

# FY13 Town of Williamsburg Community Development Strategy

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

This Community Development Strategy (CDS) serves to summarize various planning documents used by the Town of Williamsburg, and builds upon those planning efforts to outline a plan of action intended to accomplish specific community development goals that will have a positive impact on the Town, including a priority list of projects and activities. The target area is the entire town.

## **II. SUMMARY OF PLANS AND STRATEGIES:**

### **Town of Williamsburg Community Action Statement (1993, amended 1996)**

Williamsburg began its comprehensive community development planning process with the development of a Community Action Statement (CAS) as required by the former MA EOCD (now MA DHCD). The CAS provides an assessment of community capacity along with an inventory of community needs. For each need identified, an assessment of the factors that contribute to the need led to the development of action steps to resolve it. Needs included administrative, health and human service, housing, economic development, and park and recreation needs. Many of these have been successfully addressed primarily through the application and receipt of CDBG funds which allowed for renovations to the Town Office to provide handicapped accessibility, funds for housing rehabilitation, enhanced provision of various social services and elder services through programs such as the Hilltown Elder Network (HEN), assistance to first-time homebuyers, economic development programs such as small business technical assistance and training and other services for town residents.

### **Executive Office of Environmental Affairs Buildout Analysis (2000)**

Under the direction of the EOE, the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) completed a Build-out Analysis for the town. The build-out analysis gave the town its first in depth look at available land, building constraints, and potential residential growth. It laid a foundation for the in-depth community planning effort that took place under the EO 418 community development plans.

### **Town of Williamsburg Transition Plan for Compliance Under the American with Disabilities Act (1993, revised, 2000)**

In 1993, the town completed a self-evaluation of its current services, policies, and practices that do not meet the requirements of the ADA, and to the extent modification of any such services, policies, and practices is required, stated that the public entity shall proceed to make the necessary modifications. Physical inspections were performed, barriers were identified, and a plan was created to prioritize, schedule, and budget for their removal. In 2000, the plan was amended to include the needs for second floor access to Town Offices as well as many barrier removal and access needs of the Meekins Library. Through a combination of local and CDBG funds, an elevator was added to the town offices. A new addition to the Meekins Library, including an elevator, was completed in 2003, making both the new and old sections handicapped accessible.

### **Open Space and Recreation Plan (1987, revised 2004)**

The town completed an Open Space and Recreation Plan in 1987 and a comprehensive revision of this plan in 2004, which spells out an extensive list of goals and policies over a range of focus areas including historic preservation, growth management, water resources, fisheries and wildlife, forest and vegetation, agriculture, soils, scenic qualities, recreational activities, and general environmental protection. Identified goals included: support the working farms and forests of Williamsburg, limit the impacts of the Open Space Plan strategies on the Town's tax base, protect the rivers, streams, ponds wetlands and watersheds in Town, protect places of unusual scenic, historic or ecological significance, support plant and wildlife habitats, enhance appropriate recreational opportunities and raise community awareness of the full range of open space issues, needs and opportunities in Williamsburg. **This plan has been updated as of 10/11/11.**

### **Community Development Plan (2004)**

The Williamsburg Community Development Plan was developed by Williamsburg's Community Development Planning Committee, with support from PVPC and the Williamsburg Open Space Committee. The four elements addressed by this plan are open space and resource protection, housing, economic development, and transportation. Additional funding from the Highlands Community Initiative, a program of the Trustees of Reservations, allowed for a thorough update of the Town's 1987 Open Space and Recreational Plan (see above), which was included as a substantial portion of the Community Development Plan. Goals identified in the other three areas of study include:

#### **Housing:**

1. Provide a diverse range of housing choices in Williamsburg to serve a broader range of household types, including non-family households, single parents, empty nesters, low-income families and other under-served groups.
2. Offer a broad range of affordable housing choices for the **growing population of seniors in town.**
3. Preserve the character of historic homes and historic districts in town.

#### **Economic Development:**

1. Diversify Williamsburg's tax base
2. Increase employment opportunities in Williamsburg.
3. Ensure Business and commercial development is compatible with the character of the town and its established neighborhoods.

