

# MASTER PLAN

## Town of Otis, Massachusetts

Adopted by the Otis  
Planning Board on  
January 11, 2016

Prepared by:  
The Otis Master Plan  
Steering Committee &  
The Berkshire Regional  
Planning Commission

# **MASTER PLAN**

Town of Otis, Massachusetts



## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

### **The Planning Process and Plan Creation Was Spearheaded by The Following:**

---

#### **Otis Planning Board**

Harold Kobrin, Chair  
Jim Carlin  
Terry Cook  
Michael Ernst  
Jim Kauffman  
Rona Knight  
Alan Koivisto

#### **Otis Master Plan Steering Committee (MPSC)**

Harold Kobrin, Chair  
Terry Cook  
Geoff Geane  
Larry Gould  
Terry Gould  
Jim Kauffman  
Edward Partyka  
Charles Schwartz  
Craig Westcott

#### **Otis Select Board**

Donald Hawley  
Roberta Sarnacki, Chair  
William Hiller

#### **Berkshire Regional Planning Commission**

Thomas Matuszko, Assistant Director  
Eammon Coughlin, Planner

### **Thanks to Those Who Provided Review, Comments, and Assistance Along the Way!**

---

#### **Citizens of Otis**

#### **Public Survey Respondents**

#### **Public Forum Participants**

#### **Town of Otis Staff**

---

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements.....	iii
Executive Summary .....	vi
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction.....</b>	<b>1-1</b>
Welcome to Otis! .....	1-1
What does this plan address? .....	1-1
About master plans .....	1-2
What does the plan contain? .....	1-3
The planning process.....	1-3
Plan Overview .....	1-4
<b>Chapter 2: Population and Demographics.....</b>	<b>2-1</b>
Trends and Conditions .....	2-1
Key population issues.....	2-2
<b>Chapter 3: Economy .....</b>	<b>3-1</b>
Trends and conditions.....	3-2
Key economy issues .....	3-3
Economy goals, objectives, and actions.....	3-4
<b>Chapter 4: Infrastructure.....</b>	<b>4-1</b>
Trends and conditions.....	4-1
Key infrastructure issues .....	4-3
Infrastructure goals, objectives, and actions .....	4-4
<b>Chapter 5: Public Services .....</b>	<b>5-1</b>
Trends and conditions.....	5-1
Key public services issues.....	5-2
Public services goals, objectives, and actions .....	5-3
<b>Chapter 6: Housing.....</b>	<b>6-1</b>
Trends and conditions.....	6-1
Key housing issues.....	6-3
Housing goals, objectives, and actions.....	6-3
<b>Chapter 7: Transportation .....</b>	<b>7-1</b>
Trends and conditions.....	7-1
Key transportation issues.....	7-3
Transportation goals, objectives, and actions.....	7-3
<b>Chapter 8: Land Use.....</b>	<b>8-1</b>
Trends and conditions.....	8-1
Key land use Issues.....	8-4
Land use goals, policies, and actions.....	8-4



**Chapter 9: Natural and Cultural Resources .....9-1**  
Trends and conditions ..... 9-1  
Key natural and cultural resource issues..... 9-4  
Natural and cultural resources goals, policies, and actions ..... 9-5

**Chapter 10: Open Space and Recreation .....10-1**  
Trends and conditions ..... 10-1  
Key open space and recreation issues..... 10-3  
Open space and recreation goals, policies, and actions..... 10-3

**Chapter 11: Vision.....11-1**  
Introduction ..... 11-1  
Vision ..... 11-1

**Chapter 12: Planning Process .....12-1**  
Introduction ..... 12-1  
Planning process..... 12-1

**Chapter 13: Implementation Strategy .....13-1**  
Implementing the plan ..... 13-1  
Updating the plan ..... 13-2  
Action plan..... 13-4

**APPENDICES**

- A: Maps
- B: Key Issues
- C: Existing Conditions Summary
- D: MGL 41: Master Planning Law
- E: Public Survey Results

---

## Executive Summary

During 2015, the Town of Otis developed a master plan, a strategic document that helps direct decision-making in the town for the next 10-20 years. A master plan considers all aspects of a community to create a consistent strategy for how each should progress in the future – including land use, housing, economy, natural and cultural resources, open space and recreation, services, infrastructure, and transportation.

Also produced concurrently during work on this master plan was an update to the Town’s Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP). The State of Massachusetts requires this to be a separate stand alone document. Chapter 10 of this master plan is a summary of the OSRP and contains goals and objectives identical to those found within the larger OSRP.

The development of the master plan was the work of the Otis Master Plan Steering Committee. This group was comprised of members of other town boards, town staff, and interested citizens of Otis. The planning process also incorporated broad community input through the development of a public opinion survey and two public informational meetings or forums. This valuable input has helped to shape the content of the plan—thank you to all who devoted time to the creation of this plan for the town’s future.

