold or rented units pending occupation, and other vacancies such as “abandoned” or unused homes. Rental units in Sandisfield accounted for 6.2% of all housing stock, and includes year-round and seasonal rentals. Most housing units in town are of the single family-type and are owner occupied. Between 2000 and 2010, the number of seasonal housing units in town decreased by around 5%, while the number of year-round housing units increased. There are no dedicated “affordable” housing units within the town. In recent years the number of new permits issued for single family homes has decreased. Single family home sales

also declined between 2008-2010. However, they have increased in recent years. The Master Plan sets goals to address housing within the town, through participation in housing rehabilitation programs and other incentives, as well as potential bylaw changes that could help to encourage the development of affordable housing units. Additionally, Sandisfield will work to develop the local capacity to address its housing needs through possible formation of a housing organization, such as a committee, and strategic partnerships with local housing organizations. Finally, the plan sets the goal that the town will create a long term strategy to supply senior housing, as well encourage the rehabilitation of existing historic homes in Sandisfield.

Housing Goals

- Sandisfield will supply housing to meet the needs of all ages in incomes.

Transportation

Sandisfield has a network of nearly 100 miles of roadway within the town. The vast majority of these miles are the responsibility of the town. Only Route 8 and some state forest land roadways are the responsibility of the state to care for. Moreover, a few miles are privately maintained. Additionally, the town has only one roadway which are eligible for federal funding (Route 57). There is no public transportation in Sandisfield beyond existing senior and paratransit services provided by grant funding to the town and two other organizations (BRTA and the SBETC). Transportation is an important issue in Sandisfield, as well as a major town expense.

The Master Plan provides a number of recommendations to address transportation needs within the community. These include capital improvement planning and advocacy with surrounding towns to work towards state responsibility of Route 57. Additionally, the plan develops strategic actions that the town will implement to reduce long-term costs. Moreover, the plan addresses non-motorized transportation in town, and recommends the town adopt a “Complete Streets” approach to future roadway projects, implementing accommodations for cyclists and pedestrians where it can. Finally, the town will work to establish a wayfinding system and improve local roadway signage.

Transportation Goals

- Provide a complete and well maintained system of roads.
- Improve public and non-motorized transportation in Sandisfield.
- Establish a town wayfinding system and improve local signage.

Land Use

Sandisfield is a rural town in the southern Berkshires. Forest covers approximately 86% of all land within Sandisfield. Residential land use is the most significant human land use in the community at around 1.6% of all land within the town. This land use far exceeds the acreage devoted to institutional, commercial or industrial uses. Historically, land use patterns and development has been dispersed within the town. At one time, there were as many as six separate villages within the community. Land use in Sandisfield is regulated through the town’s zoning and bylaws. Sandisfield currently has one zoning district, and has worked with BRPC recently to update its zoning regulations. As part of its work on the Master Plan, BRPC performed a buildout analysis based on current zoning. This analysis concluded that approximately 7,500 additional housing units could be built in Sandisfield based on its current zoning regulations and the remaining developable land within the town.

The Master Plan sets several goals for the town, including the establishment of a town center in Sandisfield. This has long been discussed in town as a way to provide a hub for social and public life within the town. The town will work to develop this town center, integrating its plans for other public facilities (see Chapter 4). Moreover, the town will continue to update and modernize its zoning bylaws, including developing bylaws to anticipate future land uses such as commercial and solar wind energy or wireless communications towers. Finally, the town will address the proposed Connecticut Expansion Pipeline Project by supporting equitable taxation for utilities.

Land Use Goals

- Establish a Town Center in Sandisfield.
- Update Town Zoning and Bylaws.



- Address the proposed Connecticut Expansion Pipeline Project.

Natural and Cultural Resources

Sandisfield has an abundance of natural and cultural resources. Natural resources in the town include extensive forests and wildlife habitat, wetlands, vernal pools, several water bodies, streams, and rivers. Regionally, Sandisfield is located at the headwaters of the Farmington River, meaning that land use within the town could potentially impact the drinking water resources of nearly 600,000 downstream users who rely on the Farmington for drinking water, including the City of Hartford, CT. Several rare bird species have been sighted in Sandisfield, and the Colebrook River Lake area has been identified as a bird watching hotspot. Culturally, the town has many historic buildings and areas, including a portion of the Knox Trail, a historic and recreation trail that was crucial to our nation's early development. The Sandisfield Historic Commission has been instrumental in developing the towns cultural resources, through several initiatives. Additionally, the town is home to the Sandisfield Arts Center, a non-profit organization that hosts events, performances, and exhibits. The center provides a space for theater, film, and workshops, as well as a large gallery for visual arts display.

The Master Plan sets the goal of establishing Sandisfield as an environmental and historic destination. This entails protecting natural resources and promoting the town as destination for birdwatching and other events. The town will also continue its efforts to develop its cultural and historic resources to draw residents and visitors to the town.

Natural and Cultural Resource Goals

- Establish Sandisfield as an environmental destination.
- Establish Sandisfield as a heritage and historic destination.

Open Space and Recreation

The Town of Sandisfield has thousands of acres of open space. Open space is traditionally defined as land that has not been developed for residential, industrial, or commercial use. Open space is often protected from future development, as is the case

with state forest lands, properties owned by land trusts, and private land with conservation restrictions. In fact, 48% of all land within Sandisfield is protected in some way. Much of this belongs to land protected by the state and is found in Otis and Sandisfield state forests. A small percentage is protected as part of watershed preservation lands owned by the Connecticut Metropolitan District Commission, which helps to ensure clean drinking water for the City of Hartford, CT. Finally, a number of residents in Sandisfield have chosen to protect their properties through Chapter 61. Through this state program, landowners receive reduced property taxes in exchange for the protection of land from future development. In terms of recreation, these open space lands, particularly publicly accessible state forest lands provide ample space for multiple activities. However, while these state lands are open to the public, they lack adequate facilities and are not managed for active recreation use, which limits their overall potential. There are two locally active snowmobile organizations in Sandisfield, both of which help to maintain and develop trails for this use. Finally, the town has two major recreation areas, including the library playground, and Yanner Park. Yanner Park was donated to the town for use as a public recreation area. There was significant planning done in the past to help guide the use of this area. However, efforts to create it as such have tapered off in recent years.

The Master Plan makes recommendations to establish the town as recreation destination through better promotion, improving access to state lands, encouraging snowmobiling, and linking recreation areas through trail networks. The plan also provides suggestions for leveraging state lands to provide additional benefits to the town, such as through PILOT payments or changes to state stumpage fee regulations. Finally, the plan works to address town owned recreation areas. Under this goal, the town will revisit its needs for and invest in the Library Playground and Yanner Park.

Open Space and Recreation Goals

- Establish Sandisfield as a recreation destination.
- Increase recreation opportunities for Sandisfield residents.
- Leverage state lands to generate additional benefits for the town.

IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

The plan calls for numerous actions. To make implementation easier, the final chapter lists each action and assigns a relative time, priority, and who is responsible for initiating the implementation of the action. Ideally, the town will use this tool as it plans annual priorities from year-to-year.

APPENDICES

In addition to the plan for the town's future, there are a number of appendices that highlight current conditions at the time of the plan, legal considerations, and survey feedback received from the community

- A. Maps
- B. Key issues
- C. Existing Conditions Summary
- D. MGL 41
- E. Survey Results



CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This Master Plan for the Town of Sandisfield was developed in 2015 to guide growth, policy, and investment decisions for the next 10 to 20 years. This chapter provides background to the planning process and describes the content of different chapters of the plan for easy reference and use.

WELCOME TO SANDISFIELD!

Sandisfield is a small town located in the beautiful Berkshire region of Massachusetts. Located in westernmost Massachusetts, the Berkshires are renowned for their natural beauty, rich arts and culture scene, and small New England town charm. In this setting lies the town of Sandisfield, nestled in the Berkshire Hills southeast of Great Barrington, it is the largest community in the Berkshires by geographic area. Sandisfield is bordered by the towns of Otis to the North, Monterey and New Marlborough to the West, and Tolland to the East.

Sandisfield is a town of approximately 915 year-round residents and a substantial number of seasonal residents and second homeowners. Second and seasonal homes comprise approximately 40% of all housing in town. Sandisfield was incorporated as a town in 1762 and was named after Lord Samuel Sandys, the first “Lord of Trade and the Plantations.” It is both the largest town in Berkshire County at 53 sq. mi. as well as the most sparsely populated.

WHAT DOES THIS PLAN ADDRESS?

This plan addresses a wide range of issues and priorities as expressed by the town through survey responses received at the start of the planning process. Some highlights, which illustrate recurring themes in the plan and its policies, include:

Character:

TO BE COMPLETED

Economy:

TO BE COMPLETED

Housing:

TO BE COMPLETED

Environment:

TO BE COMPLETED

Recreation:

TO BE COMPLETED

Town Services and Facilities:

TO BE COMPLETED

ABOUT MASTER PLANS

A Master Plan is a document that sets a blueprint for town decision-makers to use in their day-to-day actions as part of managing the town. It is an advisory document not a regulatory document. The purpose of this plan is to create an opportunity for the town to reflect and determine what it wants for its future and then chart out the preferred actions to achieve that vision. It is then the responsibility of the town’s elected and appointed officials to pursue the actions identified in the implementation chapter of this plan to gradually make the regulatory changes and priority investments needed to achieve the vision statement.

How does the Master Plan Relate to Other Town Plans and Documents?

The Master Plan takes precedence over other plans of the community such as transportation plans, open space and recreation plans, area plans, and other area- or topic-specific documents. The Master Plan is typically more

general than more focused plan documents but provides overarching guidance to the content of these plans in that they should be consistent with the policies established in the Master Plan.

An important function of the Master Plan is to ensure priorities and approaches in one area such as land use relate to another, such as transportation. Because all of the topics are addressed within a single document, the policies in these different areas are developed to be consistent and supportive, thus safeguarding the potential danger of conflicting policies that can occur in a more fragmented planning approach. Other town plans can then use this framework to reach a finer level of detail in a particular subject area. For a list of the topics required by Massachusetts law to be addressed in a Master Plan, see Appendix D.

While the Master Plan is not a regulatory document, it does set the policy for the town to develop new bylaws to regulate land use decisions. For more on how the plan impacts land use and bylaw decisions see Chapter 8: Land Use.

WHAT DOES THE PLAN CONTAIN?

Master Plan guidance is provided in a number of ways, including maps of current and desired conditions, illustrations of concepts, and policy language. At the core of the plan is a vision statement of the overarching objectives the town wants to accomplish for its future. The Vision is the foundation for a number of goals and more specific policy and action statements. Together these establish the blueprint for what the town will do to achieve its vision and will serve as a guide for town policy and decision-makers for the life of the plan.

Vision

The vision is the “big picture” statement of where the town would like to be five, ten or twenty

years from now.

Goals

Goal statements go into greater detail on the different pieces that the town will need to pursue in order to make the vision a reality.

Objectives

These are the specific strategies that the town will pursue to achieve the goal.

Actions

Actions are the specific tasks that individuals or groups will need to do in order to achieve specific policy statements.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

This plan was developed through a planning process that included a few key ways of participation and feedback from the community:

Master Plan Steering Committee

The XXXXXXXXXXXX initiated the development of the Master Plan. **NOTE: Include more about the appointment process.** This Committee met XXXX times from July 2015 to XXXX to review draft work products and provide direction on the vision, goals, policies, and actions identified in this plan.

Survey

A survey was developed to gain feedback from Sandisfield residents regarding aspects of the Master Plan. The survey was made open to the public on XXXX 2015 and was concluded on June XXXX 2015. The results of the public survey are included as appendix E of this document.

Public Forums

TO BE COMPLETED



Chapter 3: Economy

This chapter provides an overview of the key economic sectors present in the town and makes recommendations for how the town can support the retention and expansion of economic activity in the future.

Chapter 4: Infrastructure

Chapter 4 contains an overview of town infrastructure including sewer and communications and makes recommendations for future infrastructure improvement and development.

Chapter 5: Services

This chapter provides an overview of the fire, police, and other services provided in the town and sets goals and policies for the town to pursue to maintain and enhance services in the future.

Chapter 6: Housing

This chapter provides an overview of housing supply and needs both now and in the future and then presents town goals and policies to address future housing in the town including options for young professionals, families, and seniors.

Chapter 7: Transportation

This chapter highlights key features and issues with the current transportation system in the town and then establishes goals and policies for the town to pursue to maintain and enhance this system in the future.

Chapter 8: Land Use

This chapter contains a description of the current land use patterns and constraints, identifies goals and policies for future land use, and presents the future land use plan for the town.

Chapter 9: Natural and Cultural Resources

This chapter summarizes the natural

PLAN OVERVIEW

This plan contains eleven total chapters in addition to this introduction that address the following aspects of the town:

Chapter 2: Population and Demographics

This chapter presents population and demographic trends in Sandisfield and outlines key issues.

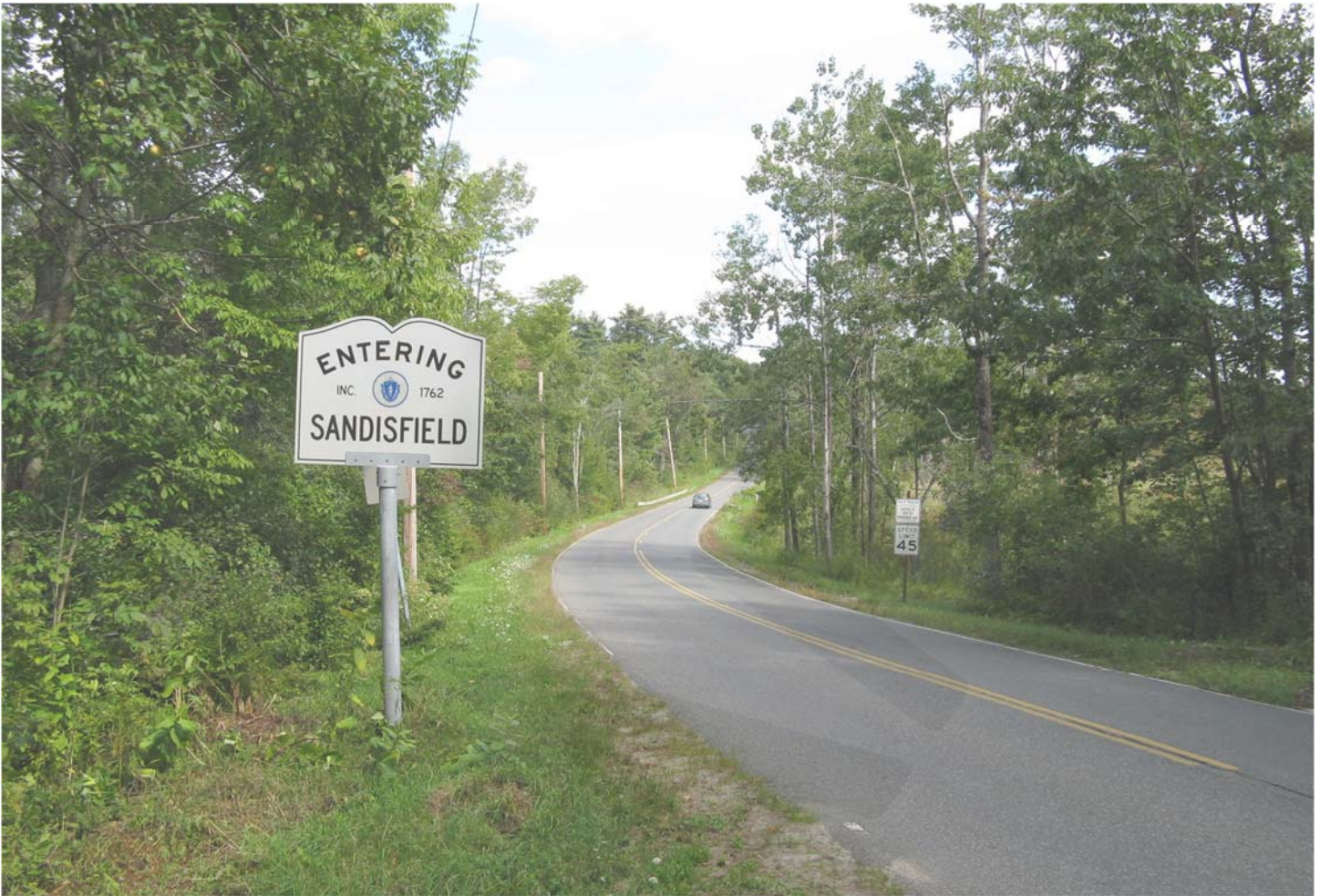


Figure 1.1—Eastbound on Route 57 entering Sandisfield. Sandisfield is a rural town in the southern Berkshires of around 900 year-round residents. Photograph credit John Phelan. Image licensed under CC by 3.0.

environment, as well as cultural and historic attributes of the town and sets goals and objectives for the town to pursue.

Chapter 10: Open Space and Recreation

This chapter summarizes the open space and recreation elements of the town and sets goals and objectives for the town to pursue.

Chapter 11: Vision

This chapter contains the vision statement for the town – a concise statement of what residents want their town to be like in the future.

Chapter 12: Process

This chapter outlines the public process that was used to develop the Master Plan.

Chapter 13: Implementation Strategy

This chapter contains an overview of the different types of actions that will be needed to implement the plan and the range of entities that will be involved in that process. Additionally, it includes the Implementation Strategy, which details the actions, responsible parties, relative priority, and potential funding sources for each action called for in the plan.



Appendices

- A. Maps
- B. Key issues
- C. Existing Conditions Summary
- D. MGL 41
- E. Survey Results

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CHAPTER 2: POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

TRENDS AND CONDITIONS

Population

Sandisfield is a small town in the Berkshires with a relatively low year-round population - 930 residents as of the 2010 census. Census data indicates that the town population increased from 667 to 930 residents between 1990 and 2010. This amounts to a 39% increase in population over the 20 year period.

Additionally, Sandisfield is one of only a handful of Berkshire county towns projected to grow in the future. The Donahue Institute at UMass Amherst projects that Sandisfield will grow by roughly 126 additional residents over the next two decades, reaching 1,041 year-round residents by 2035 (see Table 1.1 in Appendix C). Due to the high number of seasonal residents that come to Sandisfield during summer months, it is unclear whether growth over past years has been comprised of newcomers to Sandisfield, or of seasonal residents transitioning their second home into their year round residence.

Seasonal Residents/Second Homeowners

Seasonal residents and second homeowners are a significant portion of the Sandisfield population that are barely captured by census and other data. According to the 2010 census, 45% of all housing units in Sandisfield are listed as seasonal units. Along with the towns of Becket, Stockbridge, Lenox and Otis, Sandisfield has one of the highest numbers of seasonal homes in the Berkshires. This seasonal population affects town services, infrastructure and housing. Additionally, they are likely a large contributor of new year-round residents to Sandisfield.

A demographics question related to seasonal residents and second homeowners was included on the public survey that was developed as part of the Master Plan process. According to the survey results, 7 out of 44 year round residents (15.9%), indicated that they had at one time been seasonal residents or second homeowners. Additionally, 17 out of 56 seasonal residents or second homeowners (26.5%) reported that they were planning on becoming year round residents of Sandisfield. For



The annual Sandisfield Steak roast dinner is held in August. Photograph provided by the Sandisfield Times.

POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS AT A GLANCE

Age

The median age of an Sandisfield resident increased from 44.7 to 48 between 2000 and 2010.

Seasonal Residents

Seasonal residents are a major portion of Sandisfield's population. 2010 Census records indicate 45% of all housing in the town is seasonal.

Diversity

The population of Asians and those of 2 or more races has increased in Sandisfield since 2000, all other population groups have stayed constant or decreased slightly.

Additional discussion of population and demographics may be found in Appendix C: Existing Conditions Summary

Table 2.1 - Change in Age Distribution in Sandisfield 2000-2010

Source: 2000 and 2010 U.S. Census

Age	2000	2010	% Change 2000-2010
≤19	21.17%	18.25%	-2.92%
20-44	28.64%	22.95%	-5.69%
45-64	31.67%	39.02%	+7.35%
65≤	17.96%	19.78%	+1.82%

the complete results of the public survey, refer to appendix E.

Age

The population of Sandisfield is increasingly becoming older. Between the 2000 and 2010 census, the number of Sandisfield residents below the age of 45 decreased while the residents age 45 and older increased (See Table 2.1 above). The change was most pronounced in the 45-64 age group, which saw an increase of 7.35% during the “aughts” decade. Between these years, the median age of town residents increased by 3.3 years from 44.7 to 49.9. The aging population could have effects on town services as well as its housing, recreation, and transportation needs.

At the other end of the spectrum, the decline in younger residents could have an effect on school enrollment and funding as well as future volunteers and town workers such as police and firefighters. Enrollment at the local elementary school, the Farmington River School, has decreased by about 25% since 2003 (see Table 2.2 above). Available data indicates that the number of students from Sandisfield and school choice students decreased the most. The number of school choice students enrolled at Farmington River has decreased from 35 to 24 students since 2007. Students attending from Sandisfield decreased from 43 to 26. However, the number of students from Otis increased slightly – by 7 students – since 2007.

During meetings of the Sandisfield Master Plan Steering Committee (MPSC), it was identified that student enrollment might increase in the future at the

TABLE 2.2 - Farmington River School District Enrollment

*Source: Otis Annual Report 2007-2014, Massachusetts Dept. of Education**

Year	Total Enrollment	From Otis	From Sandisfield	School Choice Students
2003	178*	-	-	-
2004	188*	-	-	-
2005	190*	-	-	-
2006	171*	-	-	-
2007	153	75	43	35
2008	143	68	42	33
2009	147	77	42	28
2010	149	87	41	21
2011	144	86	37	21
2012	150	88	39	23
2013	149	87	37	25
2014	132	82	26	24

Farmington River School due to a number of school choice students who can no longer attend the nearby Southern Berkshire Regional School District in Sheffield due to a transportation issue. A bus driver for the district formerly provided transportation for these Sandisfield students to the school in Sheffield, but is unable to continue doing so. Lacking this available transportation, these students may begin to attend the Farmington River School District out of necessity and proximity (Nina Carr Personal Communication 2015).