#### **Transportation:**

1. Periodically monitor traffic volumes along key town roads to determine changes in traffic patterns
2. Develop a pavement management program for all town roads.
3. Consider strategies to reduce vehicle trips to and from local schools such as walk and bike to school programs.
4. Promote ridesharing and ride matching services.
5. Continue to promote and support public transportation.

### **Northern Hilltown Sub-regional Housing Plan (2002; amended 2003, 2004)**

The Northern Hilltown Sub-regional Housing Plan was created to guide the implementation of regional measures to increase the affordable housing supply. Ten towns in the region joined to use the most recent census data, information from the buildout presentations, and a needs assessment questionnaire, to identify affordable housing needs and inventory the resources presently available to meet them. The towns agreed to support a regional approach to efforts to develop affordable housing at the local level. The plan recommends specific actions for each town. For Williamsburg these include working with developers to assure the creation of units that are priced to meet the needs of citizens with a broad range of incomes; cooperating with sub region towns and financing institutions to sponsor first-time homebuyer seminars on an annual basis; investigating resources for technical assistance in areas such as zoning bylaws, homebuyer purchase assistance, state and federal housing programs, and alternative ways of producing affordable housing in small New England towns and seeking state, CDBG and federal funding for housing rehabilitation and septic system repair.

### **Zoning Bylaw Review (2004)**

Previously all one "zone," the Town of Williamsburg undertook a comprehensive revision of its zoning bylaws. Three distinct "zones" were created: The Village Residential Zone, created to maintain the traditional character of the village residential neighborhoods; The Village Mixed Zone, created to follow the traditional mixed pattern of business and residential uses along Route 9 and the village centers; and The Rural Zone, which recognizes the traditional low-density residential and agricultural character of areas outside the village centers, while protecting their environmentally sensitive resources.

## Hazard Mitigation Plan (2010)

### III. MUNICIPAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GOALS:

Previous planning activities have aided the Town in developing the following Community Development goals, updated annually at community meetings to which all residents are invited:

#### Land Use and Growth Management

- Manage development to increase benefits to the community while lessening potential negative impacts. Efforts to accomplish this include the said revision of zoning bylaws.
- Study modifications to the Village Residential zone that would allow for higher density development in the town centers.
- Ensure business and commercial development does not compromise the character of the Town and its established neighborhoods.

#### Affordable Housing

- Provide Rehabilitation Funds for rehabilitation of existing housing stock occupied by low and moderate-income persons. An old and aging housing stock coupled with a rising population of elders often lead to housing repairs being left unattended.
- Make available crucial Homebuyer Counseling programs, as the cost of homes in the area are not affordable to young families and low and moderate income families. First time homebuyers often do not have the product knowledge or skills to work with financial institutions to access the most favorable mortgage product or terms for their needs.
- Provide assistance to **first time homebuyers** with down payment and closing costs, needed home repairs at the time of purchase, and mortgage assistance to increase the affordability of homes in Williamsburg to low and moderate income households. Home prices continue to be very high.
- Production of **affordable homeownership opportunities** is needed, as current market conditions do not provide homes affordable to low and moderate-income persons.
- Provide **affordable rental units** for persons with **low/mod incomes** who cannot afford homeownership.
- Update data to determine the extent of the need for Senior Housing for the increasing LMI elder population and develop housing to address that need.

#### Economic Development

- Provide technical assistance and training for small and micro businesses to help local entrepreneurs increase their self-employment skills in the areas of business training, marketing, financing and basic business operations to increase their profitability and self-sufficiency.
- Help small and micro businesses find appropriate loan funds when they cannot access traditional sources of capital, including referrals to the Town's Brassworks Fund. Small businesses need access to capital to upgrade or expand operations in ways that help them be more productive and profitable.
- Make available **training and technical assistance for small and micro businesses** on computer technology issues. Rural isolation makes accessing technology training more difficult. At the same time, greater skills in using technology are essential to remaining competitive as a small business.
- Advocate for and support infrastructure development and physical improvements critical to local business, including town-wide Broadband access and improved cell phone service. Approximately 10% of residents still lack broadband services.
- Support training programs in the regional school district, at Smith Vocational High School, at the Hilltown CDC, and at the Meekins Library.
- Work with owners of land in farming and forestry to find ways to help keep agriculture a viable business, and to help keep farm and forest lands in productive agricultural use. The Town Agricultural Committee can assist in this work.
- Welcome and support businesses that provide benefits to the community in ways that contribute to the rural character and fit into our scenic landscape.

