

2015-2018 MONTAGUE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Overview

The Town of Montague (pop. 8473) is a small, diverse community located in Franklin County, the most rural county in Massachusetts. It is situated on the Connecticut River in the Pioneer Valley of Western Massachusetts. The Town is located near major transportation routes (Interstate 91 and Route 2) and is served by the Turners Falls Municipal Airport. Montague was established in 1754. The village of Turners Falls is one of the primary population and employment centers in Franklin County. Food processing and precision manufacturing are the dominant industries in Montague. The Town is governed by a Board of Selectmen and has a representative form of Town Meeting. There are also several overlapping political jurisdictions within the town, including fire districts, water districts, and school districts.

The Community Development Strategy is meant to be a comprehensive, integrated approach to the municipality's community development priorities, summarizing public purposes set out in the principal planning documents—Comprehensive Plan, Open Space and Recreation Plan, Economic Development Plan, Housing Plan, ADA Transition Plan, and Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan—used by the Town of Montague. The Strategy is not a plan specific only to CDBG eligible activities. The Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) further requires that the strategy include the following:

- A discussion how the community will plan for and implement both CDBG and non-CDBG projects that are consistent with the Commonwealth's Sustainable Development Principles.
- An explanation how the community expects to address the priorities with CDBG and non-CDBG funds over a 3-5 year period.
- A list of projects and activities in order of the priority in which the community intends to undertake them, and provide specific goals and annual timelines for accomplishing its goals.
- Identification and description of the geographic target areas that are intended as the focus of community development efforts.

Montague's Community Development Strategy assembles master planning efforts of the Town. Each of which have incorporated extensive public outreach. This CDS was prepared by the Town of Montague, Planning and Conservation Department with substantial updates from the previous iterations. The 2014 CDS was approved by the Board of Selectmen on 11/25/2014 subsequent to a public information session hosted by the Planning & Conservation Department on 10/28/2014.

Town Plans

Comprehensive Plan

The fundamental mission of the Town of Montague is to ensure its residents the highest possible quality of life using all available resources in an efficient and effective way. The Comprehensive Plan is a primary tool of public policy which can be used to accomplish this mission by identifying critical issues, developing possible solutions, and establishing ways to measure progress.

The Comprehensive Plan prepared by the Montague Planning Board and adopted by Town Meeting in 1999 addresses land use, housing, cultural and historic resources, community issues, open space, natural resources, recreation, economic development, public facilities, infrastructure, and transportation in Montague. The Future Land Use Map provides a long-term vision for growth and development that is fully consistent with the Commonwealth's Sustainable Development Principles. It concentrates residential development in and adjacent to village centers, promotes growth of businesses in villages and along major roads, and identifies prime farmland, productive forest and wildlife habitat for protection. The plan was developed with input from hundreds of residents through public meetings and surveys, and was been updated and expanded in 2004

The major themes of the comprehensive plan are as follows:

- The vitality of all five of Montague's villages must be retained and enhanced.
- Redevelopment of abandoned and underutilized commercial and industrial properties.

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- Preservation of historic resources.
- Rehabilitation of older residential properties.
- Development of transportation alternatives.

Downtown Turners Falls Livability Plan

The 2013 Downtown Livability Plan was developed by over 40 working group members and an 11 member steering committee. Using extensive public input including a charette and focus groups with underserved populations, the plan developed an overall vision statement and map to guide the development of Turners Falls. The plan has the following goals:

- Enhanced connectivity for pedestrians and bicyclists
- Improved appearance and functionality of Ave A and 3rd St streetscape
- Enhanced recreational opportunities for residents of all ages
- Expand community events and activities in downtown Turners Falls
- Improve services and quality of life for all downtown residents
- Retain existing businesses and support business development
- Refine marketing and communications programs
- Improve gateway treatments and way finding signage
- Expand economic development policies and regulatory programs.

Economic Development Plan

The Montague EDP was developed by a 24-member task force of municipal and civic leaders and adopted by the Selectmen in 2004. The plan highlights priorities for improvements in civic and physical infrastructure to support economic development. The plan advances the following four goals:

- Promote retention and growth of existing businesses.
- Recruit new businesses in key sectors including manufacturing, the arts, agriculture, tourism and pedestrian-oriented retail and service enterprises.
- Improve the climate for business in villages.
- Promote Montague's historic villages, cultural attractions and natural resources to tourists.

