

Town of Lee Master Plan

A Vision for 2040

Adopted by the Lee Planning Board on May 13, 2024



May 13, 2024

Dear Lee Community Member,

In our work over the last 18 months, the Master Plan Committee is gratified to find the Town of Lee in good shape overall. Although much remains to be done, we have learned that Lee is widely recognized as a great place to live, both by our current residents and by people from the greater region. Residents specifically value Lee's:

- Small-town character;
- Downtown area and overall mixture of businesses in the community;
- Open space and recreational resources;
- Public schools; and,
- Community services and facilities.

This work also identifies several primary challenges facing the community:

- The cleanup and transportation of PCBs from the Housatonic River and Woods Pond;
- Limited housing types, cost, and availability;
- The need to boost resources to aid the business community;
- Vacant and underutilized properties;
- An aging population and a declining number of school-aged children; and,
- Limited transportation options aside from automobiles.

Despite these challenges, Lee's future looks bright—provided we work hard in the coming days, weeks, months, and years to ensure future prosperity. Potential future projects proposed in the plan include:

- Constructing a combined public safety facility;
- Improving the town's gateways into the community;
- Partnering with property owners of vacant mills and underutilized properties to map out their future;
- Removing potential zoning barriers to new housing and mill redevelopment;
- Improving the safety of all forms of transportation in town;
- Completing the bike path and investigate extensions;
- Creating a downtown cultural district and public art program; and,
- Enhancing communication between municipal government, residents, businesses, and community organizations.

PREFACE

The Master Plan Committee is delighted at our town's potential and proud to offer this plan to guide the town for years to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter Bluhm". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Peter Bluhm
Chair of the Lee Master Plan Committee

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This project was funded by the Town of Lee, the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, and the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities program.

Introduction

The town of Lee is a Massachusetts municipality located in central Berkshire County. It borders on the communities of Becket, Great Barrington, Lenox, Stockbridge, Tyringham, and Washington. This master plan for Lee was adopted by action of the Lee Planning Board on May 13, 2024.

Master Plans

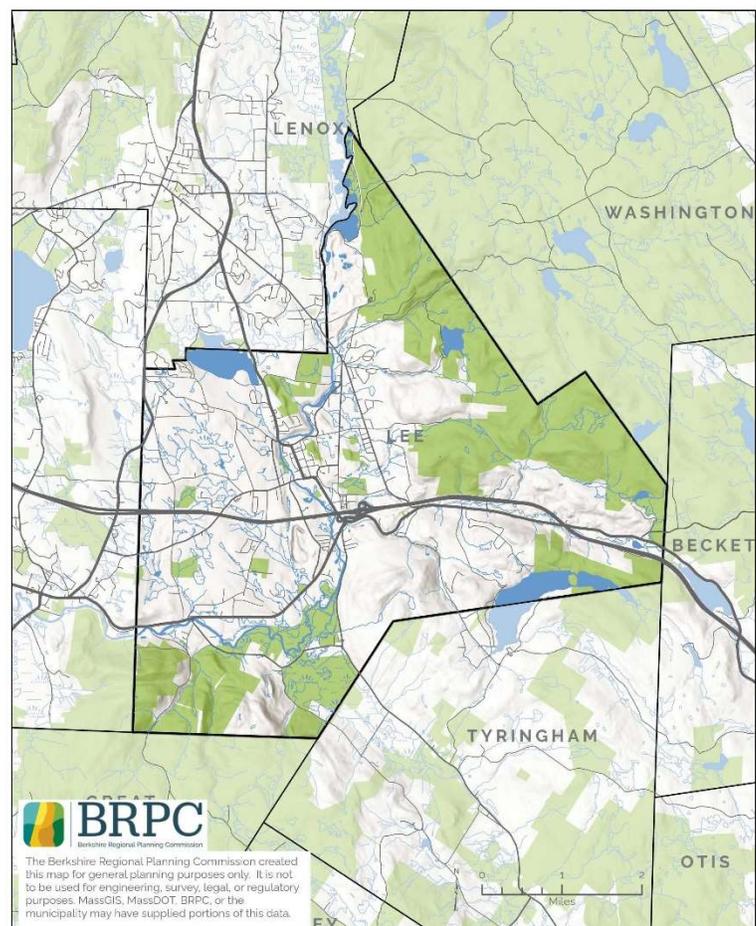
A master plan (also called a comprehensive plan) lays out a community's vision for the future. It also expresses goals and actions aimed at allowing the community to advance its vision of itself. While Massachusetts General Laws (Chapter 41, Section 81D) lay out specific elements to be incorporated into a master plan, each community's plan is unique.

Transportation, jobs, employers, land uses, education, and housing are all dynamic factors affecting each community. A master plan seeks to guide that change to best meet the needs of the residents. Rather than responding piecemeal to challenges, a master plan seeks a coordinated response through strategies that meet the community's overarching goals.

A master plan can:

- Bring the community together in an inclusive process to discuss challenges, solutions, and differing perspectives in an open format;
- Recognize the many strengths and positive attributes of the community;
- Provide a shared vision for how the community should grow, adapt, and respond to change;
- Provide coordinated solutions to complex problems, thereby reducing expense to the municipality, residents, and business owners;
- Facilitate proactive planning;
- Provide accountability so that future decision-making reflects the goals of the plan; and

EXHIBIT 1: Regional Context



- Provide benchmarks for gauging and reporting progress over time.

History of Planning in Lee

This 2024 Master Plan builds upon decades of planning work. The town adopted its first master plan in 1959. Since then, Lee has undergone several other planning efforts, as shown in Table 1.

The 2000 Master Plan was Lee’s most recent town-wide planning effort. That master plan thoroughly reviewed all aspects of the community and proposed key actions regarding land use, housing, transportation, community services, open space, and natural resources. Many key goals from that document still resonate today:

- Supporting downtown Lee as a place of local and regional importance by providing shopping, services, and residential accommodations;
- Creating affordable housing options for all;
- Embracing Lee’s status as the “Gateway to the Berkshires” and working to enhance and preserve the town’s “gateways;”
- Managing investments in public utilities and services;
- Protecting natural resources and conserving open space; and
- Providing high-quality educational and town services.

TABLE 1: History of Planning in Lee

Year	Project
1959	Master Plan
1963	Zoning Adopted
1981	“Think Positivelee” Study
1989	Open Space and Recreation Plan
1996	Open Space and Recreation Plan
2000	Master Plan, Open Space and Recreation Plan
2004	Community Development Plan
2007	Water Protection Plan
2010	Area Traffic Study
2015	Sidewalk Assessment
2016	Open Space and Recreation Plan

Creating the Master Plan

Background

In 2021, the Town of Lee decided to develop a new comprehensive plan. After requesting proposals from qualified consulting firms, the town selected Berkshire Regional Planning Commission in the spring of 2022 to support this effort. Subsequently, the Planning Board created a committee to oversee the process.

Plan Development and Public Engagement

The Master Plan Committee began meeting in September of 2022. Over a period of 18 months the committee held 23 meetings open to the public. During this process the committee and Berkshire Regional Planning Commission met with residents, businesses, and community organizations. The committee held two public forums and conducted a town-wide survey. These efforts guided the Master Plan Committee as it developed an understanding of the current situation, assessed community needs, and created an action plan for the next 10 to 15 years.



Ad for 2023 Master Plan Public Forum



Lee residents share ideas at the 2023 public forum

On February 18, 2023, the committee hosted a public forum at the Lee High School Auditorium. The meeting opened with a presentation on the purpose and process of formulating a master plan and some initial analysis. Thereafter, the attendees formed separate groups to identify the town's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The forum was attended by over 100 people.

In 2023 the Master Plan Committee also developed an online community survey that it administered in both online and paper

formats. Over 400 persons responded. The survey results are summarized in Appendix 1.

During 18 months of work, the Master Plan Committee also undertook two separate but linked efforts. An Open Space and Recreation subcommittee was created in the spring of 2023. This group was tasked with developing an Open Space and Recreation Plan, which is a standalone document that evaluates the town's open space and recreational resources and their best uses. With assistance from Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, this group met eight times while developing this plan and held a separate public forum on October 21, 2023. This planning effort guided the related portions of this plan to ensure consistency.

The Master Plan Committee also formed a separate subcommittee to focus on the needs of Lee's economy and business community. With assistance from Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, this group conducted one-on-one interviews with several Lee business stakeholders and distributed an online survey specifically targeting the business community. The information gathered by the subcommittee is summarized in the existing conditions section below. A summary of the survey results is presented in Appendix 2.

On April 6, 2024, the committee hosted a second public forum to present the draft of this plan. Copies of the draft plan were first made available online and then hard copies were distributed at the meeting. At the forum, the committee informed Lee residents about its work and encouraged them to offer comments on the draft plan. Questions and comments received from this meeting as well as through the posting of the draft plan were reviewed by the Master Plan Committee and incorporated through edits to the document. The Master Plan Committee finalized the plan and referred it to the Lee Planning Board at its meeting on April 29, 2024.

History of Lee

Many years before European settlement, Berkshire County was inhabited by the Algonquin people, who relied on the territory's rich natural resources for fishing, hunting and agriculture. The passage of time, as well as later building and development have erased much of the evidence of this early Native American presence. Yet remnants of it remain in the form of archeological artifacts.

Present day Lee was sparsely settled with farms when, in the mid-18th century, Peter Wilcox built a house where the library now stands. About the same time, Isaac Davis and Reuben Pixley started farms in South Lee. Other settlers arrived soon thereafter from Connecticut and Cape Cod and established farms on East Lee Mountain (then known as Dodgetown) and in the valley around the Housatonic River. The town was incorporated in 1777 and named after General Charles Lee who was then the second-in-command of the Continental Army under George Washington. By 1790, the first US census recorded Lee's population at 1,170 people.



The Housatonic House ca. 1860 (Lee Library Historical Collection)

Agriculture was the primary economic activity for the early European settlers. The river valley was cleared for farmland, and the gently rolling hills in the central portion of the town also supported crops.

In 1806, Samuel Church built the first paper mill in South Lee, relying on the waterpower from the streams of East Lee. Sawmills, grist mills, and machine shops also relied on hydropower, including from the Housatonic River. Manufacturing and domestic demand grew rapidly during and after the War of 1812. Ball & Basset Company wove woolen cloth, Foote and Hinman made cotton cloth, Laflin & Loomis made gunpowder, and the Hurlbut family made carriages and paper.

The Housatonic Railroad came to Lee in 1851 and provided an efficient means to export Lee's manufactured products to the world. Lee grew with its industry, reaching a population of 3,220 by 1850. In 1852, Elizur Smith devised a new and cheaper method of making paper purely from wood pulp. The new method drove a huge leap in paper production in Lee. By 1867, Lee had 25 paper mills and was ranked first in the country's paper-making industry. Smith Paper Company of Lee was briefly the largest paper producer in the world.



Damage from the flood of 1886 (Lee Library Historical Collection)

In 1886, after a flood wiped out many mills in East Lee, several paper mills and sawmills were rebuilt along the Housatonic River and nearer to the railroad. By 1930, however, the paper industry in Lee was in decline as local sources of wood pulp were depleted. Other major floods occurred in 1938 and in 1968.



Lee National Bank in full holiday dress ca. 1930 (Lee Library Historical Association)

The railroad also enabled a quarry industry in Lee to develop, which produced marble from the 1850s through the 1930s. Lee marble, considered to be the hardest and finest in the country, was used in many historic monuments and buildings across the country, including a wing of the US Capitol, the Washington Monument, St. Patrick's Cathedral, Grant's Tomb, and the State House Annex and Public Library in Boston. A new lime industry was established in 1885, furnishing lime for both building and agriculture. By the 1930s, the Lee Lime Corporation was one of the largest producers of lime in New England, a ranking that it continues to hold today.

The Massachusetts Turnpike opened in 1957 to provide quick travel across the state for automobiles, buses, and commercial trucking. Later, the New York Thruway connected the turnpike to New York City, Albany, and other points west. The Lee interchange became the primary access point for all of Berkshire County, and Lee proudly adopted the moniker "Gateway to the Berkshires."

Increased auto traffic spurred commercial development in the town, especially near the turnpike interchange. At the same time, shorter drives to regional employment centers encouraged low density suburban development on Lee's outskirts, which transformed much of the open farmland and forest to housing sites. Lee's population increased by 22% between 1960 and 1970.

Lee's fortunes changed after 1970, when many local and regional manufacturing businesses closed or moved away from the area. Among the largest industries to close was General Electric, whose large plant in Pittsfield employed more than 13,000 people, many of whom lived in Lee. After GE closed during the 1970s and 1980s, its economic role has been only partially replaced by a General Dynamics operation at that site.

Lee also lost five of its six remaining paper mills. In 2008, four major mills began closing in Lee and Lenox Dale, followed by layoffs and closings at a mill in South Lee. Today, the Onyx Paper Company operates the town's one remaining paper mill, located in South Lee with two additional sites along Route 102.

Growth in Lee's service industries has replaced some of these job losses. As hotels, inns, and restaurants along with arts and historical venues have become the mainstay of the southern Berkshire County economy, Lee's economy has become heavily dependent on tourism as well.

Today, Lee has upwards of 13 restaurants and eateries. The Prime Outlet Village, completed in 1997 near the turnpike exchange, continues to attract tourists and contribute to Lee's economy.

The Big Y Supermarket opened in 2011 at the junction of Routes 7 and 102 near the Massachusetts Turnpike exit. It is a particularly convenient location for those coming to the Berkshires to visit, tour, and stay in their second homes. The Big Y also serves as the main grocery store for year-round residents of Lee and surrounding towns. This has been especially true since Price Chopper, an older neighborhood market in the heart of town, closed in 2017, which was felt as a significant loss by many local residents.

In recent years, Berkshire Sterile has established a successful medical manufacturing business on Route 102, while the owner of the brick Baird and Benton Block building on Main Street has installed a fresh façade on the building. Canna Provisions, a cannabis retailer on Housatonic Street, has also made a large investment in the town.

Other aspects of town life have also kept pace with change. Lee has a relatively new elementary school on the hill behind the high school on Greylock Street. St George's Episcopal Church on Franklin Street has been converted to a venue for performing arts (currently unused). The Congregational Church park, in the heart of downtown, provides a convenient meeting place for residents and the site for a farmer's market during the summer. Within the park, the Kilbon-Konkapot Fountain has been expertly restored, and a covered performing pavilion was recently constructed for musical and other performances.

Many residents feel that Lee is a special place. Many of the town's buildings and monuments mark the town's important role during the 19th century's great eras of paper making and marble quarrying. This multi-generational heritage remains a key characteristic of Lee, which is the first community that many visitors experience on their arrival in the Berkshires. Most importantly, Lee residents have a powerful sense of cohesion and actively participate in community activities while providing personal support to neighbors and friends.

Most of the historical changes that Lee has undergone cannot be reversed. Yet this history also provides a long-term perspective on Lee's strengths during periods of growth and its troubles during more recent periods of economic decline. Taken together, this proud history serves as a foundation for the vision and strategies that are needed to secure a healthy and prosperous future for the town and its residents.

Existing Conditions

With a population of 5,788, Lee has the second largest population in the southern half of Berkshire County after Great Barrington (7,169).

Open spaces, including forest, wetlands, water bodies and watercourses, agricultural land, and recreational lands, comprise approximately 87% of the town's area. Most of this land is protected through holdings by the state, the town, the Lee Land Trust, and other organizations. Forested property alone makes up approximately 67% of the overall open space area.

The town has undertaken land conservation measures as far back as the 1960s. The town also has many acres of agricultural land, mostly in a few large holdings. Lee's topography and environmental features limit future development, and its pattern of overall development is unlikely to change significantly in the future.

Lee features an historic mixed-use downtown core, residential neighborhoods largely established around properties that were once industrial mills, and modern suburban-style residential subdivisions. A limited auto-oriented commercial corridor is located primarily on Route 20 near the Massachusetts Turnpike interchange. The town has active industrial and manufacturing sites, mainly on or near Route 102.

The primary roadways traversing the community are US Route 20, a small section of US Route 7, State Route 102, and Interstate 90 (Massachusetts Turnpike). The town offers its own water district, sewer district, police department, fire department, and other community services.

Community Demographics

Through the mid-20th century, the population of Lee increased almost every decade. However, from the 1970s onward, the population of Lee declined each decade through 2020. Overall, Lee's loss of residents reflects the population trend in the entire region. Berkshire County's population also peaked in 1970, at nearly 150,000 persons, and then decreased every decade over the next 50 years. Much of the regional population decline can be attributed to the loss of manufacturing jobs, declining household size¹ and the emigration of working-age persons and families. This regional population loss contrasts with overall gains in the Commonwealth as a whole, which is driven by growth centers in the eastern portion of the state. Lee's population is projected to remain stable through 2040, with a loss of 34 persons from 2020, with an approximately 1% loss between 2040 and 2050. The regional population is projected to decrease at a 2 or 3% rate in the coming decades, while the state population is projected to plateau in the year 2040. The details of population change are shown in Table 2.

¹ In 1970, the US Census calculated 3.41 persons per household in Lee. In 2022, the American Community Survey estimates Lee has 2.21 persons per household.