- Increase the availability of local employment opportunities. **Retain local jobs.**
- Diversify the tax base with appropriate businesses. Ensure that business and commercial development is compatible with the character of the town.
- Explore Economic Target Area designation for the Town or as part of a larger region.

#### Natural Resources

- Research and develop incentives for landowners to keep their land in forestry.
- Develop economic support for agricultural based industry.
- Safeguard water and other natural resources: forests, farms, fields.

#### Open Space and Recreation

- Develop and implement a plan for targeting parcels, portions of parcels, development rights, and easements for acquisition and protection. Participate in regional planning.
- Establish a system of trails, which link recreational and public parcels and facilities.
- Charge the Town Recreation Committee with developing methods to examine and recommend options for recreational needs, and others.
- Develop a plan to enhance the Mill River as a town amenity.
- Mill River Greenway committee formed to connect the villages of Haydenville and Williamsburg
- Collaborate with the Fertile Ground program

#### Community Facilities and Services

- Address building needs per the December 7, 2010 assessment, complete the Anne T. Dunphy school renovation and addition project, assess and determine best use of Helen E. James building when released as a school, discuss needs and location of Public Safety Complex and adhere to capital improvement plan.
- Address needed capital improvements to Old Town Hall.
- Provide upkeep for two Town-owned historic cemeteries.
- Conduct a town office space needs analysis.
- Evaluate senior needs including new services and facilities.
- Periodically update 5- and 10-year fire and police department needs plan, including garaging needs. Develop a plan for a public safety complex.
- Replace and improve town vehicles and emergency equipment as needed.
- Obtain Green Communities designation in 2013
- Extend bike path from Northampton to Haydenville

#### Transportation and Energy

- Preserve regional transit through the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTA).
- Worked with PVTA and **installed** a bus shelter with regular, on-time bus service.
  - Charge the town Energy Committee to explore and develop renewable energy and conservation options, using appropriated funds for conservation and for improving the efficiency of streetlights, town buildings and making zoning changes that support energy conservation. **(See accomplishments)**
- Recommend and implement traffic calming measures.
- Continue the schedule of road and sidewalk construction.

#### Health and Human Services

- Provide a variety of **services to elders** so they are able to stay in their homes and communities. Needed services include: meals and food programs, help with chores, adult day care programs, transportation and health care that is accessible.
- Provide **childcare opportunities**, a continuing problem in both affordability and availability.
- Provide family support services and parenting assistance.
- Provide locally based social services programs in the area.
- Support a locally and/or regionally based food pantry for low and moderate income residents.

- Support and supplement Visiting Nurse Association (VNA) services.
- **Continue** effective preparation and training for health emergencies, for example, an epidemic.
- Support the development of life-skills learning, matching the skills and needs of younger and older residents, possibly through COA programs.
- Provide a variety of services in the evening hours at the COA, Library and other locations.

#### IV. MUNICIPAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PRIORITY LIST:

The Town has determined that the following municipal needs reflect the Town's highest priorities:

1. Continue working with the Massachusetts School Building Authority to design and construct new and/or improved Elementary School facilities and address school building needs. Anne T. Dunphy School renovation and addition project - final stages of bid documents (January 2013); construction in March 2013 to complete combining of school program into one building.
2. Seek funding to support **social service** programs serving low and moderate-income (LMI) households in Williamsburg, especially given economic pressures such as rising fuel costs.
3. Continue planning for and implementing a program that effectively develops existing Town assets and/or provides for new construction to meet town needs for a Public Safety Complex, improved Senior Center facilities, and Town Office space.
4. Create Open Space and Recreation facilities and increase awareness of walking trails.
5. Continue to address the Town's aging infrastructure

