

**Community Development Strategy
Town of Gill
September 27, 2010**

Overview

Volunteers and paid staff serve as elected or appointed members of various boards and committees, and undertake Gill's governance, community development, and strategic planning efforts. The activities contained within this application for funding are consistent with the priorities and needs identified through several local and regional community assessment and strategic planning processes, and with the Commonwealth's Sustainable Development Principles. Public hearings were held on September 27, 2010 to review and discuss this Community Development Strategy and the document was adopted by the Selectboard on October 12, 2010.

Community Planning Entities

Gill residents are involved in a variety of local and regional planning efforts to help clarify and coordinate the town's priorities. The following committees and people conduct needs assessments and community-based planning activities for the town: the 911 Coordinator, Accountant, Administrative Assistant, Agricultural Commission, Board of Assessors, Board of Health, Board of Selectmen, Cable Access Committee, Capital Improvement Planning Committee, Cemetery Commission, Conservation Commission, Council on Aging, Cultural Council, Energy Commission, Finance Committee, Fire Chief/Emergency Management Director, Gill-Montague Regional School Committee, Gill School Advisory Committee, Highway Superintendent, Historical Commission, Library Trustees, Memorial Committee, Personnel Committee, Planning Board, Police Chief, Recreation Committee, Riverside Municipal Building Use Committee, Town Clerk, Town Forest Committee, Treasurer/Tax Collector, and the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Several regional organizations assist Gill in its planning and community development efforts including the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG), Franklin Community Development Corporation, Franklin Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority, Franklin County Home Care Corporation, Franklin County Cooperative Inspection Program, Franklin County Solid Waste Management District, and the Franklin Regional Transit Authority. Gill residents serve as representatives to these and other organizations carrying out local and regional planning initiatives.

The following Massachusetts state offices and agencies also assist the town, providing guidance and funding to help meet community needs: Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, Department of Transportation, Department of Energy Resources, Department of Public Health, Emergency Management Agency, Historical Commission, Department of Revenue Division of Local Services, and Department of Housing and Community Development.

Planning Processes and Documents

The town is involved in a variety of planning processes, as follows:

Capital Plan: Each year members of the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committees meet to discuss long-range capital needs and priorities for the Town. Each department head and the members of the Building Committee are asked for input. Prioritization of needs and allocation of resources are recommended and discussed at Town Meeting.

Beginning in FY 2011, much of the responsibility for capital planning will be assumed by the newly formed Capital Improvement Planning Committee. According to the enabling town by-law, no appropriation may be made for a capital expenditure without first being considered by this seven-member group.

Green Communities Action Plan: In 2010, with technical assistance from the FRCOG Planning Department, Gill's Energy Commission developed a Green Communities Action Plan. This document outlines the steps the Town hopes to take in order to achieve state designation as a Green Community. If it becomes so designated, the Town could then apply for Green Community grants which could be used by the Town and its residents to make energy conservation improvements to buildings, homes, and town services.

Subdivision Regulations: In 2009, using funds from a Chapter 43D planning grant, the Gill Planning Board, with assistance from town counsel and the FRCOG, completed a major update and revision to the Town's subdivision regulations.

Energy Savings Performance Contract: In 2008 Gill began investigating the feasibility and desirability of paying for energy conservation measures in town-owned buildings using Energy Savings Performance Contracts. Since then the Town has had preliminary and investment-grade energy audits conducted at its buildings, and in June 2010 voters approved borrowing of up to \$430,000 to perform energy conservation improvements. This sum of money includes a \$150,000 Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) from the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources for the replacement of the 30-year old boiler at the Gill Elementary School.

Right-To-Farm By-Law & Agricultural Commission: In 2006 Gill voters established an Agricultural Commission, a five-member body charged with supporting agriculture and other farming activities in Gill. This group meets monthly and sponsors farmers markets and educational events throughout the year. The Right To Farm by-law was adopted in 2009, and is meant to encourage agriculture and related activities, while minimizing conflicts between farmers, neighbors, and town officials.

Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP): In 2005, the Gill Open Space Committee, with assistance from the FRCOG Planning Department, updated its OSRP. The OSRP combines the interest, effort, and motivation of community members towards the identification, prioritization, conservation and protection of Gill's landscapes and ecosystems in the face of new residential development. Its purpose is to provide a framework for decisions dealing with land use, which may affect ecosystems and the lands that contain unique agricultural, historical, recreational, and scenic values.

