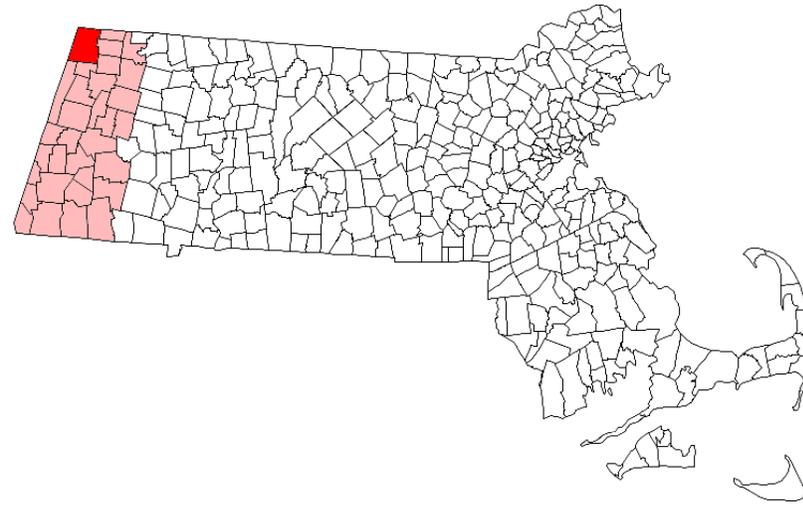


Housing Reform in Williamstown, MA

Andrew Groff, AICP - Community Development Director



Our Community



- ▶ Pop. 7,592 (2016 ACS)
- ▶ Selectmen & Town Manager
- ▶ Open Town Meeting
- ▶ Home of Williams College & The Clark Art Institute



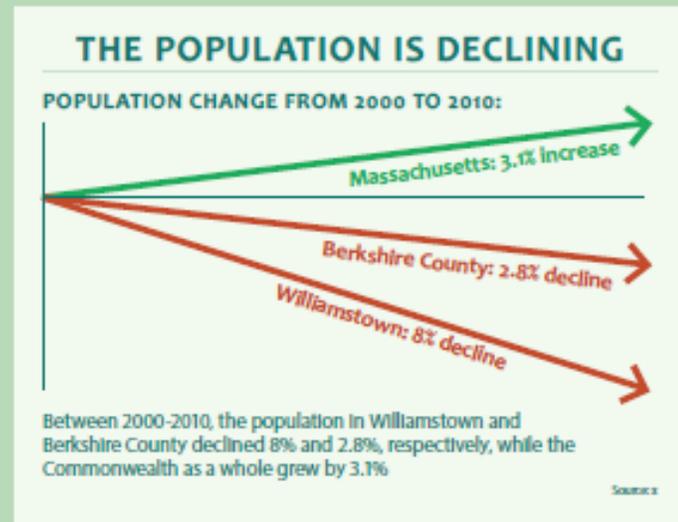
Political Environment

- ▶ High, but selective, participation in local government
- ▶ Opinionated residents who are frequent meeting attendees
- ▶ Strong commitment to preserving Williamstown character
- ▶ Less participation from renters, young families, and others

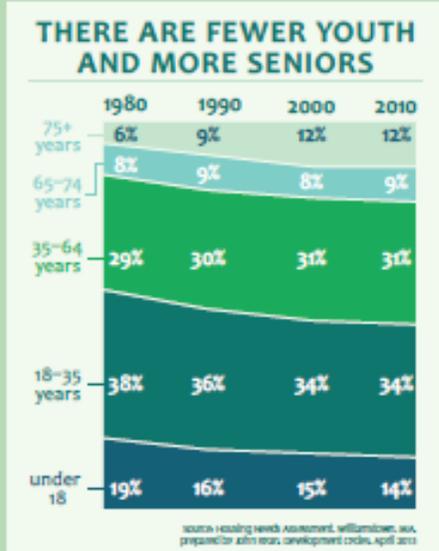
Housing Needs - Demographic Challenges

Overview of Williamstown's Housing Needs

For Berkshire County, Williamstown is a high priority zone for housing production because of its high access to employment, higher performing schools, and water and sewer service.