TABLE 2: Population Since 1800

Year	Lee		Berkshire County		Massachusetts	
	Total	% Change	Total	% Change	Total	% Change
1800	1,267	-	33,633	-	442,845	-
1850	3,220	154%	50,118	49%	994,514	135%
1900	3,596	12%	95,667	91%	2,805,346	182%
1950	4,820	34%	132,966	39%	4,690,514	67%
1960	5,271	9%	142,136	7%	5,148,578	10%
1970	6,426	22%	149,402	5%	5,689,170	10%
1980	6,247	-3%	145,110	-3%	5,737,093	1%
1990	5,849	-6%	139,352	-4%	6,166,425	8%
2000	5,985	2%	134,953	-3%	6,349,097	3%
2010	5,943	-1%	131,219	-3%	6,547,629	3%
2020	5,788	-3%	129,026	-2%	7,029,917	7%
2030	5,783	0%	125,223	-3%	7,195,346	2%
2040	5,754	0%	122,454	-2%	7,263,082	1%
2050	5,683	-1%	120,612	-2%	7,267,961	0%

Source: US Census Bureau 1800-2020; University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute UMDI-V2020 Massachusetts Population Projections

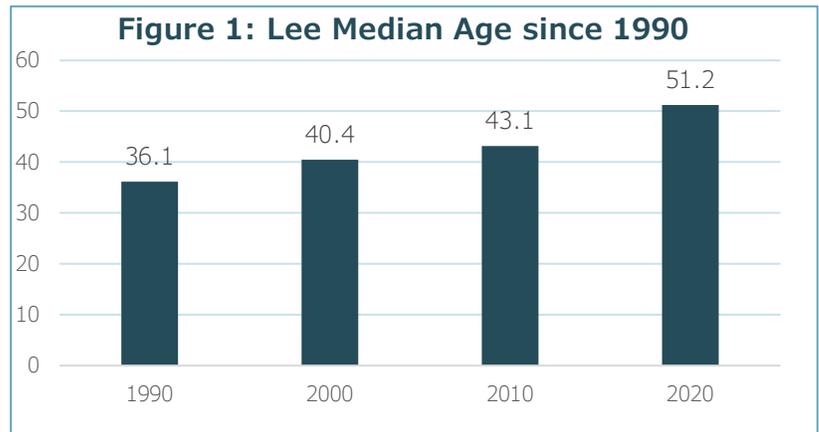
Age of Residents

From 2000 to 2020, the population of Lee has remained almost constant, while its age profile has changed dramatically. By 2020, Lee had far fewer school-aged children and people of working age and far more people aged 55 or older than in previous years.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Since 1990, the town's median age has also increased every decade, especially the last, as shown in Figure 1. In 1990, the median age was 36.1. Over the next 30 years, the median age increased to 51.2.

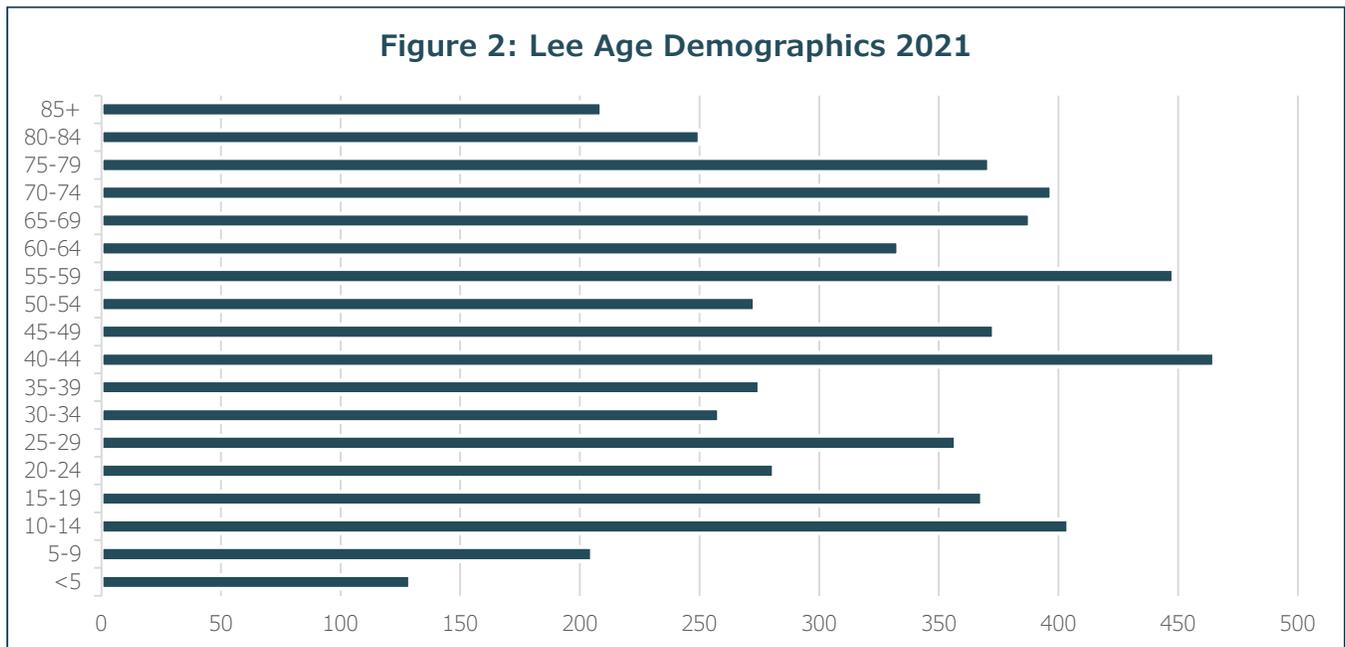
The aging of Lee's population had several causes, including the loss of younger working-age families, the aging of the large "baby-boomer" generation, and the increase in life spans nationally.



Source: US Census Bureau

Another likely cause is Lee's declining birth rate. In 1990, Lee had 77 births. In 2019, there were only 27. As discussed in detail below, the lower birth rate has contributed to a smaller resident school-aged population.

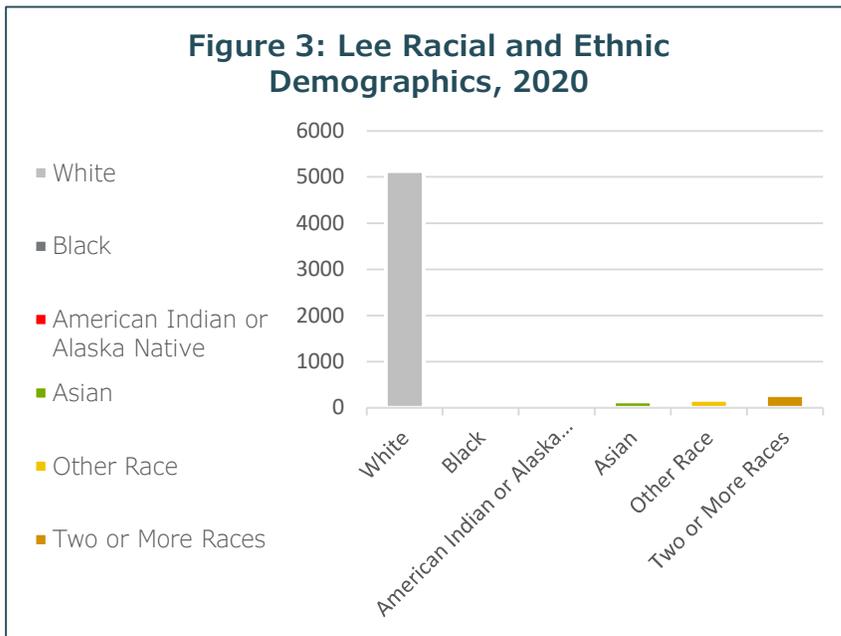
Figure 2 shows Lee's current age profile in more detail. The two largest groups are aged 40 to 44 and 55 to 59. The smallest age group is children less than 5.



Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2021 5-Year Estimates, DP05

Race and Ethnicity

Although Lee’s ethnic and racial diversity is growing, the 2020 US Census classifies Lee’s population as predominantly White and non-Hispanic (see Figure 3). In 2000, approximately 96% of Lee residents were White, a figure that decreased to 89% in 2020. Persons identifying as Black were 0.9% of the population in 2020. Persons identifying as two or more races were 4.8%. Persons identifying as Asian totaled 2.4% in 2020 and comprise the largest single racial category after White. Only 3% of Lee residents did not identify as any of the listed race categories.



Source: US Census Bureau, Decennial 2020 Census DP1

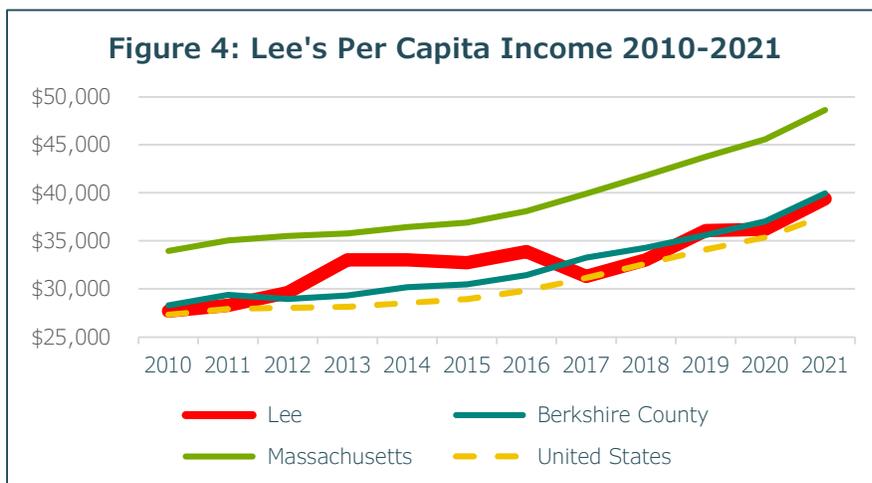
Hispanic residents have increased from 102 persons in 2000 to 304 persons in 2020. These residents can self-identify ethnically as Hispanic, but they can also identify racially as Black, White, or more than one race. Also, comparisons across decades are approximate because ethnic and race self-classification categories have changed over time.

In 2020, approximately 8% of the population aged 5 and older was reported to speak a language other than English at home.

Economy

Per Capita Income

Per capita income (PCI) in Lee has increased from \$27,703 in 2010 to \$39,400 in 2021 (see Figure 4). Lee’s 2021 PCI closely reflects the county average of \$39,952. Berkshire County’s PCI is higher than that of the Pioneer Valley and lower than that of the Capital District of New York. In 2021, both Lee and Berkshire County lagged significantly behind the



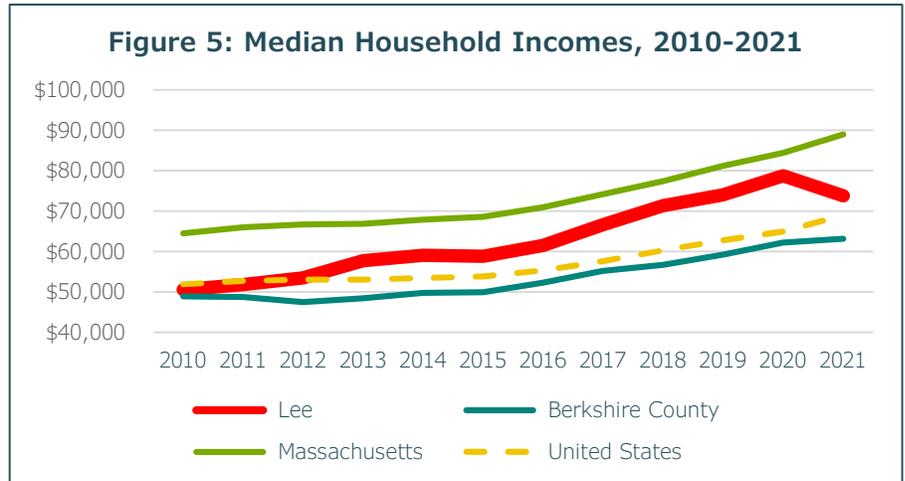
Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2010-2021 5-Year Estimates, DP03

Massachusetts average PCI (\$48,617), but they were slightly higher than US average PCI (\$37,638).

Appendix 3 contains more detailed per capita income data with comparisons to similar municipalities since 2000.

Median Household Income

A comparison of median household incomes tells a more positive story for Lee (see Figure 5). Since 2012, the town’s median household income remains above both the Berkshire County median and the US median, but below the statewide median.

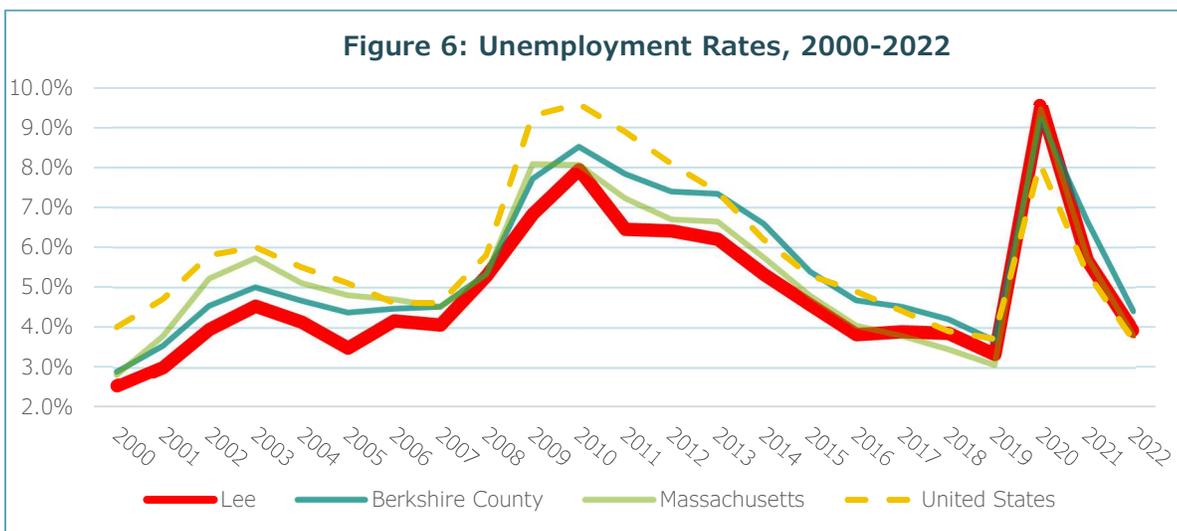


Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2010-2021 5-Year Estimates, DP03

Unemployment Rates

Since 2000, unemployment rates in Lee have typically been lower than those of Berkshire County, the Commonwealth, and the United States, although all those rates have closely followed national economic trends (see Figure 6). In more recent years, unemployment rates in Lee have closely matched those of Berkshire County and the Commonwealth.

Despite the significant increase in Lee unemployment during the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020, Lee’s unemployment rate during that period was similar to that of both the county and the state. Appendix 3 contains more detailed unemployment data with comparisons to similar municipalities since 2000.



Source: Massachusetts Department of Economic Research, Labor Force and Unemployment Data

Labor Force

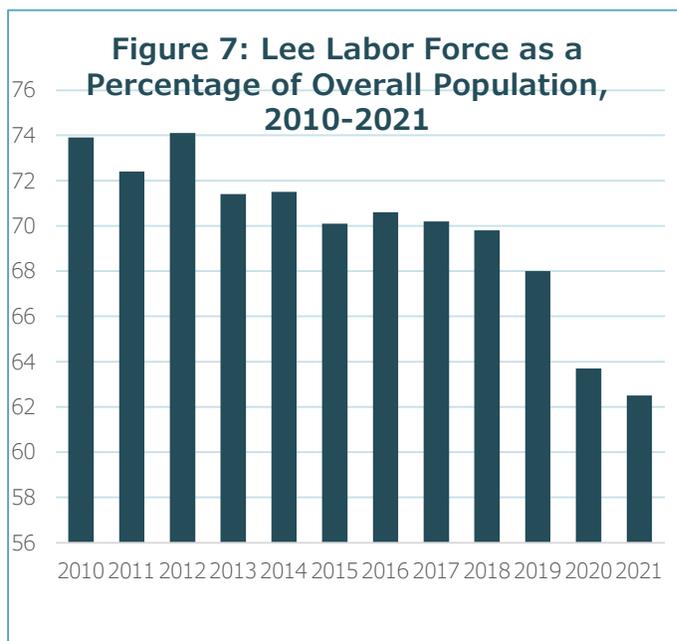
From 2010 to 2021, Lee’s labor force² decreased from 73.9% to 62.5% of the total population (Figure 7). The rate of this decline increased during the later years of the period. The major reasons for this decline include changes in the regional economy, the workforce ramifications of the COVID epidemic, and the increasing median age in Lee.

Employment and Wages by Industry

Table 3 provides an overview of the number of establishments in Lee, categorized according to the 2-digit North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). For each category, the table shows the number of businesses in Lee, the total wages paid in 2022, the average weekly wage, and the average monthly number of employees. Each data column tells a slightly different story.

Of the \$164 million in total wages paid by Lee firms during 2022, 42 construction and manufacturing firms paid generated one-third of wages, or \$54 million. Average weekly wages in these two sectors were well above \$1,000 per week. These two sectors employ 650 people in Lee, and they appear quite healthy.

Looking now at the 3,181 jobs in town, the largest single sector was retail trade (789), followed by manufacturing (510) and accommodation and food services (379). The retail trade category includes a large number of jobs in the outlet village.



Source: Massachusetts Department of Economic Research, Labor Force and Unemployment Data

² The labor force is defined as all those within the given population who are currently employed plus the number of people who are unemployed but actively seeking employment.

