

Resident Comments Detailed in Categories

Aug. 15, 2017

LENOX DALE ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES -- EIGHT CATEGORIES: Concerns and opportunities identified by Lenox residents and in previous Community Surveys, along with thought-starter suggestions on possible Town next steps in response. These are organized by topic:

1. Lenox Dale Community Character
2. Roadways, Sidewalks and Traffic
3. Open Space and Recreation
4. Streetscape Improvements
5. Housing
6. Industrial and Commercial Development
7. The Niagara Mill Site
8. Rest of River Cleanup

 1. Lenox Dale Community Character	
Strengths and Opportunities Identified by Residents:	Town Department/Board/Committee Responsible for Addressing:
Strong neighborhood identity and sense of community.	
Preserve the strong community character and identify as a close knit residential area.	

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2. Roadways, Sidewalks and Traffic

Strengths and Opportunities Identified by Residents:	Town Department /Board/Committee Responsible for Addressing:
There is strong pedestrian connectivity within the neighborhood center, and pending projects will fill in “gaps” to connect pedestrians and cyclists between Lenox Dale and the Village Center.	
Crystal Street is identified as a potential multi-use link through Lenox Dale. Promote Crystal Street as a safe roadway for all users— pedestrians, cyclists, parents with strollers, residents in wheelchairs. Maintain visitors along Crystal Street, as continued and increased visitors would support expanded and new businesses providing services and benefit to residents as well.	
Concern regarding high traffic volumes and higher speeds along Mill St., Walker St., East St., and Crystal St.	
Walking conditions are considered safe and enjoyable, while the majority of roads are narrow.	
Some of the purely residential streets are not marked, and residents noted speed to be a concern in some locations.	
The solely residential streets are not all striped.	
The solely residential streets do not all include pedestrian accommodations.	
A wide intersection across Walker Street to Golden Hill Road lends to an uncomfortable pedestrian environment.	

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 3. Open Space and Recreation	
Strengths and Opportunities Identified by Residents:	Town Department/ Board/Committee Responsible for Addressing:
<p>A number of pedestrian-based open space and recreational opportunities exist in Lenox Dale:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woods Pond is a popular ice fishing location in winter months, and this draws visitors and a hot dog cart. • A pedestrian bridge connects residents to the expanse of open space and trails of October Mountain State Forest. • Post Farm is accessible via Lenox Dale. Berkshire Natural Resource Council owns property in the neighborhood. • Proximity to the Housatonic River provides an opportunity to connect residents and visitors to a natural resource and orient activity and land uses toward a unique landscape feature. <p>But, not all of these sites have formal access, i.e. parking or trailhead are notably absent for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hallowell Meadow • Post Farm 	
<p>As Lee and Pittsfield develop their bike path plans, Lenox Dale serves as a connecting point. It is likely that the Lee bicycle path will terminate somewhere at the Lenox/Lee boundary in the Lenox Dale neighborhood.</p>	<p>Connect Lenox Dale to other municipality's walking/bike paths, and connect existing recreational assets.</p>
<p>In the past, Lenox has grappled with adopting an off-road shared use path alignment due to specific property owner concerns.</p>	
<p>The Berkshire Scenic Railway Museum is another attraction that brings visitors into the neighborhood.</p>	

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<p>However, the Scenic Railway Museum is unable to continue its scenic rides from the historic train station at this time Residents missed the scenic rides once offered from the museum and would like to see that activity restored.</p>	
<p>Continue efforts to extend access for and service by Berkshire Scenic Railway and consider ways of linking this initiative and Housatonic River Initiatives to benefit Lenox Dale.</p>	
<p>Landscape provides access to Housatonic River, Woods Pond and October Mountain State Forest, but Housatonic River remediation lends uncertainty to what the land along the river will look like and be available for well into the future.</p>	
<p>Walking and biking improvements within the village, between the Berkshire Scenic Railway Museum and Lenox Historic Village should also be pursued. Fill in pedestrian and bike connectivity gaps, such as the gap between Lenox Dale and the Lenox Village Center on Walker Street and connecting Tillotson Park to Crystal Street, Housatonic Street and Mountainview Cemetery.</p>	
<p>Design Housatonic River Walk to the east of the river.</p>	
<p>Coordinate activities between the Town of Lee, private landowners, and businesses to leverage existing resources and opportunities.</p>	