Housing Plan

The Town's 2004 Housing Plan, prepared by a 12-member committee including housing and social service advocates, realtors, town officials and low-income residents, includes an inventory of housing assets, demographic information and needs assessment and guidelines for future housing development. The plan emphasizes the importance of modernization and improvements to the Town's existing stock of older, pre-World War II housing. The plan, which is being updated in 2015 advances the following goals:

- To maintain and enhance quality of life in the town's residential neighborhoods.
- To encourage a mix of housing types, densities, prices and ownership patterns that serve diverse Montague households while maintaining the community's character.
- To direct growth and development of new housing to areas that have the resources and services to accommodate it, while protecting important agricultural, natural, scenic and historic resources from residential sprawl.

Open Space and Recreation Plan

Seven year action plan developed by the Open Space and Recreation Planning Committee, the plan inventories natural and recreational resources in the community and identifies goals and strategies to enhance them. Over 40 people participated in the 2010 update of the plan. The plan advances the following goals:

- To conserve native plants and wildlife habitat, protect rivers and streams, river corridors and their watersheds and maintain scenic landscapes

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- To protect Montague's drinking water
- To ensure the continued viability of commercial agriculture and forestry in the Town of Montague and to conserve prime farmland soils
- To ensure that the Town of Montague continues to maintain and improve its recreational facilities in addition to delivering safe, accessible, quality recreational opportunities.
- To increase public support for the conservation of Montague's natural resources
- To safeguard the future of the Montague Plains

Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan

Adopted in 2014, this plan was developed by a committee of local public safety officials, utility company representatives, facility managers, Town Planner and residents with assistance from FRCOG. The Plan identifies Montague's vulnerability to natural disasters and identifies strategies to minimize the threat.

Energy Reduction Plan

A five-year strategy to reduce municipal energy consumption by 20%. Using FY08 as the baseline year, the plan inventories the energy use of all town-owned facilities, street lights, vehicles and identifies strategies to reduce energy consumption. The plan was developed jointly by the Planning Department and Energy Committee and was adopted in May 2010 by the Selectboard as a component of Montague's Green Community designation application.

Greater Franklin County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)

The town also actively contributes to and participates in regional planning efforts. Chief among these is the (*CEDS 2013*). The CEDS Program is a fundamental component of the greater Franklin County region's economic development planning efforts. The CEDS Program examines the current economic situation and identifies important economic development goals and projects in the region. The CEDS Region encompasses the twenty-six towns of Franklin County, plus Amherst in Hampshire County, and Athol and Phillipston in Worcester County. The process is guided by the CEDS Committee and the Economic Development District (EDD) Governing Board.

Recent Projects

In the past 5 years Montague has undertaken the following tasks or projects:

- Completed a livability plan for downtown Turners Falls
- Reconstructed Unity Park into a multi-use, multi-generational park
- Completed a new public safety complex
- Redevelopment planning and site preparation of the Strathmore Mill Complex
- Completed preliminary design for the Turnpike Road Industrial Park
- Received funding to assist the rehabilitation of over 30 private housing units
- Received Green Communities Designation which has funded guaranteed energy efficiency improvements to Town Hall, Carnegie Library, Public Safety Complex, and Shea Theater
- Updated Open Space and Recreation Plan and Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan, secured funding for a soil stabilization and drainage improvements on Millers Falls Rd.
- Reestablished an Agriculture Commission and adopted a right- to-farm bylaw.
- The Franklin Conservation District completed a ecological restoration project on the Sawmill River
- Turners Falls Water Dept. has established Hannegan Brook Well as a backup water source
- Received CDBG funding for two slum and blight designation studies and a senior center feasibility study (studies are underway)
- Received CDBG funding for streetscape and pedestrian lighting improvements to Avenue A.

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Target Areas

The Town of Montague designated four distinct target areas for community development activities for the 2007 Community Development Strategy. The boundaries of each target area approximate the geographic boundaries of the 5 villages in the Town: Turners Falls and Montague City form Target Area 1, the Lake Pleasant area forms Target Area 2, Millers Falls is Target Area 3, and Montague Center is Target Area 4.