Race, Ethnicity, and Diversity

The population of several ethnic groups including African Americans and Latinos fell between 2000 and 2010. The number of African Americans in Sandisfield decreased from 4 persons to 0. The number of Latinos decreased from 8 to 7. However, the population of Asian Americans residents in Sandisfield increased from 1 to 35 between 2000 and 2010 and the population of persons of 2 or more races increased from 17 to 43 in the same time period. Increasing diversity for Berkshire County as a whole is a trend that has been identified in regional planning work



including the 2014 Sustainable Berkshires Plan.

KEY POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHIC ISSUES

An Older Populace

The increased number of older residents may affect the range of services the town wishes to provide as well as the range of housing options available.

Additionally, it makes issues such as the need for universal accessibility to town buildings or amenities more important due to potential mobility impairment issues.

Seasonal Residents

Seasonal residents have a potentially large impact on town population as well as town services and local housing.



CHAPTER 3: ECONOMY

In its past, the Town of Sandisfield was known as a center for manufacturing due to its many water powered mills as well as hub of agriculture and lumbering. While some farming and forestry remain, the town's economy has changed, based primarily around a strong base of small business entrepreneurs. This chapter reviews the composition of economic activity in the town and then details the goals, objectives and actions for the town to take to achieve its vision for the Sandisfield economy. Sandisfield's vision for the economy includes supporting its local business base and developing its agriculture and wood products industries.



Riiska Brook Orchard is located along New Hartford Road. Photograph provided by the Sandisfield Times.

ECONOMY AT A GLANCE

Composition

Sandisfield has a business base comprised of small local businesses and entrepreneurs. Notable segments of the local economy include several small farms as well as those in the logging and wood products industry.

Employment

59.7% of the population over the age of 16 was considered employed according to data from the U.S. Census American Community Survey. Another 5.1% was considered unemployed. 35.5% was considered "not in the labor force", meaning they are not employed or seeking work.

Survey Respondents

Roughly 70% of survey respondents were in favor of encouraging business development in Sandisfield.

Additional discussion of economy may be found in Appendix C: Existing Conditions Summary

Table 3.1 - Sandisfield Employment Statistics 2000-2013

Source: 2000 US Census and 2009-2013 American Community Survey

	2000	2013
Population 16 years and Over (Considered the population eligible to work)	687 (100%)	766 (100%)
In Civilian Labor Force (employed and unemployed individuals)	418 (60.8%)	496 (64.8%)
Employed (full and part time workers, or anyone receiving payment for work)	411 (59.8%)	457 (59.7%)
Unemployed (Individuals who are laid off from a job or are actively seeking work)	7 (1%)	39 (5.1%)
Armed Forces	0	0
Not In Labor Force (Individuals who are not employed, not laid off and not seeking employment)	269 (39.2%)	270 (35.5%)
Mean travel time to work (minutes)	37	38.8

TRENDS AND CONDITIONS

Employment

As of the 2009-2013 American Community Survey, the civilian labor force of Sandisfield was 496 persons, representing approximately 64.8% of the population over the age of 16 (766) or 53% of the total population (496 out of an estimated 930 residents).

It is important to note that employment data is not calculated based on the entire population. Only persons over the age of 16 who are not members of the military, or institutionalized (such as in in prison, in a nursing home or mental health facility) are used to calculate employment figures. Individuals who have received any payment for work are considered employed. Individuals who are laid off from work or are actively seeking employment are considered unemployed. Individuals who are not employed, laid off, or actively seeking employment are considered not in the labor force and are not used to calculate unemployment figures. Individuals in this category might include retirees, homemakers, students, the independently wealthy, or a person without a job who has stopped looking for work (perhaps temporarily). A person who is unemployed and stopped looking for work is sometimes referred to as a “discouraged worker”.

The unemployment rate was measured as 5.1% during the 2009-2013 American Community Survey (see Table 3.1), and represents an estimated 39 out of 766 individuals. This value is lower than the value for the county (7.1% according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics).

As of the 2009-2013 American Community Survey, the total number of residents age 16 and older in Sandisfield was 766 persons, or approximately 82% of the total estimated population of the town (930 residents as of the 2009-2013 Census ACS). Of this population, 496 are considered “in the labor force”, meaning they are either employed or unemployed. This figure represents around 53% of the town’s 930 year-round residents. The remaining 270 individuals are considered “not in the labor force”.

Income

Per capita income was \$29,539 as measured in the 2009-2013 American Community Survey. (U.S. Census

ACS 2009-2013). Median household income was \$55,917. Sandisfield’s median household income was higher than the surrounding town of Monterey, but lower than that of Otis or New Marlborough.

Local Business

Small local businesses dominate the business activity in Sandisfield. Town Clerk records show that eighty-one businesses registered or renewed their “Doing Business As” (DBA) in Sandisfield between 2010 and 2015 (Sandisfield Town Clerk Records, 2015). These are summarized in Table 2.1 and presented individually in Table 2.6 in Appendix C. Businesses in Sandisfield fall into many categories. Twenty one businesses were categorized as belonging to agriculture or forestry. Another 14 businesses fell into the category of “Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services”. There were also many businesses in the construction (11) and retail trade (13) (see Table 2.2 in Appendix C).

Occupation

Since 2000, the employment and occupation of Sandisfield workers has shifted. Between 2000 and 2013, industries that saw gains in the percentage of workers include agriculture, retail, information, finance, professional services, education, and “other services”. Gains were greatest in the “other services” (23 workers, or 4.9%) and education, health and social services categories (30 workers, or 4.3%). Industries that saw declines in the percentage of workers include construction, manufacturing, wholesale Trade, transportation, arts, and public administration. Declines in the percentage of Sandisfield workers were greatest in the public administration (30 workers, or 7.3%) and construction fields (16 workers, or 5.1%) (see Table 2.3 in Appendix C).

Public Survey Results

Based on the results of the public survey, Sandisfield residents and seasonal residents / second homeowners generally supported the encouragement of business development within the town (70%). Survey respondents were in favor of encouraging most types of new business with the exception of construction (including trucking and hauling), auto repair, and industrial development. Year-round residents supported encouraging economic



development at a higher rate (81%) than seasonal residents (63%).

KEY ECONOMY ISSUES

Small Local Business

Sandisfield has a business base comprised of small local businesses and entrepreneurs. The town should work with these businesses and individuals to explore cooperative measures for business promotion and economic development efforts.

ECONOMY GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

Goal 1: Improve the Local Economy.

The Town of Sandisfield will work to improve the local economy by reaching out to its local business base, coordinating promotion of the town and exploring the development of events and programs in town. Moreover, the town will focus on promoting and developing its local strengths, including local agriculture and wood products. These efforts will draw tourists and new residents to the town, while improving the quality of life of existing residents.

General Objective: Increase the Number of Tourist Visitors and Second Homeowners in Sandisfield.

Sandisfield recognizes tourism and its strong second home market are major economic drivers both local and regionally. These factors add to the tax base in town, while also contributing to the local economy. The town will work to identify and implement programs and other initiatives that increase the number of tourists that visit the town each year, while attracting future second homeowners.

General Objective: Develop the Town's Agricultural and Wood Products Industry.

There are more businesses in Sandisfield focused on agricultural and wood products than any other in town. The town will work to cultivate, develop, and promote these businesses, while creating opportunity for these industries to further expand in town.

General Objective: Promote the Town's Open Space and Recreation Opportunities.

Sandisfield has thousands of acres of publically accessible state land, numerous water bodies, and miles of roadway for cycling or walking. The town will promote these assets to draw tourists and potential new residents to the town, thus providing critical economic stimulus.

General Objective: Expedite the Development of Broadband Internet in Sandisfield.

Sandisfield recently approved funding for the development of broadband internet in town. The town will work to hasten the implementation of high speed internet in town to help support existing local and home-based business, as well as attract future entrepreneurs to the town.

Objective: Work with Local Businesses to Coordinate and Participate in Regional Organizations.

The Town will work more actively to ensure that local business participate in regional programs and business organizations. The town will also work to cultivate and develop its base of small local businesses through training and education.

ACTION 1: ENCOURAGE LOCAL BUSINESSES TO PARTICIPATE IN REGIONAL BUSINESS ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS BERKSHIRE GROWN AND THE SOUTHERN BERKSHIRE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE.

ACTION 2: EXPLORE DEVELOPMENT OF A SANDISFIELD BUSINESS ASSOCIATION OR LOCAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE.

ACTION 3: ENCOURAGE OR SPONSOR BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS AND TRAINING IN TOWN.

ACTION 4: CONDUCT OUTREACH TO INFORM LOCAL BUSINESSES ABOUT TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS IN THE REGION.

Objective: Actively Promote the Town and its Assets.

The Town will work to ensure that town businesses and assets are promoted across the region. Additionally, the town will work to create draws for tourists and potential future residents through coordinated marketing and promotion of its events and programs in town.

ACTION 1: DEVELOP OR APPOINT AN EVENT COORDINATION COMMITTEE THAT WILL ACTIVELY PROMOTE TOWN ASSETS

AND EVENTS REGIONALLY. THIS COMMITTEE WOULD BE RESPONSIBLE FOR MANAGING A CALENDAR OF TOWN EVENTS, COORDINATING WITH LOCAL BUSINESSES AND ORGANIZATIONS, AND ENSURING THAT TOWN EVENTS AND ASSETS ARE PUBLICIZED REGIONALLY.

ACTION 2: COORDINATE THE “CROSS PROMOTION” OF LOCAL BUSINESSES AND EVENTS IN TOWN.

ACTION 3: ORGANIZE AND PROMOTE FARM TOURS IN SANDISFIELD.

ACTION 4: ORGANIZE AND PROMOTE MORE EVENTS AND PROGRAMS IN SANDISFIELD, SUCH AS THE 250TH CELEBRATION.

ACTION 5: ORGANIZE AND PROMOTE A “BUY LOCAL” CAMPAIGN FOCUSING ON THE TOWN’S AGRICULTURAL, FORESTRY, AND ARTISANAL PRODUCTS.

ACTION 6: ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY TO DEVELOP A TOWN LOGO TO BE USED ON PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS AND BRANDING.

ACTION 7: PROMOTE THE QUALITY OF LIFE AND THE FARMINGTON RIVER SCHOOL AS POTENTIAL DRAWS FOR NEW RESIDENTS.

ACTION 8: DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A LOCAL WAYFINDING SYSTEM IN SANDISFIELD THAT PROMOTES AND LOCATES LOCAL BUSINESSES AND TOWN AMENITIES AND FEATURES.

Objective: Develop and Regularly Update the Town Website as a Promotional Tool for the Town.

The Town will more effectively utilize its website to promote the town, its businesses, and its assets. Additionally, the town will utilize its website to ensure that potential commercial developers and homeowners can easily access applicable forms and permits, are provided with up to date contact information for boards and committees, and can access an easily navigable and user-friendly development review process in town.

ACTION 1: DISPLAY AND PROMOTE LOCAL BUSINESSES ON THE TOWN WEBSITE.

ACTION 2: DISPLAY AND MAINTAIN AN INTERACTIVE MAP ON THE TOWN WEBSITE THAT PROVIDES INFORMATION ABOUT RECREATION AREAS IN TOWN, INCLUDING WATER ACCESS POINTS, TRAILS, AND OTHER ATTRACTIONS.

ACTION 3: DISPLAY AND MAINTAIN AN INTERACTIVE MAP ON THE TOWN WEBSITE THAT PROMOTES THE TOWN’S HISTORIC BUILDINGS AND CEMETERIES, AS WELL AS ITS CULTURAL ASSETS, SUCH AS THE ARTS CENTER.

ACTION 4: ENSURE THAT COMMERCIAL DEVELOPERS AND POTENTIAL HOMEOWNERS IN SANDISFIELD CAN EASILY ACCESS AND DOWNLOAD APPLICABLE FORMS AND PERMIT APPLICATIONS AND ARE PROVIDED WITH UP TO DATE CONTACT INFORMATION FOR PUBLIC OFFICIALS, BOARDS AND COMMITTEES.

ACTION 5: DISPLAY AND MAINTAIN UP-TO-DATE AND USER-FRIENDLY INFORMATION ABOUT THE DEVELOPMENT REVIEW PROCESS IN SANDISFIELD.

Objective: Leverage and Improve the Physical Assets of the Town.

The Town will work to enhance the attractiveness and “curb appeal” of its physical assets, to promote economic development. The town will also work to leverage its assets, such as town buildings to provide economic development and stimulus in town.

ACTION 1: IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE TOWN IMAGE, SUCH AS THROUGH POTENTIAL SCREENING OF THE TRANSFER STATION WITH EVERGREEN TREES.

ACTION 2: CREATE ATTRACTIVE “GATEWAYS” TO SANDISFIELD, SUCH AS ALONG ROUTE 8 AND 57, THROUGH LANDSCAPING, SIGNAGE AND OTHER ENHANCEMENTS.

ACTION 3: IMPROVE THE TOWN GREEN NEAR THE INTERSECTION OF ROUTE 57 AND NEW HARTFORD ROAD WITH LANDSCAPING, A KIOSK AND OTHER FEATURES TO ENHANCE ITS USE AS A TOWN GATHERING SPACE.

ACTION 4: EXPLORE THE ADAPTIVE REUSE OF TOWN HALL AND OTHER TOWN BUILDINGS TO CREATE ECONOMIC STIMULUS.

Goal 2: Improve Daily Life Through Additional Services and Amenities.

Objective: Explore the Development of Cooperative Business Models in Town.

The town will explore the development of a cooperative store or grocery in town, similar to existing regional models like the Old Creamery grocery in Cummington. This potential amenity will help to meet demand for a local and close to home “country store”



and could also provide a venue to market local products. The town will also develop other cooperative elements and services in Sandisfield, such as a swap shop and food pantry.

ACTION 1: RESEARCH SUCCESSFUL COOPERATIVE MODELS AND DETERMINE THE BUSINESS MODEL THAT WILL BE MOST SUCCESSFUL IN SANDISFIELD.

ACTION 2: FORM A PUBLIC COMMITTEE OR CITIZEN'S GROUP THAT WILL INVESTIGATE A COOPERATIVE BUSINESS IN TOWN.

ACTION 3: SURVEY THE PUBLIC TO DETERMINE INTEREST IN A FUTURE COOPERATIVE BUSINESS IN TOWN.

ACTION 4: DEVELOP A "SWAP SHOP" IN TOWN FOR THE EXCHANGE OF SECOND HAND ITEMS.

ACTION 5: DEVELOP A FOOD PANTRY IN TOWN.

ACTION 6: PROMOTE EXISTING COOPERATIVE BUSINESSES OR SERVICES.



CHAPTER 4: INFRASTRUCTURE

The Town of Sandisfield has recently embarked on an assessment of one of its major pieces of infrastructure— buildings. Additionally, the town recently approved funding for development of high speed internet in town. Moreover, the town faces a major infrastructural project in the form of a proposed natural gas pipeline expansion through town. This chapter reviews the composition of town infrastructure and then details the goals, objectives and actions for the town to take to achieve its vision. Sandisfield’s vision for infrastructure includes improved town facilities and technology infrastructure, as well as alternative energy development in town.

TRENDS AND CONDITIONS

Existing Town Infrastructure

Sandisfield currently owns five major buildings and facilities including its main administrative building located at the Town Hall Annex on Route 57.

All wastewater is currently treated through existing septic systems adjacent to private homes and on municipal buildings or through shared septic systems.

All drinking water is supplied through privately and municipally owned wells. In the past there have been issues with salt contamination in private wells located near Route 8.

For discussion of the town’s roadways please refer to the transportation section of this appendix and Chapter 7—Transportation.

Broadband / High Speed Internet

One of the programs of the American Investment and Recovery act of 2009 included significant federal funding for broadband internet expansion. In 2011, a group of towns formed a cooperative called WiredWest to help advance installation of the “last mile”, in which broadband internet connections are established for individual homes and users. Sandisfield was one of the original member towns that signed the organization’s charter, and holds a seat on the organization’s executive committee and board.



The Town Hall Annex is the Sandisfield’s main administrative building. Photograph by BRPC.

INFRASTRUCTURE AT A GLANCE

Broadband / High Speed Internet

Sandisfield has been pursuing development of high speed internet with a regional cooperative known as WiredWest, and recently approved funding for the project in May 2015.

Kinder Morgan Tennessee Gas Pipeline—Connecticut Expansion Project

Sandisfield currently has two existing natural gas pipelines which pass through the town. The pipeline owner has announced plans to expand capacity of this line, which has been met with significant opposition from the town and its residents.

Town Buildings

Sandisfield owns five major buildings and facilities. The town’s strategic planning committee recently hired a consultant to assess all town buildings. The assessment noted multiple needs for town buildings.

Additional discussion of infrastructure may be found in Appendix C: Existing Conditions Summary



Figure 4.1—The Sandisfield Town Hall or “Old Town Hall” is located on Silverbrook Road. The old town hall provides space for board and committee meetings.

The total cost to install broadband internet in Sandisfield has been estimated at \$3.65 million. State funding will provide \$1.25 million of this cost, bringing the town’s total costs to \$2.4 million. At town meeting on May 16th, 2015, the town voted to fund development of the broadband network for the full \$2.4 million. The vote passed with over 100 voters supporting the measure and two opposed. The town also voted to exempt this debt from Proposition 2 1/2. Proposition 2 1/2 is a state tax law that creates a tax levy ceiling and establishes limits on how much property taxes can be increased year to year.

According to Jean Atwater-Williams, Chair of the Sandisfield Technology Committee, broadband internet and other services provided by WiredWest are anticipated to reach the first member towns in 2018 (Personal Communication 2015). It is unknown precisely when service will reach Sandisfield.

Drinking Water

For mapped public drinking water supplies, please see Map K—Water Resources.

All drinking water is currently provided through public and private well systems. Public drinking water wells are listed in Table 3.1 in Appendix C.

Public drinking water supply data shows eight public water supply wells in the Town of Sandisfield, including locations at the Town Hall Annex (listed as the Sandisfield School in the water supply data) and local inns and restaurants. These wells fall into three categories including Community Groundwater wells (GW), Transient Non-Community water systems (TNC), and Non-Transient Non-Community (NTNC) water systems. TNC systems serve fewer than 25 people daily and are generally located at sites such as restaurants and campgrounds. NTNC systems serve 25 or more people daily for 6 months or more out of the year. GW wells are typically shared by several private residences. However, the GW well in Sandisfield serves the population at the Berkshire Health and Rehabilitation facility on Route 57. The important distinction between GW wells and the NTNC and TNC systems is that GW systems serve a year-round population.

These public drinking water wells are all surrounded



by interim well-head protection areas (IWPA), which provide a minimum 500' buffer around the well-head.

Kinder Morgan Tennessee Gas Pipeline—Connecticut Expansion Project

Sandisfield currently has two existing gas pipelines which pass through town. Collectively these are known as the “200 line”. The 200 line includes a 24 and 30 inch diameter pipeline within a roughly 75 foot wide right-of-way (ROW). The existing 200 line ROW crosses into Sandisfield near the intersection of Route 23 and Town Hill Road. From here the pipeline ROW runs roughly parallel to and immediately south of Cold Spring Road moving southeast across the town. The pipeline crosses South Beech Plain Road and Route 8 and passes into the Town of Tolland.

Recently, Tennessee Gas Pipeline and its parent company, Kinder Morgan have announced plans to expand this pipeline in Sandisfield as part its Connecticut Expansion Project. The project proposes the construction of 3.8 miles of new 36 inch outside diameter pipeline within or adjacent to the current pipeline ROW, as well as additional facilities for operations and maintenance including a relocated main line valves and pig launchers and receivers.

At its annual town meeting in May of 2014, the Town of Sandisfield approved a resolution to ban the pipeline expansion project in town. The resolution cited potential damage to natural resources and the town’s scenic beauty, as well as the project’s undermining of state climate change mitigation efforts and commitments to renewable energy among the reasons for banning its construction. Additionally, a citizen’s group known as Sandisfield Taxpayers Opposing Pipeline (STOP) was formed to oppose the gas expansion project.

Town Buildings

For mapped town buildings and town owned lands, please see Map B—Community Facilities and Town Owned Land.

For a complete list of town buildings and potential repairs identified, please refer to Table 3.3 in Appendix C.

Bryarly Consulting LLC Building Assessment

In 2013-2014, at the request of Sandisfield’s Strategic Planning Committee, Bryarly Consulting, LLC located in Hadley, MA conducted an assessment of town owned buildings to make recommendations for future repairs. The report evaluated the Town Hall, the Town Hall Annex, the Library, and the Highway Department Garage.

The assessment concluded that the town’s current facilities are not compliant with current building code. Additionally, it noted that after the cost of code upgrades and other repairs to existing buildings, the structures would still not meet current or future needs, and that upgrading these facilities would not be an efficient use of town financial resources. The report also highlighted possible repairs to the highway department or DPW garage, saying that due to “existing structural issues, and the location, it is not feasible nor financially prudent to attempt to repair the existing town DPW garage”.

The building assessment and the Sandisfield Strategic Planning Committee ultimately recommended the construction of a new town administration building, as well as a new highway department or DPW garage. As for potential locations for these proposed structures, and one possible solution to help address town facility needs, the Strategic Planning Committee proposed that the existing Town Hall and highway department garage structures on Silverbrook Road could be removed to create room for an expanded highway department garage at the same site. A potential location for the proposed town administration building has not been determined. Additionally, as part of this planning effort, the strategic planning committee recommended that the existing Library and Town Hall Annex building be sold to help fund the construction of these new facilities.