TABLE 3: Wages by Industry, 2022

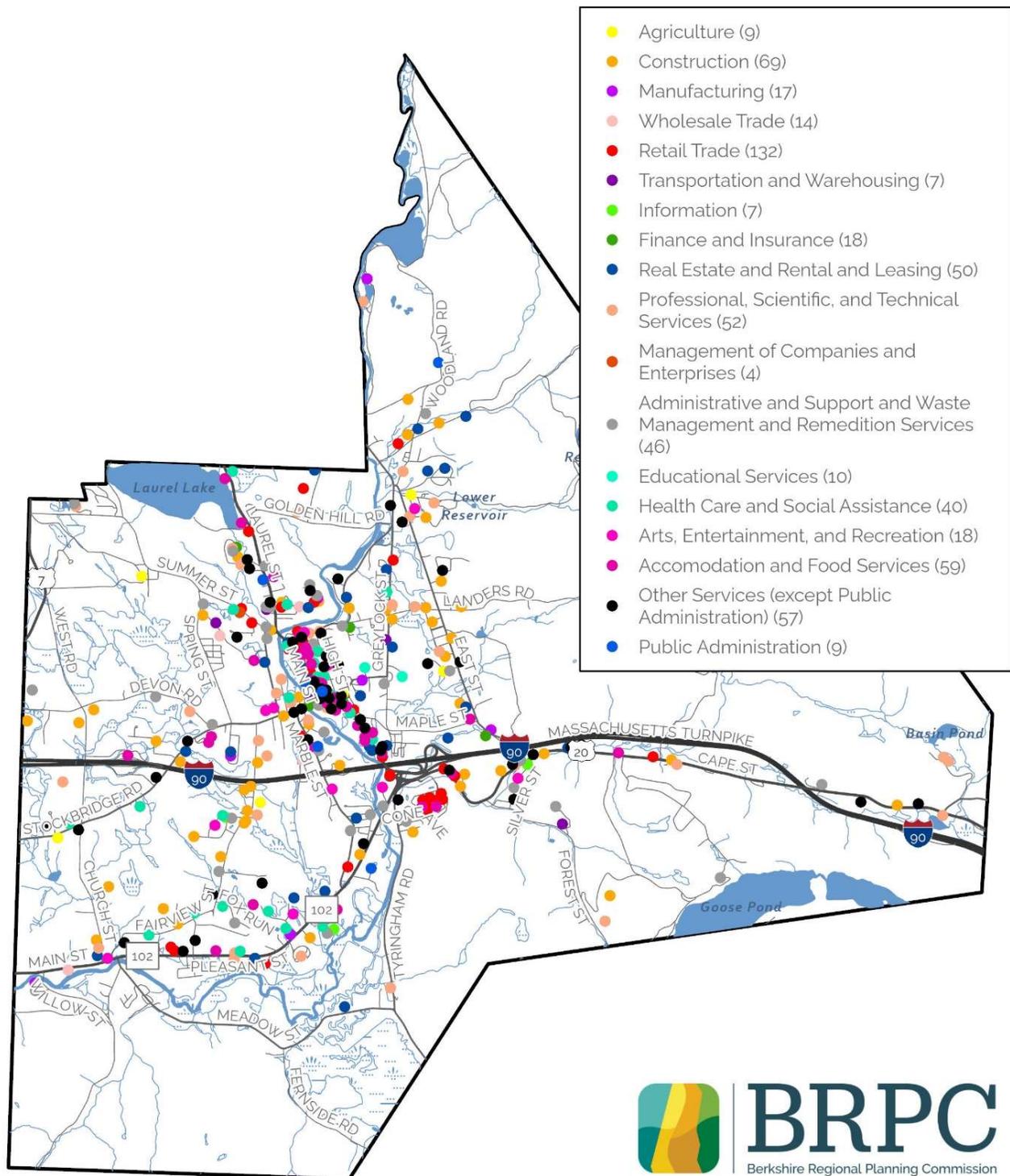
NAICS	Description	Number of Businesses	Total Wages	Average Weekly Wages	Average Monthly Employment
10	Total, All Industries	305	\$163,533,871	\$989	3,181
23	Construction	33	\$15,888,857	\$1,263	242
31-33	Manufacturing	9	\$38,494,832	\$1,452	510
42	Wholesale Trade	7	\$6,423,690	\$1,453	85
44-45	Retail Trade	69	\$28,232,238	\$688	789
48-49	Transportation and Warehousing	4	\$2,745,507	\$982	54
51	Information	5	\$476,568	\$547	17
52	Finance and Insurance	9	\$4,690,514	\$1,696	82
53	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	5	\$1,068,828	\$822	25
54	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	14	\$4,384,103	\$1,008	84
56	Administrative and Support and Waste Management Services	21	\$4,331,137	\$714	117
61	Educational Services	4	\$10,408,374	\$1,170	171
62	Healthcare and Social Assistance	52	\$15,005,906	\$925	312
71	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	2	\$202,260	\$432	9
72	Accommodation and Food Services	37	\$11,799,640	\$599	379
81	Other Services	23	\$8,852,640	\$1,027	166
92	Public Administration	9	\$5,676,804	\$1,227	89

Source: MA Dept. of Unemployment Assistance, Employment and Wages (ES-202). Only sixteen of the twenty standard NAICS industry categories are reported for Lee by this source, indicating a negligible number of firms and/or employees in the remaining four categories.

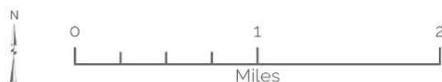
Business Locations

The map below (Exhibit 2) demonstrates the distribution of businesses in Lee. Many of these businesses are operating as sole proprietorships in home-based situations. An inventory of businesses operating in Lee over the past five to 10 years, some of which may be dormant or permanently closed, is presented in Appendix 4.

Exhibit 2: Lee Business Locations by Industry



The Berkshire Regional Planning Commission created this map for general planning purposes only. It is not to be used for engineering, survey, legal, or regulatory purposes. MassGIS, MassDOT, BRPC, or the municipality may have supplied portions of this data.



Regional Business Environment

The region contains several small local chambers of commerce and business associations (as in Adams, Lee, Lenox, downtown Pittsfield, Williamstown). Two sub-regional chambers exist, one in southern Berkshire County and the other in North Adams. Several community development corporations exist, for example, in South Berkshire, Lee, and Pittsfield. The Lee Community Development Corporation has historically focused on commercial and industrial development, highlighted by the build-out of the Quarry Hill Business Park and the Lee Corporate Center. The state-designated regional economic development organization is 1Berkshire. Other entities involved in supporting businesses include the Massachusetts Small Business Development Center Network, E for All Berkshire County, Lever, and the Berkshire Black Economic Council.

These support entities increasingly share information and coordinate programming. This cooperation has long-term benefits for the business community as it allows service providers to better understand what fellow providers offer and make efficient referrals.

Business owners in Berkshire County have access to the services of the MassHire Berkshire Workforce Board and MassHire Career Center. These agencies provide training programs, training grant funds, internship programs, job postings, and help connect job seekers with openings.

The Berkshire Innovation Center in Pittsfield has launched the Berkshire Manufacturing Academy, which helps train incumbent workers and cooperatively explores new technologies and the repurposing of existing technologies. These efforts help Berkshire-based manufacturers to branch out into new product lines and end markets.

The region's rural nature and its large proportion of home-based and micro-businesses create challenges for entrepreneurs and even established business owners. There are persistent gaps in services and a lack of access to capital, especially for startups. The Berkshire Regional Planning Commission has adopted a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for 2023–2027. A primary goal of the strategy is to create a stronger business environment and support a diverse range of businesses with increased access to capital, technical assistance, and opportunities for expansion.

Business Survey

The Master Plan Committee surveyed over 300 Lee businesses about conditions for employers in the community. The survey produced 57 responses for a 16% response rate. A broad range of industries responded (although healthcare and social assistance and retail trade were underrepresented). The size of responding businesses ranged from sole proprietorship to upwards of 100 employees, with the largest categories being the three to five employee and 26 to 30 employee ranges. The low response rate to the survey warrants caution, but the results accurately reflect the committee's anecdotal understanding of conditions for employers in the community. A brief overview of survey results is provided in Appendix 2.

Overall Assessment

Lee's economy appears relatively healthy overall. Lee has significant manufacturing and construction industries. The town also relies heavily on retail trade and the tourist industries. This economic profile is reasonably balanced and aligned with the distribution of industries in the region. Nevertheless, further industry diversification would likely strengthen the town's economic future, and the heavy reliance on retail trade may be a weakness as internet sales continue to increase.

The business climate in Lee is good overall, but with some areas for improvement. There is little reason to believe that town zoning bylaws or other regulations are stifling development, although more streamlining of business permitting and zoning would certainly be welcome. Employers do seem to have some regional resources available for hiring and training.

At the same time, Lee businesses are facing many challenges. One is the regional housing shortage and the high price for existing housing. Many employers report difficulty obtaining housing for their new employees. Also, skilled worker availability is limited, in part because of the higher wages generally paid in nearby urban areas and possibly also because of insufficient in-county training programs. Energy costs are also a problem for Lee businesses that rely heavily on electricity. Warmer winters with less snow impact local businesses that rely on direct or indirect traffic from visitors drawn to the Berkshires for traditional winter sports. Other nearby towns spend considerably more promoting their tourism and retail trade sectors. Finally, the downtown area would benefit from increased "curb appeal," especially in the Eagle Mill and former Price Chopper areas.

Land Use and Zoning

Land Use Patterns

Much of Lee is rural, with limited 20th-century suburban sprawl. Development is largely concentrated around the historic downtown core and the residential neighborhoods that grew up around former industrial sites. Most of the land in town is undeveloped forest, agricultural land, wetlands, and water bodies. The most common use of developed land is single-family residential, followed by commercial and industrial uses (see Exhibit 3).

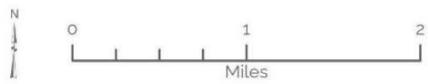
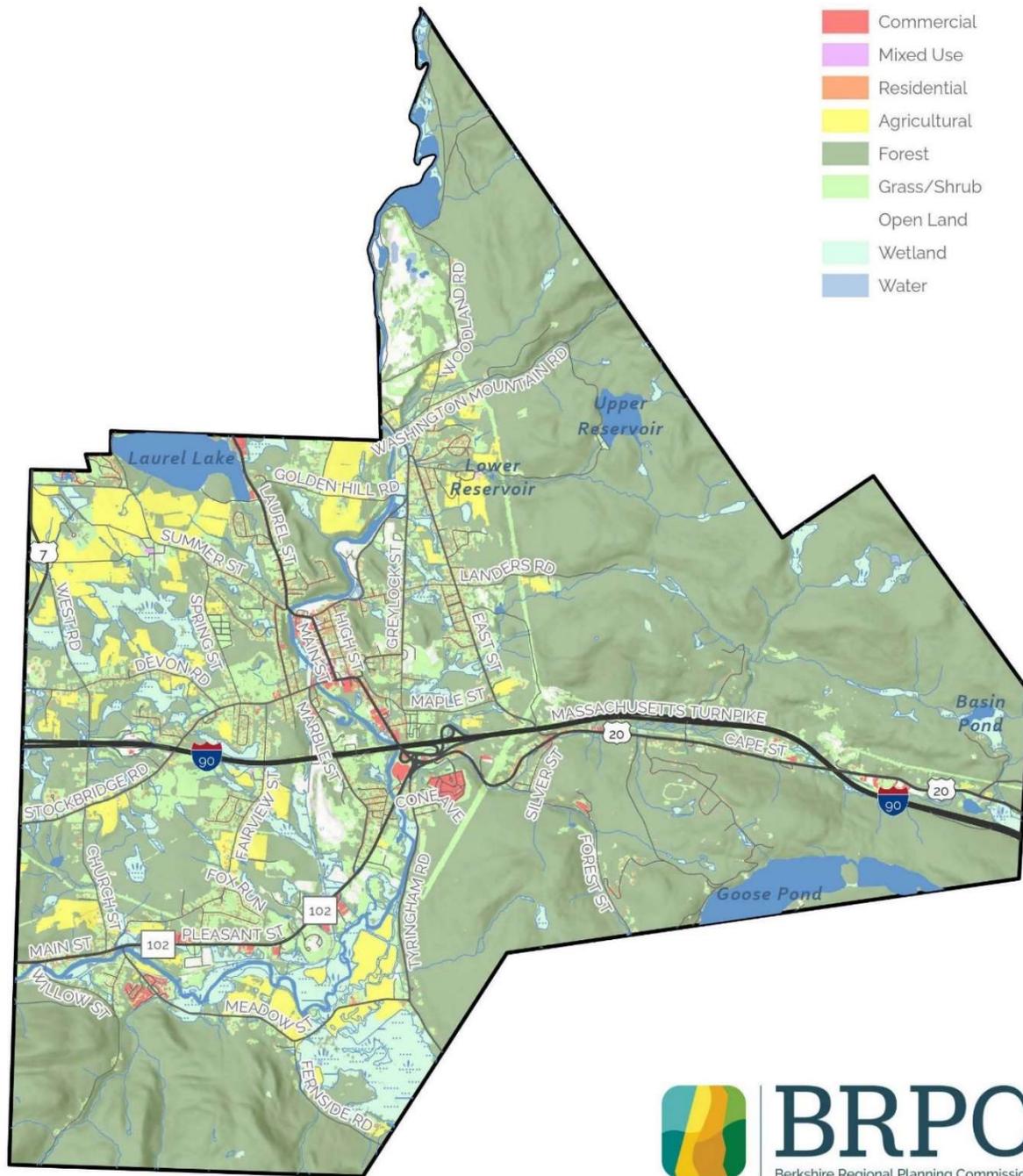
New development has been limited since the adoption of Lee's last master plan in 2000. After that plan was adopted, several paper mills and the former Price Chopper supermarket in the downtown area closed. The largest new project has been the Big Y Plaza, which in 2011 replaced a truck stop south of downtown. Several former commercial properties on the Route 20 corridor have been subject to adaptive reuse or redevelopment.

New housing has been quite limited in recent years. In the 11 years from 2010 through 2020, Lee issued only 52 building permits for new housing units. The redevelopment of the Eagle Mill site, currently underway at the north end of downtown, offers the prospect of much more rental housing. Its developer is planning, over three phases, to construct over 100 new residential units along with some commercial spaces. Phase I began in 2023. Several other opportunities exist for adaptive reuse in town, including the vacant former Price Chopper supermarket and two large industrial buildings, the Columbia Mill and the Greylock Mill, which were once used for papermaking.

In the second half of the 20th century, residential development in Lee consisted largely of single-family subdivisions. However, even two decades ago, the town's 2000 Master Plan recognized that further development of this kind was limited by a lack of suitable land. Nevertheless, opportunities exist for new housing in previously developed and lower-density development sites.

Several agricultural properties remain active in town, including High Lawn Farm and a few smaller but still sizable farm holdings. Development pressure on this agricultural land is considered low in the near term.

Exhibit 3: Land Use Map



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Existing Land Use Regulations

Lee is governed by a 1960s-era zoning bylaw that has been regularly amended. The town also has subdivision regulations that were last updated in 2004. The zoning bylaw is a traditional use-based land use regulation specifying 11 base zoning districts and three overlay districts. Five of the base districts are residential, four are commercial, and two are industrial. See Tables 4 and 5 for base zoning district and overlay district descriptions and Exhibit 4 for the zoning map.

TABLE 4: Base Zoning Districts

Zone	Description	Minimum Lot Size (sq ft)	Minimum Frontage (ft)	Comment
R-20	Residential	20,000	100	Minimum lot size almost ½ acre
R-30	Residential	30,000	125	Minimum lot size about ¾ acre
RM	Residential Multiple Dwellings	10,000	75	Multi-family residential
RA	Residential-Agricultural	20,000/40,000 w/ w/o utilities	125	Promotes residential development in outlying areas
CR	Conservation-Residential	3 acres	200	Protects sensitive areas, but steep slopes are not strongly protected
DCBC	Downtown Commercial Business Corridor	8,000	60	Downtown core on Main Street allows for a mixture of uses
PCVC	Planned Commercial Village Center	50 acres	1,000	Large single-parcel development under strict guidelines
RB	Rural Business	1 acre	200	Located in three different areas
CBC	Commercial Business Corridor	8,000	60	Allows for mixed uses and includes strip retail commercial
OPLI	Office Park Light Industrial	2 acres	125	Located on Route 102 and encourages medium-scale uses
I	Industrial	1 acre	125	Largest “by right” industrial areas south of Pittsfield, with the area north of Route 102 having limited depth

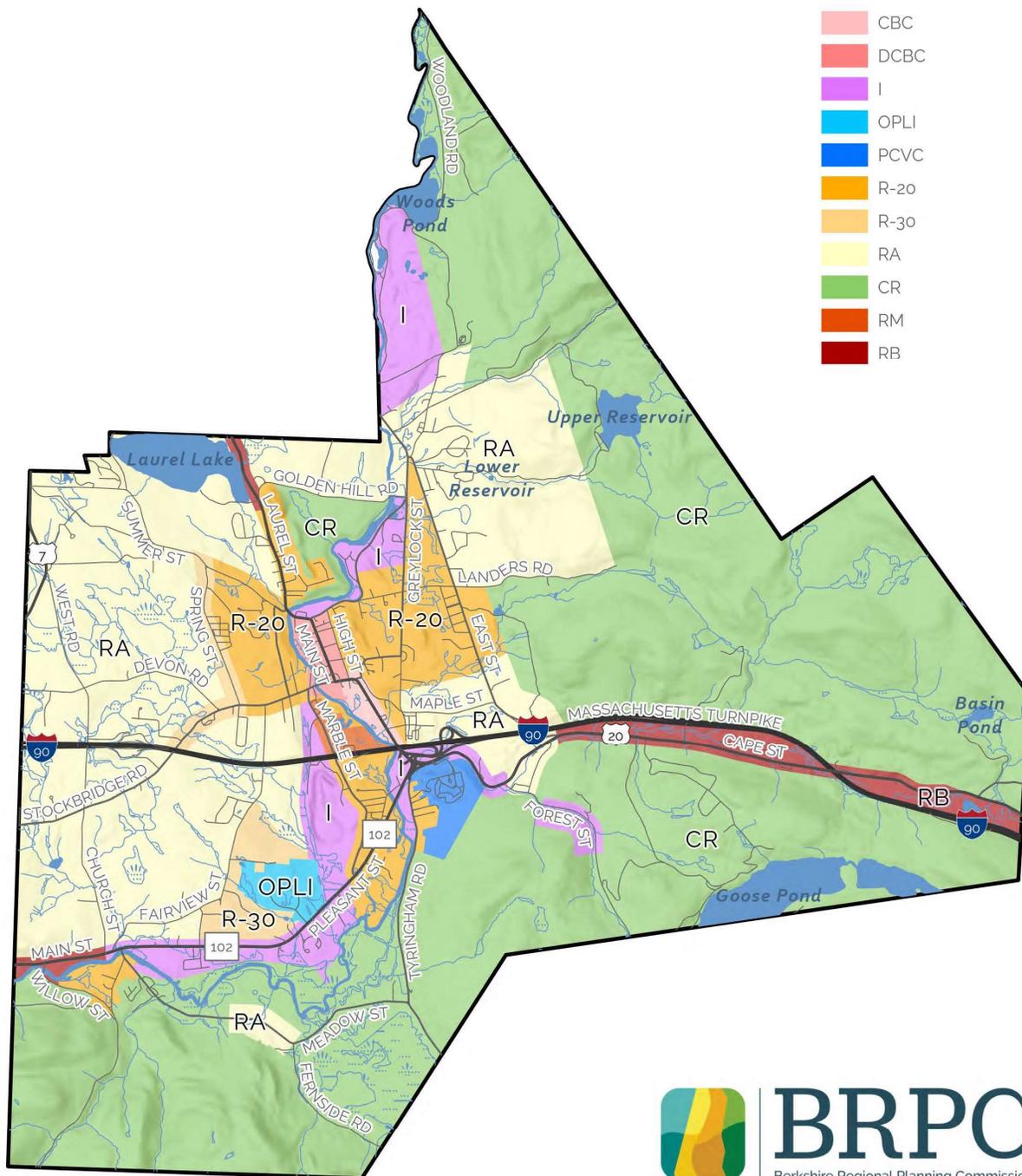
Source: Town of Lee Zoning Bylaw

TABLE 5: Overlay Districts

Zone	Designation	Comment
FP	Floodplain	Applies restrictions to the 100-year floodplain
AR	Adaptive Reuse	Authorizes adaptive re-use of existing buildings anywhere in town
SG	Smart Growth	Aims to remove barriers to redevelopment, especially for housing, at the Eagle Mill

Source: Town of Lee Zoning Bylaw

Exhibit 4: Zoning Map



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Housing and Residential Neighborhoods

Housing

Lee had approximately 2,796 residential dwelling units as of 2021. Over 65% of those are single-family detached dwellings, which represents a slight increase from 1990. Approximately 200 buildings in town have two or more units, and approximately 70 properties are considered mixed-use with a residential component. The majority of housing units are owner-occupied (representing 76.3% of the housing stock).