2015 population estimate: 7,605



If people of various ages, incomes, and lifestyles have the opportunity to live in the neighborhood due to more diversity of housing choices, it will increase the vibrancy of the neighborhood.

Williamstown residents are getting older, like many places in the Commonwealth. In addition to ensuring there are options for seniors, Williamstown must plan for future residents.

Not only are rising home prices a barrier for young people and young families, but the lack of opportunity to live in a walkable neighborhood or smaller home may be a deterrent as well.

Owner- and Renter-Occupied Housing Units:

OWNER-OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS

WILLIAMSTOWN



BERKSHIRE COUNTY



MASSACHUSETTS



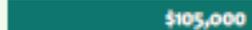
Source: Housing Needs Assessment, Williamstown, MA, prepared by John Ryan, Development Cycles, April 2013

WILLIAMSTOWN'S MEDIAN SINGLE-FAMILY HOME PRICE IS HIGH

WILLIAMSTOWN



NORTH ADAMS



ADAMS

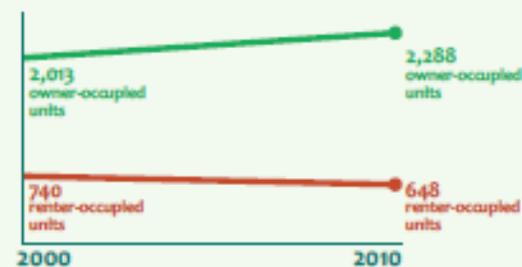


BERKSHIRE COUNTY



Source: Median Sales Price for 2010, Jan-Nov, The Warren Group, Town Stats, accessed 9/14/12

RENTER-OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS



Renter-occupied units declined 12% between 2000-2010.

Source: Housing Needs Assessment, Williamstown, MA, prepared by John Ryan, Development Cycles, April 2013

Local Housing Needs

Williamstown's existing housing stock lacks diversity of options – particularly smaller multi-family units. Based on the 2013 Housing Needs Assessment, Williamstown needs more rental units, especially apartments affordable to low-income households, as well as more subsidized elderly rental housing.

WILLIAMSTOWN NEEDS MORE RENTAL UNITS

The supply of rental units is tight and prices are high—rents are roughly 30-60% higher in Williamstown than in Adams and North Adams. This leads to renters spending too much for housing costs.



About **38.2%** of all Williamstown renter-households are cost-burdened, paying more than 35% of their gross income for rent.

Sources: 2011-2013 American Community Survey and Housing Needs Assessment, Williamstown, MA, prepared by John Ryan, Development Cycles, April 2013

Employer Challenges, Changes in Preference

- ▶ Significant numbers of tenured faculty are retiring each year between now and the mid 2020's.
- ▶ Williams is focused on recruiting younger faculty for these tenure track positions.
- ▶ These new residents have less housing need than in the past and prefer low maintenance apartment living over single family homes.
- ▶ They also often lack resources to purchase available single family homes within Williamstown.
- ▶ All of these factors have placed stress on the College's faculty housing program and ability to recruit top talent.
- ▶ Cable Mills, 48 luxury apartments, 13 moderate income affordable units.
- ▶ Fully leased out under 3 months from completion.
- ▶ Has brought new residents to town seeking non single family living.