Public Survey Results

Respondents were in favor of potential energy efficiency upgrades to town buildings (83%). A potential new town administrative building was favored by 55% of survey respondents. A potential new DPW garage was supported by 40% of survey respondents. Support for a potential new DPW garage was above 50% when the responses of only

year-round residents were tallied.

KEY INFRASTRUCTURE ISSUES

Town Buildings and Facilities

Sandisfield's public buildings are in need of repair and do not currently meet town needs. The town will engage in additional planning to improve its public facilities and replace town buildings.

Town Technology Infrastructure

Sandisfield has a need to improve its technology infrastructure, including the town website, phones, and computers.

INFRASTRUCTURE GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

Goal 1: Improve Town Facilities to Meet Current and Future Needs.

The Town will conduct and implement additional planning to improve and replace town buildings, such as Town Hall, the Town Hall Annex, DPW Garage, and Library. This will include development of a fiscally sound funding plan and process to replace the structures. The Town will integrate this with other Capital Improvement Planning and plans for a "Town Center" (See Chapter 8—Land Use)

Objective: Develop and Implement a Comprehensive and Fiscally Sound Funding Plan and Process to Replace Town Buildings.

The Town will develop and implement a comprehensive funding plan and process to replace town buildings. This effort will include public outreach to inform residents about efforts relating to public buildings.

ACTION 1: DEVELOP A FUNDING PLAN AND PROCESS TO REPLACE TOWN BUILDINGS. INTEGRATE THIS EFFORT WITH LARGER CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING.

ACTION 2: CONDUCT OUTREACH TO SEEK PUBLIC COMMENT, INFORM RESIDENTS, AND DEVELOP CONSENSUS AROUND A PLAN FOR TOWN BUILDINGS.

ACTION 3: INTEGRATE AND INFORM RESIDENTS ABOUT UNIQUE FISCAL CONDITIONS IMPACTING THIS PLANNING EFFORT, SUCH AS HISTORICALLY LOW INTEREST RATES.

Goal 2: Improve Town Technology Infrastructure.

Sandisfield has recently engaged in planning to update and improve the town's technology infrastructure, including phones, computers, and the town website. These efforts will improve communications between the town and its residents. The Town will work to develop and regularly update a town technology and spending plan to meet its needs.

Objective: Plan and Implement Future Improvements to Town Technology Infrastructure.

The Town will work to develop and implement its plans to improve town technology infrastructure. The town will also explore cost saving measures, such as a shared IT professional, with surrounding municipalities.

ACTION 1: DEVELOP A MULTI-YEAR SPENDING PLAN FOR TOWN TECHNOLOGY INFRASTRUCTURE. INTEGRATE THIS PLAN WITH LARGER CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING.

ACTION 2: DEVELOP AND REGULARLY UPDATE A TECHNOLOGY PLAN AND PROGRAM FOR THE TOWN.

ACTION 3: COORDINATE WITH BRPC AND SURROUNDING TOWNS TO INVESTIGATE A POSSIBLE SHARED INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY STAFF POSITION.

ACTION 4: CREATE A STREAMLINED TELEPHONE AND EMAIL SYSTEM FOR THE TOWN.

Objective: Expedite Broadband Internet Development in Town.

The Town will hasten broadband internet development in Town through its continued work with WiredWest. Broadband will provide an important service to residents and help to support home-based and small business in town.

ACTION 1: CONTINUE TO COORDINATE WITH WIREDWEST ON BROADBAND INTERNET CREATION IN TOWN.

ACTION 2: ADVANCE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION PHASE.

ACTION 3: FINALIZE BROADBAND INSTALLATION.



Goal 3: Develop Alternative Sources of Energy in Sandisfield.

Sandisfield will continue the work of the town Energy Committee to investigate potential sources of alternative energy, such as solar, wind, or fuel cells in town. The Town will also connect residents to existing programs such as Mass. Saves and work to implement a Solarize Mass. program in the town.

Objective: Pursue and Promote Potential Alternative Energy Development in Sandisfield.

Sandisfield will pursue changes to its bylaws to promote alternative energy development in the town, including its potential on town-owned lands.

ACTION 1: AMEND TOWN BYLAWS TO PROMOTE ALTERNATIVE ENERGY DEVELOPMENT IN TOWN.

ACTION 2: PURSUE DEVELOPMENT OF SOLAR OR WIND ENERGY ON TOWN OWNED LANDS AND BUILDINGS.

Objective: Connect Sandisfield Residents with Programs to Promote Small Scale Energy Production and Energy Efficiency.

Sandisfield will work to connect residents to existing energy efficiency programs and investigate the implementation of a Solarize Mass. program in town.

ACTION 1: CONNECT SANDISFIELD RESIDENTS WITH ENERGY EFFICIENCY PROGRAMS, SUCH AS MASS. SAVES.

ACTION 2: ENCOURAGE OR SPONSOR ENERGY EFFICIENCY EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS AND EVENTS IN TOWN.

ACTION 3: INVESTIGATE IMPLEMENTATION OF A SOLARIZE MASS PROGRAM IN SANDISFIELD, POSSIBLY IN COMBINATION WITH SURROUNDING TOWNS.



CHAPTER 5: SERVICES

Sandisfield's vision for services includes reducing and offsetting town expenses, while improving services for seniors and families. The town will also improve communications to town residents to more effectively engage the public as well as its various boards and committees. This chapter provides an overview of the services offered through the town. It also establishes the town's work plan for goals, objectives, and actions to achieve its vision for the services it provides.

TRENDS AND CONDITIONS

Police Department

Sandisfield has a small police force of three officers, and provides law enforcement services to the Town of Sandisfield.

Fire Department / Ambulance Squad

Fire protection and Ambulance services are provided by the Sandisfield Volunteer Fire Department Inc. This organization operates from two fire stations located on Route 8 and Route 57. In 2014, this department responded to a total of 168 calls.

Library / Community Center

Library services are provided by the town. The library has books and other media available to be checked out. The library also provides interlibrary loan services in coordination with other libraries in the region. Free wireless internet and two publicly accessible computers allow residents to access information online. The library also has publically available meeting space, allowing it to function as a valuable community center.

Highway Department

The Sandisfield Highway Department provides road maintenance and snow removal services for the town. The Highway Department has a staff of five, including the Highway Department Supervisor. One or two individuals are usually hired temporarily during the winter months to help with road plowing needs and



Educational services are provided through the shared Farmington River School District. Photograph provided by the Sandisfield Times.

SERVICES AT A GLANCE

Select Board

The Sandisfield Select Board is comprised of three members. The Sandisfield Select Board is the special permit granting authority in the town and reviews all special permit applications.

Future Planning/Strategic planning Committee

This committee was formed to address the future needs of Sandisfield with the intent to "develop and assist with the implementation of a long range plan to improve [the town's] infrastructure, local economy and financial health."

Farmington River School

Sandisfield is part of a combined school district with the nearby Town of Otis and the towns share a single school facility in Otis known as the Farmington River School.

Additional discussion of services may be found in Appendix C: Existing Conditions Summary



Figure 5.1—The Sandisfield Town Hall Annex. This building houses the town’s main administrative services. The building was formerly used as the town’s School before Sandisfield formed a combined school district with the nearby Town of Otis.

other snow removal. The town participates in the regional group purchasing program, which allows towns to pool their resources to get cheaper materials.

Transfer Station

Sandisfield provides for waste removal services through its transfer station located on Route 57. Household trash and recyclable materials can be brought here for transfer to a regional landfill.

Planning Board

The Sandisfield Planning Board provides site plan review services. The Planning Board reviews and decides on certain types of permits/approvals and administers the subdivision of land within the town.

Finance Committee

All towns with a total valuation of \$1,000,000 or more are required to have a finance or advisory committee. The Finance Committee is tasked with making sure that the town has a balanced and fiscally sound budget.

Council on Aging

The Sandisfield Council on Aging (COA) provides social and support services to elders, families and caregivers in the town. The COA organizes a weekly potluck lunch, held on Wednesdays in basement of the Town Hall Annex, in addition to other programs it offers to seniors. The COA also helps to organize and connect seniors with regional transportation services.

Conservation Commission

The Sandisfield Conservation Commission provides site plan review and administers the Massachusetts Wetland Protection Act (WPA) as well as the Rivers Protection Act (RPA).

Recreation Committee

The Sandisfield Recreation Committee organizes recreation events in town, including the annual Easter egg hunt and Memorial Day Parade (Sandisfield Town Report, 2013).



Strategic planning Committee

This committee was formed to address the future needs of Sandisfield with the intent to “develop and assist with the implementation of a long range plan to improve [the town’s] infrastructure, local economy and financial health.”

Cemetery Committee

The Sandisfield Cemetery Committee was appointed due to concerns about the poor conditions of Sandisfield’s five cemeteries. The Cemetery Committee established a set of rules for use of town cemeteries in 2015. Additionally, the committee has been organizing volunteers to help cleanup and restoration of the town’s cemeteries.

Historical Commission

The Sandisfield Historical Commission’s purpose is to “encourage and plan for the preservation and protection of the communities historical and archaeological assets”. The Historical Commission has worked to publish two histories of the town in recent years and has been working to update the town’s inventory of historic buildings.

Select Board

The Sandisfield Select Board is comprised of three members. The Sandisfield Select Board is the special permit granting authority in the town and reviews all special permit applications.

Farmington River School

Sandisfield is part of a combined school district with the nearby Town of Otis and the towns share a single school facility in Otis known as the Farmington River School. The Farmington River School provides educational services from pre-kindergarten until sixth grade. For more information about school enrollment figures, see Chapter 2—Population and Demographics, and the accompanying section of this appendix.

Public Survey Results

Over 50% of survey respondents supported keeping the following services the same: Fire Protection, Sanitation Inspection, Building permitting, Rescue Squad, Site plan review by the Planning Board, Police

Protection, Transfer Station, and permitting by the Conservation Commission. No services received over 50% support for expansion. However, town communications and the town website both had 48% support for expansion, while Library services received 43% support for expansion.

Fiscal Conditions

Tax Rate

For fiscal year (FY) 2015, the tax rate in Sandisfield was \$13.00 per \$1,000 of assessed value. This rate has increased by 57% since its value in 2008 (\$8.25) (see Table 4.1 in Appendix C). In 2015, the average single family tax bill was \$3,192.

Revenue by Source

Sandisfield collects revenue through four major sources—its tax levy, state aid, local receipts and “other” sources. Local receipts are derived from motor vehicle excise payments, building permits and other licenses, as well as “dump stickers” that allow access to the town transfer station. “Other” sources of revenue include free cash or stabilization funds. In FY 2015, Sandisfield’s total revenue was over \$3.28 million dollars. This figure represents a 73% increase in revenue since 2005 levels (\$1.82 million).

In FY 2015, Sandisfield’s tax levy was just over \$2.8 million dollars and constituted 85.62% of the town’s total revenue for that year. The town’s tax levy has increased over the last ten years, up nearly \$1.3 million since 2005 levels. However, as a percentage of overall revenue it has only increased by 3% since 2005 levels (82.66%). State aid has increased from just over \$56,000 in 2005 to over \$152,000 in 2015. As a percentage of total revenue, state aid has increased from 2.98% to 4.65%.

Expenditures

Based on data from the Massachusetts Department of Revenue, town expenditures for fiscal year (FY) 2013 were greatest for education and public works related costs. In FY 2013, Sandisfield spent just over \$1.3 million dollars for education (see Figure 4.1 in Appendix C). In comparison, in the year 2000, funding for this line item was just over \$644,000, meaning that funding for the local school has roughly doubled (see Figure 4.2 in Appendix C).

Moreover, expenditures related to public works (road maintenance, snow and ice removal, etc.) in FY 2013 were nearly \$859,000 dollars. In comparison, in the year 2000, the expenses of the road department were around \$500,000. This amounts to an increase in spending of over 70% (see Figure 4.2 in Appendix C).

Financial Flexibility and Available Resources

Data from the Massachusetts Department of Revenue provides a measure of a municipality's "financial flexibility" through several indicators. These indicators can provide an estimate of the availability of funds that could allow a community to respond to unforeseen but necessary expenditures or to invest in other projects. The town's financial flexibility can be measured through its free cash, stabilization funds, and excess tax levy capacity. The town's excess levy capacity is low, just over \$500. However, in FY 2015, the town had over \$600,000 in free cash, and \$900,000 in stabilization funds. Together, these funds constitute the town's available resources, which total over \$1.5 million, or around 47% of the town's budget in FY 2015 (\$3.28 million).

KEY SERVICES ISSUES

Reducing Town Expenses

Sandisfield will explore a range of options to reduce its expenses, from regionalization and equipment sharing, to additional grant writing.

Services for Seniors and Families

Sandisfield will work to improve its services for its elderly population, as well as families in the town. This approach, helping to meet the needs of the town's youngest and oldest residents.

Town Communications to the Public

Sandisfield will develop and implement services to better inform and engage its residents.

SERVICES GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

Goal 1: Provide Efficient and Fiscally Responsible Services.

The Town of Sandisfield will continue to provide efficient and fiscally responsible services to all its residents. The town will seek new opportunities to streamline costs, increase sources of external funding. Moreover the town will implement new strategies to enhance services for children, families, and its senior citizens.

Objective: Streamline Costs While Maintaining or Enhancing Levels of Service.

The Town will continue efforts to regionalize and reduce costs through additional planning and management of its human resources.

ACTION 1: PURSUE OPTIONS TO REGIONALIZE AND SHARE EQUIPMENT.

ACTION 2: DEVELOP A SHARED INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY STAFF POSITION WITH SURROUNDING TOWNS AND BRPC.

ACTION 3: WORK WITH SURROUNDING TOWNS TO ADVOCATE FOR STATE FUNDING OR MAINTENANCE RESPONSIBILITY OF ROUTE 57.

ACTION 4: CONTINUE TO USE THE REGIONAL GROUP PURCHASING PROGRAM.

ACTION 5: CREATE FORMAL JOB DESCRIPTIONS FOR TOWN STAFF.

ACTION 6: ESTABLISH A SYSTEM FOR EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE EVALUATION.

ACTION 7: DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A MULTI-YEAR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN (CIP) THAT INCLUDES ALL TOWN DEPARTMENTS, INTEGRATES ONGOING AND PROPOSED WORK, IS OPEN TO PUBLIC COMMENT, AND IS APPROVED YEARLY AT TOWN MEETING.

Objective: Offset Town Costs through External Funding Sources.

The Town will explore options to increase external sources of funding, such as pursuit of grant opportunities and potential sale of town assets.



ACTION 1: CONTINUE TO RESEARCH AND APPLY FOR GRANT FUNDING FROM STATE AND PRIVATE SOURCES TO ADDRESS ROAD MAINTENANCE, INFRASTRUCTURE AND OTHER NEEDS.

ACTION 2: CONTINUE TO REVIEW TOWN FEES AND LICENSES.

ACTION 3: DEVELOP A PLAN TO GENERATE REVENUE FROM THE SALE OF TOWN OWNED PROPERTY OR EQUIPMENT.

ACTION 4: SPONSOR OR PROMOTE REVENUE GENERATING EVENTS IN TOWN.

Objective: Pursue Opportunities to Reduce Town Education Costs, while Maintaining High Levels of Service.

Education expenses are the largest component of town spending. The town will pursue and implement strategies to reduce its education costs.

ACTION 1: PARTICIPATE IN REGIONAL EFFORTS TO EXAMINE THE RESTRUCTURING OF THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN BERKSHIRE COUNTY.

ACTION 2: PURSUE COST REDUCTION MEASURES IN THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM WHERE POSSIBLE, SUCH AS SHARED SERVICES, COOPERATIVE PURCHASING, AND SPECIALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAMS.

Objective: Enhance Services for Sandisfield's Senior Citizens.

Sandisfield will implement strategies to improve services for its senior citizens.

ACTION 1: CONTINUE TO APPLY FOR GRANTS TO FUND PROGRAMS FOR SANDISFIELD'S SENIOR CITIZENS.

ACTION 2: RECRUIT VOLUNTEERS FOR COUNCIL ON AGING PROGRAMS.

ACTION 3: EXPLORE DEVELOPMENT OF REGIONAL PROGRAMS OR SHARED RESOURCES FOR SENIORS WITH SURROUNDING TOWNS.

ACTION 4: INVESTIGATE DEVELOPMENT OF A "MEALS ON WHEELS" PROGRAM FOR SENIORS.

ACTION 5: ESTABLISH A WELLNESS CHECK CALL SYSTEM FOR SENIORS.

ACTION 6: DEVELOP A POOL OF VOLUNTEERS TO HELP THOSE IN NEED OF SERVICES, SUCH AS THE HOME BOUND.

ACTION 7: CONTINUE TO PARTICIPATE IN REGIONAL EFFORTS, SUCH AS THE BERKSHIRES AGE FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE.

Objective: Enhance Services for Sandisfield's Families.

Sandisfield will implement strategies to improve services for its children and families.

ACTION 1: ENCOURAGE AND SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS, AND PROMOTE THOSE EXISTING IN TOWN.

ACTION 2: CONTINUE TO PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH OUTDOOR RECREATION.

Goal 2: Better Inform and Engage Residents, Boards, and Committees.

Sandisfield will better serve and inform its residents and the community through efforts to increase public participation, civic engagement, and its overall transparency.

ACTION 1: ENSURE TIMELY POSTING OF AGENDAS, MINUTES, AND PROCUREMENT ON THE TOWN WEBSITE TO AVOID MEETING CONFLICTS, AND IMPROVE COMMUNICATIONS WITH RESIDENTS.

ACTION 2: EXPLORE IMPLEMENTATION OF AN ELECTRONIC DISPLAY TO POST PUBLIC MEETINGS.

ACTION 3: ENCOURAGE ELECTED OFFICIALS TO HOLD OFFICE HOURS IN SANDISFIELD TO MORE EFFECTIVELY ADVOCATE FOR THE TOWN'S NEEDS.

ACTION 4: RECRUIT ADDITIONAL MEMBERS TO SERVE ON TOWN BOARDS AND THE FIRE DEPARTMENT.

ACTION 5: REVIEW COMPENSATION FOR VOLUNTEER BOARDS.

ACTION 6: DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT STRATEGIES TO ENGAGE NEW RESIDENTS TO PARTICIPATE IN TOWN GOVERNMENT AND CIVIC LIFE, SUCH AS WELCOME BASKETS, EVENT PROMOTION, ETC.



CHAPTER 6: HOUSING

The Town of Sandisfield's vision for housing includes providing housing for all ages and income levels in the town. This chapter reviews existing conditions related to housing in the town and lists the goals, objectives and actions for the town to take to achieve its vision for housing in Sandisfield.

TRENDS AND CONDITIONS

Existing Conditions

As of the 2010 Census, there were 671 housing units in Sandisfield. Housing units listed for "seasonal, recreational, or occasional use" accounted for 40.2% or 270 total units. Year round housing units totaled 56.1% of the town's total housing stock, or 377 units. The remaining 3.6% of housing units, or 24 units, were listed as vacant. This category includes unoccupied homes for sale or rent, sold or rented units pending occupation, and other vacancies such as "abandoned" or unused homes. Rental units comprised 6.2% of all housing stock, or 42 total units, and contains units for year-round and seasonal rental.

Housing Ownership and Occupancy

The town has a predominantly single-family housing stock with most being owner occupied. Between 2000 and 2010, there was a 3.7% increase in the number of housing units in Sandisfield, with 24 units of housing added during the "aughts" decade. See Table 5.2 in Appendix C for Housing Occupancy in Sandisfield 2000-2010. The number of seasonal housing units decreased by 5.5%, or 26 units, over this decade. The number of year round housing units increased by 5.6%, or 50 units over this decade. The number of vacant housing units remained the same between 2000 and 2010. The number of rental units decreased from 45 to 42 units.

None of the town's housing units are listed by the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) as Chapter 40B qualifying units (DHCD, 2014).



New Boston village is one of the town's several historic population centers. Photograph by BRPC.

HOUSING AT A GLANCE

Existing Conditions

Roughly 40% of housing in Sandisfield is used seasonally, while 56% is used year-round. Another 3.6% of housing units are considered vacant.

Housing Occupancy

The number of seasonal housing units in the town decreased by 5.5% between 2000 and 2010. Conversely, the number of year-round housing units increased by 5.6% over the same decade.

Home Value Trends

The median sales price of a home in Sandisfield increased by over \$80,000 between 2000 and 2014.

Additional discussion of housing may be found in Appendix C: Existing Conditions Summary

“Chapter 40B Units” are units considered affordable by low- and moderate-income households with long-term restrictions that ensure that it will continue to be affordable.

Home Value Trends

As of the 2009-2013 American Community Survey, 64% of homes, or 218 total homes, in Sandisfield had a value of between \$200,000 and \$499,999. An estimated 12, or 3.6% of all homes had a value of \$1,000,000 or more.

In the year 2000, the median sales price of a single family home in Sandisfield was just over \$196,000. In the year 2014, the median sales price of a single family home was over \$278,000. In comparison, the median sales price for a single family home in Berkshire County was \$184,500 in 2014, or \$94,000 less than the sales price of a home in Sandisfield, Ma.

Home Sales Vs. New Construction

The number of sales of single family homes in Sandisfield fell from a high in 2001 of 27 homes, to a low in 2010 of 7 homes. The number of sales has increased from this low point to 17 home sales per year during 2012 and 2013. Similarly, the number of building permits issued for single family homes peaked in 2005 at 16 homes. This number decreased until 2012, where no building permits for single family homes were issued during that year. In 2013, five building permits were issued for single family homes.

Public Survey Results

Over 50% of respondents were in favor of encouraging development in Sandisfield, when responses were examined in total. However, year-round residents were overall more in support of encouraging development in Sandisfield than Seasonal residents. Year-round residents said “encourage development” at a rate of 68%. Seasonal residents supported that statement at a rate of 41%. Seasonal residents were more likely to choose answers of “keep the same” or “unsure” than year-round residents.