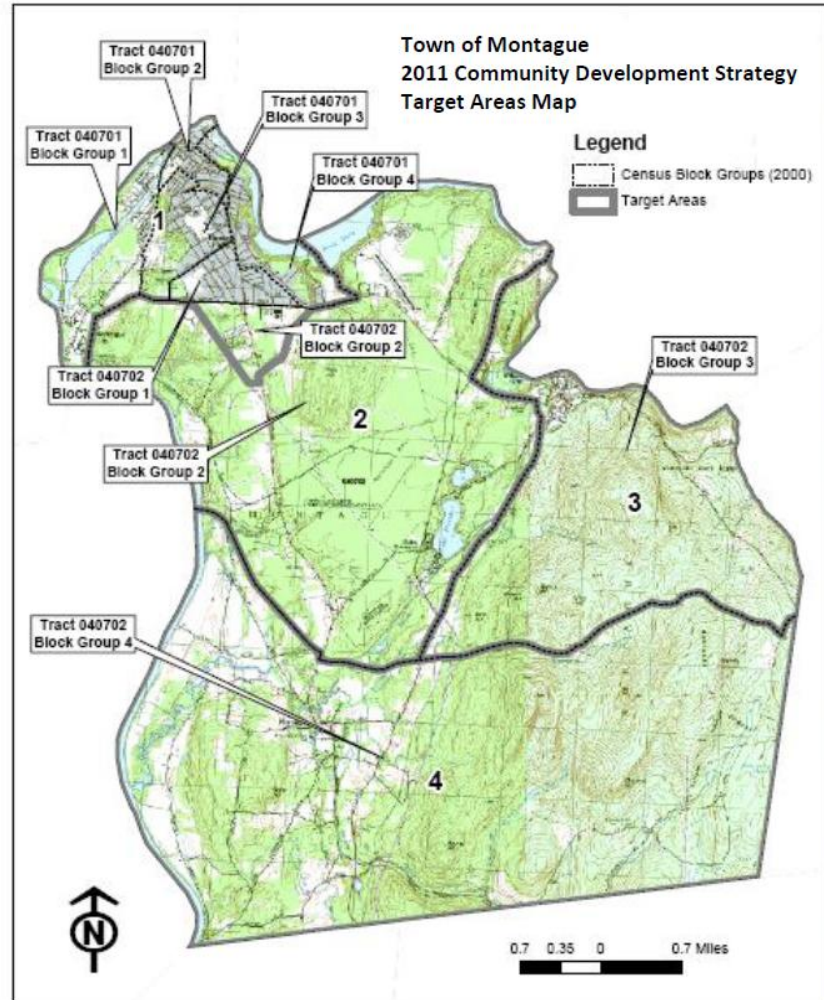
Area One is comprised of the village of Turners Falls and Montague City in the Town of Montague. The boundaries of the Target Area were determined by both village area and the Census Tract and block group (407.01, block groups 1-4 and 407.02, block groups 1 & 2). The Target Area contains over three-quarters of the population of Montague, and is the economic, cultural, and governmental center. Area 1 represents the highest concentration of low income, disabled and elderly residents in the Town. Target Area 1 is where the Town of Montague has targeted the majority of its affordable housing, community and economic development activities over the last decade—resulting in a steady revitalization. Many blighted commercial and industrial properties occur in Target Area 1 and the residential stock in the target area is in need of rehabilitation.

Area Two consists of the village of Lake Pleasant area. The area includes the

Montague Plains—a unique forest habitat, and the Airport Industrial Park. Target Area 2 has potential for industrial expansion and a need to preserve priority lands. There are several important thoroughfares in Target Area 2 including Greenfield Road, Turners Falls Rd, Miller Falls Rd, and Rt 63.

Area Three is comprised of the village of Millers Falls. The boundaries of the Target Area were determined by both village area and the Census Tract and block group (407.02, block group 3). Commonly known as the village of Millers Falls, the target area has a small mixed-use village center. The commercial and residential stock in the target area is in need of rehabilitation and revitalization.

Area Four consists of approximately one third of land area of Montague. At the hub of Target Area 4 is Montague Center, a quintessential New England mixed-use village center neighborhood surrounding a common. Housing 16% of Montague residents, most of the Target Area is rural and sparsely populated. There is significant agricultural and forestry activity in the Target Area. The boundaries of Target Area 4 were determined by both village area and the Census Tract and block group (407.02, block group 4).