In 2020, the median Lee house was 63 years old, and more than two-thirds of the homes were at least 40 years old. The housing stock in Lee is aging, as is in most Berkshire communities, and carries a high cost of maintenance, lacks energy-efficient features, and is likely to contain lead paint.

From 2010 through 2020, 52 new residential units were constructed in Lee. All were detached, single-family residences. Most were constructed in existing subdivisions or as single-lot subdivisions for which, as a matter of state law, “approval [is] not required.” No new formal residential subdivision developments were proposed during this decade. By comparison, Great Barrington, Lenox, Becket, and Stockbridge each approved more new residential units during the same period.

Median home values have increased significantly in recent years. In January 2020, Zillow.com estimated a median home value of \$247,183. Values continued to rise to \$349,998 in January 2023 (representing a 42% increase over three years). This increase in listing and sale prices is not unique to Lee, and housing prices increased throughout the region during the same period.

Households that pay 30% or more of their household income on housing are considered cost burdened. Table 6 shows that over a quarter of Lee’s homeowners, and almost half of Lee’s renters, were cost burdened in 2021. These Lee figures on cost-burden are roughly typical of the region and the state.

TABLE 6: Housing Occupancy and Rents

	Town of Lee	Berkshire County	Massachusetts
Total Housing Units	2,796*	69,985	3,017,772
Occupied Housing Units	2,212	54,786	2,646,980
Owners Paying 30% or more of Household Income to Housing Cost	28%	29%	30%
Renters Paying 30% or more of Household Income to Housing Cost	45%	49%	48%

Source: US Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey

*The 2020 Decennial Census lists the total number of housing units as 3,398 – however, based on review of several decades of Census data, in 2020 this number became inflated by counting Oak & Spruce as “residential”, increasing the town-wide unit total by 602.

Efforts have been underway since late 2020 to study and develop a regional approach to creating new housing opportunities in the Berkshires. The primary causes of the housing shortage are the overall lack of housing production and the focus of building single-family homes during the past 50 years. Other factors include the influx of second homeowners, and the recent availability of telecommuting from home.

Mortgage rates have increased in recent years. Combined with the increase in housing values, housing in Lee has become unaffordable for many aspiring residents. Table 7 shows the average household income needed to finance a typical mortgage for the median-priced house in Lee, considering other costs such as taxes, water, and sewer. Table 7 suggests that two-family homes, which can generate rental income, can be more affordable for a family with a typical household income.

TABLE 7: Income Demand for Housing Purchase in Lee

Lee	Typical Price	Monthly Housing Cost*	Annual Income Needed
Single-Family	\$280,300	\$2,291	\$91,000
Two-Family with Rental Income	\$350,000	\$1,692	\$68,000

Source: Zillow, market data, July 2023

*\$280,300 was Lee’s typical price based on market data in July 2023. An assumed mortgage rate was used of 7.815% for a 30-year fixed mortgage. Property taxes are assumed at 1.2%, with water and sewer charges of \$500 per year per dwelling. Rental income is assumed at \$1,200/mo. for one unit of the two-family home.

Short-term rentals of less than 30 days have increased in recent years both in Lee and nationally. As of January 2023, the Massachusetts Department of Revenue reported 120 short-

term rental units in Lee. In 2023, Lee adopted a regulation to cover these rentals. The state records their numbers for tax purposes, and Lee will require local registration as well.

As shown in Table 8 below, approximately 4% of Lee's housing is available for short-term rental. Nearby communities have incidences ranging from about 2% to 8%. Anecdotally, some communities are attributing shortages of local housing stock to increased prevalence of short-term rentals.

TABLE 8: Short-Term Rentals in Lee and Nearby Communities

Town	Registered Short-term Rentals	Number of Housing Units	% registered STR to housing units
Becket	79	1884	4.2%
Great Barrington	300	3742	8.0%
Lee	120	2765	4.3%
Lenox	127	3022	4.2%
Stockbridge	112	1638	6.8%
Tyringham	11	373	2.9%
Washington	7	296	2.4%
West Stockbridge	47	889	5.3%

Source: Department of Revenue Short-term Rental Inventory of January 2023

Open Space, Recreation, and Natural Resources

Natural Resources—Topography and Soils

Lee is nestled in the Housatonic River Valley with hills to the east, south, and west. The center of town has an elevation of about 900 feet. The surrounding slopes are the largest constraint on future development. Approximately 6,500 acres (37% of the town's total area) has a steep grade of 15% or greater.

To the east of Lee is the Berkshire Hills Plateau, the site of October Mountain, which offers one of Lee's most scenic vistas. The mountain rises to nearly 2,000 feet, which is much higher than the center of town.

Beartown State Forest is in another large upland lying south of town. Beartown is a regional draw for swimming, hiking, and camping. It is cleaved by the picturesque Tyringham Valley and is home to a segment of the Appalachian Trail.

To the north and west, the weathering of metamorphic rock in the Taconic Range has exposed the limestone underlying the Housatonic Valley. The Rattlesnake Hill range to the west of town separates the lowlands of Lee from the northern lowlands of Stockbridge. Small hills, such as those in the Golden Hill Town Forest in the northern part of town, also dot the valley.

Most of the town's active agricultural land is found in the western part of Lee.

Natural Resources—Water

Lee is rich in water resources, including brooks, streams, ponds, vernal pools, wetlands, and aquifers (see Exhibit 5). The town's surface water sources (primarily Schoolhouse Lake and Leahey Reservoirs) provide clean drinking water, while others offer scenic and recreational resources to residents and tourists. Washington Mountain Brook and Coddling Brook, flowing down from October Mountain, are sources of water for the reservoirs that serve Lee and portions of nearby Lenox.



Sandy Beach bath house (Lee Library Historical Collection)

Laurel Lake is the largest body of water in Lee. Sandy Beach, situated on the south shore on land belonging to High Lawn Farm, is available seasonally for recreational use by Lee residents. The north portion of the lake, which is in Lenox, has a separate beach for Lenox residents. The state also runs a public boat ramp adjacent to Route 20. The lake is drawn down annually by three feet, and some invasive aquatic plants are selectively removed by hand. Since 2010, Water Resources Services and the Laurel Lake Preservation Association have conducted annual studies to determine the most beneficial lake management approaches.

“Goose Pond” covers 225 acres straddling the border with Tyringham. It comprises two bodies of water, Upper and Lower Goose Pond, which are cold water lakes with unusually clear water that is transparent down to more than 15 feet. Lower Goose Pond has a public boat ramp. Upper Goose Pond has a steep rocky shoreline and no formal trails. The ponds are managed by The Trustees of Reservation as a wilderness area with one-quarter mile of rocky shoreline rising nearly 300 feet to a ridge. The Appalachian Trail runs adjacent to The Trustees’ property.

Housatonic River

The town’s landscape is dominated by the Housatonic River, flowing south and eventually west through the town. It is both a natural and an economic resource. Two branches of the river meet in Pittsfield and then flow through Lenox before arriving in Lee and continuing south to Connecticut and the Long Island Sound.

Woods Pond is a wide, lake-like section of the Housatonic River that provides residents with opportunities to paddle, fish, hunt waterfowl, and view wildlife. Woods Pond is famous for large carp and for viewing herons, bald eagles, and various duck species.

The Housatonic River is heavily contaminated with polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs). These chemicals have a long half-life and are harmful to humans and other animal life. The General Electric Company (GE) has been tasked by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to finance and supervise a cleanup of the river, beginning at the Pittsfield line, and extending downriver through Lee. The EPA’s permit prescribes many details of the cleanup project. The work will consist mainly of dredging sediment from the river, transporting high concentration sediment out of state, and placing lower concentration sediment in a local facility in Lee. The Lee location will be the Upland Disposal Facility (or “Dump”) in the northern part of Lee, between the Housatonic River and Woodland Road. The EPA’s permit was recently affirmed by the federal courts, and it appears more likely than not that the Dump will be constructed in Lee, regardless of local opposition.³

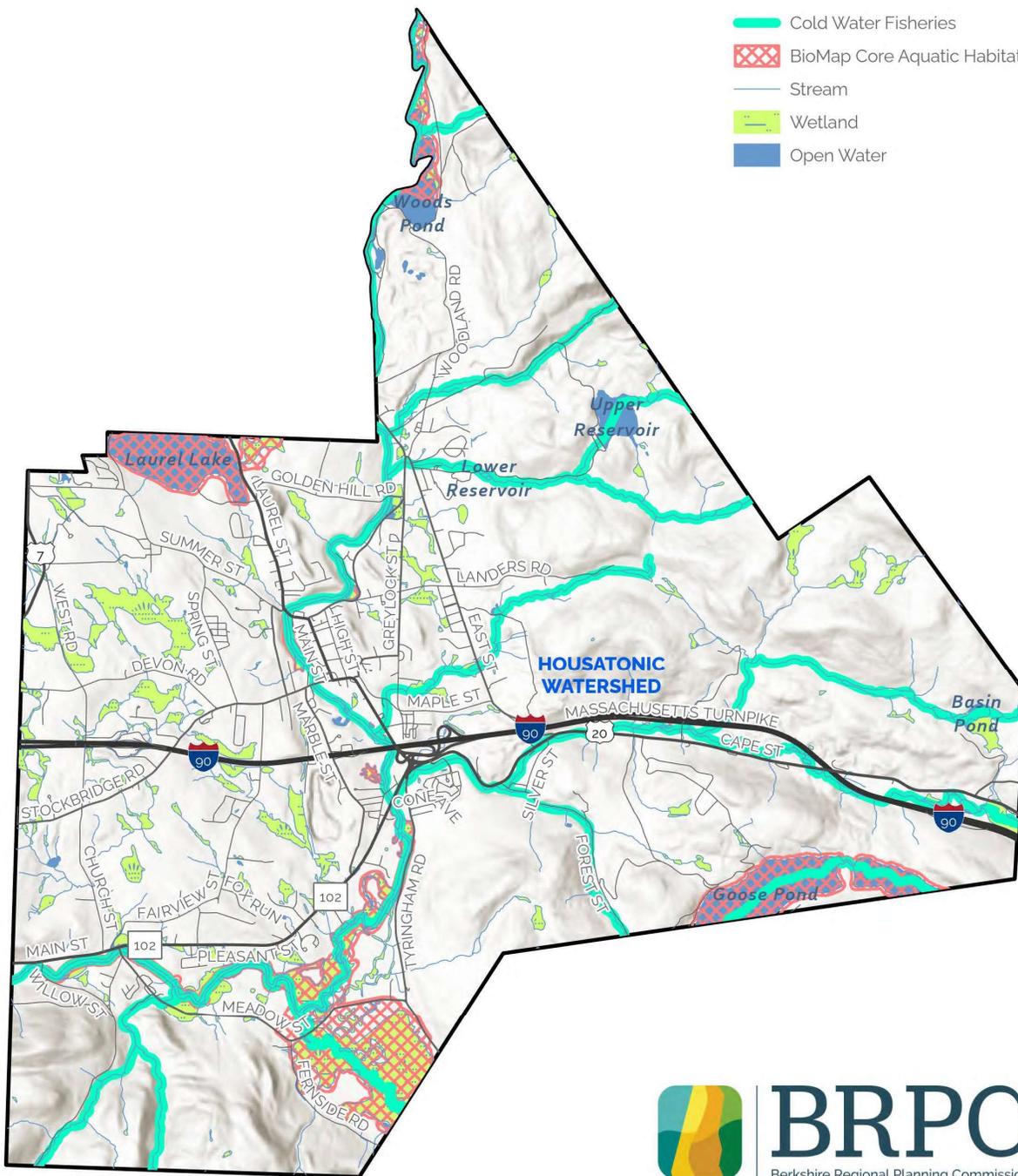


Warning of PCB Contamination at Housatonic River

The presence of PCBs in the Housatonic River and Woods Pond makes them unsuitable for swimming and prohibits anglers from consuming their catch. Both remain primarily a recreational resource for kayaking, canoeing, and catch-and-release fishing. Local and regional environmental groups, including the Lee PCB Advisory Committee, Lee Land Trust, the Housatonic River Initiative, and the Housatonic Valley Association, continue to work to clean up the river and to plan for its increased recreational and scenic use.

³ Lee established the PCB Advisory Committee in March 2024 to provide guidance to the Select Board.

Exhibit 5: Water Resources



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Wetlands

Wetland resources are protected by state law. They have value for wildlife, outdoor recreation, water purification in aquifer recharge areas, flood control, erosion reduction, and scenic qualities.

Lee has 1,154 acres of wetlands, equal to 7% of the town area. This figure includes emergent, scrub or shrub, and forested wetland ecosystems, but it does not include the smaller wetlands that exist throughout the town near or in developed areas. Larger wetlands are located mostly in wooded areas at the following locations:

- North and south of Devon Road;
- Along and to the south of Route 102;
- Along the Massachusetts Turnpike;
- Between Greylock Street and East Street;
- Along Washington Mountain Road;
- North of Woods Pond;
- Along the railroad tracks near the Lenox town border;
- South of the limestone quarry;
- West of Finnerty Pond; and
- South of Basin Pond.

Recreational and Open Space Resources

Residents of and visitors to Lee benefit from a wide range of active and passive recreation spaces (see Exhibit 6, Open Space and Recreational Lands). Active recreation generally involves playing fields, basketball courts, playground facilities, and boating. Passive recreation typically involves walking/hiking trails, picnicking spaces, and nature focused study/activity.

Town-Owned Conservation Lands

Town-owned lands under some form of permanent protection include more than 170 acres held under the control of the Conservation Commission. These conservation properties, which include Dunn Park Preserve, Longcope Park, Ferncliff Reservation, Edith Wharton Park, Golden Hill Town Forest, and Abbey Court Park, are mostly forested sites with unimproved trails for hiking, limited parking, and no facilities or picnic areas. Steep slopes are found on most of these sites, rendering them inaccessible for physically disabled persons. Commercial activity and motorized vehicles are prohibited.

Lee also owns two large parcels of land totaling 171 acres off Stockbridge Road, known as the Stockbridge Road Recreation Area or Town Farm. These parcels were originally acquired for a proposed municipal golf course. Current proposals for the property include continued agricultural use, a trail network, passive recreation, control of invasive species, and wildlife habitat.

The town owns over 600 acres of watershed land in the eastern hills. This land was acquired to protect the town's drinking water supply. Recreation is not permitted on watershed lands.

Town-Owned Recreational Lands

Lee owns and maintains several recreational properties. Neighborhood parks are located at the school, Lee Athletic Field, Marble Street, South Lee, Bradley Street, and East Lee. Athletic fields are present at the school, the Lee Athletic Field near downtown, and the soccer field off Route 102. Playgrounds are located at Marble Street, South Lee, Bradley Street, East Lee, and the Lee Athletic Field. Most town parks have some level of handicapped accessibility.

The Department of Public Works has an annual budget to care for town-owned parks and recreation, but these duties are collateral to the department's main charge of providing maintenance. This annual budget does not include funds for capital improvements.

Chapter 61 Lands

Chapter 61 is a Massachusetts tax abatement program for forest landowners. The program aims to protect and enhance the state's timber-producing capacity. Working forests also provide an array of outdoor recreational opportunities. Chapter 61A is a separate Massachusetts tax abatement program for agricultural land, and Chapter 61B is a separate program for open space and recreation.

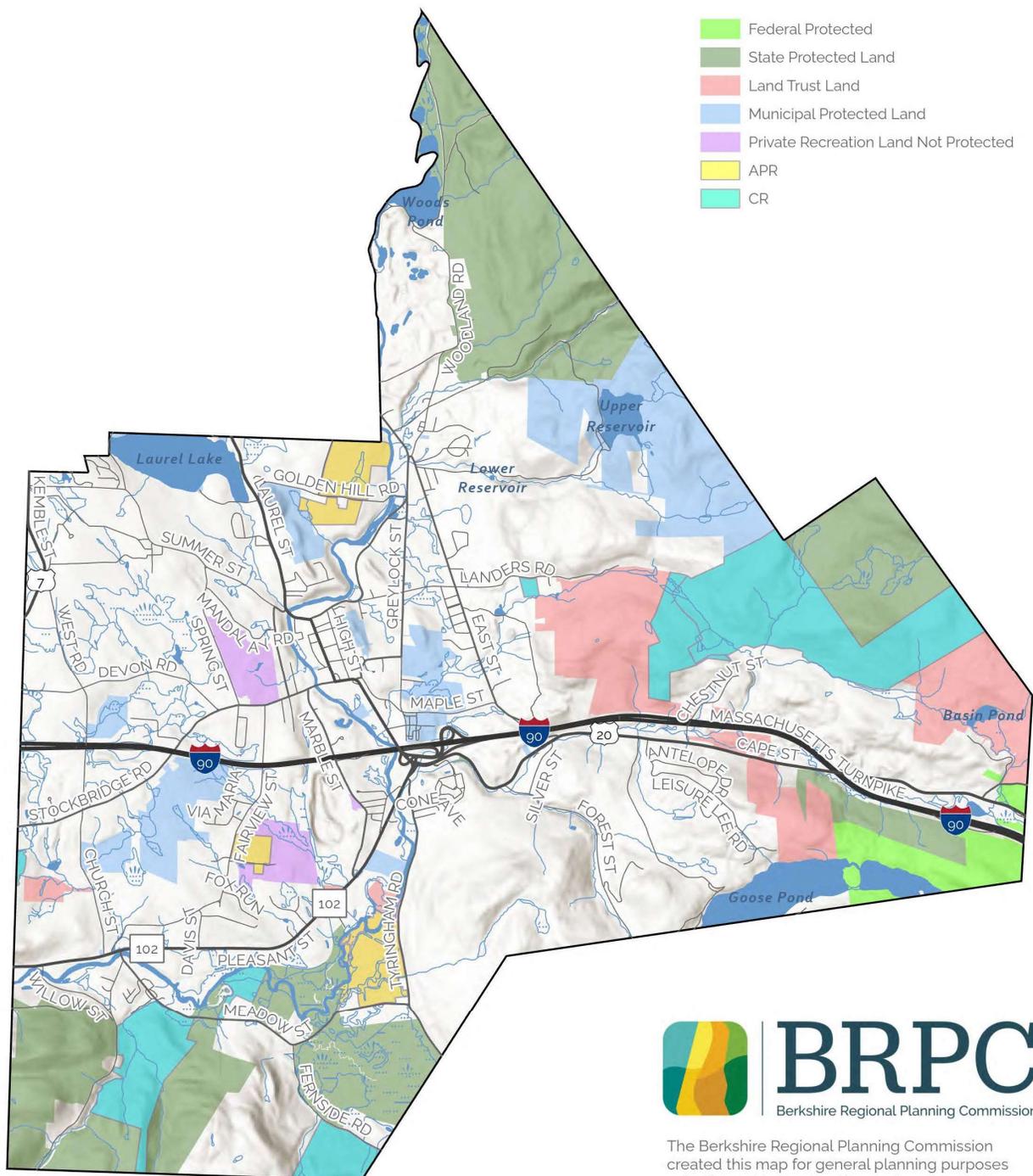
The three Chapter 61 tax programs help ensure that privately owned forest, agricultural and recreational lands remain open and scenic, thereby helping communities maintain their historic rural roots. When any Chapter 61 property is offered for a sale involving a change of use, the town has a right of first refusal to purchase the property at fair market value.