Mariamante Parcel: In December of 2004, the Town purchased a commercially zoned fifteen-acre parcel of land that had previously been classified under Chapter 61A. The hope was the Town could encourage future commercial development to occur in already existing commercial areas in town. The Town has held numerous visioning and brainstorming meetings, and paid to have two archaeological studies performed on the site in order to better qualify and quantify the extent of Native American artifacts and influences on the property.

In October 2009, in a striking example of civic spirit, a ground penetrating radar study was conducted.

The professional costs of the study, including surveying, radar equipment, and analysis of a mountain of data, was all donated. In January 2010 the Town heard preliminary results of the radar study, and will hear final results in October 2010.

Community Development Plan (CDP): The Gill Community Development Committee, with assistance from the FRCOG, completed a comprehensive Community Development Plan in June 2004. This plan, developed under Executive Order 418, addresses four principal areas: open space and resource protection, economic development, transportation, and housing. The CDP uses the information collected and maps created to establish options and strategies for addressing future development. The CDP's vision statement reads,

The vision for the Town of Gill is to recognize and preserve the Town's unique natural, historic and scenic resources, as well as its overall rural character. The preservation of these assets is for the benefit of current and future residents and visitors alike. This vision for Gill includes the continued provision of quality community services and the promotion of the economic well-being of residents and the health of the Town's business community.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Plan: The ADA coordinator annually assesses the town's ability to meet the regulations of the ADA with respect to town-owned buildings and properties. The town underwent an ADA compliance review by the United States Department of Agriculture in September, 2007. After making a few small adjustments, the town easily passed the review.

Annual Town Report: Each year the town produces an Annual Town Report, which contains detailed information about town processes, highlights progress made on a number of community development and planning projects, and identifies needs and priorities related to town governance, community development, social services, and public safety. Reports from various boards, committees, commissions, and trustees are reviewed and accepted at each Annual Town Meeting.

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

- The Greater Franklin County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) 2010 Annual Report. The FRCOG operated the CEDS program and guides economic development activities throughout Franklin County and neighboring communities. A committee of 46 business and community leaders directs the program.
- Franklin County Bikeway Plan, 2009. The plan seeks to design facilities and a transportation system that encourage bicycling as a viable mode of transportation and reduces auto trips. The 2009 update extends and expands a system created in 1993, and installed roadside signs delineating bikeway routes, including approximately four miles of road-based trails in Gill.
- Mohawk Trail Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan, 2009. In 1998, the FRCOG and the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) embarked on a cooperative project to recognize, interpret, preserve and promote the unique scenic, natural, recreational, historical, cultural and archaeological resources of the Mohawk Trail in Franklin and Berkshire Counties. The FRCOG and the BRPC sought and received funding through the Federal Scenic Byway program to complete a corridor management plan for the Mohawk Trail Scenic Byway between Greenfield and Williamstown in Massachusetts.

- Regional Transportation Plan, 2007. This plan, coordinated by the FRCOG with input from all 26 towns in Franklin County, promotes ways to develop transportation alternatives to the automobile while, at the same time, supporting the improvement and more efficient use of traditional facilities.

Strategic Action Plan

The planning processes described above have resulted in specific action plans that the Town has completed and/or will undertake over the next three to five years. The Town's priorities, projects, and identified resources and funding sources are described in detail in the relevant planning documents. The Town strives to embrace the Sustainable Development Principles published by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and incorporates aspects of these principles in its planning activities.

The activities included in the following list of projects promote a strong emphasis on regional planning, as Gill is fortunate to be a member community of the Franklin Regional Council of Governments. Smart land use, environmental sensitivity, and energy conservation also play a strong role in Gill's planned activities. The projects reflect a focus on maintenance and improvement of existing Town facilities and infrastructure, a commitment to improving the economic conditions and quality of life for town residents, and a dedication to conserving the Town's natural resources.