#### V. STRATEGY TO ADDRESS THE MUNICIPAL PRIORITY LIST WITH CDBG AND NON-CDBG FUNDS OVER THE NEXT 3-5 YEARS:

The Town of Williamsburg will address its municipal priorities using a variety of local, regional state and national programs and resources including:

1. The Town will seek CDBG funds to support **social service** programs serving LMI residents of Williamsburg. Use Town funds to support local Council on Aging activities.
2. Utilizing the December 7, 2010 Building Needs Committee report which outlines building needs and recommendations, the Board of Selectmen will continue to work with the Town Capital Planning and Finance committees, and town departments to determine development priorities and a timetable for implementation of the improvements and/or re-purposing or closing of town buildings. Funded and hired a part-time Building Supervisor to address everyday maintenance and immediate repair needs. The Town continues to move forward on the Anne T. Dunphy renovation and addition project utilizing Massachusetts School Building Authority and Town funds. The completion of the Anne. T. Dunphy building project in 2014 is the first step in this initiative. It will seek CDBG funds to renovate or construct improved **municipal** facilities and **infrastructure**.
3. The Town will use a combination of local and grant funds to acquire open space and develop recreation facilities.

#### VI. CONSISTENCY WITH THE COMMONWEALTH'S SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES:

The Town of Williamsburg's Community Development Strategy seeks to enhance its consistency with the ten Sustainable Development Principles:

1. Concentrate Development and Mixed Use – The Town continues to recognize the importance of its town center. Many of the town's planning efforts, such as the Zoning Bylaw Revision propose and promote concentrating resources and modifying zoning to encourage continued use and development of this area. Much of Williamsburg's planning efforts are directed to redeveloping existing infrastructure, utilities, and buildings, i.e. the Town Hall, library and elementary schools that already exist in the Town Center. The Town believes one of the reasons it has been approved by the MSBA to take the next step in renovating and consolidating its elementary schools was its desire to retain the schools in the Town Center and continue to utilize the other existing amenities.

2. Advance Equity – The Town’s strategic planning committees have made exhaustive efforts to solicit community participation, with special attention to making meetings, etc. completely accessible to all residents, regardless of ability or income.

3. Make Efficient Decisions -- The Town has recently approved a Zoning Bylaw amendment to allow age restricted housing for persons over age 55 which allows higher density development and requires conservation of open space.

4. Protect Land and Eco-Systems – The Town has a comprehensive Open Space and Recreation Plan (1987, 2004), which is currently being updated. The Town recently approved a procedure for transitioning land out of Chapter 61 that enables the Town to more effectively exercise its right of first refusal. In 2009 the Town sent informational letters to all Chapter 61 landowners.

5. Use Natural Resources Wisely – The Town has a comprehensive Open Space and Recreation Plan (1987, 2004). The Town has also approved a Right to Farm bylaw, and recently approved a conservation restriction on a 7 acre parcel that abuts existing conservation land.

6. Expand Housing Opportunities – The Town recently added an 11-unit cluster affordable housing development on **Solar Circle** in Haydenville, built by Hilltown CDC. The Town will also continue to pursue funding for housing rehabilitation as well as other affordable housing opportunities.

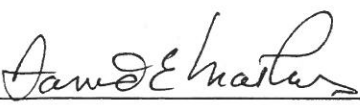
7. Provide Transportation Choice – Williamsburg is the only Hilltown community with fixed route transit service. Door to door accessible van service (paratransit) is also provided for elderly and disabled residents.

8. Increase Job and Business Opportunities – The Town’s participation in the regional FY 08 Economic Development Fund grant is aimed at creating new jobs through training and technical assistance to local micro-enterprises. The town is also promoting Williamsburg as a destination for tourist and recreational activities. The Town also participates in a Hilltown CDC regional state technical assistance program for businesses with 20 employees or fewer. The Town also supports other Hilltown CDC business development programs which include a printed and on-line Hilltown Business Directory which is mailed annually to every household in the hilltowns to promote patronage of local businesses. The Open Space and Recreation Plan and the Agriculture Committee also support working farms and forests in Williamsburg.

9. Promote Clean Energy -- The Town has formed an Energy Committee that is charged with using appropriated funds for conservation and for improving the efficiency of streetlights, town buildings and making zoning changes that support energy conservation.