Approximately 3,685 acres or 2% of land in Lee is currently classified as Chapter 61 land. Several property owners in Lee have placed all or a portion of their lands into one of several state programs for reduced property taxes, temporarily limiting the potential for development. This includes four farms that have more than 100 acres. Since 2016, more than 550 additional acres have enrolled in Chapter 61 tax programs.



Active agricultural property in Lee

Exhibit 6: Open Space and Recreational Lands



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High Lawn Farm is one of the region's few remaining dairy farms and is enrolled in the Chapter 61A program. High Lawn Farm is the largest agricultural operation in town and offers the only creamery in the area. It is located on a hilltop overlooking Laurel Lake and stretches westward into Stockbridge. Only a few smaller agricultural uses remain in town. Greenock Golf Course is also enrolled in the Chapter 61B program.

Protected Non-Profit Lands and Private Deed Restricted Lands

Lee has several tracts of privately owned and permanently protected open space lands. Some are owned outright by land trusts with a mission to protect lands for conservation or recreation. Other tracts are owned by private landowners who have sold the development rights to the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources, ensuring that the land will remain undeveloped and in agricultural use in perpetuity.

Three land trusts in Lee either own or hold conservation restrictions on a total of 1,977 acres (1.1%) of land. The Lee Land Trust owns 130 acres; the Trustees of Reservations owns 112 acres; and the Berkshire Natural Resources Council owns 698 acres and holds Conservation Restrictions on an additional 1,054 acres of land, including the Davis property (711 acres) and the Silverleaf property (207 acres). The Trustees property features Donato's Trail, which is a 2.2 mile loop created in coordination with the Lee Land Trust at Goose Pond Reservation. Berkshire Natural Resources Council allows public access to most of the land that it owns for passive recreation, including fishing and hunting. Members of the public must obtain advance permission from landowners before entering other conserved lands.

Three Lee farmers have placed agricultural preservation restrictions on their land, totaling 267 acres. The Agricultural Preservation Restriction Program makes it economically feasible for a property to remain permanently in agriculture as the state purchases the development rights, reducing the perceived value of the property based on future land development, such as residential subdivisions. Maintaining the working farms in Lee helps preserve the town's rural character and provides local farm products to residents, although public recreational access may not be offered. The Lee Agricultural Commission was recently re-activated with a primary objective to advocate for the further use of the Agricultural Preservation Restriction Program.

Non-protected Privately Owned Recreation and Open Spaces

Some privately owned recreational lands in Lee are not protected from development. Notable properties include the Greenock Country Club, which offers golf to the public, and the Lee Sportsmen's Club. Access to these lands is by fee or to members only. Smaller private parcels open to the public free of charge include St. Mary's School grounds (outside of school hours), St. Mary's Cemetery, Fairmont Cemetery, Lee Bank Little League Field, Marble Street Playground, Sandy Beach at Laurel Lake, and Lee Congregational Church town park.

State and Federal Parklands

Lee residents benefit from almost 3,000 acres of land owned and protected by the state and federal governments. Over 2,047 acres of state land in South Lee and East Lee are permanently protected as part of the October Mountain and Beartown State Forests. These properties offer a variety of recreational activities, some of which are handicapped accessible.



Hop Brook Wildlife Management Area, one of Lee's several properties conserved and managed by state agencies

Bicycle/Pedestrian Path

The Lee Bike Path Committee has identified a preferred bicycle and pedestrian path through the town. The path would travel from Pleasant Street (Route 102) at the Stockbridge town line to the Big Y. A middle section would continue as an off-road path from the Big Y northward to West Park Street. The northern section would eventually connect to Lenox Dale. The total route is approximately 6.7 miles.

The off-road sections of the path generally parallel the Housatonic River, thereby offering additional public access to the river itself. This route would advance a long-desired river "greenway" vision, promoted by the Lee Conservation Commission and the Lee Land Trust, to link Lee's downtown center to its various parks.

The final section is expected to connect West Park Street to Lenox Dale. The plans call for crossing West Park Street and continuing along the river through downtown, then crossing Route 20 and running cross-country along the west side of the river to connect with Golden Hill Road. Thereafter, the route would travel on roads, including Bradley Street and Mill Street, and then finally end at the Lenox town line. The Bilke Path Committee continues to investigate new routing options for this section.

Funding has been secured for the design of the middle section of the bike path between the Big Y and West Park Street. State construction funds are expected to be available in future years.

Transportation

The automobile is the dominant mode of transportation in Lee. In 2020, approximately 90% of working residents commuted by car and 87% traveled alone (Table 9).

The primary option for local public transit is the Berkshire Regional Transit Authority (BRTA) bus system. Lee is primarily served by the following BRTA routes:

- Route 2, connecting the Pittsfield Intermodal Center with the Lee Premium Outlets;
- Route 21, connecting the Pittsfield Intermodal Center with the Fairgrounds Plaza in Great Barrington, with dedicated stops at the Lee Premium Outlets and the Big Y Market; and
- Route 21x, traversing Route 7 and providing additional South County connections.

**TABLE 9:
Transportation Mode to Work**

Travel Mode	%
Vehicle, drove alone	86.8%
Vehicle, carpooled	3.1%
Public transportation	1.0%
Walked	3.6%
Worked from home	5.3%

Source: US Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey

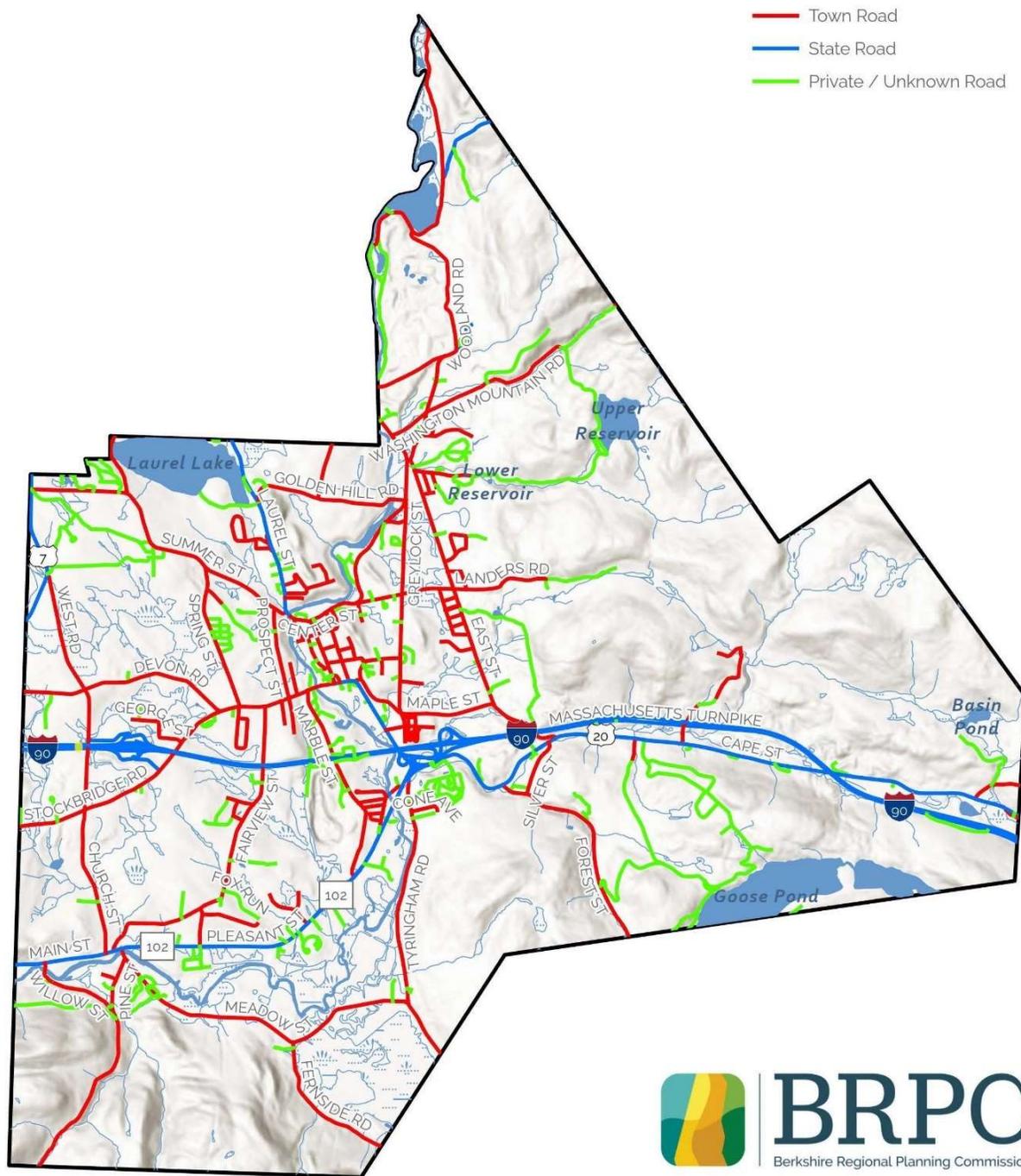
As with much of the county, the utility of public transportation is limited by the available destinations, the travel time required, and the absence of night service. BRTA designs its routes to connect to regional employers, and thereby remains a vital, albeit limited, service to many residents.

Lee has approximately 81 miles of roadway (Exhibit 7). This includes six miles of the Massachusetts Turnpike (Interstate 90), as well as lengths of US Route 20, US Route 7, and State Route 102. The town maintains approximately 60 miles of local roads. Lee annually updates a capital improvement plan for its roads, which is based on a survey of conditions of all roadways.

Most of the downtown area has sidewalks, but much of the town does not. Overall, the sidewalks are in good condition and passable. A 2015 survey identified several needed improvements. To date, the town has not introduced any bicycle lanes as part of its line painting, road construction, or road maintenance.

In February 2023, the town approved a “complete streets” policy that was accepted by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation. A complete street provides safe and accessible means for all modes of travel, including vehicles, pedestrians, bicycles, and transit systems. Once Lee has developed and obtained state approval for a project prioritization plan, it will be eligible for funding to construct complete streets projects.

Exhibit 7: Road Jurisdiction



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Community Services and Facilities

Lee Police Department

The Lee Police Department employs 13 officers, nine of whom are full-time. Staffing also includes a full-time mental health counselor. Like many regional police departments, Lee has had difficulty maintaining a fully staffed police force. Lee cooperates with neighboring communities for mutual aid when additional public safety assistance is needed.

The police department occupies offices in the Town Hall basement and first floor, and that space has had capacity deficiencies for the last several decades. The town has been developing plans for a new facility, which received preliminary approval at town meeting in December 2023.

Lee Fire and EMS Department

The Lee Fire Department and Emergency Medical Services consists of 10 full-time employees and 47 call (or volunteer) firefighters. Emergency medical services are provided by paramedics. The department also responds to hazardous material spills, water and ice rescues, and emergencies on the Massachusetts Turnpike between mile 6.0 and mile 24.5. The department occupies three buildings.

The Central Fire Station is in downtown Lee adjacent to the Fire Headquarters building, and it houses four fire trucks. An additional station is in the village of South Lee. The department maintains three engines, one mini pumper, one tanker engine, two ambulances, and two forestry trucks.

The Central Fire Station is antiquated and lacks sufficient capacity for current operations. Due to height, width, and length constraints, fire apparatus needs to be custom built to fit into the building. A new building received preliminary approval in December 2023 and will include new facilities for the fire and EMS services.

Senior Services

The Senior Center is part of the Crossway Village senior housing complex. The space for the center is leased from Berkshire Housing Development Corporation. The center provides meals, programs, activities, and outreach using both paid staff and volunteers. Some residents perceive incorrectly that the center is available only to seniors at Crossway Village.



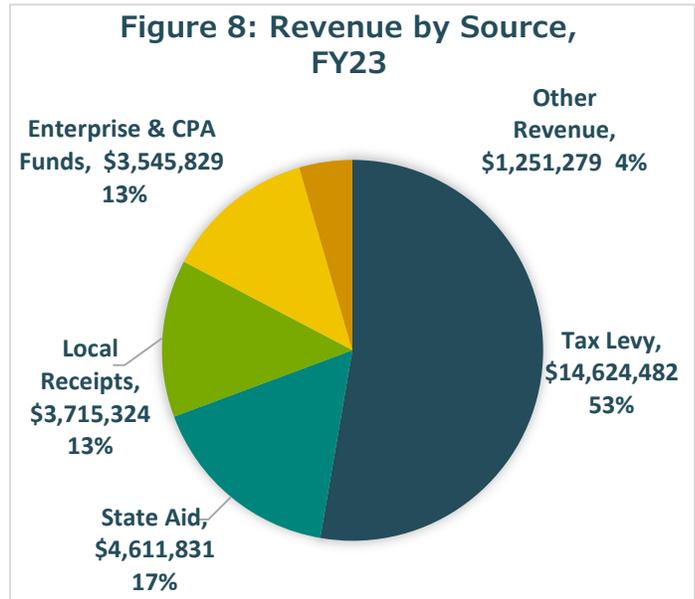
Lee Central Fire Station

Municipal Finances

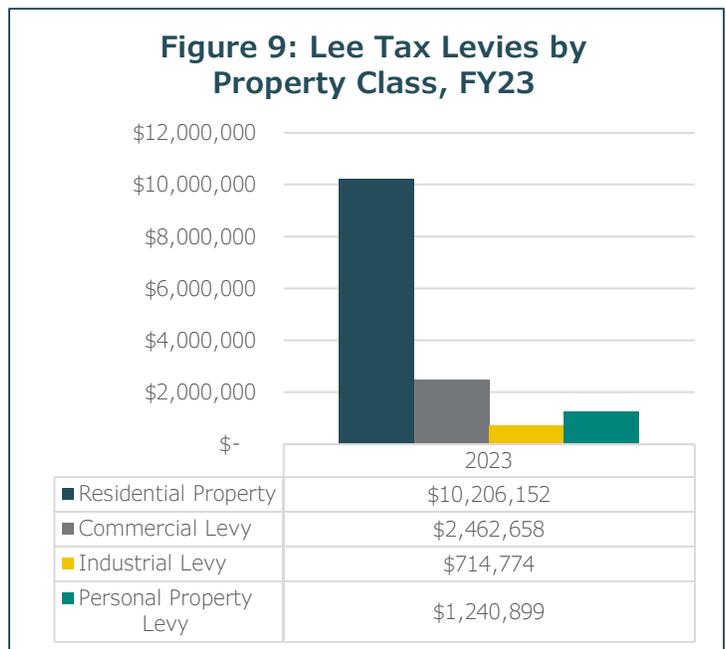
Lee’s 2023 operating budget is approximately \$27.7 million, including enterprise⁴ and Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds (Figure 8). Just over half of the budget (\$14,624,482) is derived from local taxes, while another 13% is derived from other locally generated sources. About 17% of Lee’s municipal budget is funded by state aid.

Lee has approximately \$1,236,220,000 in taxable property values. Figure 9 shows the allocation of tax levies by property class. Approximately 70% of the tax levy is derived from residential property.

Lee funds 53% of its budget from local property tax bills. Table 10 shows Lee’s budget sources compared to peer towns. Because of Lee’s high state aid, its local tax share of budget is lower than almost all peer towns.



Source: Division of Local Service (DLS), Community Comparison Report



Source: Division of Local Service (DLS), Community Comparison Report

⁴ In Massachusetts, an “enterprise” fund is a municipal fund that “establishes a separate accounting and financial reporting mechanism for a municipal service for which a fee is charged in exchange for goods or services (MGL chapter 44, Section 53F½), Water and sewer are two of the more common types of enterprise funds.

TABLE 10: Comparison of Municipal Budgets, by Total Budget Size, FY23

Municipality	Total Budget	Tax Levy as % of Budget	State Aid as % of Budget	Local Receipts as % of Budget	Other + CPA + Ent as % of Total
Great Barrington	\$38,898,256	67.3%	3.5%	5.2%	24.0%
Lenox	\$32,433,154	52.7%	11.0%	12.9%	23.55
Lee	\$27,748,745	52.7%	16.6%	13.4%	17.3%
Dalton	\$20,629,225	69.8%	8.6%	12.1%	9.4%
Adams	\$18,030,454	71.4%	16.6%	8.0%	4.0%

Source: Division of Local Services (DLS), Community Comparison Report

Like most towns, Lee’s property taxes are imposed at a uniform rate on all property classes. The current rate on residential property is lower than all peer towns but Lenox, shown in Table 11.