Housing options for seniors, including single story or assisted living, Adaptive re-use, and options for young families were supported by over 50% of respondents.

Multi-Family/multi-unit housing such as condominiums were listed as unimportant by 62.24%, or 61, respondents. Apartments and rental units were listed as unimportant by 51.06%, or 48, respondents. Housing types that respondents were most “neutral” about include single-family homes, high-end homes, and second homes

KEY HOUSING ISSUES

Aging

Sandisfield’s population is increasingly older. Regional studies conducted by BRPC show that the vast majority of older residents want to reside in their own homes and communities as they age. The town will work to support the aging in place of its older residents, as well as investigating long term dedicated housing for seniors.

HOUSING GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

Goal 1: Sandisfield Will Supply Housing to Meet the Needs of All Ages and Incomes.

The Town of Sandisfield will work to provide housing in town that meets the needs of all ages and incomes.

Objective: Develop Local Capacity to Address Housing Needs.

The Town of Sandisfield will work to develop its capacity to address its housing needs by establishing a dedicated housing organization and partnering with regional housing organizations.

ACTION 1: ESTABLISH A LOCAL HOUSING ORGANIZATION SUCH AS A TOWN COMMITTEE, HOUSING PARTNERSHIP. OR HOUSING TRUST.

ACTION 2: WORK WITH LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS DHCD, BERKSHIRE COMMUNITY LAND TRUST, CONSTRUCT INC. AND HABITAT FOR HUMANITY TO ADDRESS LOCAL NEEDS.

ACTION 3: DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND HOUSING PRODUCTION PLAN.

**Objective: Participate in and Promote Housing Rehabilitation Programs and Incentives.**

The Town of Sandisfield will work to improve its existing housing stock and support the needs of its residents through participation in housing rehabilitation programs. The town will also work to connect its older residents and veterans with programs that will provide financial assistance toward increasing the accessibility of homes for older residents.

ACTION 1: WORK WITH APPROPRIATE AGENCIES AND SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES TO APPLY FOR HOUSING REHABILITATION FUNDING, SUCH AS THROUGH COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANTS.

ACTION 2: PURSUE NEW REHABILITATION FUNDS, WHICH MAY BECOME AVAILABLE.

ACTION 3: PROMOTE AND EDUCATE ABOUT PROGRAMS THAT PROVIDE ASSISTANCE IN IMPROVING HOME ACCESSIBILITY FOR OLDER RESIDENTS, SUCH AS THROUGH, THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS OR THE USDA SINGLE FAMILY HOUSING REPAIR PROGRAM.

Objective: Investigate Funding Sources and Bylaw Changes to Address Housing Needs.

The town will work to address funding and policy barriers in town that hinder the development of affordable housing.

ACTION 1: INVESTIGATE DEDICATED FUNDING SOURCES FOR HOUSING, SUCH AS THE COMMUNITY PRESERVATION ACT IN SANDISFIELD.

ACTION 2: INVESTIGATE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ACCESSORY, OR IN-LAW APARTMENT BYLAW.

ACTION 3: INVESTIGATE DEVELOPMENT OF AN OPEN SPACE RESIDENTIAL DESIGN BYLAW OR NATURAL RESOURCE PROTECTION ZONING IN TOWN.

Objective: Create a Long-Term Plan for Senior Housing in Sandisfield.

The town will work to address senior housing through strategic long term planning. The town will develop and implement a housing needs assessment and housing production plan. Moreover, the town will work to explore and implement successful and non-traditional models to support its senior citizens and allow them to age in place.

ACTION 1: EXPLORE SUCCESSFUL REGIONAL MODELS FOR SENIOR HOUSING OR ASSISTED LIVING IN SANDISFIELD AND ENCOURAGE THEIR DEVELOPMENT IN TOWN.

ACTION 2: EXPLORE OTHER OPTIONS TO SUPPORT SENIOR HOUSING AND AGING IN PLACE IN SANDISFIELD, SUCH AS COHOUSING OR HOME-SHARING MODELS.

ACTION 3: INTEGRATE RESEARCH INTO THE FUTURE HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND HOUSING PRODUCTION PLAN.

ACTION 4: WORK TO IMPLEMENT FUTURE SENIOR HOUSING OVER TIME.

Objective: Encourage the Rehabilitation of Historic Homes in Sandisfield.

The town will work to encourage and incentivize the rehabilitation of historic homes in Sandisfield by informing and assisting its residents and second homeowners in maintaining and restoring their historic properties.

ACTION 1: SPONSOR PROGRAMS AND WORKSHOPS FOCUSED ON HISTORIC HOME REHABILITATION AND MAINTENANCE IN TOWN.

ACTION 2: PROMOTE PARTICIPATION IN THE MASS. HISTORICAL COMMISSION HISTORIC REHABILITATION TAX CREDIT PROGRAM.

ACTION 3: DEVELOP LOCAL INCENTIVES AND PROGRAMS TO ENCOURAGE HOMEOWNERS TO RESTORE THEIR HISTORIC HOMES.



CHAPTER 7: TRANSPORTATION

Sandisfield's vision for transportation includes addressing its roadways in a comprehensive and forward looking manner, as well as improved non-motorized transportation options, and the establishment of a wayfinding system. For a rural town like Sandisfield, transportation is an important issue and a major town expense. As the largest town by area in the Berkshires, Sandisfield has nearly 100 miles of roadway, most of which is the responsibility of the town to maintain. This chapter reviews town services and lists the goals, objectives and actions for the town to take to achieve its vision for transportation in Sandisfield.

TRENDS AND CONDITIONS

Regional Roadways

Two major regional roadways serve Sandisfield, Route 57 and Route 8. Route 8 runs north to south through Massachusetts, from the border with Clarksburg, VT to Sandisfield and the Connecticut state line. Route 57 is the major east-west route. Route 57 begins in the nearby Town of Monterey and travels east to Agawam. Route 57, while a numbered state route, is the maintenance responsibility of the town.

Local Roadways

Sandisfield is a rural community, and as such, the predominant form of transportation is by automobiles or trucks. Town Hill Road and New Hartford Road are the town's major local north south roadways. Both of these roads intersect with Route 57 and are paved. Local roadways are primarily maintained by the Town of Sandisfield. However, there are some privately owned and maintained roadways in town, particularly in the Otis Woodlands subdivision, a portion of which is located in Sandisfield.

Elderly and Disabled Transportation

Southern Berkshire Elderly Transportation Corporation (SBETC) and Berkshire Regional Transportation Agency



Route 57 in Sandisfield is the town's major east-west roadway. Photograph by the BRPC.

TRANSPORTATION AT A GLANCE

Road Jurisdiction

The Town of Sandisfield has jurisdiction over roughly 82% of the 98 miles of roadway in town. State roadways, such as Route 8, comprise another 11%, with 5% having private jurisdiction. Finally, 1.8% of roadway miles have unresolved jurisdiction.

Public Transportation

The Town of Sandisfield is not served by regional public transportation, however, elderly and disabled transportation services are provided by BRTA, SBETC, and the town.

Transportation and the Environment

Transportation and roadways are potential sources of non-point source pollution and moreover impacts wildlife movement.

Additional discussion of transportation may be found in Appendix C: Existing Conditions Summary



Figure 7.1—The Clam River Bridge on Route 57. The town was awarded a MassWorks infrastructure grant to help fund the repair or replacement of this bridge in 2015. Photograph credit Wikipedia user ToddC4176. Image licensed under CC by 3.0.

(BRTA) Paratransit provide transportation services for elderly and disabled residents in Sandisfield.

The Council on Aging has also received state grant funding to reimburse volunteers for their time to provide transportation services one day a week. The advantage of this transportation service is that it can cross state lines into nearby Connecticut, whereas BRTA and SBETC cannot (Sandisfield Council on Aging Personal Communication 2015).

Road Jurisdiction

For roadways by jurisdiction, please see Map C—Road Jurisdiction

For a breakdown of road miles by jurisdiction, please see Table 6.2—Road Jurisdiction in Sandisfield, MA in Appendix C.

State

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts is responsible for around 10.85 miles of roadway in Sandisfield or around 11% of all roads in Town. This includes all of Route 8 and roadways found within Sandisfield State Forest.

Town

The Town of Sandisfield is responsible for 80.80 miles of road, or around 82% of all roads.

Private Roads

Privately maintained roads comprise 4.72 miles of roadway in Sandisfield, or around 4.8% of all roads in town. The majority of these roadways are found in the portion of the Otis Woodlands private community located within Sandisfield.

Unresolved Jurisdiction

Several roads have unresolved jurisdiction in town. This includes Webb Road, near Upper Spectacle Pond, Old Beech Road, near Cold Spring and South Beech Plain Road, and a portion of road east of Beech Hill Road in the south of town. These may be public or private roads, but are listed as having unresolved jurisdiction in the MassDOT's Road Inventory File (RIF). More research is required to determine the jurisdiction of these roadways. However, all appear to have low levels of maintenance, if any maintenance at all.



Bridges

For a list of bridges in Sandisfield, please refer to Table 6.2 in Appendix C.

According to available state data, there are 20 bridges within Sandisfield. Of these 20 bridges, five are maintained by the state, and the remaining 15 are maintained by the town. Sandisfield recently received a MassWorks infrastructure grant for nearly \$1 million dollars to replace a deteriorating bridge along Route 57 that crosses over the Clam River, known locally as the “Rugg” or “Clam River” Bridge (see Figure 7.1). An article in the Berkshire Eagle noted that “the bridge currently has only a 12-ton weight limit, which forces DPW trucks, school buses, emergency vehicles and commercial vehicles to make a 15.4-mile detour to get into town” (Gentile 2015).

Transportation and Roadway Funding

Federal Funding

In Massachusetts, towns may nominate potential road repairs and improvements to their Regional Planning Agencies as part of the regional Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). In Sandisfield, the only locally maintained roadway eligible for federal funding is Route 57.

State Funding

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts provides additional roadway funding through its Chapter 90 reimbursement program. This program provides funding for other roadway projects not eligible for the TIP program and is allocated based on population, employment level, and miles of roadway within town. However, as a reimbursement program, the town must fully fund any roadway project before it can be compensated by state funding. Yearly Chapter 90 funding for Sandisfield is around \$340,000 (BRPC Sandisfield Road Condition Report, 2013).

Town Funding

The 2013 BRPC Road Condition report notes that Sandisfield spends around \$30,000 on gravel and another \$15,000 on asphalt to repair and pave roads.

Road Maintenance and Upcoming Roadway Work

Roadway Needs

Priority Roads to be Repaired:

The following summarizes priority roadway needs for the town and was provided by Stephan Harasyko, Superintendent of the Sandisfield Highway Department (Personal Communication 2015).

Town Hill Road—reclamation of approximately 2 miles of roadway.

Hubbard Road and West St.—reclamation of approximately 6 miles of roadway in total.

Route 57—reclamation of the length of the roadway, contingent upon available funding.

Other Roadway Projects Recommended in the 2013 BRPC Road Condition Report:

Rehabilitation of Rooster Hill Bridge

Widening and drainage improvements for South Sandisfield Road

Chip seal treatment of Route 183 with some drainage repairs

Widening and improving portions of Beech Plain Road

Drainage repairs on Route 57

Replacement of approximately 10 culverts on Town Hill Road

Chip seal treatment of Cold Spring Road with drainage improvements

Widening and drainage for Abbey Road

Roadway Standards

The town may wish to review and adopt the following publications as standards for future roadway projects:

Road Construction and Overall Design Guidance:
MassDOT Project Development and Design Guide.

2006

Traffic Engineering:
Institute of Traffic Engineers, Traffic Engineering Handbook, 7th Edition. 2016.

Asset Management:
American Association of State Highway and Transportation Organizations (AASHTO). Transportation Asset Management Guide: A Focus on Implementation, 1st Edition. 2011.

Unpaved Roadway Construction and Maintenance:
US Department of Transportation. Federal Highway Administration. Gravel Roads Construction and Maintenance Guide. 2015.

Best Practices to address water quality through unpaved road management:
Berkshire Regional Planning Commission. Unpaved Roads BMP Manual: A Guide to Improve Water Quality While Addressing Common Problems. 2001.

2013 BRPC Road Condition Report and Potential Road Jurisdiction Issues

The status of roads has important ramifications for towns. Once a road is duly laid out as a public way, it remains so until it is legally discontinued, even if the road has not been used or maintained for many years. Additionally, roads influence patterns of development, as Approval Not Required (ANR) subdivision is generally not allowed on private roads or Statutory Private Ways. Subdivision on these types of roadways must follow the full subdivision review process. However, on town roadways, even long unused ones, ANR subdivision is allowed. Additionally, the town is liable for harm to people using its roadways, and discontinuance and other processes can eliminate that liability.

In 2013, Sandisfield contacted BRPC to assess the condition of all town roads and provide a set of recommendations for maintenance. In addition to a number of proposed roadway projects, the report also provided several general recommendations for road management within Sandisfield, including working to clearly identify and delineate maintenance responsibilities for Sandisfield's roadways.

BRPC has been involved with several status of roads projects with communities in Berkshire County, including nearby Otis. Status of Road projects research the legal status of all town roadways to determine ownership and maintenance responsibility. Towns can then utilize this information to alter the road status if they wish. It can also assist a town in developing an official map

Options for Altering Legal Road Statuses

BRPC generally recommends that towns pursue one of three possible actions including road discontinuance, discontinuance of maintenance and the creation of statutory private ways. Many of these actions must be taken up by the Select Board and some may need to be approved by Town Meeting vote. Typically the actions requiring approval at Town Meeting can be laid out in a series of articles in the Town Warrant. Towns can also create an "official map". This map, once adopted, serves as a legal document regarding road ownership, maintenance, frontage, and public access.

Discontinuance of Maintenance

Discontinuance of maintenance is authorized under M.G.L. Chap. 82, Sec. 32A and results in the cessation of the Town's responsibility for maintenance and liability for use of the road (so long as the road is adequately posted as not maintained), but the road remains a public way with a public right of passage, and with the potential for strip and ANR development.

Statutory Private Ways

Statutory Private Ways are unique to Massachusetts. They are actually public roads, with public right of passage, but no responsibility by the Town for maintenance. Maintenance is provided by the abutters.

Discontinuance

Discontinuance of a road must be approved by Town Meeting vote under M.G.L. Chap. 82, Sec. 21 completely ends the public right of passage along a road or way: the Town ends all legal responsibility for the road's maintenance and its liability for use.

Official Map

An official map shows the accepted names, locations, distances, maintenance and liability responsibilities,



and legal status or ownership of all roads within a town. This is a formal legal document, approved by majority Town Meeting vote and signed by the planning board. Generally, development of an official map is reinforced by other votes altering road status, such as those described previously in this section.

Walking Loops

Several Berkshire towns have identified “walking loops” in town centers and on quiet rural roads. These walking loops help to encourage pedestrian use and exercise, especially for elderly residents. Walking loops should be well marked and located on relatively flat terrain to enable use by residents of any age.

Within Sandisfield, a walking loop could be located on a flatter section of a quiet roadway. A conversation with Linda Riiska of the Sandisfield Council on Aging revealed that the town organizes a walking program for seniors along River Road (Personal Communication 2015). The town might consider establishing a walking loop on this roadway, and other popular walking areas in town.

Transportation and the Environment

Unpaved Roads and Non-Point Source Pollution

Unpaved or dirt roads are a major source of non-point source pollution such as sediment, or soil particles that are suspended in water. Sediment from unpaved roads is one of the main contributors to water quality problems in the Farmington River Watershed in Massachusetts. (BRPC 1997) as well as a national water quality issue. Non-point source pollution is distinguished from point source pollution, which refers to pollution that has a particular entry site such as a factory's smokestack or pipe. With the decline of point source pollution problems due to the Clean Water Act of 1972, nonpoint source pollution has become a growing concern. Nonpoint source (NPS) pollution, unlike pollution from sewage treatment plants and industrial discharge pipes, comes from many diffuse sources.

BRPC has been involved with several studies of the Farmington River Watershed, including the development of a watershed wide action plan in 1997 to address issues of non-point source pollution, the

creation of a system of Best Management Practices (BMPs) for unpaved roads in 2001, and community level assessments of possible improvements to address sediment pollution from unpaved roads in 2004. This last report included a 5-year action plan for the Town of Sandisfield with recommendations for yearly ditch inspection and preventative maintenance, dust control, and potential road rehabilitation.

Climate Change Adaptation

In Massachusetts and New England, climate change is expected to increase the frequency of storms and the amount of precipitation. Since 1970, annual temperatures in New England have increased by 2° Fahrenheit (F) and winter temperatures have increased 4°F. Regionally, most winter precipitation now falls as rain, not snow (U.S. EPA, 2015). Existing roadway infrastructure, such as culverts and bridges, may be undersized and unable to accommodate the greater amount of water anticipated with climate change, leading to a higher likelihood of damage to the roadway requiring costly replacement. Simple climate adaptation measures could take the form of increasing the size of culverts and bridges during replacement. Additionally, the amount of gravel or stone armoring around these pieces of infrastructure could be increased to help reduce scour and erosion caused by larger and more frequent storms. Towns should consider their road infrastructure as one of the key ways to adapt to future climate change.

Public Survey Results

Roads were listed by 27 (or 23% of) survey respondents as one of the aspects of life in Sandisfield that they liked the least.

Survey respondents listed Route 57, Town Hill Road, and New Hartford Road as roads in town that were most important to improve. Significant work on New Hartford Road was recently completed by the town in 2015. Work on Route 57 and Town Hill Road has been listed as priority roadwork for town in coming years.

Overall, 61% of survey respondents supported the possible creation of a public transportation route through Sandisfield. Shopping or errands, access to other regional transportation and attending cultural events were listed as the top reasons for possibly using

this service.

Survey responses were inconclusive about possible expansion for elderly transportation services through BRTA paratransit or Southern Berkshire Elderly Transportation Corporation. Responses were divided between “keep the same”, “expand” and “don’t know” with no clear support for any choice.

KEY TRANSPORTATION ISSUES

General Roadway Needs

There are nearly 100 miles of roadway in Sandisfield, with most of these miles maintained by the town. The town will work to address a range of roadway needs from advocating for state maintenance and funding of Route 57, to investigating road jurisdiction, to additional future planning for extreme weather and general bridge maintenance.

Non-Motorized Transportation and Complete Streets

Sandisfield will address non-motorized transportation, such as walking and bicycling in town. This will help to provide healthy and low cost transportation options for year-round residents, while making the town a destination for cyclists and others who visit the town.

Wayfinding and Signage

Sandisfield will implement a town wayfinding system. While aiding transportation ease throughout the town, this system could also help to provide a measure of economic development by better promoting town businesses and assets.

TRANSPORTATION GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

Goal 1: Provide a Complete and Well Maintained System of Roads

The Town of Sandisfield will work to provide a complete system of roadways that are safe and well-maintained.

Objective: Increase the Town’s Utilization of Chapter 90 Funding.

The Town of Sandisfield will develop and implement a multi-year plan for roadway spending that enables the town to fully utilize the state funding allocated for it yearly. Moreover, the plan will account for potential preventative maintenance costs that will help to delay more costly road repair and replacements.

ACTION 1: DEVELOP A MULTI-YEAR ROADWAY SPENDING PLAN. INTEGRATE THIS PLAN WITH LARGER CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING.

Objective: Address Town Needs for Route 57.

Route 57 is one of the few state routes maintained by the municipalities through which it passes. Additionally, it is a major east-west roadway, meaning that ongoing maintenance of the road could be a major expense. The town will ensure that road maintenance needs for Route 57 are included in the regional TIP so that they have the potential for federal financing. Additionally, the town will continue efforts to advocate with surrounding towns for additional state funding or maintenance responsibility of Route 57.

ACTION 1: WORK WITH SURROUNDING TOWNS TO ADVOCATE FOR STATE FUNDING OR MAINTENANCE RESPONSIBILITY OF ROUTE 57.

ACTION 2: CONTINUE TO PLACE ROUTE 57 ROAD MAINTENANCE NEEDS ON THE TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP) UNTIL FUNDED.

Objective: Work to Resolve Road Jurisdiction and Maintenance Responsibility Issues.

The town will work to examine the status and maintenance responsibility of roads based on its current maintenance demands and the findings of a comprehensive status of roads report.

ACTION 1: DEVELOP A STATUS OF ROADS REPORT THAT EVALUATES THE JURISDICTION OF ALL TOWN ROADWAYS.

ACTION 2: WORK WITH THE TOWN HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT, SELECT BOARD, AND PLANNING BOARD TO DEVELOP RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TOWN ROADS BASED ON REPORT FINDINGS AND CURRENT MAINTENANCE DEMANDS.



ACTION 3: IMPLEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS.

Objective: Plan for and Address Future Roadway Needs.

The town will ensure that future roadway work accounts for the impacts of extreme weather events. These efforts will help to reduce long term costs and mitigate future risks. The town will also engage in planning to determine its practices for road maintenance. Finally, the town will ensure that future road construction and other transportation projects meet the latest standards, best practices, and recommendations.

ACTION 1: AS EXISTING CULVERTS AND BRIDGES NEED REPLACEMENT, ENSURE THAT REPLACEMENT COMPONENTS ARE ADEQUATE TO ACCOMMODATE EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS.

ACTION 2: CONDUCT A COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS OF TOWN ROADWAYS TO DETERMINE IF THERE IS BENEFIT TO PAVING SOME UNPAVED ROADWAYS, OR WHICH MAINTENANCE PRACTICES (I.E. CRACK SEAL VS. CHIP SEAL) COULD HELP TO REDUCE LONG TERM COSTS.

ACTION 3: ANALYZE AND IMPLEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS TO ADDRESS POTENTIAL TRAFFIC SAFETY RISK AREAS IN TOWN, SUCH AS DANGEROUS INTERSECTIONS, AREAS WITH FREQUENT TRAFFIC VIOLATIONS, ETC.