10. Plan Regionally – The Town has been an active participant in numerous regional planning efforts including the Northern Hilltown Sub-regional Housing Plan, the Highland Communities Initiative, **a regional veteran’s services district, regional emergency dispatch and police/fire mutual aid and snow plowing**, as well as inter-municipal agreements with a neighboring community regarding water **and sewer services**. **The Town has joined with neighboring communities and the regional school district to plan for and implement regional emergency response efforts, including clinics and shelters.** The Town annually participates in the planning and submission of regional CDBG applications which include projects that address a number of shared municipal community development goals across the region.

*Reviewed and discussed at a public meeting on November 15, 2012 and accepted by the Williamsburg Selectboard on December 27, 2012.*

By:  Selectboard Chair  
David E. Mathers

APPENDIX I  
ACCOMPLISHMENTS

<b>Date completed</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>
2011	Began "Burgy" Farmer's Market with Hilltown CDC as fiscal sponsor	
2011	Created Village Center Visioning Committee	PVPC – District Local Technical Grant, town funded match of \$500
2011	Voted and contracted with Drummey/Rosane for feasibility study and schematic design of Williamsburg School building project	Approved at \$162,000
2011	Voted and contracted with Arcadis to perform as Owners Project manager	\$75,000
2011	Implemented reverse 911 system	\$3,250
2011	Energy Improvements at highway garage and town offices	\$59,500
2011	Installed generator for town offices	\$3,500 donation and Dept. of Health
2011	Repairs to Ashfield road, North Farms Rd. and South St.	Chapter 90 funds
2010 (June)	Voted to purchase new highway dept. truck	\$66,000
2010 (June)	Repaired and painted town offices	\$35,000
2010 (June)	Voted to allocate funds to finish highway garage work	\$25,000
2011 (June)	Voted to purchase police cruiser	\$35,000
2011 (June) voted to appropriate funds	Plans to install computer server at town offices and upgrade computers	\$31,000
2011	11/17/11 report presented to Board of Selectmen from Village Center Visioning Committee regarding modifications to the Village Residential zone allowing higher density	
2011	Insulation installed in Town Office	EECBG grant
2011	Reconstruction of Route 143	\$420,000 Mass Works Infrastructure Program
<b>2012</b>	<b>Equip the Helen E. James School with photovoltaic panels.</b>	<b>\$20,738.55 – Clean Energy Grant</b>
<b>2012</b>	<b>Contracted with City of Northampton for Building and Wiring Inspection services</b>	<b>\$21,000</b>
<b>2012</b>	<b>Completed renovations installing an elevator and new entry way at Nash Hill Senior Housing facility with use of CDBG funds</b>	<b>\$306,690</b>
<b>2012</b>	<b>Repaired Conway Road, East Main St and Nash Hill Road</b>	<b>\$196,774 – Chapter 90 Funds</b>
<b>2012</b>	<b>Installed air conditioning at library</b>	<b>\$39,158</b>
<b>2012</b>	<b>Conducted Old Town Hall architectural assessment</b>	<b>\$15,000</b>
<b>2012</b>	<b>Repaired sidewalk on East Main Street, Main Street</b>	<b>\$7,716</b>
<b>2012</b>	<b>Purchased Emergency Response Trailer</b>	<b>\$5,000 – MIIA Loss Control Grant</b>
<b>2012</b>	<b>Purchased Fire Chief's Ford Expedition</b>	<b>\$36,000</b>
<b>2012</b>	<b>Purchased audio/video equipment for police cruiser</b>	<b>\$5,000 – FY13 Loss Control Grant</b>
<b>2012</b>	<b>Installed generators in Fire, Police, Town Hall facilities</b>	<b>\$17,075</b>
<b>2012</b>	<b>Completed road work at Solar Circle development</b>	<b>\$9,664</b>
<b>2012</b>	<b>Repaired Sirens on both Fire Stations</b>	<b>\$ 4,000 – EMPG Grant/ Town Match</b>
<b>2012</b>	<b>Upgraded Emergency Radio Equipment</b>	<b>\$15,500</b>