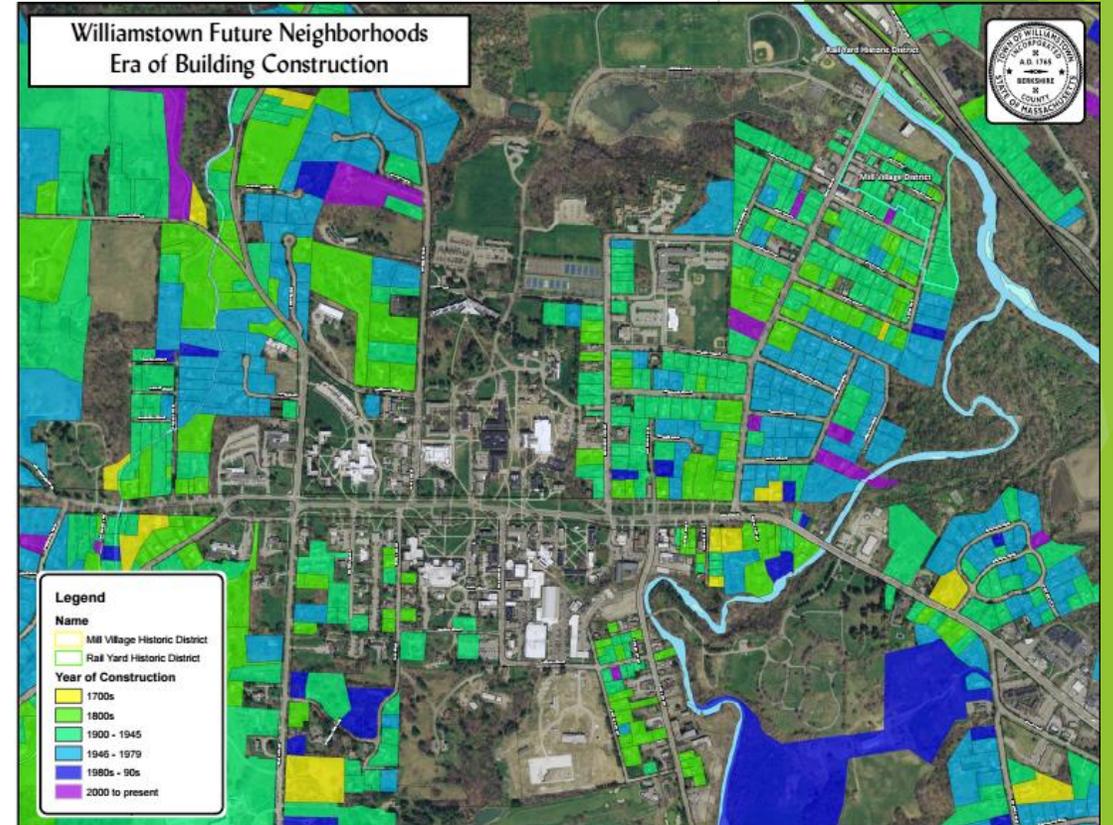
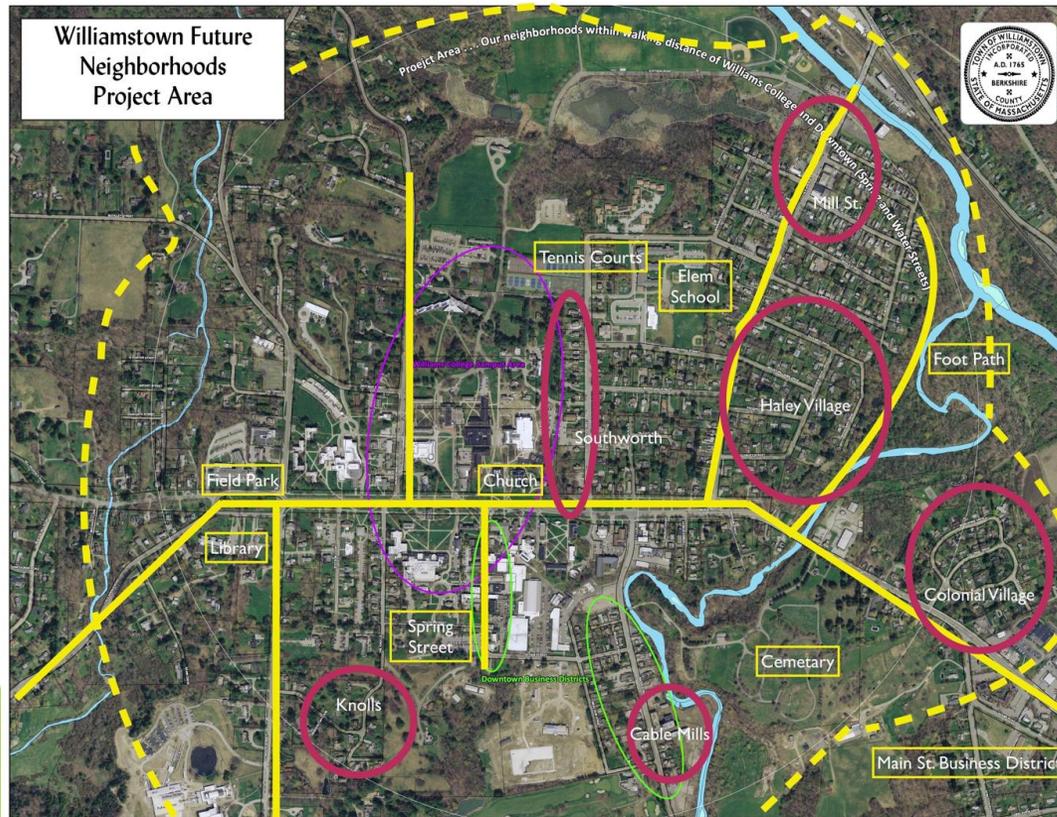