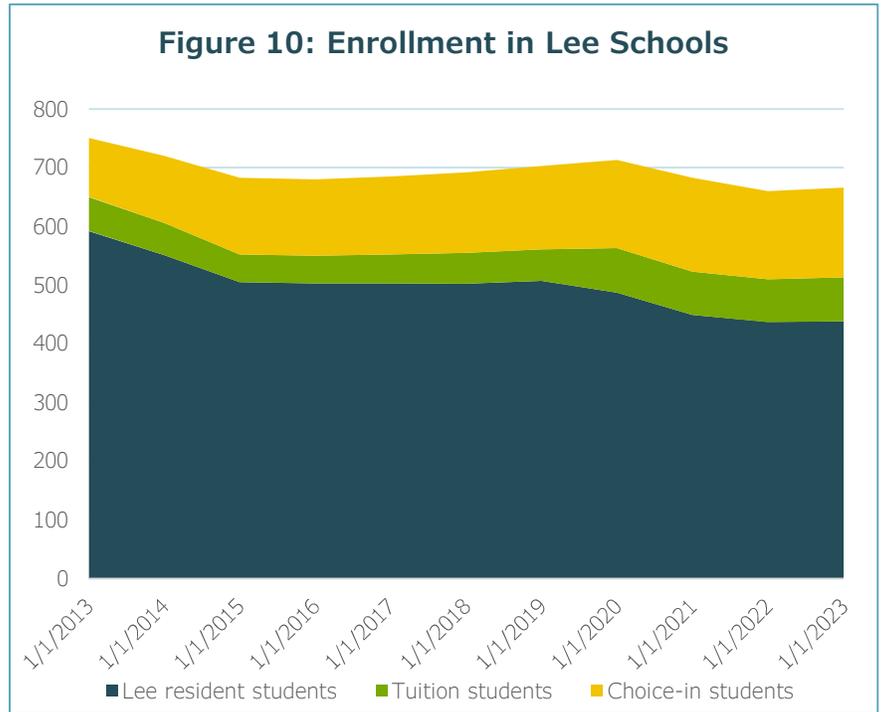
TABLE 11: Comparison of Municipal Tax Rates, Arranged by Residential Rate, FY23, \$/thousand

Municipality	Residential Tax Rate	Commercial Tax Rate	Industrial Tax Rate	Personal Property Tax Rate
Adams	18.55	25.65	25.65	25.65
Dalton	18.37	18.37	18.37	18.37
Great Barrington	14.07	14.07	14.07	14.07
Lee	11.83	11.83	11.83	11.83
Lenox	9.16	13.03	13.03	13.03

Source: Division of Local Services (DLS), Community Comparison Report

Education—Lee Public Schools

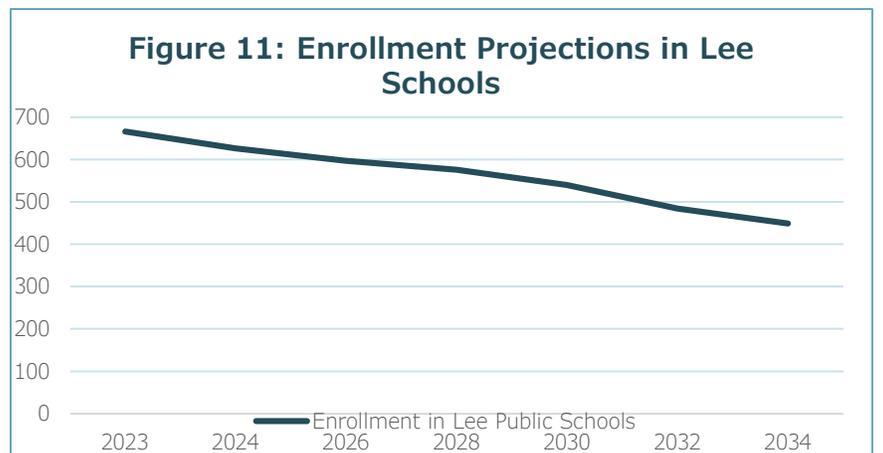
The Lee Public Schools are officially a union district comprising Lee and Tyringham. The district has a tuition agreement with the Farmington River Regional School District for students from Otis and Sandisfield to attend Lee Middle and High School. The district has relatively modern educational facilities consisting of two buildings. The Lee Middle and High School located on Greylock Street was constructed in 1962 and has significant later renovations, including an addition built in 2002. The middle and high school building features a large auditorium that is used for town meetings. The Lee Elementary School (PK-6) was constructed in 2002 and sits on the hill behind the Lee Middle and High School.



Source: Lee Public Schools, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

On January 1, 2023, a total of 666 students were enrolled in the district, of which 438 were Lee residents. Like many other schools in the county, the district has had a declining enrollment in recent years. The overall student body enrolled in Lee schools decreased by 11% between 2013 and 2023 (Figure 10). In early 2024, the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission released enrollment projections for each school district in Berkshire County. Enrollment is projected to decline to 449 students by 2034, a decrease of approximately 32.6% from 2023 (Figure 11). The total enrollment loss from 2013 to 2034 is, therefore, projected at 40.2%.

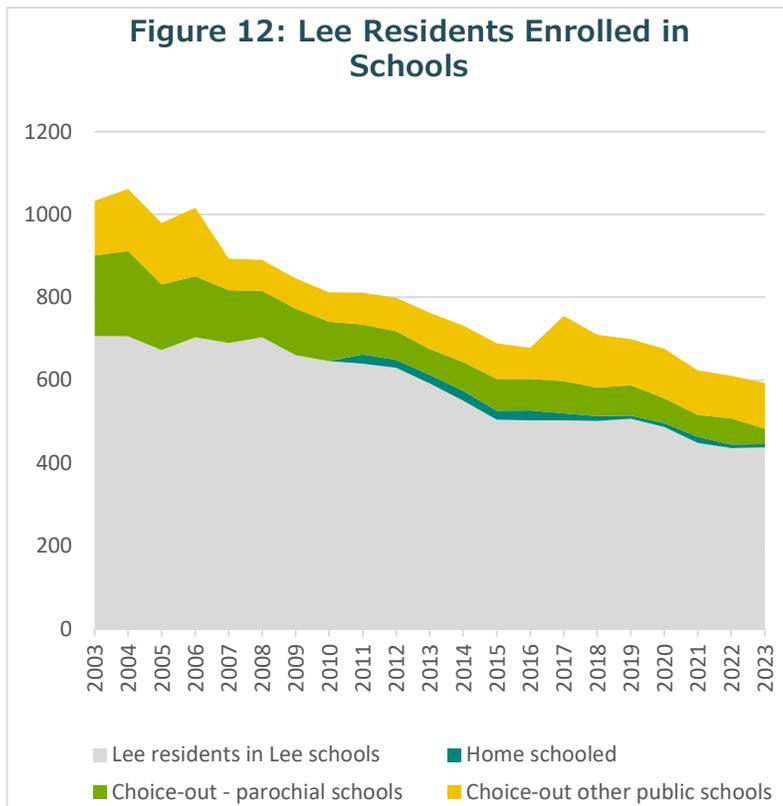
Lee schools also recorded a decline in resident school-aged children from 2003 to 2023 (Figure 12), which accounts for most of the overall loss in enrollment. Over this 20-year span, the number of resident students in Lee schools declined by 37%. The last 10 years alone have seen a 26% reduction. The decline has leveled off during the most recent two years, but the proportion of Lee residents enrolled in Lee schools will continue to decline as the overall population of school-aged children in Lee declines.



Source: Berkshire County School Enrollment Projections v2024, Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, February 2024

The loss in the resident student population has many causes, including the closing of the Lee paper mills, the limited availability of jobs for young parents, and a housing market that is increasingly beyond the reach of young families. As of January 2023, approximately 155 Lee students chose to go to other public or private schools or to school at home. While significant, those numbers have generally stayed consistent over time.

Non-resident students in Lee schools are largely “choice-in” students that reside in other districts, elect to attend Lee schools, and generate tuition to the Lee schools. The number of these “choice-in” students enrolled in Lee schools has increased, but not enough to offset the larger decline in resident population. In 2023, 153 students were “choice-in”, while 110 students were “choice-out” to other public-school districts, resulting in a net enrollment gain from the choice program of 43 students.



Source: Lee Public Schools, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Each “choice-in” student generates tuition for the Lee schools, but the amount, limited by state regulations, is currently only \$5,000 per student per year, or less than one-quarter of Lee’s average cost per student. While these payments produce extra non-tax revenue, the question remains whether the revenue from these 153 “choice-in” students covers the marginal cost to the district.

Future district enrollment cannot be known with certainty. Recent trends counsel for establishing a plan to address declining enrollment. Lee Public Schools represent 47% of the town’s total general fund budget. In the 2022 school year, Lee had only 9.2 students per teacher, while Lenox had 9.8 and the state average was 12.0. Despite recent staff cuts, enrollment declines will continue to result in a low student per teacher ratio. As the number of enrolled students who are Lee residents continues to decline, the town’s cost to educate resident students increases per capita. Such an approach increases the burden on Lee taxpayers and makes school budgets a potential source of controversy. Likewise, recruiting more “choice-in” students might allow the school to preserve some programs and maintain staff levels, but it would also increase the per-student tax effort required to educate Lee resident students.⁵

⁵ To determine whether “choice-in” students benefit the district, one must estimate their marginal cost to the district. An optimistic case would assume that “choice-in” students seldom impose extra costs and that all or most of the tuition revenue benefits the town. But in 2023, 153 students, or almost one-quarter of the total number, were

Despite Lee's declining past and projected enrollment, there are reasons for optimism. Notably, if more affordable and mid-market housing becomes available in Lee, enrollment levels might stabilize or even increase, but risk factors also exist. Changes external to Lee, such as expanding vocational training in neighboring high schools, could increase the number of students leaving Lee to study elsewhere.

The town should pursue other strategies in relationship to creating long-term sustainability of public education in Lee. This plan suggests several such strategies, including looking for merger partners, finding niche programs (such as expanded vocational offerings) that can attract choice-in students, and declaring in advance the enrollment point which, if reached, would require serious consideration of other options.

Other Educational Institutions in Lee

St. Mary's School is a Catholic school located on Orchard Street. The school meets the curriculum standards of Lee Public Schools and is accredited with the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. St. Mary's is one of three remaining parochial schools in Berkshire County, and the lone school located in the southern portion of the region. The school offers pre-school childcare services, as well as pre-kindergarten through 8th grade. In addition, St. Mary's provides before-school and after-school care for school-aged children. In the 2023 school year, its total enrollment was 107 students.

The Lee Youth Association is a non-profit organization, which includes the Busy Bee Learning Center that provides daily education services for children aged six weeks through pre-kindergarten. The Busy Bee Learning Center is licensed and meets the curriculum requirements of the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care. The Lee Youth Association also provides after-school services.

The College Internship Program (CIP) is a specialized transition program that assists young adults on the autism spectrum, ADHD, and other learning differences. CIP is a national program that was founded in the Berkshires. The CIP Berkshire office is located on Main Street in downtown Lee.

"choice-in", so the optimistic case seems implausible. A pessimistic case, at the other extreme, would use average cost. In the 2022 school year, Lee schools' operating cost was approximately \$20,537.50 per pupil, more than four times the tuition revenue for each "choice-in" student. If those 153 students did indeed impose the average cost, the subsidy to each tuition student would be approximately \$15,000.

The best economic subsidy case undoubtedly lies between these two extremes and must also account for other kinds of revenue, such as for special education students and state aid. In addition, if choice-in students are educated at a financial loss, then Lee is receiving a financial benefit from its 110 "choice-out" students who use the choice program to attend elsewhere and for whom Lee pays the tuition. On balance, the choice program seems to operate at a net cost to Lee taxpayers. Thus, any effort to address declining enrollment by attracting more choice-in students seems likely to increase the per-student tax effort needed to educate resident students.

Municipal Utilities

Water Supply

Lee's water supply is from two reservoirs located near October Mountain, October Mountain Lake, and Schoolhouse Lake in Washington. Lee has three storage tanks that provide an overall capacity of 2.5 million gallons. Typical daily demand is approximately 800,000 to 900,000 gallons. Over 90% of residences in Lee are supplied by the town water system. Lee's reservoirs and water treatment plant are built with excess capacity that could handle double the current demand.

Lee's water distribution system is aging, with some components well over a century old. Typically, the town tries to replace water lines in coordination with road reconstruction, thereby reducing cost and community disruption. However, the great age of the system leads unavoidably to emergencies. An overall assessment of its water lines would give town officials a greater understanding of the physical location of lines and their age and would likely reduce the frequency of emergency repairs.

Wastewater Collection and Treatment

Lee's wastewater system was constructed in 1931 to serve the central area of the town. Today, over 85% of Lee housing units are connected to the wastewater system. Lee's single wastewater treatment facility is located off Route 102 and was constructed in 2008. Following treatment and aeration, the plant discharges wastewater into the Housatonic River. An ongoing concern is rainwater infiltrating into sewers, usually during storms. Stormwater in Lee is released directly into the Housatonic River and is not treated at the wastewater treatment plant. Overall, the sewer line system of pipes functions well with few issues.

Septic systems in Lee are generally well maintained due to aggressive enforcement of Title 5 by the Tri-Town Board of Health. The Tri-Town Board of Health is a regional collaboration between the towns of Lee, Lenox, and Stockbridge that provides public health services to the three communities. The few contamination problems that do exist are usually due to system overloads that follow the conversion of seasonal lakeside cottages to year-round use.

Historic and Cultural Resources

Lee's past as an industrial and agricultural community left a wide range of historic traces that are still present in the community. Some of these areas and buildings are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, but there are many other buildings, sites, landscapes, burial grounds, and neighborhoods throughout the town.

National Register of Historic Places

The National Register of Historic Places is a program of the National Park Service and state historical commissions to create an official list of historic properties worthy of preservation. Buildings, districts, structures, sites, and objects can be listed in the National Register. Lee has several districts and individual properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places:

- Hyde House (1976);
- Lower Main Street Historic District (1976);
- Golden Hill Bridge (1994);
- South Lee Historic District (1999);
- Hyde School (2004); and
- Lee Railroad Station (2010).



Lower Main Street Historic District

Designation in the National Register is primarily honorary and does not by itself create any protective restrictions. Nevertheless, it does provide eligibility for state, federal and other funding. The Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System lists over 300 inventoried sites and properties within the town.

Preservation Restrictions

Preservation restrictions are used to protect historic properties and open spaces. The following Lee buildings have been protected with preservation restrictions held by the state that provide control over future use and modifications to the structure:

- Merrell Tavern (1986);
- First Congregational Church (1989);
- Lee Library (1998);
- Lee Town Park (1999); and
- Memorial Town Hall (2002).

Community Preservation Act

The Massachusetts Community Preservation Act (CPA) authorizes matching funds to communities that opt into the program. Lee joined the CPA program in 2022, which entailed an additional surcharge on local property taxes. Lee now has a stable funding source for local

projects focusing on historic preservation, parks, open space, and housing. Lee's CPA funds will be disbursed for the first time in 2024.

Cultural Resources

Lee hosts several events that draw local and regional visitors, including:

- Founders Day Weekend, an annual event in September featuring music, food, and a parade;
- Memorial Day Parade;
- Sunday Concerts in the Park;
- Lee Farmers Market in summer;
- Jazz Weekend in July and craft fairs at the Congregational Church;
- Lee Community Garden;
- Seasonal sports and camp events sponsored by the Lee Youth Association;
- Second Saturday events for Lee's youth, sponsored by the Lee Youth Commission.



Lee Farmers Market

The Lee Library, Lee Senior Center, Lee Public Schools, Lee Youth Commission, Lee Youth Association, Lee Cultural Council, Lee Land Trust, Kiwanis, and Lee Congregational Church provide a range of other events serving local residents of all ages.

Lee also benefits from large-scale cultural attractions in surrounding communities including the summer Tanglewood season in Lenox, several continuing classical music programs. Jacob's Pillow in Becket is a summer venue for dance. The area also hosts three theater companies, located in Stockbridge, Lenox, and Pittsfield.

Action Plan

Introduction

The Master Plan Committee launched its work in 2022 to identify a set of core goals that could guide an action plan that will usefully guide the town from 2024 to 2040. Early on, the committee agreed to focus on the following concerns:

- Ensuring that Lee provides a welcoming environment for residents and businesses;
- Maintaining Lee’s open space and recreation network and ensuring that it is accessible to all residents;
- Preserving Lee’s small-town character; and
- Creating a diverse housing stock in Lee with options for all ages, income levels, and family size

In the course of extensive discussions, interviews, surveys, and mapping, the Master Plan Committee refined these initial concerns into a broader, deeper set of goals and objectives to address key aspects of Lee’s future development and ensure a healthy and prosperous community. The goals that the Master Plan Committee proposes to guide Lee’s development are as follows:

Economy

Goal 1—Ensure a supportive environment for the business community.

Goal 2—Create a vibrant, appealing experience for residents and visitors.

Land Use and Zoning

Goal 1—Ensure that land use decisions balance quality of life and social and economic needs and improve the quality of the environment.

Housing and Residential Neighborhoods

Goal 1—Promote diversity in housing choices in Lee to ensure that housing stock serves all residents, including singles, young families, and low- and moderate-income households.

Open Space, Recreation, and Natural Resources

Goal 1—Support the protection of sensitive natural resources and agricultural resources.

Goal 2—Provide active and passive outdoor recreation for all residents of all ages and abilities.

Transportation

Goal 1—Ensure public rights-of-way are designed to serve all residents.

Goal 2—Provide adequate parking for all downtown users.

Community Services and Facilities

Goal 1—Provide high-quality public services to residents and businesses.

Goal 2—Provide a quality educational experience for Lee’s youth.

Public Utilities

Goal 1—Maintain water, wastewater, and stormwater systems through timely maintenance and planned capital improvements.

Goal 2—Improve the town’s digital connectivity.

Cultural and Historic Resources

Goal 1—Promote and protect the historic characteristics of the town.

Goal 2—Enhance appreciation of Lee’s historic and cultural resources.

Planning for the Future

This action plan includes specific objectives and actions and implementable activities to accomplish the preceding goals. The Master Plan Committee was intentional in selecting the final actions presented below. Rather than generating an all-encompassing list of potential tasks that would overwhelm the capacity of town staff and volunteers, the committee carefully chose actions that are reasonably attainable in the coming weeks, months, and years.