ACTION 4: ENSURE THAT ALL FUTURE ROADWAY PROJECTS, FROM NEW CONSTRUCTION TO ONGOING MAINTENANCE AND REPAIRS, MEET APPLICABLE STANDARDS, BEST PRACTICES, AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

ACTION 5: REVIEW AND IMPLEMENT THE RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROJECTS IDENTIFIED IN THE 2013 BRPC ROAD CONDITION REPORT.

Objective: Plan for and Address Future Bridge Needs.

Sandisfield's 15 bridges are critical pieces of roadway infrastructure that can have major consequences if not addressed. The town will work to address its bridge needs and ensure preventative maintenance is performed. These efforts will reduce town costs and ensure the long term sustainability of its bridges.

ACTION 1: MONITOR ALL MASSDOT BRIDGE INSPECTIONS TO IDENTIFY PREVENTATIVE MAINTENANCE NEEDS FOR BRIDGES.

ACTION 2: INTEGRATE BRIDGE NEEDS INTO LARGER

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING.

ACTION 3: ENSURE PREVENTATIVE MAINTENANCE IS PERFORMED ON TOWN BRIDGES, AND THAT LONG TERM REPAIR AND RECONSTRUCTION NEEDS ARE ADDRESSED.

Goal 2: Improve Public and Non-Motorized Transportation in Sandisfield.

Objective: Adopt a Long-Term Complete Streets Approach to Future Roadway Projects.

The Town of Sandisfield will adopt a Complete Streets approach to its roads, and will work to integrate accommodations for pedestrians, cyclists, and other users into future roadway projects. This approach will benefit residents and visitors and will allow the town to access additional transportation funding, such as the newly developed MassDOT Complete Streets funding program.

ACTION 1: HAVE A MUNICIPAL REPRESENTATIVE ATTEND A COMPLETE STREETS TRAINING SESSION TO ALLOW THE TOWN TO PARTICIPATE IN THE MASSDOT COMPLETE STREETS FUNDING PROGRAM

ACTION 2: ADOPT A COMPLETE STREETS POLICY, SUCH AS A BY-LAW OR ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY. VET THIS POLICY THROUGH AT LEAST ONE PUBLIC MEETING.

ACTION 3: DEVELOP AND MAINTAIN A COMPLETE STREETS PRIORITIZATION PLAN FOR THE TOWN.

ACTION 4: SEND PROPOSED PROJECTS TO MASSDOT FOR APPROVAL.

Objective: More Effectively Accommodate Bicyclists, Pedestrians, and Alternative Transportation on Sandisfield's Roadways in the Short Term.

The Town will work to implement projects to improve the bicycling and pedestrian environment in town, improve walkability in town, and make the town a destination for recreational cyclists and others. The town will also work to develop alternative transportation improvements through short term parking to encourage carpooling and support travel to existing recreation areas.

ACTION 1: COORDINATE WITH MASSDOT ON GUIDANCE FOR BICYCLE ACCOMODATIONS ALONG TOWN-OWNED

ROADWAYS, PARTICULARLY NEWLY PAVED ROADS SUCH AS TOWN HILL AND NEW HARTFORD ROAD.

ACTION 2: EXPLORE DEVELOPMENT OF PEDESTRIAN ACCOMMODATIONS ON ROADS FREQUENTED BY PEDESTRIANS.

ACTION 3: WHERE APPROPRIATE, INSTALL BICYCLE WARNING SIGNAGE, BICYCLE LANES, OR SHARED LANE MARKINGS ON TOWN ROADWAYS.

ACTION 4: WHERE APPROPRIATE, INSTALL PEDESTRIAN WARNING SIGNAGE ON TOWN ROADWAYS.

ACTION 5: ENSURE BICYCLE RACKS ARE INCLUDED AT MAJOR TOWN FACILITIES.

ACTION 6: COORDINATE WITH LOCAL BUSINESSES, ORGANIZATIONS, AND THE STATE TO ENSURE THAT BICYCLE RACKS ARE INSTALLED AT MAJOR TOWN DESTINATIONS AND STATE OWNED FACILITIES.

ACTION 7: IMPLEMENT OPTIONS FOR SHORT TERM PARKING TO FACILITATE CARPOOLING AND PROVIDE ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT AND RECREATION AREAS.

ACTION 8: WHEN BRIDGES ARE REPAIRED OR REPLACED, PURSUE OPTIONS FOR WATER RECREATION ACCESS, SUCH AS PARKING FOR FISHING, BOAT LAUNCHES, ETC.

Objective: Create “Walking Loops” on Town Roadways.

The Town will create “walking loops” or marked walking areas on existing roadways. These walking loops will encourage walking in the town. Moreover, the town will integrate this effort with its other wayfinding proposals.

ACTION 1: IDENTIFY LOW TRAFFIC RURAL ROADWAYS THAT ARE FREQUENTED BY WALKERS, SUCH AS RIVER ROAD.

ACTION 2: INSTALL SIGNAGE TO MARK THESE AREAS AS WALKING LOOPS, WITH INFORMATION ON POTENTIAL PARKING, AND LOOP LENGTH. INTEGRATE THIS WITH OTHER WAYFINDING EFFORTS

ACTION 3: PROMOTE THESE WALKING LOOPS THROUGH THE COUNCIL ON AGING AND THE TOWN WEBSITE.

ACTION 4: IF FEASIBLE, CONNECT WALKING LOOPS WITH EXISTING HIKING AND WALKING TRAILS.

Objective: Maintain and Enhance Transportation Services for Seniors.

The Town will continue to explore and implement options to provide transportation for its senior citizens.

ACTION 1: CONTINUE TO SEEK GRANT FUNDING FOR SENIOR TRANSPORTATION IN TOWN.

ACTION 2: MORE EFFECTIVELY CONNECT TOWN SENIORS WITH EXISTING TRANSPORTATION SERVICES THROUGH BRTA AND THE SBETC.

ACTION 3: INVESTIGATE A POSSIBLE APPLICATION TO THE MASSDOT AND BRTA COMMUNITY TRANSIT GRANT PROGRAM, THAT COULD HELP FUND A VEHICLE FOR USE BY THE COUNCIL ON AGING.

Goal 3: Establish a Town Wayfinding System and Improve Local Signage.

The Town will develop a local wayfinding system to improve ease of transportation and promote its assets. Combined with this effort, the town will improve other roadway signage to inform residents and visitors about roads maintained in the winter, roads that may be impassable, dead ends, and other hazards.

ACTION 1: CONDUCT AN INVENTORY OF TOWN DESTINATIONS, ASSETS, RECREATION AMENITIES, HISTORIC BUILDINGS, ETC. FOR POSSIBLE INTEGRATION INTO A WAYFINDING SYSTEM.

ACTION 2: DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A SIGNAGE AND WAYFINDING SYSTEM FOR THE TOWN.

ACTION 3: IDENTIFY AREAS IN TOWN WHERE EXISTING ROADWAY SIGNAGE NEEDS IMPROVEMENT, OR WHERE SIGNAGE NEEDS TO BE INSTALLED.

ACTION 4: IMPLEMENT IMPROVEMENTS TO TOWN ROADWAY SIGNAGE.



CHAPTER 8: LAND USE

The town of Sandisfield's vision for land use includes the establishment of a "Town Center" to create a social hub and center for public life within the town. Additionally, the town will update and modernize its zoning regulations and bylaws to anticipate future uses. The Town of Sandisfield's major land uses include forest, which covers the vast majority of the town as well as residential land, which far exceeds commercial or industrial land in the town. This chapter reviews the existing conditions related to land use and outlines the goals, objectives and actions the town will take to achieve its vision for land use.

TRENDS AND CONDITIONS

Location and Context

The Town of Sandisfield is approximately 52.97 square miles, or around 33,904 acres in size. Sandisfield is the largest town in Berkshire County by land area and one of the largest towns in the Commonwealth. Sandisfield is one of the least densely populated towns in Berkshire County.

Sandisfield is bordered to the east by the Massachusetts town of Tolland, to the west by New Marlborough, to the north by Otis and Monterey, and to the south by Norfolk and Colebrook, CT.

Villages

For mapped village locations, please refer to Map D—Land Use.

Sandisfield has a dispersed pattern of settlement that historically included several village areas or local "neighborhoods".

New Boston

The area surrounding the intersection of Route 8 and Route 57.

West New Boston

The area surrounding the intersection of Route 57, Silverbrook Road and South Beech Plain Road.



Sandisfield is a rural town in the southern Berkshires. Photograph by BRPC.

LAND USE AT A GLANCE

Forest

Forested land covers roughly 86% of the town.

Residential Land

Residential land use occupies over 560 acres in Sandisfield, far more than that used for commercial or industrial purposes in town.

Villages

Sandisfield has a dispersed pattern of settlement that historically included several village areas or local "neighborhoods".

Additional discussion of land use may be found in Appendix C: Existing Conditions Summary

Montville

The area surrounding the intersections of Sandisfield Road with Town Hill and Hammertown Roads.

Sandisfield Center

The area surrounding the intersections of Route 57, Silverbrook Road and New Hartford Road.

South Sandisfield

The area surrounding the intersection of South Sandisfield Road, Webster Road, and Sandy Brook Road.

Roosterville

The area immediately south of New Boston along Roosterville Road.

Land Use

Land Use Change 1971-1999

For a table of land use changes from 1971-1999, please refer to Table 7.1 in Appendix C.

Between 1971 and 1999, residential acreage increased more than any other land use category. Residential land use increased by almost 400 acres during this time, from 1.69% to 2.81% of the total land in the town. Forest land decreased the most over the period from 1971-1999. Forest land decreased by just over 400 acres, from 90.15% of all land to 88.88% of all land in Sandisfield. Other categories that saw increases in Sandisfield during this time include commercial, recreational, vacant, and wetland land uses. Other categories that saw decreases between 1971 and 1999 include agriculture, institutional, and water types.

Land Use 2005

For mapped land uses, please see Map D—Land Use (2005).

For a table of 2005 land use data, please refer to Table 7.2 in appendix C.

While available land use data from 2005 should not be compared with earlier data to determine trends, it does provide the most recent “snapshot” of land use within Sandisfield. The 2005 data does not paint a substantially different portrait of the town than the

earlier data provides. As of 2005, Sandisfield is primarily forested, with nearly 29,500 acres, or 86.88% of all land in the town covered by forest. Residential land use is also significant, far exceeding the acreage devoted to institutional, commercial, or industrial land uses. Residential land use covers just over 565 acres, or 1.67% of all land within the town.

Also it is important to note that during the 2005 land use classification, 2.6 acres of industrial land were recorded. When BRPC checked this area against existing aerial photography, this area appears to be a large barn adjacent to a pond just east of the intersection of Sandisfield and Silverbrook Road. This area was classified as industrial and may be the result of the automated land use classification process.

Existing Zoning

For a map of current zoning districts, please see Map E—Zoning.

Sandisfield currently has one zoning district covering the entirety of the town with a Floodplain Overlay District regulating development in flood prone areas.

Existing Dimensional Requirements and Use Regulations

The following is summarized from the Sandisfield Town Bylaws, last amended May 16, 2009.

Minimum Lot Size: 1 acre

Minimum Lot Frontage: 200 Feet

Minimum Lot Depth: 150 Feet

Minimum Building Setback (from road and all lot lines): 30 Feet

Maximum Building Coverage: 4% of lot size

BRPC Zoning Audit

In 2012, BRPC conducted a review and audit of the Town of Sandisfield zoning bylaws at the request of the Planning Board. The recommendations of the audit are summarized in the land use section of Appendix C.

Development Trends and Future Development Capacity



Development Trends

For a map of buildings in Sandisfield by construction date, please see Map F—Development Trend.

For a breakdown of buildings in Sandisfield by construction date, see Table 7.3 in Appendix C.

Available data from the Town Assessor showing the construction date of buildings within the Town of Sandisfield allows for a picture of development trends to emerge. The data shows the last available construction date for a given building, so does not capture earlier structures that may have existed on a given parcel and been replaced. The data is based on assessor's information current as of 2011.

Many structures in the town built prior to 1900 are still remaining, which could account for the large amount of historic structures found in the town (see Table 8.4 in Appendix C). Additionally, prior to 1900, development is relatively dispersed throughout the town. This accounts for the town's six villages (see village descriptions earlier in this section). The majority of housing development between 1901 and 1950 is located along Route 57 and Route 8, though some is still dispersed. Between 1951 and 1975, 167 structures were built, these are dispersed throughout the town along existing road frontage. Post 1975, over 500 new structures have been built, also following a dispersed pattern. However, there is a notable cluster in the large Otis Woodlands development found in the northeast corner of Sandisfield.

Buildout and Development Capacity

For a map of remaining developable land in Sandisfield used to quantify this buildout analysis, please see Map G—Buildout.

A buildout analysis is a way for a community to assess its future by examining what developable land remains in the town, and what the development capacity of this land is based on its current zoning regulations. A buildout analysis examines the maximum extent of future development in a town. Based on this analysis, 7,519 new housing units could be built in Sandisfield

under current zoning regulations and with remaining buildable acreage. For more details on the buildout methodology, please refer to the land use section of Appendix C.

Public Survey Results

The public survey included one broad question regarding land use in Sandisfield, which asked about controls on residential development and environmental resources.

In regards to residential development controls, most responses were split between "controls are at the right level" and "don't know / need more information", with no clear majority supporting any answer choice. In regards to Environmental resources, there was a similar pattern of response with no clear majority supporting any answer option. Responses were split between "controls are at the right level" and "don't know / need more information" with 35% supporting the latter statement.

KEY LAND USE ISSUES

Town Center

The concept of a Town Center in Sandisfield has been explored by the town over the years. The town will continue its work to establish a town center, that could help to cluster public buildings, and potentially generate revenue to the town through the sale of land.

General Updates to Town Bylaws and Zoning

Sandisfield has recently audited its zoning and bylaws. The results of the audit identified several areas of the bylaw that could be updated and modernized. In addition to these changes, the town will also investigate and implement changes to its zoning to anticipate future land uses, such as wireless communications towers and solar and wind energy infrastructure.

LAND USE GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

Goal 1: Establish a “Town Center” in Sandisfield.

Sandisfield will establish a Town Center. The Town Center will help to cluster and co-locate public facilities (see Chapter 4—Infrastructure) and other uses and create a hub for town affairs and activities. The town will also pursue potential revenue generating options in the Town Center, such as the sale of lots for adjacent commercial or retail development.

Objective: Continue to Pursue Creation of a Future Town Center In Sandisfield.

Sandisfield will continue its efforts to establish a Town Center. These efforts will include the development and implementation of a process that results in a fiscally sound plan specifies the location, timing, and funding of this center.

ACTION 1: INTEGRATE TOWN CENTER PLANNING EFFORTS WITH LARGER CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING AND OTHER EFFORTS TO IMPROVE PUBLIC FACILITIES.

ACTION 2: CONDUCT OUTREACH TO SEEK PUBLIC COMMENT, INFORM RESIDENTS, AND DEVELOP CONSENSUS AROUND A PLAN FOR A TOWN CENTER.

ACTION 3: DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT OPTIONS TO GENERATE REVENUE FROM THE DEVELOPMENT OF A TOWN CENTER.

ACTION 4: IMPLEMENT THE TOWN CENTER PLAN.

Goal 2: Update Town Zoning and Bylaws

The Town of Sandisfield has recently undertaken an effort to reassess its zoning and bylaws through technical assistance from BRPC. The Town will implement the recommendations of this effort over time and also explore other bylaw and zoning changes.

Objective: Implement the Recommendations of the BRPC Zoning Audit and other General Revisions to Town Bylaws.

The Town will implement the recommendations of the BRPC Zoning Audit and explore general changes its zoning to improve the clarity of the document and update it to meet the current and future needs of town residents.

ACTION 1: IMPLEMENT THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE BRPC ZONING AUDIT.

ACTION 2: REVIEW AND IMPLEMENT POSSIBLE CHANGES TO GENERAL CONDITIONS IN THE TOWN BYLAWS, SUCH AS LOT SIZE AND FRONTAGE REQUIREMENTS.

Objective: Explore the Development of Commercial Solar and Wind Energy, and Wireless Communications Bylaws and Siting requirements.

The Town will update its bylaws to address possible future and solar wind energy and wireless communications. Revised bylaws will help to minimize aesthetic and environmental impacts from these potential uses and ensure public safety.

ACTION 1: RESEARCH, DEVELOP, AND IMPLEMENT COMMERCIAL SOLAR AND WIND ENERGY BYLAWS.

ACTION 2: RESEARCH, DEVELOP, AND IMPLEMENT A WIRELESS COMMUNICATIONS BYLAW.

Objective: Explore the Development of One or More Village Center Zoning Districts in Sandisfield.

The Town will explore the creation of possible Village Center zoning districts in town. Village center zoning can help to encourage development, generally through a reduced minimum lot size and frontage requirements in certain areas of town.

ACTION 1: RESEARCH, DEVELOP, AND IMPLEMENT POSSIBLE VILLAGE CENTER ZONING DISTRICTS IN TOWN.

Objective: Investigate a Possible Rear Lot or Shared Driveway Bylaw in Town.

The Town will explore potential rear lot or shared driveway bylaw in town. Rear lot bylaws can help to encourage development on lots that would otherwise not meet zoning standards. These measures allow a landowner with a large lot that lacks adequate road frontage to subdivide the property and provide access to the rear lots through a shared driveway. Often the subdivided lots have larger minimum sizes than otherwise would be required. The bylaw can also require that homeowners develop an agreement to ensure maintenance of the shared driveway.

ACTION 1: RESEARCH, DEVELOP, AND IMPLEMENT A REAR LOT OR SHARED DRIVEWAY BYLAW.



Objective: Investigate the Creation of One or More Commercial Development Zones in Sandisfield.

The Town will explore creating Commercial Development Zones in Town. These Commercial Development Zones could help to encourage the siting of future businesses and help to improve the local economy. Additionally, these zones would help to minimize the aesthetic, environmental, and other impacts of potential future commercial development within the town.

ACTION 1: RESEARCH, DEVELOP, AND IMPLEMENT COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT ZONES IN SANDISFIELD.

Goal 3: Address the Proposed Connecticut Expansion Pipeline Project.

The Town will address proposed land uses in Sandisfield, such as the Connecticut Expansion Pipeline Project, by supporting the equitable taxation of this utility by the town. See Chapter 4-Infrastructure for more information on this topic.

ACTION 1: SUPPORT THE EQUITABLE TAXATION OF UTILITIES SUCH AS THE CONNECTICUT EXPANSION PIPELINE IN SANDISFIELD.



CHAPTER 9: NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

The Town of Sandisfield has an abundance of natural and cultural resources including extensive wildlife habitat, important wetland areas and water resources, as well as historic buildings and the Sandisfield Arts Center. Sandisfield's vision for these resources includes establishing the town as recreation and heritage destination in the region. This chapter reviews town natural and cultural resources and lists the goals, objectives and actions for the town to take to achieve its vision for these in Sandisfield.

TRENDS AND CONDITIONS

Topography and Landscape

Sandisfield is characterized by a rugged, diverse topography with steep hills, numerous water bodies and expansive wetlands. The 1987 Sandisfield Land Use Plan prepared by the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission defines Sandisfield as having two main topographic regions. The first are the sharp ridges and deeply eroded streams of the Farmington River Valley and the second is the broad plateau of the central and western portions of town.

Soils

For a map of general soil conditions in Sandisfield, please see Map I—Soils and Geologic Features.

Sandisfield's soils are contained in two main associations located around the town's river valleys and upland areas. In upland areas, soils are generally shallow and close to bedrock, and steep slopes are common. For a map of general soil conditions and prime agricultural soils, see Map I—Soils and Geologic Features.

Ecoregion and Forest Resources

Ecoregions are areas with similar climate, geology, and topography. Massachusetts is part of two large ecoregions, the Northeastern Highlands and the Northeastern Coastal Zone. These two ecoregions can be further divided into 13 sub-regions.



The Sandisfield Player's production of "Our Town" at the Sandisfield Arts Center. Photograph provided by the Sandisfield Times.

NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES AT A GLANCE

Watershed and Regional Context

Sandisfield is located at the headwaters of the Farmington River, a source of drinking water for the City of Hartford, Ct and an estimated 600,000 people.

Historic Resources

The state's historic inventory lists 117 records comprising mostly historic buildings. The town is working to add to and update this inventory

Knox Trail

A portion of the Knox Trail passes through Sandisfield. This trail has a unique history that shaped events leading to the founding of our nation.

Additional discussion of natural and cultural resources may be found in Appendix C: Existing Conditions Summary

Sandisfield is located in the Lower Berkshire Hills Ecoregion, a sub-region of the Northeastern Highlands. The Massachusetts Audubon Breeding Bird Atlas notes that this ecoregion is “similar to the Berkshire Highlands to the north, but the average elevation is lower, (1,000 to 1,700 feet) with a forest cover composed primarily of northern hardwoods” (2015).

Water Resources

For mapped watershed boundaries, water bodies, and floodplains, please refer to Map K—Water Resources.

Watersheds

The majority of Sandisfield is located within the Farmington River Watershed (FRW). A small portion of the Housatonic River Watershed is located on the westernmost edge of the town. Regionally, the FRW is an important water source for the city of Hartford, Connecticut (population 125,000). However, many other towns within the Farmington River valley rely on the river as a drinking water source. The Farmington River Watershed Association (FRWA), the non-profit group that helps to address issues of water quality within the watershed, estimates that the river supplies drinking water to 600,000 people in total (FRWA 2003).