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4. Streetscape

<p>Strengths and Opportunities Identified by Residents:</p>	<p>Town Department/ Board/Committee Responsible for Addressing:</p>
<p>Stakeholders expressed interest in improving the physical infrastructure and upgrading the landscaping and building facades.</p> <p>The physical condition of certain buildings was noted as a challenge. Weary facades and unkempt front yard areas detract from the “gateway” area at the Crystal Street/Mill Street/Walker Street intersection.</p>	
<p>Lenox Dale has many historic homes and sites evocative of its unique past as both the industrial hub of Lenox and the gateway into Lenox for the owners and employees of the Gilded Age estates.</p> <p>This history is visible throughout the neighborhood, and some of the homes in the neighborhood date back to the 18th and 19th century.</p>	
<p>Lenox Dale does not have a Local Historic District; few buildings in the neighborhood are listed in MACRIS, nor is there the same prevalence of inventoried historic buildings as exists in and around the village center.</p>	
<p>Retain the current scale and mix of land uses within Lenox Dale and the Village Center.</p>	

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 5. Housing	
Strengths and Opportunities Identified by Residents:	Town Department/ Board/Committee Responsible for Addressing:
In-fill potential exists on properties zoned commercially, industrially and residentially.	
Zoning policy and map results in conflict or potentially onerous permitting procedures for even modest use or structure modifications.	
A place where families can afford to live.	
<p>Recommendations from RKG:</p> <p>The development of mixed-use development could be made easier in Lenox Dale.</p> <p>The recommended Lenox Dale district would ease density requirements, helping to increase and diversify housing stock in the neighborhood and broader community of Lenox.</p> <p>Encourage housing development on nonconforming lots; including those shown on Exhibit B in Lenox Dale neighborhood. Lenox Dale has traditionally been home to residential density of more than one residential unit per acre.</p>	

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6. Industrial and Commercial Development

Strengths and Opportunities Identified by Residents:	Town Department/ Board/Committee Responsible for Addressing:
Revitalize industrial and commercial areas.	
Residents in Lenox Dale have long lived near industrial activity; however, one resident expressed desire to not see the physical footprint of industrial activity expanded, to maintain quality of life for residents.	
Residents expressed desire for businesses that could provide local services (i.e., a pizza place or casual family dining) along with a mix of activities that could draw visitors, such as a redevelopment of the Niagara Mill site into a brewery or museum space or re-activation of the scenic train rides at the Scenic Railway Museum.	
Rest of River cleanup puts a big question mark on the viability of entrepreneurial investment until after the cleanup is complete.	
One challenge to further attracting new or expanding businesses into the neighborhood has been a zoning map not accurately reflecting on-the-ground activities. This makes adapting old buildings into new uses challenging for existing owners and unpredictable for prospective owners. This was partially resolved at the 2017 Annual Town Meeting through amendments to the zoning district boundaries.	
Lenox Dale is home to a base of industry providing significant employment,	

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<p>The 2004 Community Development Plan describes Lenox Dale as a priority area for economic development in Lenox. It describes the neighborhood as providing a link to key industrial and river recreation points. It also makes links between economic development and recreation and other place-based assets: “Utilizing and developing this area for recreational purposes can also serve to bolster the economic development potential of the village. Pedestrian based opportunities need to be enhanced in order to contribute to community interaction and quality of life. It also notes the assets of Woods Pond, the Housatonic River, and October Mountain State Park.</p>	
<p>Promote business in Lenox, and the Industrial zone along Crystal Street and Willow Creek Road</p>	

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7. The Niagara Mill

Strengths and Opportunities Identified by Residents:	Town Department/ Board/Committee Responsible for Addressing:
<p>The Niagara Mill is an anchor site in the neighborhood. It is visible to people entering the Lenox “the back way” and to those heading into Lee from Lenox. It is reflective of the neighborhood’s industrial legacy and also a marker for the future. It is an important piece of the land use scheme in the neighborhood, and can further Lenox Dale’s position as a location of jobs in Lenox and fulfill the goal of attracting visitors and residents into the neighborhood.</p>	
<p>The Niagara Mill site provides a unique space for adaptive reuse potential and has been part of a multi-year reuse study by the EPA, the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) and the Town of Lee with input from Lenox.</p>	
<p>The mill site will require building and site remediation – a serious question mark – as well as infrastructure improvements to realize its full re-use potential.</p>	

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8. Rest of River Housatonic River Cleanup

Strengths and Opportunities Identified by Residents:	Town Department/ Board/Committee Responsible for Addressing:
<p>The pending Rest of River cleanup adds a question mark to future land use and activity in Lenox Dale, posing three key questions that could impact the future of the neighborhood:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The extent and duration of the EPA-mandated Rest of River cleanup of Woods Pond are currently not known.2. The Rest of River will be an extensive project involving dredging and the relocation of sediment and fill, likely resulting in increased construction and freight traffic through Lenox Dale.3. GE's desire to locate waste disposal locally could also impact future land use and development activity in the neighborhood.	
<p>Coordinate with the EPA to make clear the community and neighborhood's desires regarding Rest of River.</p>	