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Priority	Project	Description	Funding Source	Target Area	Category
1	Redevelop Vacant Properties	Market and Redevelop vacant municipal properties in village centers so that they may be put to productive use.	Private Investment, Historic Tax Credits, Town	1,3,4	ED
2	Turnpike Road Industrial Park	Develop Turnpike Road Industrial Park- a 45 acre green industrial park designed to retain and promote growth of Franklin County Businesses	EDA, MassWorks, MassDevelopment	2	ED
3	ADA Accessibility	Update Transition Plan and Continue to make modifications and improvements based on the current <i>Transition Plan</i> ensuring that all public and private facilities and programs are accessible to individuals of differing abilities, including public streets, sidewalks and Town-owned property. Also ensure that sidewalks, especially within Village Centers and those leading to and from Village Centers are accessible. Also broadcast all public meetings on community television.	CDBG, Private Investment	town wide	TW
4	Senior Center Feasibility Study	Identify need for a senior center expansion or new location in downtown Turners Falls	CDBG	1	TW
5	Downtown Turners Falls Streetscape Improvements	Implement streetscape improvement recommendations in the 2013 Downtown Turners Falls Livability Plan, including new and expanded LED lighting and places for gathering/sitting. Public parking at Canal St	HUD, CDBG	1	INF
6	New Skate Park	Develop skatepark at Unity Park to support physical activity for youth	CDBG/ PARC	1	REC
7	Road/ Bridge Repair	Greenfield and Hatchery Road, Montague City Road multimodal safety improvements. Support expanded public transit on nights and holidays	MassHighway, Fed Highway Aid	Town wide	INF
8	Broadband Infrastructure	Connect unserved and underserved residences and businesses to "middle mile" and "last mile" fiber broadband internet services	MassBroadband Institute, Wired West, Town, Comcast	2,3,4	INF
9	Housing Rehabilitation Program	Develop financing strategies that will provide funding to maintain and upgrade the physical condition of existing residential structures, especially when housing is not in compliance with existing building code and or health codes	CDBG	town wide	TW
10	Sewer Pump Station Upgrades	Upgrades are required for all 8 sewer pump stations in Montague	State Revolving Loan Fund, Town of Montague	town wide	INF

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11	Improve Existing Parks	Improve or upgrade parks in Lake Pleasant, Millers Falls and Montague Center	CDBG	1,3	ED
12	Revitalize Historic-Industrial Mill District	Slum and Blight designation for access and infrastructure improvements targeted at the Turners Falls historic-industrial district	Private Investment, MassWorks, CDBG	1	ED
13	Millers Falls Slum and Blight Designation	Designate village center a slum and blighted area so that necessary public parking and façade improvements can be made.	CDBG	3	INF
14	Social Service Programs	Work with local Social Service Agencies to provide the community's needs through a RFP process. Provide social service programs to town residents as prioritized in the 2009 social service needs survey. (Education, literacy, senior services, public transportation)	CDBG, Philanthropic Organizations	town wide	TW
15	Improve river access	Improve recreational access at Poplar Street canoe launch and seek opportunities to create public access to Millers River in Millers Falls.	Private Investment, CDBG	town wide	REC
16	Public Works Facility	Develop Public Works Facility as recommended in 2012 assessment completed by the Town	MGL CH90, Town	town wide	TW
17	Open Space and Cultural Protection	Identify and preserve scenic, historic, cultural landmarks and prime agricultural soils as identified in the Open Space Plan. Establish public access to Dry Hill Cemetery	CDBG, Historic Tax Credits, Land Trusts	town wide	REC
18	Millers Falls Road Erosion Mitigation	Restore banking and reconstruct Millers Falls road drainage across from cemetery	FEMA/MEMA, Town	2	INF
19	Solar Facility Development	Develop Municipal solar facility that will meet municipal energy needs	Private Investment, DOER	town wide	TW
20	Business Recruitment	Enable and recruit appropriate retail and other businesses and cultural endeavors that enliven downtown and village centers, and serve the community.	Mass Cultural Council, Town of Montague	1,3	ED
21	Montague Plains Management	Access management and trail restoration on Montague Plains	DCR Recreational Trail Program	2	REC
22	Hannegan Brook Well Pump Station	Establish a Hannegan Brook Well as a primary public water source	Turners Falls Water District, State Revolving Loan Fund	1	INF
23	Update Comprehensive Plan	General update the Montague Comprehensive Plan. Update Housing Plan in 2015	DHCD	town wide	TW
<i>Category Description</i>		<i>TW=Town Wide Benefit INF= Infrastructure Improvement</i>	<i>REC = Open Space/ Recreational ED= Economic Development Project</i>		