Surface Waters

Rivers and Streams

The Town of Sandisfield’s major rivers are the Buck River, Clam River and the Farmington River. The Buck River flows roughly northwest to southeast across the northern portion of Sandisfield and roughly follows the direction of much of Route 57. The Clam River flows roughly north to south. The Buck River meets the Clam River just west of the intersection of Route 8 and Route 57 in Sandisfield, and they flow (as the Clam River) into the Farmington River. In the western portion of town, the Sandy Brook flows south from York Lake (in New Marlborough) and into Connecticut, roughly following the direction of Route 183.

The Buck River, Clam River, and Farmington River are stocked yearly with Trout by the Massachusetts

Department of Fish and Game (Mass. DFG Trout Stocking Schedule 2015).

Lakes and Ponds

Sandisfield contains a number of lakes and ponds. The largest is Lower Spectacle Pond (69 acres), within Otis State Forest in the northeastern portion of Town (See Table C19—Water Resources In Sandisfield, MA). A portion of Upper Spectacle Pond is also located within the town; however, it straddles the boundary between Otis and Sandisfield.

Many of Sandisfield’s water bodies were created or have been altered by dams. Within Sandisfield, Upper Spectacle Pond, West Lake, Abbey Lake, North Silver Brook Flood Control Site, South Silver Brook Flood Control Site, and the Clam Lake Flood Control Site have all been created through damming.

Wetlands

There are over 2200 acres of wetlands in Sandisfield, comprising 6.6% of all land within the town. These wetlands can be divided into seven main types. Over 500 acres belongs to the wooded coniferous swamp variety. This type makes up over 22% of wetlands in the town, the greatest of all the seven wetland typologies. The least are Bogs, which occupy just over 6 acres, or around .3% of all wetlands within the town. See Table 8.2 –Wetland Resources in Sandisfield, MA in Appendix C.

Rare Species and Wildlife Habitat

Within Sandisfield, 20 Endangered, threatened and special concern species have been sighted in the town since the earliest records of 1912. See Table 8.3—Threatened, Endangered and Special Concern Species Sighted in Sandisfield, MA in Appendix C.

Bird Sighting Data

Within Sandisfield, Colebrook River Lake (the northern portion of Colebrook Reservoir) is listed as an E-Bird hotspot. This area is located in the southeast corner of the town, near Route 8. Based on these data, 125 species have been sighted near Colebrook River Lake since 2011. This includes threatened, endangered and special concern species such as the Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) and Blackpoll Warbler



(*Dendroica striata*) in addition to other more common bird species.

Additionally, there have been other rare bird sightings in Sandisfield not captured in E-Bird data. In a 2013 article in the Sandisfield Times, Margaret O’Claire detailed the sighting of rare bird species including the Common Loon (*Gavia immer*) and Sand Hill Cranes (*Grus canadensis*). The article also notes the Colebrook Reservoir and the town’s multiple lakes and ponds as prime bird watching areas.

BioMap2

For locations of BioMap2 components and natural communities, please refer to Map J—Vegetation, Fisheries and Wildlife.

BioMap2 is a statewide mapping project that combines 30 years of rare species and natural community data from the NHESP with wildlife species and habitat assessments that were conducted as part of the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife’s 2005 State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP). Additionally, BioMap2 data integrates the Nature Conservancy’s assessment of large, connected and intact ecosystems across the state. (NHESP, 2012).

BioMap2 has two primary components, Core Habitat and Critical Natural Landscape. According to BioMap2, Core Habitat is found on 3,281 acres in Sandisfield, or around 9.6% of the land in town. Critical natural landscape comprises 29,488 acres or 86.9% of all land within the town.

Priority and Exemplary Natural Communities

Priority Natural Communities

High-terrace Floodplain Forest
High Energy Riverbank
Rich, Mesic Forest Community
Riverine Point bar and Beach
Spruce-Tamarack Bog

Priority Natural Communities

Hemlock Ravine Community
Hemlock Hardwood Swamp

Cultural Resources

History of the Community

Sandisfield has a rich and varied history. For a detailed history of the town, please refer to Appendix C.

Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System (MACRIS) Database

For locations of historic buildings and other structures found in the MACRIS database, please refer to Map L—Historic Resources. For a table of listings in the MACRIS database, please refer to Table C22.

The Massachusetts Cultural Information Resource System (MACRIS) is a database maintained by the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) that lists historic structures, areas, objects and burial grounds recognized at the local, state, and national level. Within Sandisfield, the MACRIS database lists 117 records comprising mostly historic buildings. However, the records also include the smaller villages that make up the town, several bridges, stores, inns, and cemeteries among other places.

It is important to note that the MACRIS records identified in this plan are incomplete for several reasons, the first being that listings available online are part of ongoing digitization efforts by the state. Moreover, most of the MACRIS records for the Town of Sandisfield were collected from an inventory of historic properties completed in 1979. The Sandisfield Historic Commission has been working to update this inventory as well as identify new historically significant properties. They are in the process of compiling these inventory records and submitting them to the state. For more information on the town’s historic buildings and other areas, please consult the Sandisfield Historical Commission or the Sandisfield Historical Society.

Cemeteries

There are five cemeteries located in Sandisfield.

Sandisfield Center

Established circa 1758, located on Route 57 or Sandisfield Road.

New Boston

Established circa 1831, located on Route 57 or Sandisfield Road.

Beech Plain

Established circa 1775, located on North Beech Plain Road.

South Sandisfield

Established circa 1836, located on Route 183 or Sandy Brook Road.

Roberts Road

Established circa 1790, located on Roberts Road.
(Sandisfield Town Report, 2014)

The town has been actively working to clean up its cemeteries as well as promote these areas as cultural and historical resources. The town formed a Cemetery Committee, which recently created a set of rules for town cemeteries and has helped to organize pruning and clean up events with volunteers. Moreover, the Sandisfield Historical Commission has been working to mark the gravestones of Sandisfield's veterans.

Knox Trail or Great Road

The Town of Sandisfield developed partially along the historic route known as the Knox Trail, or Great Road, that connected Boston and Albany. This roadway was a major regional trade route. However, the route is most famous for its use by General Henry Knox as he worked during the winter of 1775-1776 to move cannons from Fort Ticonderoga on Lake Champlain to Boston, Massachusetts.

The route of the Knox Trail crosses into Sandisfield from Otis and travels west immediately south of Upper Spectacle Pond through Otis State Forest. The Trail crosses back into Otis near Cold Spring Road. Portions of the Knox Trail are currently used during the winter by snowmobilers.

Members of the Otis Historic Commission have been active in identifying landmarks, markers, tavern sites, and other historic resources along the trail. The Otis Historic Commission has also secured permission to develop the trail through portions of state owned land like Otis State Forest.



Figure 9.1—The Philomen Sage House, New Boston Inn, and Sandisfield Arts Center (former Montville Baptist Church) are three historic buildings in Sandisfield listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Photograph credit John Phelan. Image licensed under CC by 3.0.



The Sandisfield Historic Commission has been coordinating with members of the Otis Historic Commission to hold walks and help promote awareness of this important historic resource (Ronald Bernard Personal Communication 2015).

KEY NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES ISSUES

Leveraging Natural Resource, Ecological and Historical Assets

Sandisfield has many natural resource and ecological assets which could be leveraged to draw visitors and new residents to the town, as well as help to improve the daily life of year round residents. These assets include the unique natural environments found in the abundant open spaces in Sandisfield, as well as latent assets such as destinations in town for birdwatchers. Moreover, the town has been working in recent years to promote and develop its historic resources, such as buildings and the Knox Trail. These features could also help to draw

NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

Goal 1: Establish Sandisfield as an Environmental Destination.

The Town of Sandisfield will establish itself as an ecological and environmental destination by continued protection and promotion of its natural resources.

Objective: Protect Sandisfield's Natural Resources.

The Town will continue to protect its natural resources. The town will also explore new ways to minimize its environmental impacts.

ACTION 1: CONTINUE TO ENFORCE REGULATIONS THAT PROTECT THE TOWN'S WETLANDS AND WATER RESOURCES.

ACTION 2: EXPLORE ALTERNATIVE DEICING METHODS ON TOWN ROADWAYS.

Objective: Promote Sandisfield's Natural Resources.

Sandisfield will more effectively promote its natural resources for the benefit of the town.

ACTION 1: ENCOURAGE THE COMMONWEALTH, LOCAL LAND TRUSTS, AND OTHER CONSERVATION ORGANIZATIONS TO HOLD EVENTS, TRAIL WALKS, INFORMATIONAL TALKS, AND OTHER EVENTS ABOUT TOWN NATURAL RESOURCES.

ACTION 2: INTEGRATE NATURAL RESOURCES INTO OTHER TOWN PROMOTION AND WAYFINDING EFFORTS.

ACTION 3: CO-PROMOTE NATURAL RESOURCES WITH BUSINESSES AND EVENTS.

Objective: Promote Sandisfield as a Destination for Bird-Watching.

Several rare bird species have been sighted in Sandisfield. Colebrook River Lake has been identified as a bird-watching "hot spot". The town will promote itself as a destination for this activity and collaborate with other efforts in town, such as a possible bird sanctuary that has been proposed by Mass. Audubon.

ACTION 1: ENCOURAGE BIRD-WATCHERS TO SUBMIT BIRD SIGHTINGS TO THE E-BIRD WEBSITE.

ACTION 2: ENCOURAGE THE IDENTIFICATION OF BIRD WATCHING "HOT SPOTS" IN TOWN.

ACTION 3: COORDINATE WITH LOCAL EXPERTS AND RELEVANT ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS THE HOFFMAN BIRD CLUB AND MASS. AUDUBON TO ENCOURAGE THE HOSTING OF BIRD WATCHING EVENTS IN SANDISFIELD.

ACTION 4: COORDINATE WITH MASS. AUDUBON ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF A BIRD SANCTUARY IN THE TOWN.

Goal 2: Establish Sandisfield as a Heritage and Historic Destination.

The Town of Sandisfield will establish itself as a heritage and historic destination through efforts to utilize its historic buildings in town and the promotion, cultivation, and support of its historic resources.

Objective: Encourage the Utilization and Restoration of Historic Buildings in Town.

The town will encourage residents and newcomers to utilize and restore historic structures in town through

promotion and development of technical assistance and incentive programs.

ACTION 1: IDENTIFY HISTORIC PROPERTIES THAT WOULD MOST BENEFIT FROM POTENTIAL RESTORATION AND CURATION.

ACTION 2: DEVELOP OR PARTICIPATE IN PROGRAMS THAT PROVIDE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO THE OWNERS OF HISTORIC HOMES TO INCENTIVIZE THEIR RESTORATION.

ACTION 3: PROMOTE AND SUPPORT INCENTIVES FOR THE RESTORATION OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES, SUCH AS THE MHC HISTORIC REHABILITATION TAX CREDIT.

Objective: Cultivate the Town's Historic and Cultural Assets.

Sandisfield will continue efforts to achieve recognition for, promote, and develop its historic resources. The town will also continue to ensure that crucial assets such as town documents and records are adequately stored.

ACTION 1: CONTINUE ONGOING WORK TO UPDATE THE TOWN'S INVENTORY OF HISTORIC RESOURCES.

ACTION 2: CONTINUE TO NOMINATE TOWN BUILDINGS FOR STATE AND NATIONAL HISTORIC RECOGNITION.

ACTION 3: CONTINUE ONGOING WORK TO ESTABLISH SEVERAL NATIONAL HISTORIC REGISTER DISTRICTS IN TOWN.

ACTION 4: PROMOTE THE TOWN RECOGNITION AND AWARD PROGRAM FOR HISTORIC BUILDINGS AND RESOURCES.

ACTION 5: CONTINUE TO IMPROVE AND UPGRADE METHODS TO STORE AND MAINTAIN TOWN HISTORIC DOCUMENTS.

ACTION 6: CONTINUE ONGOING EFFORTS TO INSTALL SIGNS MARKING HISTORIC BUILDINGS THROUGH OUTREACH TO LOCAL HOMEOWNERS.

ACTION 7: INTEGRATE HISTORIC AND CULTURAL ASSETS INTO THE TOWN'S PROMOTION AND WAYFINDING EFFORTS.

ACTION 8: ORGANIZE A HERITAGE TOUR OF SANDISFIELD.

ACTION 9: CONTINUE TO SUPPORT THE PERFORMING AND VISUAL ARTS PROGRAMS IN SANDISFIELD THROUGH THE SANDISFIELD ARTS CENTER.

Objective: Develop and Promote the Knox Trail as a Multi-Use, Multi-Season Historic Recreation Trail in Sandisfield.

Sandisfield will work collaboratively to promote and develop the historic Knox Trail as a historic and recreation asset.

ACTION 1: CONTINUE TO COLLABORATE WITH THE TOWN OF OTIS ON EFFORTS TO DEVELOP THE KNOX TRAIL.

ACTION 2: WORK WITH STATE AND LOCAL LANDOWNERS TO ALLOW YEAR-ROUND USE OF THE KNOX TRAIL.

ACTION 3: INTEGRATE THE KNOX TRAIL INTO OTHER PROMOTIONAL EFFORTS.

ACTION 4: CONNECT THE KNOX TRAIL TO OTHER LOCAL AND REGIONAL TRAIL NETWORKS AND RECREATION AREAS, SUCH AS SPECTACLE POND.

ACTION 5: COORDINATE WITH THE STATE AND LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS THE KNOX TRAIL SNO-RIDERS AND SANDISFIELD SNOWMOBILE CLUB ON TRAIL DEVELOPMENT.

ACTION 6: PROMOTE THE KNOX TRAIL AS A EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE.

Objective: Develop and Promote the Town's Cemeteries as Historic Destinations.

Sandisfield will continue efforts to maintain and promote its historic cemeteries.

ACTION 1: CONTINUE ONGOING WORK TO CLEAN UP AND ACTIVELY MAINTAIN TOWN CEMETERIES.

ACTION 2: CONTINUE ONGOING WORK TO MARK THE GRAVES OF VETERANS IN TOWN CEMETERIES.



CHAPTER 10: OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION

The Town of Sandisfield offers a range of services to its residents including building inspection, Council on Aging activities, educational services through the local elementary school, and road maintenance, to name a few. This chapter reviews town services and lists the goals, objectives and actions for the town to take to achieve its vision for Sandisfield.

TRENDS AND CONDITIONS

Open Space

Open space is defined as land that has not been developed for residential, commercial, or industrial uses and includes publicly and privately owned land. Open space often has particular interest to conservation or recreation and can include:

1. Land which contributes to the public water supply
2. Forests, fields, and agricultural lands
3. Wetlands
4. Rivers, streams, and lakes
5. Parks and other recreation lands
6. Wildlife corridors or animal habitats
7. Land which preserves scenic views or town character

Land in Sandisfield is protected in a variety of ways and with varying degrees of protection. Conservation and recreation lands in the Town of Sandisfield are protected by four entities, the Town and other municipal organizations, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, local land trusts, and private landowners.

Protected Open Space

For locations of protected open space and Chapter 61 properties, please refer to Map M—Open Space.

According to the Massachusetts State Geographic Information System (GIS) “Open Space” data layer, there are 16,599 acres of protected open space lands



Spectacle Pond is a popular recreation area in Sandisfield. Photograph provided by the Sandisfield Times.

OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION AT A GLANCE

Protected Open Space

There are 16,599 acres of protected open space lands in the Town of Sandisfield, the equivalent of 48.9% of all land within the town. This includes state land, watershed protection land and land owned by local land trusts. Also included in this total are privately owned lands with conservation restrictions, and land in Chapter 61 programs.

Stump Fees

Revenue from state timber harvests is a potential revenue source for the town.

Recreation Areas

Sandisfield boasts several recreation areas including a town park and playground, land in three state forests and four flood control sites. Additionally, BNRC’s Clam River Reserve offer hiking trails and additional recreation options.

Additional discussion of open space and recreation may be found in Appendix C: Existing Conditions Summary



Figure 10.1—The Sandisfield Library Playground is one of two town owned recreation areas. The other is Yanner Park. The playground is located on Route 57 adjacent the Clam River.

in the Town of Sandisfield, the equivalent of 48.9% of all land within the town. Over 7000 acres of this total (or around 44% of all protected land) is in parcels held by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and includes the portions of Otis and Sandisfield State Forest, as well as several flood control sites (See Table C24—Summary of Protected Land in Sandisfield, MA and Table C25—Protected Land in Sandisfield, MA). Also included are permanently protected open space lands owned by land trusts and private landowners, watershed protection land held by the Connecticut Metropolitan District Commission, as well as temporarily protected lands protected by Chapter 61 incentives. This total also includes Town of Sandisfield owned properties such as Yanner Park, which have limited protections due to municipal ownership.

Additionally, it should be noted that roughly 900 acres of privately owned lands in Sandisfield are both permanently protected and in Chapter 61 incentive programs. These 900 acres with “overlapping” conservation protection were removed from acreage totals to provide a more accurate amount of protected land within the town.

Chapter 61, 61A, and 61B Lands

Chapter 61 is a state program that allows private landowners to manage their properties for forestry (Chapter 61), agricultural (Chapter 61A), or recreational purposes (Chapter 61B) in exchange for reduced taxes. Parcels in the program for the purposes of forestry must be at least 10 acres in size and must have an approved 10-year management plan in place. Parcels enrolled in Chapter 61A or 61B must be at least five acres in size. Once enrolled in Chapter 61, the town where the property is located acquires a right of first refusal should the land be put up for sale. This right of first refusal can also be assigned by the town to a land trust or state agency. Chapter 61 lands are not considered permanently protected, as landowners can remove their property from the program at any time. However, there are monetary penalties associated with sale of properties enrolled in Chapter 61 for purposes other than forestry, agriculture or recreation, as well as any changes in land use while enrolled.

For more information on Chapter 61 programs, consult



a local forester or the town assessor. Chapter 61 properties are privately owned and should be considered off limits to public access without the landowner's permission. There are a total of 5425 acres of land currently enrolled in Chapter 61 in Sandisfield, totaling around 16% of all land within the town. The majority of these properties are enrolled for the purposes of forestry, with some enrolled for agriculture. There are currently no parcels in Sandisfield enrolled in the Chapter 61 program for recreation (see Table C26—Chapter 61 Parcels in Sandisfield, MA).

State and Private Lands and Stumpage Fees

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts is required to donate a portion of revenue generated from timber harvests on its lands to the municipality in which the timber harvest occurs. In state lands purchased prior to 1986-1988, this value is 8%. However, for state land purchased after this date, the value increases significantly to 50%.

Similarly, timber harvests on private lands enrolled in Chapter 61 used to be required to provide 8% of timber harvest revenue to the municipality where the property was located. However, in 2006, changes to Chapter 61 regulations eliminated this requirement.

Recreation

The Town of Sandisfield offers several areas for recreation, including town, state, and privately owned areas.

Town Owned Recreation Areas

Yanner Park
Sandisfield Library Playground (see Figure 10.1)

State Owned Recreation Areas

Otis State Forest and Spectacle Pond Farm
West Lake And Abbey Pond Flood Control Site
Sandisfield State Forest
Clam Lake Flood Control Site
Silver Brook North Flood Control Site
Silver Brook South Flood Control Site
Cookson State Forest



Figure 10.2—Berkshire Natural Resources Council's (BNRC) Clam River Reserve is a publically accessible natural area with a trailhead located behind the Town Hall Annex on Route 57. BNRC recently completed work on a major 1.5 mile long section of trail in 2015. Photographs provided by BNRC.

Privately Owned Recreation Areas

Recreation areas managed by Berkshire Natural Resources Council (BNRC):

Clam River Reserve (see Figure 10.2)

Steepletop (portion only, primary access is from New Marlborough)

Bob's Way (portion only, primary access is from Monterey)

Sandisfield / New Marlborough Wildlife Conservation Easement (WCE) Areas:

These areas are privately owned, but have easements for public access through the Mass. Department of Fish and Game (DFG).

Allen Mountain WCE

Silverbrook WCE

Thorpe Brook WCE

Sandisfield Snowmobile Club and Knox Trail Sno-Rider Trails

The Sandisfield Snowmobile Club and the Knox Trail Sno-Riders (based in nearby Otis) maintain a number of snowmobile trails on public and private land in Sandisfield. Several trails cross through a portion of the West Lake And Abbey Pond Flood Control Site, including trails that cross both these waterbodies during the winter. Another trail runs parallel to and north of Silverbrook Road. The Sandisfield Snowmobile Club also has plans to expand its trail network north into the Town of Monterey as well as south along Back, Clark, and Beech Hill Roads.

KEY OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION ISSUES

Access to State Lands

Sandisfield'

Leveraging Recreation Assets

Sandisfield

TO BE COMPLETED

DRAFT OPEN SPACE AND

RECREATION GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS (NOT FINAL)

Goal 1: Establish Sandisfield as a Recreation Destination.

The Town of Sandisfield will establish itself as a recreation destination that draws on its vast natural resources, open spaces and public land. The town will meet this goal through coordination and collaboration with the Commonwealth and local organizations, as well as improving access to and linking the various recreation areas in town. The town will also leverage its existing assets to encourage and develop snowmobiling in town.

Objective: Promote the Town's Recreation Areas.

The town will more effectively promote its recreation areas to increase awareness and use of these places. The town will also integrate these resources into its wayfinding efforts.

ACTION 1: COORDINATE WITH THE STATE AND LOCAL LAND TRUSTS TO CREATE SIGNAGE MARKING LOCAL RECREATION ASSETS, SUCH AS THE CLAM RIVER RESERVE AND STATE OWNED LANDS.

ACTION 2: INTEGRATE SANDISFIELD'S RECREATION ASSETS INTO PROMOTIONAL AND WAYFINDING EFFORTS.

Objective: Improve Access to State Lands.

Sandisfield's thousands of acres of state land are a vast recreation resource; however, little of it is managed to support this use. The town will advocate for the management of state owned lands to improve access and support recreation. The town will also ensure that it fully participates in state planning efforts.

ACTION 1: ADVOCATE FOR THE CONSISTENT MANAGEMENT OF STATE PROPERTIES FOR ACTIVE RECREATION USE.