Each action presented below identifies responsible parties, the potential timing of implementation, and estimated cost to the town. While the timing suggestions seek to balance resources and capacity, some actions likely will be implemented faster or slower as priorities change over time or unanticipated opportunities or problems arise.

Implementation of the action plan will depend entirely on the willingness of various town officials and bodies to adopt specific proposed actions. In a few cases, the recommended actions assume the availability of additional personnel or resources, such as a town planner.⁶ Assistance in funding the additional costs suggested in this plan can likely be derived from grant funding, as well as from the receipt of over \$25,000,000 as part of the “Rest of River” PCB cleanup settlement with General Electric and the Environmental Protection Agency.

The following is a legend for terminology found in the action plan that follows this section:

Timeframe:

- Continuous—actions that will require continuous support
- 0-2 years—short-term actions that may already be in progress
- 0-5 years—medium-term actions that are priorities but may take time to implement

⁶ Lee has not previously employed a town planner, but the fiscal year 2025 town budget will likely include a line item authorizing this position.

ACTION PLAN

- 3-10 years—long-term actions

Cost to Town:

- n/c—the action is not anticipated to require a direct financial cost to the town
- \$—the action is anticipated to cost less than \$25,000
- \$\$—the action is anticipated to cost \$25,001 to \$100,000
- \$\$\$—the action is anticipated to cost \$100,001 to \$250,000
- \$\$\$\$—the action is anticipated to cost greater than \$250,000

ACTION PLAN

E. Economy					
Task		Activity	Responsible Entity	Timeframe	Cost to Town
E.1	GOAL	ENSURE A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY			
<i>E.1.1</i>	<i>Objective</i>	Invigorate and expand the Lee Chamber of Commerce and Lee Community Development Corporation			
E.1.1.1	Action	Secure additional resources to expand and strengthen staff capacity	Lee Chamber of Commerce, Lee Community Dev. Corp.	0-2 years	\$\$
E.1.1.2	Action	Hold frequent networking and educational events for local business owners		0-2 years	n/c - \$
E.1.1.3	Action	Improve and increase marketing (via website, social media, e-news, paid media options)	Lee Chamber of Commerce	0-2 years	n/c - \$\$
<i>E.1.2</i>	<i>Objective</i>	<i>Pursue redevelopment and revitalization of priority sites, especially underutilized mills and riverfront</i>			
E.1.2.1	Action	Investigate and implement a range of economic development tools, including but not limited to the PACE Program, new market tax credits, historic rehabilitation tax credits, tax increment financing, and district improvement financing	Town Planner, Select Board	0-5 years	n/c
E.1.2.2	Action	Engage with state and federal agencies (e.g., MassDevelopment, MassEcon, federal Economic Development Administration, USDA) to support redevelopment and revitalization of vacant and underutilized sites	Town Planner, Select Board	0-2 years	n/c
<i>E.1.3</i>	<i>Objective</i>	<i>Prioritize improvements in crosscutting issues critical to overall economic success</i>			

E. Economy					
Task		Activity	Responsible Entity	Timeframe	Cost to Town
E.1.3.1	Action	Participate in advocacy to reduce energy costs and increase access to affordable, high-speed broadband	Select Board, Town Administrator, Town Planner	Continuous	n/c
E.1.3.2	Action	Participate in regional efforts on workforce development, including expansion of internship, apprenticeship, and credentialing programs and recruitment and retention strategies	Select Board, Town Administrator, Town Planner	0-2 years	n/c
E.1.3.3	Action	Advocate for East-West passenger rail improvements to provide regular service to Boston, Albany, and New York City.	Select Board, BRPC	Continuous	n/c
<i>E.1.4</i>	<i>Objective</i>	<i>Leverage regional resources and business support ecosystem</i>			
E.1.4.1	Action	Engage with 1Berkshire, including the Blueprint 2.0 process and various member benefits (e.g., networking events, participation in regional marketing)	Town Planner, Lee Chamber of Commerce, Lee Community Dev. Corp.	0-2 years	n/c - \$
E.1.4.2	Action	Participate actively in Berkshire Regional Planning Commission's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy	Town Planner, Lee Community Dev. Corp.	0-2 years	n/c
E.1.4.3	Action	Facilitate connections between business community and technical assistance providers (MassHire, MSBDC, regional LEE COMMUNITY DEV. CORP.s, 1Berkshire, etc.)	Lee Chamber of Commerce, Lee Community Dev. Corp.	0-5 years	n/c
<i>E.1.5</i>	<i>Objective</i>	<i>Improve communication with current and prospective business owners</i>			

ACTION PLAN

E. Economy					
Task		Activity	Responsible Entity	Timeframe	Cost to Town
E.1.5.1	Action	Explore establishment of economic development task force and additional economic development staff	Select Board, Town Planner	0-2 years	n/c - \$\$
E.1.5.2	Action	Improve and expand communication tools (e.g., website, e-newsletter)	Town Planner, staff	0-2 years	n/c - \$
E.1.5.3	Action	Facilitate the relocation of businesses to Lee	Town Planner, Lee Chamber of Commerce, Lee Community Dev. Corp.	0-5 years	n/c
E.2	GOAL	CREATE A VIBRANT, APPEALING EXPERIENCE FOR RESIDENTS AND VISITORS			
E.2.1	<i>Objective</i>	<i>Explore district management strategies such as business improvement or cultural district</i>			
E.2.1.1	Action	Explore and as feasible implement programs related to creation of special districts	Select Board, Town Planner, Lee Chamber of Commerce, Cultural Council, Lee Community Dev. Corp.	0-5 years	n/c - \$
E.2.2	<i>Objective</i>	<i>Expand public art in appropriate locations</i>			
E.2.2.1	Action	Identify locations for public art installations (walls, open space, sidewalks, crosswalk) and develop process for funding, soliciting, and selecting public art projects	Select Board, Town Planner, Cultural Council, Lee Library	0-5 years	n/c-\$\$

ACTION PLAN

E. Economy					
Task		Activity	Responsible Entity	Timeframe	Cost to Town
E.2.3	Objective	<i>Improve commercial property façades and activate vacant and underutilized storefronts and other spaces</i>			
E.2.3.1	Action	Assess façade conditions and prioritize needs, with focus on downtown commercial district	Town Planner, Lee Chamber of Commerce, Lee Community Dev. Corp.	0-5 years	n/c - \$
E.2.3.2	Action	Inventory vacant storefronts and connect with owners	Town Planner, Lee Chamber of Commerce, Lee Community Dev. Corp.	0-2 years	n/c
E.2.3.3	Action	Explore creation of program(s) focused on façade improvements and storefront activation	Town Planner, Lee Chamber of Commerce, Lee Community Dev. Corp.	3-10 years	n/c - \$\$
E.2.3.4	Action	Work with businesses to expand and/or align their operating hours to provide regular hours that coincide with one another	Lee Chamber of Commerce, Town Planner	0-5 years	n/c
E.2.4	Objective	<i>Make wayfinding and amenity improvements in the public realm</i>			
E.2.4.1	Action	Assess conditions and prioritize needs of social public amenities in the downtown commercial district, such as benches, trash receptacles, and signage	Town Planner	0-2 years	n/c - \$

L. Land Use and Zoning					
Task		Activity	Responsible Entity	Timeframe	Cost to Town
L.1	GOAL	ENSURE THAT LAND-USE DECISIONS BALANCE QUALITY OF LIFE AND SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC NEEDS AND IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF THE ENVIRONMENT			
L.1.1	Objective	<i>Shift land-use regulatory policy from traditional zoning approaches to the types of projects and uses that the town wants to encourage</i>			
L.1.1.1	Action	Develop a permitting guidance document to help businesses, property owners, and developers navigate local regulatory processes	Planning Board, Town Planner	0-2 years	n/c - \$
L.1.1.2	Action	Consider revisions to zoning bylaws to streamline permitting and remove potential barriers to approvals	Planning Board, Town Planner	0-2 years	n/c - \$\$
L.1.1.3	Action	Evaluate the use of form-based codes and other non-traditional land-use regulations that focus more on design and form, especially in relationship to downtown	Planning Board, Town Planner	3-10 years	n/c - \$\$
L.1.1.4	Action	Develop a stormwater management ordinance that requires appropriate stormwater mitigation in overall land disturbance or the creation of impervious surfaces	Planning Board, Town Planner, voters	0-5 years	n/c - \$
L.1.1.5	Action	Encourage development that connects to and complements existing neighborhoods, infrastructure, and recreational opportunities	Planning Board, Town Planner, voters	Continuous	n/c - \$

ACTION PLAN

L. Land Use and Zoning					
Task		Activity	Responsible Entity	Timeframe	Cost to Town
L.1.2	Objective	<i>Promote the preservation of existing residential neighborhoods and encourage development that complements and connects to existing neighborhoods and infrastructure</i>			
L.1.2.1.	Action	Develop zoning bylaws that encourage residential growth based on existing infrastructure and community services	Planning Board, Town Planner	0-5 years	n/c - \$
L.1.2.2	Action	Review the zoning bylaws for potential barriers to creating new housing or ensuring diversity in housing types	Planning Board, Town Planner	0-2 years	n/c - \$
L.1.2.3	Action	Consider ways to appropriately integrate new housing into existing neighborhoods	Planning Board, Town Planner	0-2 years	n/c
L.1.3	Objective	<i>Ensure that non-residential areas in town maintain flexibility to allow for growth of existing businesses while considering adaptive re-use potential</i>			
L.1.3.1	Action	Consider enhancing connections from the Town of Lee to Lenox Dale to link the northern portion of the town to an existing center of activity	Planning Board, Town Planner	3-10 years	n/c - \$
L.1.3.2	Action	Create zoning regulations that provide flexibility in new uses and bring life to vacant and underutilized commercial and industrial properties	Planning Board, Town Planner	0-5 years	n/c - \$
L.1.3.3	Action	Create zoning that is unique for each Rural Business zoning district zone, such as scenic byway (Jacobs Ladder), historic mixed uses (South Lee), and inn or institutional (Rt. 20 by Laurel Lake)	Planning Board, Town Planner	3-10 years	n/c - \$
L.1.3.4	Action	Revise, expand, and enforce design standards in the Commercial Business Corridor zoning district	Planning Board, Town Planner	3-10 years	n/c - \$

L. Land Use and Zoning					
Task		Activity	Responsible Entity	Timeframe	Cost to Town
L.1.3.5	Action	Evaluate Adaptive Reuse Overlay District and other provisions of zoning bylaw meant to provide flexibility for practical use	Planning Board, Town Planner	3-10 years	n/c
L.1.3.6	Action	Partner with owners of mill properties in Lee to identify funding for feasibility and market studies and for other efforts to encourage adaptive re-use of vacant spaces	Select Board, Town Planner, Planning Board	0-5 years	n/c
L.1.4	Objective	<i>Manage growth in undeveloped areas of Lee to avoid unnecessary suburban sprawl, conserve open space, and protect sensitive environmental resources</i>			
L.1.4.1	Action	Consider and pursue protections for critical resource buffer areas	Conservation Commission	3-10 years	n/c - \$
L.1.4.2	Action	Consider zoning boundary changes and dimensional standards to discourage sprawl while encouraging utilization of land in and near utilities and infrastructure, particularly within walkable access to services	Planning Board, Town Planner	3-10 years	n/c - \$
L.1.4.3	Action	Evaluate adequacy of existing zoning provisions meant to incentivize set-asides for open space, cluster new development, and minimize land clearance	Planning Board, Town Planner	3-10 years	n/c - \$
L.1.4.4	Action	Examine existing subdivision regulations and incorporate modern best practices into evaluations of land development	Planning Board, Town Planner	0-5 years	n/c - \$
L.1.4.5	Action	Utilize funds from the Community Preservation Act and other sources to preserve agricultural and forested open space	Community Preservation Committee	Continuous	n/c

ACTION PLAN

L. Land Use and Zoning					
Task		Activity	Responsible Entity	Timeframe	Cost to Town
L.1.5	Objective	<i>Improve land-use pattern and design of town gateways to make town's appearance more welcoming to residents and visitors</i>			
L.1.5.1	Action	Develop overlay districts that require more attention to aesthetic improvements and create more appealing entryways into the community	Planning Board, Town Planner	3-10 years	n/c - \$\$
L.1.5.2	Action	Coordinate reviews and actions of local boards and commissions to ensure that bylaw changes, policies, and new development promote a land-use pattern and design compatible with the town's downtown and neighborhoods	Planning Board, Historical Commission	0-2 years	n/c
L.1.5.3	Action	Engage MassDOT on the use of state-owned properties for staging and storage, with aim of improving town aesthetics, especially near town gateways	Select Board, Town Administrator, Town Planner	0-2 years	n/c
L.1.5.4	Action	Investigate code enforcement tools that can help address blight in the community and strengthen the town's capacity to respond to complaints regarding zoning and other bylaw violations	Planning Board, Town Planner, Building Inspector	3-10 years	n/c
L.1.5.5	Action	Explore opportunities to remove existing billboards in Lee, specifically those in a deteriorated state	Planning Board, Town Planner	3-10 years	n/c
L.1.5.6	Action	Continue exploring methods for eliminating excessive on-site commercial signage	Planning Board, Town Planner	3-10 years	n/c - \$

H. Housing and Residential Neighborhoods					
Task		Activity	Responsible Entity	Timeframe	Cost to Town
H.1	GOAL	PROMOTE DIVERSITY IN HOUSING CHOICES IN LEE TO ENSURE THAT HOUSING STOCK SERVES ALL RESIDENTS, INCLUDING SINGLES, YOUNG FAMILIES, AND LOW- AND MODERATE-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS			
H.1.1	<i>Objective</i>	<i>Organize town government to better support housing development</i>			
H.1.1.1	Action	Create and appoint members to an affordable housing trust	Select Board	0-5 years	n/c
H.1.1.2	Action	Educate and inform residents of existing housing needs in town and in the region	Select Board, BRPC, Berkshire Housing	0-2 years	n/c
H.1.2	<i>Objective</i>	<i>Monitor and address changing housing needs over the long term</i>			
H.1.2.1	Action	Evaluate housing gaps and determine preferred residential forms (affordable, senior, condos, mixed-use, clustered)	Affordable Housing Trust, Planning Board	0-5 years	n/c - \$
H.1.2.2	Action	Facilitate discussions between local employers and local housing owners and developers to develop partnerships to create or set aside workforce housing	Affordable Housing Trust/Board, Planning Board	Continuous	n/c
H.1.3	<i>Objective</i>	<i>Review and update land use regulations to facilitate housing goals</i>			
H.1.3.1	Action	Allow accessory dwelling unit construction, both attached and detached, where in keeping with the character of the area	Planning Board	0-2 years	n/c

ACTION PLAN

H. Housing and Residential Neighborhoods					
Task		Activity	Responsible Entity	Timeframe	Cost to Town
H.1.3.2	Action	Allow short-term rentals in residential housing, where in keeping with the character of the area	Planning Board	0-2 years	n/c
H.1.3.3	Action	Consider allowing three-family residential units by-right, separating this use from what would now be considered "multifamily"	Planning Board, Town Planner	0-2 years	n/c
H.1.3.4	Action	Revise zoning regulations to reduce disincentives for multifamily and townhouse development, specifically in relation to dimensional requirements and allowable districts, in keeping with the neighborhood character	Planning Board, Town Planner	0-5 years	n/c - \$
H.1.3.5	Action	Review and amend zoning regulations as necessary to permit and encourage innovation in housing types and development trends	Planning Board, Town Planner, Zoning Board	0-5 years	n/c - \$
H.1.3.6	Action	Amend zoning regulations to require issuance of a special permit only after finding that the project is 1) consistent with the Master Plan, including the housing section; and 2) has a pedestrian orientation to minimize automobile dependence	Planning Board, Town Planner	0-2 years	n/c
H.1.3.7	Action	Meet with prospective developers to encourage adaptive re-use as housing of underutilized and vacant properties, such as the Columbia and Greylock mills	Planning Board, Housing Trust	0-5 years	n/c
<i>H.1.4</i>	<i>Objective</i>	<i>Increase housing availability for low-income households</i>			
H.1.4.1	Action	Allocate a portion of Community Preservation Act funds for housing	Community Preservation Committee	Continuous	n/c

H. Housing and Residential Neighborhoods					
Task		Activity	Responsible Entity	Timeframe	Cost to Town
H.1.4.2	Action	Consider using Community Preservation Act funds to create a first-time homebuyer program, housing rehabilitation program, or other programs to create opportunities for homeownership or keep existing homeowners in their homes	Community Preservation Committee	0-5 years	\$\$
H.1.4.3	Action	Meet the state standard of 10% deed-restricted affordable housing units, primarily by incentivizing the addition of units in or near pedestrian services and amenities in the downtown and other densely developed areas	Planning Board, Zoning Board	3-10 years	n/c
H.1.4.4	Action	Encourage repurposing vacant or underutilized downtown buildings for affordable senior housing and apartments with accessory community center and office space	Planning Board	0-5 years	n/c
H.1.4.5	Action	Support the Lee Housing Authority to increase capacity to expand its services through the creation of new housing units	Lee Housing Authority, Town Planner, Community Preservation Committee, Affordable Housing Trust	0-5 years	n/c-\$\$\$\$
<i>H.1.5</i>	<i>Objective</i>	<i>Increase availability of market-rate rentals</i>			
H.1.5.1	Action	Partner with developers on necessary infrastructure upgrades to facilitate development	Select Board, Planning Board	Continuous	\$\$ - \$\$\$\$
H.1.5.2	Action	Approve at least 10 building permits for new market-rate rentals/apartments per year	Planning Board	Continuous	n/c

ACTION PLAN

H. Housing and Residential Neighborhoods					
Task		Activity	Responsible Entity	Timeframe	Cost to Town
H.1.5.3	Action	Investigate the use of alternative, moderately priced housing types, including but not limited to "tiny homes" or manufactured housing and housing using alternative building materials	Planning Board	0-2 years	n/c