Town of Gill

Prioritized Projects List

2010 Community Development Strategy

Geographic Target Area: TW = Town-wide

Priority: 1 = High Priority 2 = Moderate Priority EP = Existing Priority (in progress and funding is secured)

CP = Completed Project

Geographic Target Area / Priority	Timeline	Project	Project Description / Relevant Plan	Funding Source / Estimated Cost
TW / 1	12/31/11	Mariamante Property	Determine best possible use for Mariamante property, develop and execute plan to sell property	Ch. 43D Tech Assistance grant, PWED & CDAG grants, local taxes \$ TBD
TW / 1	12/31/12	Housing Rehab	Correction of code violations for CDBG-qualified homeowners	CDBG funds
TW / 1	12/31/11	Public Safety Complex Roof	Determine need and course of action to replace 30-year old membrane roof	Funding: TBD Cost: TBD
TW / 1	6/30/12	Fire Truck Replacement	Replace 1979 tanker truck	FEMA Federal Assistance to Firefighters Grant; NMH gift, grants, local taxes. \$450,000
TW / 1	12/31/12	Cemetery space acquisition	Acquire new land for a town-owned cemetery	Private donations, local taxes. \$ TBD
TW / 2	6/30/12	Police Cruiser	Replace 2004 police cruiser	Local taxes \$25,000
TW / 2	6/30/14	Highway truck replacement	Replace 1990 dump truck	Local taxes. \$200,000 estimated
TW / 2	6/30/11	Extend Pavement on Hoe Shop Road	Extend pavement by 500 feet to eliminate ice-related safety hazard at crest of hill on Hoe Shop Road	Local taxes. \$ TBD
TW / 2	12/31/12	Town Forest	Develop use plan and trail network at 160-acre town conservation area.	Forestry grants \$ TBD
TW / 2	6/30/12	Community Access Programming	Establish volunteer group to produce Gill-related programming to air on local PEG cable access channel	Comcast Cable Company \$ TBD
TW / 2	6/30/12	Open Space Plan	Update Gill Open Space Plan	Volunteers and existing town staff
TW / 2	12/31/15	Master Plan	Update Gill Master Plan	Volunteers and existing town staff

Geographic Target Area / Priority	Timeline	Project	Project Description / Relevant Plan	Funding Source / Estimated Cost
TW / EP	6/30/12	Energy Savings Performance Contract	Finalize selections for energy conservation measures, obtain borrowed funds, sign contract with Siemens	DOER EECBG grant; WMECO rebates, Energy savings within existing utilities budgets Up to \$430,000
TW / EP	12/31/10	Fire Department air pack retrofit	Retrofit F.D. air packs to be compatible with RIT buddy-breathing systems	Local taxes. \$20,000
TW / EP	12/31/10	F.D brush truck	Convert surplus US Govt. pickup truck into fire-fighting brush truck	US Govt. truck donation; Town funds \$11,000
TW / EP	12/31/10	Highway dump truck refurbishment	Replace dump body and frame on 1990 truck in order to extend useful life for several more years	Stabilization \$9,350
TW / EP	9/30/11	Town Hall Office Walls	Construct office walls for Town Clerk, & Treasurer/Tax Collector; move Assessor's Office to first floor	Private donations (\$10,000) of money, materials, and labor; local taxes (\$10,000)
TW / EP	12/31/10	Gill Elementary School Bleachers	Eagle Scout project to repaint and refurbish bleachers with new seating planks and footboards	Eagle Scout \$0
Riverside Sewer District / EP	6/30/11	Sewer Pump Station Upgrades	Replace critical components of sewer system pump station to improve reliability & energy efficiency and to reduce operating & maintenance costs.	Town funds \$60,000
TW / EP	6/30/11	Capital Improvement Planning Committee	Implement CIPC	Volunteers and existing town staff
TW / EP	6/30/11	Green Communities Action Plan	Explore and implement activities to fulfill requirements to be designated as a Green Community	Volunteers and existing town staff.
TW / EP	6/30/11	Riverside Municipal Building Use Study	Identify future local and/or commercial uses of former school. Identify structural needs of aging historic building	Volunteers and existing town staff.
TW /CP	3/31/10	Public Safety Complex	Paint interior walls	Franklin County Sheriff's Office (labor) & Local Taxes (materials) \$0 labor, \$2,500 materials

Sustainable Development Principles

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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