ACTION 2: WORK WITH THE STATE TO IMPROVE AMENITIES AND ACCESS POINTS ON STATE LANDS, WITH WEST LAKE AND UPPER AND LOWER SPECTACLE POND BEING PRIORITY IMPROVEMENT AREAS.

ACTION 3: WORK TO INTEGRATE ACTIVE RECREATION USE INTO THE FINAL DRAFT OF THE SPECTACLE POND FARM MANAGEMENT PLAN.

ACTION 4: ENSURE THAT TOWN INTERESTS ARE WELL



REPRESENTED IN UPDATED MANAGEMENT PLANS FOR STATE OWNED PROPERTIES IN THE FUTURE.

ACTION 5: INVESTIGATE USE OF STATE LANDS TO HOST ATHLETIC AND SPORTING EVENTS.

ACTION 6: PARTNER WITH REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, SUCH AS LAND TRUSTS AND OTHER CONSERVATION GROUPS TO FORM A COALITION THAT WILL ADDRESS ACCESS NEEDS AND POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS TO STATE LANDS.

Objective: Link Disparate Recreation Areas.

The town will collaborate with relevant organizations to link and interconnect the public and private recreation areas in town. These efforts will create a network of recreation opportunities greater than the sum of its individual components.

ACTION 1: DEVELOP A TRAIL NETWORK THAT CONNECTS YANNER PARK, THE CLAM RIVER RESERVE, ADJACENT STATE OWNED PROPERTIES AND THE SPECTACLE POND AREA.

ACTION 2: COORDINATE WITH BNRC ON THEIR "BERKSHIRE HIGH ROAD" CAMPAIGN, A PROGRAM ATTEMPTING TO CREATE CONTIGUOUS TRAILS THROUGHOUT BERKSHIRE COUNTY.

Objective: Investigate Improvements to Encourage Snowmobiling in Town.

Sandisfield has a wide ranging network of existing snowmobile trails and an active local organization, the Sandisfield Snowmobile Club. The town will work collaboratively to develop this recreation activity in town.

ACTION 1: COORDINATE WITH LOCAL AND REGIONAL SNOWMOBILE ORGANIZATIONS TO DETERMINE POSSIBLE AREAS FOR COOPERATION AND PARTNERSHIP AS WELL AS FUTURE RECREATION NEEDS.

ACTION 2: DEVELOP PARKING AREAS FOR SNOWMOBILE TRAILERS ALONG ROUTE 57.

ACTION 3: EXPLORE GRANT FUNDING FOR POSSIBLE SNOWMOBILING RELATED PROJECTS THROUGH THE MASS. RECREATIONAL TRAILS GRANT PROGRAM.

Goal 2: Increase Recreation Opportunities for Sandisfield Residents.

The town will work to improve its local publicly owned recreation areas such as Yanner Park and the Library Playground, as well as develop other recreation opportunities in town, such as community garden program.

Objective: Increase Capacity to Address Local Recreation Needs.

ACTION 1: DEVELOP AND ADOPT AN OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN TO BE ABLE TO ACCESS STATE RECREATION FUNDING.

ACTION 2: ONCE ADOPTED BY THE TOWN AND APPROVED BY THE STATE, APPLY FOR PARC GRANT FUNDING TO IMPROVE TOWN OWNED RECREATION AREAS.

ACTION 3: APPLY FOR OTHER STATE RECREATION GRANT FUNDS, SUCH AS THE RECREATIONAL TRAILS GRANT PROGRAM OR LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND.

Objective: Improve the Library Playground.

The Town will improve and expand opportunities for recreation at the Library Playground.

ACTION 1: DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A PLAN TO IMPROVE THE LIBRARY PLAYGROUND, ITS SAFETY AND ITS ACCESSIBILITY.

ACTION 2: SEEK GRANT AND OTHER FUNDING TO IMPLEMENT IMPROVEMENTS TO THE PLAYGROUND.

ACTION 3: INVESTIGATE POTENTIAL RECREATION USE OF THE CLAM RIVER ADJACENT TO THE LIBRARY PLAYGROUND.

Objective: Revisit Yanner Park.

The Town will revisit past planning efforts for Yanner Park, implement new strategies for its use, and explore funding sources to better utilize and maintain this area. The town will work to link Yanner Park with adjacent recreation spaces through a trail network.

ACTION 1: DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A MULTI-USE PLAN FOR YANNER PARK.

ACTION 2: INTEGRATE YANNER PARK WITH ADJACENT RECREATION AREAS, SUCH AS THE CLAM RIVER RESERVE AND STATE LANDS TO CREATE SEAMLESS AND CONTIGUOUS SPACES FOR OUTDOOR ENJOYMENT.

ACTION 3: DEVELOP NON-TRADITIONAL REVENUE SOURCES

TO IMPROVE, BETTER UTILIZE, AND MAINTAIN YANNER PARK.

Objective: Investigate Development of a Community Garden Program.

Gardening is a favorite activity of Sandisfield residents. The town will work to identify a location for and implement a community program.

ACTION 1: IDENTIFY A LOCAL COMMUNITY GARDEN ADVOCATE OR COMMITTEE.

ACTION 2: ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY TO EXAMINE NEEDS AND DESIRES FOR A COMMUNITY GARDEN AVAILABLE FOR SANDISFIELD RESIDENTS.

ACTION 3: IDENTIFY AN APPROPRIATE LOCATION FOR A COMMUNITY GARDEN ON PRIVATE, STATE, OR TOWN OWNED LAND.

ACTION 4: IMPLEMENT A COMMUNITY GARDEN PROGRAM.

Goal 3: Leverage State Lands to Generate Additional Benefits for the Town.

Sandisfield will leverage the vast network of state owned in town through collaboration and advocacy with the state and other municipalities. These efforts will create additional sources of revenue for the town and create additional draws and attractions for visitors to Sandisfield.

Objective: Advocate for Additional Revenue from State Lands.

The town will advocate for changes to state stumpage fees and PILOT payments.

ACTION 1: WORK WITH THE COMMONWEALTH AND SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES TO ADVOCATE FOR CHANGES TO STATE STUMPAGE FEE LAWS AND REGULATIONS.

ACTION 2: WORK WITH THE COMMONWEALTH AND SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES TO ADVOCATE FOR CONSISTENT PILOT PAYMENTS.

Objective: Investigate Participation in the Historic Curatorship Program to Utilize the Historic Structures at Spectacle Pond Farm.

The historic structures near Spectacle Pond are a potential amenity and draw to the town. The town will engage the state on the future uses of these structures.

ACTION 1: ENGAGE THE STATE TO EXAMINE THE TOWN'S ROLE IN THE FUTURE OF THE STRUCTURES AT SPECTACLE POND FARM AS POSSIBLE AMENITIES TO GENERATE REVENUE AND IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE.

Objective: Explore Options to Hold Events on State Land.

Athletic events and competitions could draw hundreds of visitors to Sandisfield's open spaces and local businesses. The town will explore options to host these events in town and on state owned lands.

ACTION 1: ESTABLISH A PROGRAM TO HOST ATHLETIC AND SPORTING EVENTS SUCH AS BICYCLE AND ROAD RACES ON STATE OWNED LAND.



CHAPTER 11: VISION

INTRODUCTION

The vision statement is a concise description of the Town's desired future. This may include both those qualities of the town that residents would like to keep and attributes the town would like to see added or changed in the future. The vision serves as the basis for the creation of goals and objectives in the plan for the town to pursue in the future.

VISION

Sandisfield is a hidden gem of the southern Berkshire region. The town has a broad range of assets including extensive forests, wildlife habitat, and public lands, as well as abundant recreation, cultural, and historic resources. Sandisfield's nearly 1000 year-round residents, as well as many seasonal residents and second homeowners, have discovered and love the unique, rural community and have chosen to make it their home. Through dedication and collaboration, promotion and outreach, the town will leverage its assets to improve quality of life and establish Sandisfield a destination for all.

Moreover, the town will continue to seek out opportunities to make the following statements true:

Economy

Sandisfield will energize, strengthen and promote its economic base of independent local entrepreneurs, including working farms and the wood products industry, while working to improve daily life through economic models such as cooperative business.

Infrastructure

The Town will improve its public facilities and town technology infrastructure to improve public services and facilitate public engagement. The Town will pursue alternative energy development on its lands, and encourage residents to adopt small scale solar and wind energy improvements to improve sustainability, reduce costs, and generate revenue.

Services

Sandisfield will reduce and offset its expenses through a wide variety of means, while continuing to provide

high quality services for town residents and enhancing services for families and senior citizens.

Housing

Sandisfield will provide housing for all ages and income levels within the town.

Transportation

Sandisfield will comprehensively examine and plan for transportation within the town to provide a complete and well maintained system of roads within the town. The town will pursue opportunities to enhance non-motorized transportation and establish a wayfinding system to promote town assets and improve navigation throughout the largest municipality in the Berkshires.

Land Use

The Town of Sandisfield will establish a Town Center as the future hub of social and public life within the community. The town will implement comprehensive changes to its zoning and bylaws to address future land uses and improve overall usability and clarity of this important town document.

Natural and Cultural Resources

Sandisfield will establish itself as an environmental and heritage destination for all.

Open Space and Recreation

The Town will establish itself as a recreation destination for all. Sandisfield will leverage its open space assets, such as state lands, to create new recreation and economic opportunities for the town, and invest in its town owned recreation areas to improve recreation for town residents.



CHAPTER 12: PROCESS

INTRODUCTION

The vision statement is a concise description of the Town's desired future. This may include both those qualities of the town that residents would like to keep and attributes the town would like to see added or changed in the future. The vision serves as the basis for the creation of goals and objectives in the plan for the town to pursue in the future.

PLANNING PROCESS

Public Vision Meeting

Prior to BRPC's involvement as a consultant in the creation of this Master Plan, members of the Sandisfield Strategic Planning Committee held a public vision meeting on July 23, 2014. The meeting was well attended and helped to kick-off the development of the Master Plan. The format of the vision meeting was an open discussion with members of the public. Notes from the vision meeting formed the basis for many of the goals, objectives, and actions of the plan. Members of the public discussed the need to better promote the town and its assets, needs for housing for families and seniors, the possibility of the creation of a town center, and town services among other topics.

Master Plan Steering Committee Meetings

The Sandisfield Master Plan Steering Committee (MPSC) was directly responsible for the drafting and creation of the Master Plan. The committee was organized as a subcommittee of the Sandisfield Planning Board. BRPC Assistant Director Thomas Matuszko served as the facilitator of meetings of the group and no chairperson of this committee was elected. All affairs of this committee were conducted in accordance with the Mass. Open Meeting Law.

BRPC assisted the MPSC by gathering existing conditions information, conducting the public opinion survey and holding stakeholder interviews among other tasks. BRPC prepared drafts of the Master Plan which were reviewed by committee members and used to develop the goals, objectives and actions of the plan.

PLANNING PROCESS AT A GLANCE

Public Opinion Survey

A public opinion survey was developed early in the planning process. The survey was available online and at several locations in town from July 31st to August 31st, 2015. For additional information see Appendix E.

Public Vision Meeting

Members of the Sandisfield Strategic Planning Committee held a public vision meeting on July 23, 2014. The meeting was an open discussion with members of the public about the town's needs and desires for the future.

Stakeholder Interviews

Town staff, board and committee members, and members of local organizations were interviewed to help inform the development of the Master Plan and provide an assessment of ongoing and in progress work by the town.

MPSC Meetings

Members of the Sandisfield MPSC met XXXX times from XXXX 2015 until XXXX 2016 to review draft material and craft goals and objectives for the plan.



Sandisfield MPSC Members

Gary Bottum Sr.
Anina Carr
David Hubbard
Kathleen Jacobs
Sanford Parisky
John Skrip
Andrew Snyder

TO BE COMPLETED WITH BIOS FOR ALL MEMBERS

Public Opinion Survey

Early in the creation of the Master Plan, the steering committee developed a public opinion survey. The survey was available online, through the website SurveyMonkey.com as well as through hardcopies available at the Town Hall, the Library, the transfer station, Post Office, Sandisfield Arts Center and When Pigs Fly Farm. The survey was available from July 31st to August 31st, 2015. Overall there were 132 responses to the survey, with most respondents being older than 45 years of age. Roughly 18% (24/132) of survey respondents did not answer demographic questions, and cannot be identified or grouped based on residency status. However, of the remaining 108 respondents that identified demographic questions, 40% identified as year-round residents and 60% identified as seasonal or second homeowners. Based on data from the 2010 Census, 4.8% of all year-round residents in town responded to the survey. The survey asked 30 questions in total, and covered a broad range of topics including general opinion about the town (see Figure 12.1), recreation, town services, transportation, housing, and other topics to be addressed in the Master Plan. A copy of responses to the public opinion survey are included as Appendix E of this document.

Stakeholder Interviews

BRPC conducted a number of stakeholder interviews to inform the development of the Master Plan. The intent of this effort was to assess ongoing or in progress work by the town and question those with first hand knowledge about town affairs as to the direction and steps the town should take in the future. Additionally, through the interview process, the committee hoped to gain perspective from important

organizations involved in the town. Interviews were conducted in August and September of 2015, and were intended to gather information early in the Master Plan process.

Interviews were conducted primarily over the telephone, with some stakeholders completing a short questionnaire in lieu of a formal interview. Potential stakeholders were identified as leaders or chairpersons of town boards and committees, other town officials and staff, as well as those involved in local and regional entities, such as the Sandisfield Times or Arts Center. Many individuals beyond the list below were contacted to participate in the stakeholder interviews; however, they were unable to be scheduled or did not return the questionnaire.

Questions asked in the questionnaire were as follows:

1. What are your responsibilities (as a town employee or board/committee member, or with other organizations)?
2. What ongoing or in progress work or initiatives are you involved with?
3. What trends or recurring issues have you noticed in your work in town? How have these trends changed from the past?
4. What are the most important issues facing the town?
5. What actions or steps should be taken to address these issues?

Individuals Participating in Stakeholder Interviews

Dolores Harasyko, Town Clerk

Eric Munson, Building Inspector

Stephan Harasyko, Highway Superintendent

Clare English, Library Board of Trustees

Alice Boyd, Chair of Select Board

Ronald Bernard, Chair of Historical Commission

Marcella Smith*, President of Sandisfield Arts Center

Susie Crofut*, Vice President of Sandisfield Arts Center

Bill Price, Editor of Sandisfield Times

Simon Winchester, Editor and founder of Sandisfield Times

Linda Riiska, Chair of Council on Aging

Jean Atwater-Williams, Chair of Technology Committee

Liana Toscanini*, Development and Marketing Director for Community Access to the Arts, Founder of Sandisfield Times, Former President of Sandisfield Arts Center

*interviewed via email questionnaire due to time and scheduling constraints, all others emailed over the telephone.

To Be Completed



CHAPTER 13: IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

This chapter describes the types of actions that will be needed to implement this plan, who will be responsible for taking action on each item, and the relative priority for timing of implementation. It also describes the procedure for amending and updating the plan over time.

Implementation Actions

This plan will be implemented primarily through five types of actions:

- 1) Day-to-Day Policy Decisions
- 2) Regulatory changes
- 3) Plans and Programs
- 4) Regional Coordination
- 5) Collaborative Action

Each of these actions will likely involve more than one group or individual in the town and region. Specific responsibilities will be detailed for each action in the next sections of this chapter.

Day to Day Policy Decisions

The town administration, boards, commissions, and departments will be responsible for many of the day-to-day decisions that will cumulatively help implement this plan. Many of these decisions will be made by the Select Board in the form of policy creation and support and task delegation.

Regulatory Changes

A number of significant recommendations of this plan are directly or indirectly related to the development of new regulations to govern growth and land use in the town. The Planning Board will be responsible for the initiation of the efforts to draft new bylaw language but it will take a united effort on the part of the town to conduct appropriate outreach to achieve a successful and appropriate bylaw product that meets the needs of the town.

Plans and Programs

The goals, policies, and actions of this plan impact other plans and programs of the town in

a few ways. Future updates to other plans, such as the Open Space and Recreation Plan, will need to be in compliance with this plan. New programs called for in this plan will need to be systematically pursued and implemented by the responsible entity as resources allow – such as economic development activities and infrastructure planning and implementation.

Regional Governmental Coordination

In many cases, the implementation of this plan can and should involve other municipalities, the state, or the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission. The town will need to take the first step of starting a dialogue on items where collaborative planning or action is needed or where technical assistance is needed or desired.

Collaborative Action

At a very basic level, successful implementation of this plan will require collaborative action outside of the realm of formal government. Residents, various pond and watershed associations, recreation groups, state agencies, local business owners, and others will need to actively engage in the implementation of this plan – through both direct action and through support and participation with town-led implementations actions. This plan is working to achieve a shared vision of the town's future – achieving that will take a whole- town effort.

Who Will Implement the Plan?

This plan will be implemented through the collaborative and individual effort of a number of organizations, agencies, and individuals. The action plan uses the abbreviations listed at the bottom of each page to identify the parties that will likely be involved in the achievement of the corresponding action. The town may wish to consider appointing an implementation committee that would help to organize efforts to implement the plan. This committee could be especially important in working to organizing and manage volunteers to help with implementation activities. The committee could also serve as an advocate for the plan and work with other town boards and committees on strategies for plan

implementation. Moreover, it could work to “roll out” Master Plan implementation activities through integration into its regular “all boards” meetings.

The Action Plan has been developed to span a period of five years after the Master Plan’s initial adoption. Actions were categorized based on several likely periods for implementation. Items listed as “ongoing” in the schedule are actions that the town is already in the process of implementing and will likely continue to work on in the future. Actions listed as “immediate and ongoing” are items that can be implemented on an ongoing basis by the town, or integrated into other activities, but are not yet being acted on by the town. Finally, other actions are divided between three broad time periods; 1-3 years, 3-5 years, and 5+ years. Some actions, particularly those in the 1-3 year time period may reoccur regularly or continuously after initial implementation. It will be up to the town to evaluate its successes and determine if these actions occur once, or are implemented regularly.

Some items on the action plan can be completed within this five year period, while many others will not. It is recommended that the town reevaluate the action plan after this five year period to reflect on its successes and review its priorities. The town will likely not choose to pursue a full update of the Master Plan at this point, but may revise the action plan to more effectively implement the plan.

Additionally, it should be noted that some items in the action plan are redundant. These include This was intentional, and attempts to make the plan actions supporting and reinforcing, and to emphasize the interdisciplinary nature of many of the items to be acted on by the town.

UPDATING THE PLAN

A Master Plan looks far into the future and establishes a roadmap of goals, policies, and actions for the town to implement over time. In order for the plan to remain a relevant document, however, periodic updates will be necessary. Updates can occur in two general ways: plan amendments and a full plan update.

Plan Amendments

The town may, from time to time, encounter changing conditions, new laws or programs, or other circumstances that it wishes to reflect or respond to through the Master Plan document. The plan amendment process is fairly simple (see below) and allows the planning board to make small but important changes to the document over time to keep pace with changing circumstances.

Plan Update

Eventually, conditions will shift to a degree that a minor amendment is insufficient to achieve a document that provides meaningful and forward-thinking guidance to the town. At this time, typically 10-15 years from initial adoption of a new or fully updated plan, municipalities can go through a plan update process. At this time, the community initiates a full new planning process to rethink or reaffirm the vision and chart out new policy directions and carry forward any relevant directions from the prior document.

Amendment and Update Procedure

MGL 41 S81D (Appendix D) describes the practice and procedure for amending and updating an adopted Master Plan.

Vote:

An amendment of the comprehensive plan may be made through a formal majority vote of the planning board and recorded for public record.

Filing:

The planning board must supply a copy of the amended or updated plan to the Department of Housing and Community Development. In the case of an amendment, a good practice would be to include a cover memo highlighting the amendment that was made.

ACTION PLAN

The action plan details each implementation action contained in the prior chapters of the Master Plan, the proposed timing for the action to be taken, potential leadership, and other interested parties responsible for implementing the action.

ECONOMY		Suggested Leadership	Other Participants	Schedule	Priority
Goal 1: Improve the Local Economy					
General Objective: Increase the Number of Tourist Visitors and Second Homeowners in Sandisfield.					
General Objective: Develop the Town's Agricultural and Wood Products Industry.					
General Objective: Promote the Town's Open Space and Recreation Opportunities.					
General Objective: Expedite the Development of Broadband Internet in Sandisfield.					
Objective: Work with Local Businesses to Coordinate and Participate in Regional Organizations.					
Encourage local businesses to participate in regional business organizations such as Berkshire Grown and the Southern Berkshire Chamber of Commerce.					
Explore development of a Sandisfield business association or local chamber of commerce.					
Encourage or sponsor business development workshops and training in town.					
Conduct outreach to inform local businesses about training and development programs in the region.					
Objective: Actively Promote the Town and its Assets.					
Develop or appoint an event coordination committee that will actively promote town assets and events regionally. This committee would be responsible for managing a calendar of town events, coordinating with local businesses and organizations, and ensuring that town events and assets are publicized regionally.					
Coordinate the "cross promotion" of local businesses and events in town.					
Organize and Promote Farm tours in Sandisfield.					
Organize and promote more events and programs in Sandisfield, such as the 250th celebration.					
Organize and promote a "buy local" campaign focusing on the town's agricultural, forestry, and artisanal products.					
Engage the community to develop a town logo to be used on promotional materials and branding.					
Promote the quality of life and the Farmington River school as potential draws for new residents.					
Develop and implement a local wayfinding system in Sandisfield that promotes and locates local businesses and town amenities and features.					