Planning Board Begins Response

- ▶ The Board developed a mission statement on the project;
- ▶ *“Current trends show a recent significant and projected continued decline in Berkshire County’s population. Also, state and national trends show that coming generations, and even members of current generations, are looking away from traditional models of housing (...)”*
- ▶ *“Trends show that folks are looking at smaller places to live, different and more efficient ways of living, and how to leave a smaller footprint. Locally, this trend can be seen in the speed of the lease out of the new Cable Mills building (...)”*
- ▶ *“Throughout the coming months, we will be studying housing options for this next generation of workers, employers, families, and seniors [...]This process will involve significant community input and the Board hopes to hear from many members throughout our community.”*
- ▶ *“With the cooperation of our friends and neighbors, the Board hopes that the Town can institute some forward thinking and unique zoning changes to respond to broader changes that are occurring, all while protecting what makes Williamstown a unique community.”*

Creating a strategy

- ▶ Planning Board developed a project area.
- ▶ Targeted DLTA funding for assistance.
- ▶ Berkshire Regional Planning connected the Board with Mass Housing Partnership



Outreach Process

- ▶ MHP's Community Assistance Team met with the Planning Board. Hired Jennifer Goldson to help plan and facilitate community outreach.
- ▶ MHP also worked with the Town to launch a CoUrbanize based website to create additional methods of feedback.

- ▶ Board's Outreach Goals;
- ▶ How can we encourage people to attend meetings to discuss housing?
- ▶ What is the best format to both solicit input and feedback as well as educate on zoning and housing?
- ▶ How can we engage the most residents, particularly those residents who don't often attend traditional community meetings?
- ▶ How can we make the process of examining zoning options less combative and more meaningful and productive?

CoUrbanize platform

coUrbanize Explore Projects How It Works Carsten

Williamstown Future Neighborhoods Williamstown, MA MAP INFO UPDATES TIMELINE

Where and how can we improving housing options in Williamstown?

Add Your Idea

Sort by: Most popular Category: All

Julie Cassidy
Feb 12, 2017

I work at Williams College and would love, some day, to move into Williamstown so that I can walk to work and have a more sustainable lifestyle that doesn't require that I drive to/from work every day.... [Read more](#)

Could be better

Support (1) Share

Write a reply

Town of Williamstown
Feb 22, 2017

Great idea Julie! Are you looking for

CATEGORIES

- Great!
- Could be better
- What's missing

Williamstown

Williamstown Elementary School

Lower Linear Park

Hoosic River

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