O. Open Space, Recreation, and Natural Resources					
Task		Activity	Responsible Entity	Timeframe	Cost to Town
O.1	GOAL	SUPPORT THE PROTECTION OF SENSITIVE NATURAL RESOURCES AND AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES			
O.1.1	Objective	<i>Monitor the status of Housatonic River (Rest of River) Cleanup</i>			
O.1.1.1	Action	Hire consultants to assist the town in evaluating plans for the removal, transportation, and storage of PCBs	Select Board, PCB Advisory Committee, Board of Health	Continuous	\$-\$\$\$
O.1.2	Objective	<i>Protect water resources, habitats, and environmentally sensitive areas</i>			
O.1.2.1	Action	Evaluate whether the town's waterbodies, watercourses, and water supply areas are adequately protected by existing regulations	Conservation Commission	0-5 years	n/c - \$
O.1.2.2	Action	Partner with governmental entities and conservation-focused organizations to preserve forests, agricultural lands, and lands containing sensitive natural features, including flora and fauna	Town Administrator, Town Planner, Community Preservation Committee, Lee Land Trust, Lee Agricultural Commission	Continuous	\$ - \$\$\$\$

O. Open Space, Recreation, and Natural Resources					
Task		Activity	Responsible Entity	Timeframe	Cost to Town
O.1.2.3	Action	Develop an inventory and management plan for the removal of invasive species and encourage the use of native and pollinator friendly plantings in public and private projects, such as ongoing efforts of the Lee Community Gardens Pollinator Pathway program	Town Planner, Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Dept of Public Works, Lee Community Gardens, Greener Gateway Committee, Lee Land Trust	0 - 5 years	n/c - \$
O.1.2.4	Action	Maintain wildlife habitats and corridors through appropriate management of public spaces and land use permitting related to the use of private property	Town Planner, Planning Board, Dept of Public Works, Conservation Commission	Continuous	n/c - \$\$\$
O.2	GOAL	PROVIDE ACTIVE AND PASSIVE OUTDOOR RECREATION FOR ALL RESIDENTS OF ALL AGES AND ABILITIES			
O.2.1	<i>Objective</i>	<i>Enhance town parks and open space</i>			
O.2.1.1	Action	Consider the creation of a Parks and Recreation Department and evaluate the role of existing town bodies such as the Lee Youth Commission and the Sandy Beach Committee as part of this effort	Select Board, Town Administrator, Dept of Public Works, Lee Youth Commission, Sandy Beach Committee	0-5 years	n/c - \$

O. Open Space, Recreation, and Natural Resources					
Task		Activity	Responsible Entity	Timeframe	Cost to Town
O.2.1.2	Action	Provide paid staff support to track the use of town parks and open space, coordinate volunteer efforts, and coordinate needs with the Lee Department of Public Works and Lee Youth Commission	Select Board, Town Administrator	0-2 years	\$-\$\$
O.2.1.3	Action	Develop promotional materials that highlight the town's active and passive recreational opportunities and rules for the use of spaces	Town Planner, Lee Youth Commission	0-5 years	\$
O.2.1.4	Action	Recruit individual and organizational volunteers to share responsibility for the maintenance and cleanup of parks, trails, and publicly accessible forest land	Select Board, Town Administrator, Greener Gateway Committee, Lee Land Trust	0-2 years	n/c
O.2.1.5	Action	Provide adequate access and amenities for recreational spaces, including easily accessible access points, parking, seating, picnic tables, and signage	Select Board, Town Administrator, Dept of Public Works,	0-5 years	\$
O.2.1.6	Action	Develop a plan for environmental education for residents of all ages to promote stewardship and volunteerism	Town Planner, Lee Youth Commission, Lee Greener Gateway Committee, Lee Land Trust	0-5 years	n/c - \$
O.2.2	Objective	<i>Establish bike paths and trails that provide connections in the Town of Lee and with neighboring communities</i>			

ACTION PLAN

<u>O.</u> Open Space, Recreation, and Natural Resources					
Task		Activity	Responsible Entity	Timeframe	Cost to Town
O.2.2.1	Action	Complete the proposed bike path/river walk south of Park Street and advocate for an earlier release of funding to allow for project construction	Town Administrator, Town Planner	0-5 years	\$\$ - \$\$\$
O.2.2.2	Action	Pursue opportunities to provide bike path and bike lane connectivity within the Town of Lee and with neighboring communities	Dept of Public Works, Town Planner	Continuous	n/c - \$\$\$\$

ACTION PLAN

T. Transportation					
Task		Activity	Responsible Entity	Timeframe	Cost to Town
T.1	GOAL	ENSURE PUBLIC RIGHTS-OF-WAY ARE DESIGNED TO SERVE ALL RESIDENTS			
T.1.1	Objective	<i>Prioritize safe roadway design for pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorized vehicles</i>			
T.1.1.1	Action	Develop and adopt a complete streets prioritization plan that allows the town to qualify for funding to improve roadways and sidewalks	Select Board, Dept of Public Works, Town Planner	0-2 years	n/c - \$
T.1.1.2	Action	Evaluate roadways in densely settled areas of the community and identify appropriate traffic calming techniques where needed (e.g., temporary and permanent modifications to roadways and the use of warning signage such as electronic speed feedback monitoring)	Dept of Public Works, Town Planner	0-5 years	n/c - \$\$
T.1.1.3	Action	Regularly evaluate sidewalk conditions to ensure adequate maintenance	Dept of Public Works, Town Planner	0-5 years	\$\$-
T.1.1.4	Action	Identify portions of the town that need sidewalks and plan improvements through the capital improvement plan	Dept of Public Works, Town Planner	3-10 years	n/c - \$
T.1.1.6	Action	Identify locations in town with high frequency of bus pickups and drop-offs that would benefit from bus shelters	Town Planner, Berkshire Reg Trans Authority	3-10 years	n/c
T.1.1.7	Action	Encourage the use of shared curb cuts between neighboring properties to minimize the use of impervious surfaces, the removal of vegetative cover, and reduce the potential for traffic conflicts	Planning Board, Dept of Public Works, Town Planner	3-10 years	n/c

T. Transportation					
Task		Activity	Responsible Entity	Timeframe	Cost to Town
T.1.1.8	Action	Evaluate the use of scenic roadway designations in town to minimize the impacts of land clearance and preserve or improve aesthetics	Planning Board, Town Planner	0-5 years	n/c
T.1.1.9	Action	Study the feasibility of micro-transit options that allow for greater connectivity in town and to surrounding communities	Town Planner	0-5 years	\$
T.1.2	Objective	<i>Reduce the impact of commercial truck traffic in town, especially in downtown area</i>			
T.1.2.1	Action	Identify a feasible alternate truck route for non-local deliveries that avoids Main Street and move forward with implementation	Dept of Public Works, Select Board	0-5 years	\$-\$\$
T.1.2.2	Action	Take measures to improve pedestrian safety and reduce speeds on Main Street, such as narrower traffic lanes, shortened or raised pedestrian crossings, or enhanced overhead lighting	Dept. of Public Works, Town Planner	0-5 years	\$-\$\$
T.1.2.3	Action	Continue to monitor plans for transporting PCBs during the cleanup of the Housatonic River and advocate for options that minimize the impact on Lee's roads and neighborhoods and provide for adequate maintenance and remediation of roadways	Select Board, Town Administrator	Continuous	\$-\$\$\$
T.1.2.4	Action	Install advisory signage in town gateways that request tractor trailer operators to avoid the use of "engine braking"	Select Board, residents	0-2 years	n/c
T.2	GOAL	PROVIDE ADEQUATE PARKING FOR ALL DOWNTOWN USERS			

T. Transportation					
Task		Activity	Responsible Entity	Timeframe	Cost to Town
T.2.1	Objective	<i>Ensure that parking needs are assessed as overall downtown demand vs. a use-by-use or building-by-building approach</i>			
T.2.1.1	Action	Encourage development to employ shared parking arrangements before requiring dedicated on-site parking spaces	Planning Board, Town Planner	Continuous	n/c
T.2.1.2	Action	Assess the adequacy of existing parking requirements against modern best practices for downtowns and mixed-use areas	Planning Board, Town Planner	0-5 years	n/c

C. Community Services and Facilities					
Task		Activity	Responsible Entity	Timeframe	Cost to Town
C.1	GOAL	PROVIDE HIGH-QUALITY PUBLIC SERVICES TO RESIDENTS AND BUSINESSES			
C.1.1	Objective	<i>Sustain and enhance community services and facilities</i>			
C.1.1.1	Action	Create, fund, and fill the position of town planner	Select Board, voters	0-2 years	\$\$
C.1.1.2	Action	Continue efforts to relocate the Police Department, Fire Department, and Emergency Services to a modern facility	Select Board, voters	0-2 years	\$\$-\$\$\$\$
C.1.1.3	Action	Ensure that action C.1.1.2 moves forward while also considering a regionalized or shared approach	Select Board, voters	0-5 years	n/c
C.1.1.4	Action	Ensure community services are adequately included in the capital improvement plan	Select Board	Continuous	n/c
C.1.1.5	Action	Maintain a current emergency/disaster preparedness plan and appropriate resources to ensure regular review and updates	Select Board	3-10 years	\$
C.1.1.6	Action	Complete an Americans with Disabilities Act self-evaluation and transition plan for town properties and facilities	Town Administrator, Select Board	0-2 years	n/c
C.1.1.7	Action	Form a task force to assess the need for a community center, identify possible sites, develop programming, and implement a community center plan	Select Board, Town Administrator, Lee Youth Commission, Town Planner	0-2 years	n/c - \$

C. Community Services and Facilities					
Task		Activity	Responsible Entity	Timeframe	Cost to Town
C.1.1.8	Action	Inventory community meeting spaces, clarify how to gain access to them, and facilitate regular use	Select Board, Town Administrator, Dept of Public Works, Town Planner, Historical Commission, Lee Historical Society	0-5 years	n/c
C.1.1.9	Action	Ensure municipal services fit the needs of existing and future residents	Town Administrator, Council on Aging, Lee Youth Commission	Continuous	n/c
C.1.2	Objective	Enhance community-wide communication			
C.1.2.1	Action	Provide updates to the community about events and news through a newsletter and social media	Town Administrator, Select Board, Lee Youth Commission	0-2 years	n/c
C.1.2.2	Action	Implement an emergency notification system for residents using voice and text messaging	Town Administrator, Select Board	0-5 years	\$ - \$\$
C.1.2.3	Action	Develop a marketing plan to make the town an attractive destination for visitors and new potential residents	Town Administrator, Select Board, Chamber of Commerce, Town Planner	0-5 years	\$\$

C. Community Services and Facilities					
Task		Activity	Responsible Entity	Timeframe	Cost to Town
C.2	GOAL	PROVIDE A QUALITY EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE FOR LEE'S YOUTH			
C.2.1	<i>Objective</i>	<i>Ensure the long-term sustainability of educational opportunities in Lee</i>			
C.2.1.1	Action	Identify the critical minimum of school-aged populations need to effectively operate a 9-12 high school	School Committee	0-5 years	\$ - \$\$
C.2.1.2	Action	Identify options to ensure quality of education while enhancing the long-term viability of the school district	School Committee	0-2 years	\$ - \$\$
C.2.1.3	Action	Study the feasibility of implementing specialized programs to increase interest in the district from families within and outside the town	School Committee	0-2 years	\$ - \$\$
C.2.1.4.	Action	Engage in discussions with surrounding districts to understand the viability of sharing resources and services, including a shared high-school facility	School Committee	Continuous	n/c - \$\$
C.2.1.5	Action	Identify potential alternatives to merging or consolidating districts that address and prepare the community in the face of declining enrollments	School Committee	0-5 years	n/c - \$\$
C.2.1.6	Action	Ensure appropriate capital planning to minimize the impact of large school-related capital projects	School Committee	Continuous	n/c - \$
C.2.1.7	Action	Advocate to the state for more cost recovery of school-choice students	Select Board, School Committee, residents	0-2 years	n/c

C. Community Services and Facilities					
Task		Activity	Responsible Entity	Timeframe	Cost to Town
C.2.1.8	Action	Pursue opportunities to partner with St. Mary's School in extracurricular activities and other mutually beneficial services	School Committee	Continuous	n/c
C.2.1.9	Action	Foster cooperation between educational facilities in Lee	School Committee, Lee Youth Association, residents, CIP	Continuous	n/c
C.2.1.10	Action	Promote the availability of accredited early education programs in Lee	School Committee, Lee Youth Association	Continuous	n/c

M. Municipal Utilities					
Task		Activity	Responsible Entity	Timeframe	Cost to Town
M.1	GOAL	MAINTAIN WATER, WASTEWATER, AND STORMWATER SYSTEMS THROUGH TIMELY MAINTENANCE AND PLANNED CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS			
M.1.1	Objective	<i>Maintain viable systems for the safe and effective collection, distribution, and treatment of water and wastewater</i>			
M.1.1.1	Action	Develop a long-range plan for water system improvements, including assessing the existing condition of water mains and lines	Board of Public Works	0-2 years	\$\$-\$\$\$
M.1.1.2	Action	Prioritize water and wastewater infrastructure improvements outward from the center of town	Dept of Public Works	Continuous	\$\$\$ - \$\$\$\$
M.1.1.3	Action	Continue to enlarge water lines in downtown and other areas, including areas of potential growth (e.g., former mill sites), so that capacity for new and infill development and is assured	Dept of Public Works	0-5 years	\$\$\$ - \$\$\$\$
M.1.1.4	Action	Ensure that the Board of Public Works is engaged in long-term infrastructure planning	Select Board, voters	0-2 years	n/c
M.1.1.5	Action	Survey the number of properties without access to town water that utilize private wells	Dept of Public Works, Town Planner	0-5 years	\$
M.1.1.6	Action	Develop a plan for properties that rely on private wells to understand logistics of future connection to the town water supply	Dept of Public Works, Town Planner	0-5 years	\$\$
M.1.2	Objective	<i>Maintain and improve environmentally sensitive stormwater and flood protection systems</i>			

ACTION PLAN

M. Municipal Utilities					
Task		Activity	Responsible Entity	Timeframe	Cost to Town
M.1.2.1	Action	Ensure new public and private stormwater management facilities are designed according to best management standards to ensure resiliency to climate change	Dept of Public Works, Planning Board, Town Planner, Conservation Commission	Continuous	\$ - \$\$\$\$
M.1.2.2	Action	Investigate current policies addressing development and disturbance in floodplains and evaluate whether the town should pursue more rigorous methods of restricting floodplain development	Town Planner, Planning Board, Conservation Commission	3-10 years	n/c - \$
M.1.2.3	Action	Pursue opportunities to enhance stormwater management throughout town to improve the quality of water runoff	Dept of Public Works, Town Planner, Planning Board, Conservation Commission	0-5 years	\$-\$\$\$\$
M.2	GOAL	IMPROVE THE TOWN'S DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY			
M.2.1	Objective	<i>Ensure residents have adequate digital access for personal and emergency use</i>			
M.2.1.1	Action	Review and consider updating bylaws regarding wireless telecommunications to encourage growth where service currently is lacking or is at limited capacity	Planning Board	3-10 years	\$

ACTION PLAN

M. Municipal Utilities					
Task		Activity	Responsible Entity	Timeframe	Cost to Town
M.2.1.2	Action	Develop design requirements to ensure new wireless telecommunications fits the community's character	Planning Board	3-10 years	\$
M.2.1.3	Action	Evaluate and support access to high-speed internet throughout the community	Select Board, Town Planner	0-5 years	\$

HC. Historic and Cultural Resources					
Task		Activity	Responsible Entity	Timeframe	Cost to Town
HC.1	GOAL	PROMOTE AND PROTECT THE HISTORIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TOWN			
<i>HC.1.1</i>	<i>Objective</i>	<i>Preserve and enhance the character of Lee's historic districts and architectural heritage</i>			
HC.1.1.1	Action	Maintain a listing of financial resources potentially available for historic preservation projects	Town Planner, Historical Commission	Continuous	n/c
HC.1.1.2	Action	Support requests to the Massachusetts Historic Commission and town's Community Preservation Committee for funding to preserve historic resources	Town Planner, Historical Commission	Continuous	n/c
HC.1.1.3	Action	Develop a demolition delay bylaw to discourage the demolition of historic structures	Planning Board, Historical Commission	0-2 years	n/c
HC.1.1.4	Action	Develop an historic preservation plan for the community's historic neighborhoods and sites	Historical Commission, Community Preservation Committee	3-10 years	\$
HC.1.1.5	Action	Continue to update historic surveys and document buildings that have never been evaluated for historic significance	Historical Commission	Continuous	\$
HC.2	GOAL	ENHANCE APPRECIATION OF LEE'S HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES			

HC. Historic and Cultural Resources					
Task		Activity	Responsible Entity	Timeframe	Cost to Town
HC.2.1	<i>Objective</i>	<i>Continue to promote awareness of local history and cultural resources</i>			
HC.2.1.1	Action	Preserve awareness of local history through education, re-enactment events, and public and private historic preservation and restoration endeavors	Historical Commission, Historical Society, Cultural Council	Continuous	\$
HC.2.1.2	Action	Sponsor more events that celebrate the town's traditions, culture, and diversity in cooperation with other organizations as appropriate	Chamber of Commerce, Cultural Council, Lee Library	0-5 years	\$ - \$\$
HC.2.2	<i>Objective</i>	<i>Increase the presence of cultural resources and activities in Lee</i>			
HC.2.2.1	Action	Investigate the potential of creating a town-owned or town-supported cultural venue, potentially as part of a community center	Select Board, Chamber of Commerce, Cultural Council, residents	0-5 years	\$ - \$\$
HC.2.2.2	Action	Establish a combined school/town commission on the arts to help coordinate cultural and educational opportunities and offerings	Select Board, Cultural Council	3-10 years	n/c
HC.2.3	<i>Objective</i>	<i>Broaden the appeal, awareness, and links among cultural and historical resources</i>			

ACTION PLAN

HC. Historic and Cultural Resources					
Task		Activity	Responsible Entity	Timeframe	Cost to Town
HC.2.3.1	Action	Publicize cultural events in Lee and the community through traditional, social, and other media	Chamber of Commerce, Town Administrator, Historical Commission, Cultural Council, Community TV for Southern Berkshires	0-2 years	\$
HC.2.3.2	Action	Evaluate the potential for a downtown cultural district	Cultural Council, residents	0-5 years	n/c - \$

Appendices

The following appendices to the Master Plan are included in a separate, digital document that can be accessed through the Town of Lee municipal website: <https://www.lee.ma.us/>

They include:

Appendix 1: 2023 Townwide Community Survey Results

Appendix 2: 2023 Business Survey Summary

Appendix 3: Expanded Economic Community Comparisons

Appendix 4: Inventory of Lee Businesses