Parties Involved in Plan Implementation				Schedule			
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All	All Boards, Committees, and Staff	EMD	Emergency Management Director	Hist. Com.	Historical Commission	Immediate & Ongoing	Actions that can be acted on immediately and integrated throughout implementation
BOH	Board of Health	School	Farmington River School and School Committee	Highway	Highway Department	1-3 Years	Projects to be implemented within a 1-3 year time frame
BOS	Board of Selectmen	Planning	Planning Board	Cem.	Cemetery Committee	3-5 Years	Projects to be implemented within a 3-5 year time frame
Cul. Co.	Sandisfield Cultural Council	Vol.	Volunteers (residents, local businesses, etc.)	Rec.	Recreation Committee	5+ Years	Projects likely requiring 5 or more years for implementation
Staff	Town Staff	DCR	Dept. of Conservation and Recreation	Police, Fire, etc.	Other town departments	Tech.	Technology Committee
BRPC	Berkshire Regional Planning Commission	COA	Council on Aging	MassDOT	Mass. Dept. of Transportation	Strat. Plan.	Strategic Planning Committee

ECONOMY—Continued		Suggested Leadership	Other Participants	Schedule	Priority
Objective: Develop and Regularly Update the Town Website as a Promotional Tool for the Town.					
Display and promote local businesses on the town website.					
Display and maintain an interactive map on the town website that provides information about recreation areas in town, including water access points, trails, and other attractions.					
Display and maintain an interactive map on the town website that promotes the town's historic buildings and cemeteries, as well as its cultural assets, such as the arts center.					
Ensure that commercial developers and potential homeowners in Sandisfield can easily access and download applicable forms and permit applications and are provided with up to date contact information for public officials, boards and committees.					
Display and maintain up-to-date and user-friendly information about the development review process in Sandisfield.					
Objective: Leverage and Improve the Physical Assets of the Town.					
Identify opportunities to improve town image, such as through potential screening of the transfer station with evergreen trees.					
Create attractive "Gateways" to Sandisfield, such as along Route 8 and 57, through landscaping, signage and other enhancements.					
Improve the Town Green near the Intersection of Route 57 and New Hartford Road with landscaping, a kiosk and other features to enhance its use as a town gathering space.					
Explore the adaptive reuse of town hall and other town buildings to create economic stimulus.					
Goal 2: Improve Daily Life Through Additional Services and Amenities.					
Objective: Explore the Development of Cooperative Business Models in Town.					
Research successful cooperative models and determine the business model that will be most successful in Sandisfield.					
Form a public committee or citizen's group that will investigate a cooperative business in town.					
Survey the public to determine interest in a future cooperative business in town.					
Develop a "swap shop" in town for the exchange of second hand items.					
Develop a food pantry in town.					
Promote existing cooperative businesses or services.					

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INFRASTRUCTURE				Suggested Leadership	Other Participants	Schedule	Priority
Goal 1: Improve Town Facilities to Meet Current and Future Needs.							
Objective: Develop and Implement a Comprehensive and Fiscally Sound Funding Plan and Process to Replace Town Buildings.							
Develop a funding plan and process to replace town buildings. Integrate this effort with larger capital improvement planning.							
Conduct outreach to seek public comment, inform residents, and develop consensus around a plan for town buildings.							
Integrate and inform residents about unique fiscal conditions impacting this planning effort, such as historically low interest rates.							
Goal 2: Improve Town Technology Infrastructure.							
Objective: Plan and Implement Future Improvements to Town Technology Infrastructure.							
Develop a multi-year spending plan for town technology infrastructure. Integrate this plan with larger capital improvement planning.							
Develop and regularly update a technology plan and program for the town.							
Coordinate with BRPC and surrounding towns to investigate a possible shared Information technology staff position.							
Create a streamlined telephone and email system for the town.							
Expedite Broadband Internet Development in Town.							
Continue to coordinate with Wiredwest on broadband internet creation in town.							
Advance design and construction phase.							
Finalize broadband installation.							
Goal 3: Develop Alternative Sources of Energy in Sandisfield.							
Objective: Pursue and Promote Potential Alternative Energy Development in Sandisfield.							
Amend town bylaws to promote alternative energy development in town.							
Pursue development of solar or wind energy on town owned lands and buildings.							
Objective: Connect Sandisfield Residents with Programs to Promote Small Scale Energy Production and Energy Efficiency.							
Connect Sandisfield residents with energy efficiency programs, such as Mass. Saves.							
Encourage or sponsor energy efficiency educational programs and events in town.							
Investigate implementation of a solarize mass program in sandisfield, possibly In combination with surrounding towns.							

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Cul. Co.	Sandisfield Cultural Council	Vol.	Volunteers (residents, local businesses, etc.)	Rec.	Recreation Committee	5+ Years	Projects likely requiring 5 or more years for implementation
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SERVICES	Suggested Leadership	Other Participants	Schedule	Priority
Goal 1: Provide Efficient and Fiscally Responsible Services.				
Objective: Streamline Costs While Maintaining or Enhancing Levels of Service.				
Pursue options to regionalize and share equipment.				
Develop a shared information technology staff position with surrounding towns and BRPC.				
Work with surrounding towns to advocate for state funding or maintenance responsibility of Route 57.				
Continue to use the regional group purchasing program.				
Create formal job descriptions for town staff.				
Establish a system for employee performance evaluation.				
Develop and implement a multi-year capital improvement plan (CIP) that includes all town departments, integrates ongoing and proposed work, is open to public comment, and is approved yearly at town meeting.				
Objective: Offset Town Costs through External Funding Sources.				
Continue to research and apply for grant funding from state and private sources to address road maintenance, infrastructure and other needs.				
Continue to review town fees and licenses.				
Develop a plan to generate revenue from the sale of town owned property or equipment.				
Sponsor or promote revenue generating events in town.				
Objective: Pursue Opportunities to Reduce Town Education Costs, while Maintaining High Levels of Service.				
Participate in regional efforts to examine the restructuring of the educational system in Berkshire				
Pursue cost reduction measures in the educational system where possible, such as shared services, cooperative purchasing, and specialized education programs.				
Objective: Enhance Services for Sandisfield's Senior Citizens.				
Continue to apply for grants to fund programs for Sandisfield's Senior Citizens.				
Recruit volunteers for Council on Aging Programs.				
Explore development of regional programs or shared resources for seniors with surrounding towns.				
Investigate development of a "meals on wheels" program for seniors.				

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SERVICES—Continued		Suggested Leadership	Other Participants	Schedule	Priority
Objective: Enhance Services for Sandisfield's Families.					
Establish a wellness check call system for seniors.					
Develop a pool of volunteers to help those in need of services, such as the home bound.					
Continue to participate in regional efforts, such as the Berkshires Age Friendly Communities initiative.					
Objective: Enhance Services for Sandisfield's Families.					
Encourage and support the development of local community organizations, and promote those existing in town.					
Continue to provide opportunities for youth outdoor recreation.					
Goal 2: Better Inform and Engage Residents, Boards, and Committees.					
Ensure timely posting of agendas, minutes, and procurement on the town website to avoid meeting conflicts, and improve communications with residents.					
Explore implementation of an electronic display to post public meetings.					
Encourage elected officials to hold office hours in Sandisfield to more effectively advocate for the town's needs.					
Recruit additional members to serve on town boards and the fire department.					
Review compensation for volunteer boards.					
Develop and implement strategies to engage new residents to participate in town government and civic life, such as welcome baskets, event promotion, etc.					

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HOUSING		Suggested Leadership	Other Participants	Schedule	Priority
Goal 1: Sandisfield Will Supply Housing to Meet the Needs of All Ages and Incomes.					
Objective: Develop Local Capacity to Address Housing Needs.					
Establish a local housing organization such as a town committee, housing partnership. or housing trust.					
Work with local organizations such as DHCD, Berkshire Community Land Trust, Construct Inc. and Habitat for humanity to address local needs.					
Develop and implement a housing needs assessment and housing production plan.					
Objective: Participate in and Promote Housing Rehabilitation Programs and Incentives.					
Work with appropriate agencies and surrounding communities to apply for housing rehabilitation funding, such as through community development block grants.					
Pursue new rehabilitation funds, which may become available.					
Promote and educate about programs that provide assistance in improving Home accessibility for older residents, such as through, the department of veterans affairs or the USDA single family housing repair program.					
Objective: Investigate Funding Sources and Bylaw Changes to Address Housing Needs.					
Investigate dedicated funding sources for housing, such as the Community Preservation Act In Sandisfield.					
Investigate development of an accessory, or in-law apartment bylaw.					
Investigate development of an open space residential design Bylaw or Natural Resource Protection Zoning in town.					
Objective: Create a Long-Term Plan for Senior Housing in Sandisfield.					
Explore successful regional models for senior housing or assisted living in Sandisfield and encourage their development in town.					
Explore other options to support senior housing and aging in place in Sandisfield, such as cohousing or home-sharing models.					
Integrate research into the future housing needs assessment and housing production plan.					
Work to implement future senior housing over time.					

Parties Involved in Plan Implementation					Schedule		
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HOUSING—Continued	Suggested Leadership	Other Participants	Schedule	Priority
Objective: Encourage the Rehabilitation of Historic Homes in Sandisfield.				
Sponsor programs and workshops focused on historic home rehabilitation and maintenance in town.				
Promote participation in the Mass. Historical Commission Historic rehabilitation Tax credit program.				
Develop local incentives and programs to encourage homeowners to restore their historic homes.				

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TRANSPORTATION		Suggested Leadership	Other Participants	Schedule	Priority
Goal 1: Provide a Complete and Well Maintained System of Roads					
Objective: Increase the Town's Utilization of Chapter 90 Funding.					
Develop a multi-year roadway spending plan. Integrate this plan with larger capital improvement planning.					
Objective: Address Town Needs for Route 57.					
Work with surrounding towns to advocate for state funding or maintenance responsibility of route 57.					
Continue to Place Route 57 Road Maintenance Needs on the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) until funded.					
Objective: Work to Resolve Road Jurisdiction and Maintenance Responsibility Issues.					
Develop a status of roads report that evaluates the jurisdiction of all town roadways.					
Work with the town Highway department, select board, and planning board to develop recommendations for town roads based on report findings and current maintenance demands.					
Implement recommendations.					
Objective: Plan for and Address Future Roadway Needs.					
As existing culverts and bridges need replacement, ensure that replacement components are adequate to accommodate extreme weather events.					
Conduct a cost-benefit analysis of town roadways to determine if there is benefit to paving some unpaved roadways, or which maintenance practices (i.e. crack seal vs. chip seal) could help to reduce long term costs.					
Analyze and implement recommendations to address potential traffic safety risk areas in town, such as dangerous intersections, areas with frequent traffic violations, etc.					
Ensure that all future roadway projects, from new construction to ongoing maintenance and repairs, meet applicable standards, best practices, and recommendations.					
Review and implement the recommendations and projects identified in the 2013 BRPC road condition report.					

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TRANSPORTATION—Continued		Suggested Leadership	Other Participants	Schedule	Priority
Objective: Plan for and Address Future Bridge Needs.					
Monitor all MassDOT bridge inspections to identify preventative maintenance needs for bridges.					
Integrate bridge needs into larger capital improvement planning.					
Ensure preventative maintenance is performed on town bridges, and that long term repair and reconstruction needs are addressed.					
Goal 2: Improve Public and Non-Motorized Transportation in Sandisfield.					
Objective: Adopt a Long-Term Complete Streets Approach to Future Roadway Projects.					
Have a municipal representative attend a Complete Streets training session to allow the town to participate in the MASSdot complete streets funding program					
Adopt a Complete Streets Policy, such as a by-law or administrative policy. Vet this policy through at least one public meeting.					
Develop and maintain a Complete Streets Prioritization plan for the town.					
Send proposed projects to MassDOT for approval.					
Objective: More Effectively Accommodate Bicyclists, Pedestrians, and Alternative Transportation on Sandisfield's Roadways in the Short Term.					
Coordinate with MassDOT on guidance for bicycle accommodations along town-owned roadways, particularly newly paved roads such as town hill and new Hartford road.					
Explore development of pedestrian accommodations on roads frequented by pedestrians.					
Where appropriate, Install bicycle warning signage, bicycle lanes, or shared lane markings on town roadways.					
Where appropriate, install pedestrian warning signage on town roadways.					
Ensure bicycle racks are included at major town facilities.					
Coordinate with local businesses, organizations, and the state to ensure that bicycle racks are installed at major town destinations and state owned facilities.					

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TRANSPORTATION—Continued		Suggested Leadership	Other Participants	Schedule	Priority
Implement options for short term parking to facilitate carpooling and provide access to employment and recreation areas.					
When bridges are repaired or replaced, pursue options for water recreation access, such as parking for fishing, boat launches, etc.					
Objective: Create “Walking Loops” on Town Roadways.					
Identify low traffic rural roadways that are frequented by walkers, such as river road.					
Install signage to mark these areas as walking loops, with information on potential parking, and loop length. Integrate this with other wayfinding efforts					
Promote these walking loops through the Council on Aging and the town Website.					
If feasible, connect walking loops with existing hiking and walking trails.					
Objective: Maintain and Enhance Transportation Services for Seniors.					
Continue to seek grant funding for senior transportation in Town.					
More effectively connect town seniors with existing transportation services through BRTA and the SBETC.					
Investigate a possible application to the MassDOT and BRTA community transit grant program, that could help fund a vehicle for use by the Council on Aging.					
Goal 3: Establish a Town Wayfinding System and Improve Local Signage.					
Conduct an inventory of town destinations, assets, recreation amenities, historic buildings, etc. for possible integration into a wayfinding system.					
Develop and implement a signage and wayfinding system for the town.					
Identify areas in town where existing roadway signage needs improvement, or where signage needs to be installed.					
implement improvements to town roadway signage.					

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LAND USE	Suggested Leadership	Other Participants	Schedule	Priority
Goal 1: Establish a “Town Center” in Sandisfield.				
Objective: Continue to Pursue Creation of a Future Town Center In Sandisfield.				
Integrate town center planning efforts with larger capital improvement planning and other efforts to improve public facilities.				
Conduct outreach to seek public comment, inform residents, and develop consensus around a plan for a Town Center.				
Develop and implement options to generate revenue from the development of a Town Center.				
Implement the Town Center Plan.				
Goal 2: Update Town Zoning and Bylaws				
Objective: Implement the Recommendations of the BRPC Zoning Audit and other General Revisions to Town Bylaws.				
Implement the recommendations of the BRPC zoning Audit.				
Review and implement possible changes to general conditions in the town bylaws, such as lot size and frontage requirements.				
Objective: Explore the Development of Commercial Solar and Wind Energy, and Wireless Communications Bylaws and Siting requirements.				
Research, develop, and implement commercial solar and wind energy bylaws.				
Research, develop, and implement a wireless communications bylaw.				
Objective: Explore the Development of One or More Village Center Zoning Districts in Sandisfield.				
Research, develop, and implement possible village center zoning districts in town.				
Objective: Investigate a Possible Rear Lot or Shared Driveway Bylaw in Town.				
Research, develop, and implement a rear lot or shared driveway bylaw.				
Objective: Investigate the Creation of One or More Commercial Development Zones in Sandisfield.				
Research, develop, and implement Commercial Development zones in Sandisfield.				
Goal 3: Address the Proposed Connecticut Expansion Pipeline Project.				
Support the equitable taxation of utilities such as the Connecticut Expansion Pipeline in Sandisfield.				

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NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES				Suggested Leadership	Other Participants	Schedule	Priority
Goal 1: Establish Sandisfield as an Environmental Destination.							
Objective: Protect Sandisfield's Natural Resources.							
Continue to enforce regulations that protect the town's wetlands and water resources.							
Explore alternative deicing methods on town roadways.							
Objective: Promote Sandisfield's Natural Resources.							
Encourage the commonwealth, local land trusts, and other conservation organizations to hold events, trail walks, informational talks, and other events about town natural resources.							
Integrate natural resources into other town promotion and wayfinding efforts.							
Co-promote natural resources with businesses and events.							
Objective: Promote Sandisfield as a Destination for Bird-Watching.							
Encourage bird-watchers to submit bird sightings to the E-Bird Website.							
Encourage the identification of Bird Watching "Hot spots" in town.							
Coordinate with local experts and relevant organizations such as the Hoffman bird club and Mass. Audubon to encourage the hosting of bird watching events in Sandisfield.							
Coordinate with Mass. Audubon on the development of a bird sanctuary in the town.							
Goal 2: Establish Sandisfield as a Heritage and Historic Destination.							
Objective: Encourage the Utilization and Restoration of Historic Buildings in Town.							
Identify historic properties that would most benefit from potential restoration and curation.							
Develop or participate in programs that provide technical assistance to the owners of historic homes to incentivize their restoration.							
Promote and support incentives for the restoration of historic properties, such as the MHC historic rehabilitation tax credit.							
Objective: Cultivate the Town's Historic and Cultural Assets.							
Continue ongoing work to update the town's inventory of historic resources.							
Continue to nominate town buildings for state and national historic recognition.							
Continue ongoing work to establish several National Historic Register Districts in Town.							
promote the town recognition and award program for historic buildings and resources.							
Continue to improve and upgrade methods to store and maintain town historic documents.							

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NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES—Continued		Suggested Leadership	Other Participants	Schedule	Priority
Continue ongoing efforts to install signs marking historic buildings through outreach to local homeowners.					
Integrate historic and cultural assets into the town's promotion and wayfinding efforts.					
Organize a heritage tour of Sandisfield.					
Continue to support the performing and visual arts programs in Sandisfield through the Sandisfield arts center.					
Objective: Develop and Promote the Knox Trail as a Multi-Use, Multi-Season Historic Recreation Trail in Sandisfield.					
Continue to collaborate with the Town of Otis on efforts to develop the Knox Trail.					
Work with state and local landowners to allow year-round use of the Knox Trail.					
Integrate the Knox Trail into other promotional efforts.					
Connect the Knox Trail to other local and regional trail networks and recreation areas, such as Spectacle Pond.					
Coordinate with the state and local organizations such as the Knox Trail Sno-Riders and Sandisfield Snowmobile Club on trail development.					
Promote the Knox Trail as a educational resource.					
Objective: Develop and Promote the Town's Cemeteries as Historic Destinations.					
Continue ongoing work to clean up and actively maintain town cemeteries.					
Continue ongoing work to mark the graves of veterans in Town Cemeteries.					

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OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION		Suggested Leadership	Other Participants	Schedule	Priority
Goal 1: Establish Sandisfield as a Recreation Destination.					
Objective: Promote the Town's Recreation Areas.					
Coordinate with the state and local land trusts to create signage marking local recreation assets, such as the Clam River Reserve and State owned lands.					
Integrate Sandisfield's recreation assets into promotional and wayfinding efforts.					
Objective: Improve Access to State Lands.					
Advocate for the consistent management of state properties for active recreation use.					
Work with the State to improve amenities and access points on state lands, with west lake and upper and lower spectacle pond being priority improvement areas.					
Work to integrate active recreation use into the final draft of the Spectacle Pond Farm Management Plan.					
Ensure that town interests are well represented in updated management plans for state owned properties in the future.					
Investigate use of state lands to host athletic and sporting events.					
Partner with regional organizations, such as land trusts and other conservation groups to form a coalition that will address access needs and potential improvements to state lands.					
Objective: Link Disparate Recreation Areas.					
Develop a trail network that connects Yanner park, the Clam River Reserve, adjacent state-owned properties and the Spectacle Pond area.					
Coordinate with BNRC on their "Berkshire High Road" campaign, a program attempting to create contiguous trails throughout Berkshire county.					
Objective: Investigate Improvements to Encourage Snowmobiling in Town.					
Coordinate with local and regional snowmobile organizations to determine possible areas for cooperation and partnership as well as future recreation needs.					
Develop parking areas for snowmobile trailers along Route 57.					
Explore grant funding for possible snowmobiling related projects through the Mass. Recreational Trails Grant Program.					

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OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION—Continued		Suggested Leadership	Other Participants	Schedule	Priority
Goal 2: Increase Recreation Opportunities for Sandisfield Residents.					
Objective: Increase Capacity to Address Local Recreation Needs.					
Develop and adopt an Open Space and Recreation Plan to be able to access state recreation funding.					
Once adopted by the town and approved by the state, apply for PARC grant funding to improve town owned recreation areas.					
Apply for other state recreation grant funds, such as the recreational trails grant program or Land and Water Conservation Fund.					
Objective: Improve the Library Playground.					
Develop and implement a plan to improve the library playground, its safety and its accessibility.					
Seek grant and other funding to implement improvements to the playground.					
Investigate potential recreation use of the Clam River adjacent to the Library playground.					
Objective: Revisit Yanner Park.					
Develop and implement a multi-use plan for Yanner Park.					
Integrate Yanner Park with adjacent recreation areas, such as the Clam River Reserve and state lands to create seamless and contiguous spaces for outdoor enjoyment.					
Develop non-traditional revenue sources to improve, better utilize, and maintain Yanner Park.					
Objective: Investigate Development of a Community Garden Program.					
Identify a local community garden advocate or committee.					
Engage the community to examine needs and desires for a community garden available for Sandisfield residents.					
Identify an appropriate location for a community garden on private, state, or town owned land.					
Implement a community garden program.					

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OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION—Continued		Suggested Leadership	Other Participants	Schedule	Priority
Goal 3: Leverage State Lands to Generate Additional Benefits for the Town.					
Objective: Advocate for Additional Revenue from State Lands.					
Work with the Commonwealth and surrounding communities to advocate for changes to state stumpage fee laws and regulations.					
Work with the Commonwealth and surrounding communities to advocate for consistent PILOT payments.					
Objective: Investigate Participation in the Historic Curatorship Program to Utilize the Historic Structures at Spectacle Pond Farm.					
Engage the state to examine the town's role in the future of the structures at Spectacle Pond Farm as possible amenities to generate revenue and improve quality of life.					
Objective: Explore Options to Hold Events on State Land.					
Establish a program to host athletic and sporting events such as bicycle and road races on State owned land.					

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MASTER PLAN

2016

Town of Sandisfield,
Massachusetts