### VISION

This plan creates a strategy to help the town achieve its vision for its desired future. Components of Otis’ vision include additional comprehensive planning for East Otis, improved pedestrian and bicycling infrastructure in town, and potential future expansion of wastewater treatment in town.

### GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Our vision serves as the basis for a number of more-detailed goals and policies that define how the town will achieve its vision. In some cases, the successful achievement of the goals and policies depends on the collaboration of one or more other parties. Where

this is the case, the likely collaborators are identified in the implementation strategy (Chapter 13). The goals and policies are organized into chapters by topic, as described in the following sections.



### Population and Demographics

The Town of Otis has a population of roughly 1,600 year-round residents as of the 2010 US Census. Between 1990 and 2010, the population of Otis increased by approximately 50%. Projections for the future population growth of Otis indicate that Otis could grow by an additional 300 or so year-round residents by 2030. Seasonal residents and second homeowners are a significant portion of the Otis population not accounted for in census figures. Data from the census and the town show that roughly 1/2 to 2/3 of all housing in the town is used by seasonal residents or second homeowners. Data compiled from the public opinion survey revealed that this seasonal population likely contributes to the year-round population as seasonal residents retire or move to the area; transitioning their seasonal residences into more permanent housing. Moreover, the year-round population of Otis is increasingly older. Between 2000 and 2010, the median age of an Otis resident increased by 6 years from 42.3 to 48.3.

### Economy

The Otis economy is comprised primarily of small local businesses. Sixty-six businesses registered or renewed their “Doing Business As” (DBA) license in Otis between 2011 and 2014. Otis’ location in the



Berkshire highlands, and its exquisite water resources, mean that recreation and tourism are key components of the economy, as indicated by the town’s ski area, campgrounds, and summer camps. The Town of Otis seeks to work with and support its local business owners to help strengthen the Otis economy. Moreover the town seeks to create draws for future seasonal residents, tourists, and year-round residents.

### Economy Goals

- Improve the Daily Life of Year-Round Residents and Increase Otis Attractions to Second Home-Owners and Seasonal Visitors.

### Infrastructure

There are several components to Otis’ infrastructure, including a sewer system and wastewater treatment plant that serves Otis Center Village, town buildings and facilities, and public drinking water wells. Otis has several ongoing infrastructure projects including work to install a wind energy turbine in the town, which was recently approved by voters.

Moreover, the town has invested significantly in town buildings through weatherization and other energy efficiency projects, and cost savings have been substantial. Additionally, the town has been moving forward with plans to develop broadband internet service, as have many Berkshire communities. The town recently approved a bond measure to further this effort, and hopes to expedite the creation of this service in town. The town hopes to continue and



expedite this ongoing work, as well as connect residents with programs to increase energy efficiency and save them money in the long term. Moreover, the town will work to expand sewer service in town by utilizing the excess capacity of the existing system and investigating the development of a green or ecological based wastewater treatment system in East Otis.

### Infrastructure Goals

- Energy efficiency and self-sufficiency for public and private buildings in Otis.
- Improve Public Facilities and Infrastructure.



### Services

Otis offers many services to its residents including law enforcement, fire protection, road maintenance,

building and health inspection, a town website, and senior programs through the Council on Aging to name a few. The town will continue to provide efficient services that support the safety and health of the community. Moreover, the town will work to increase overall civic engagement and participation in town events and local government.

### Services Goals

- Support a Safe and Healthy Community.
- Efficient and Fiscally Responsible Services.
- Increase Civic Engagement by Otis Residents.
- Meet the Needs of an Older Population.



### Housing

Over 93% of housing in Otis is comprised of single family residences. As described previously, most housing in Otis is used seasonally. Since 2000, Otis has seen its median home sale price increase by 67% to \$260,000. While housing affordability impacts Otis, it is also a regional and national issue. Otis will work to address local housing needs, particularly those of its older residents, through participation in housing rehabilitation programs, and by working to connect residents to existing programs that support home ownership and affordability. The town will also explore homegrown efforts to address housing, such as the sale of town-owned lands to create affordable building lots.

### Housing Goals

- Address Local Housing Needs.



### Transportation

Transportation in Otis is primarily provided by automobiles and trucks. The region's public transportation provider, the Berkshire Regional Transit Authority, does not service the town, except to provide paratransit services to older residents. Otis' highway department provides road maintenance services, and works to prioritize and address local roadway needs. Otis benefits significantly from the fact that its two primary roadways, Route 8 and Route 23 are maintained by the state. The town will continue to provide a complete and well maintained system of roadways. The town will also explore potential enhancements to the bicycling and pedestrian environment in town.

### Transportation Goals

- Provide a Complete and Well Maintained System of Roads.
- Increase Access to Public and Alternative Transportation in Otis.
- Enhance the Bicycle and Pedestrian Environment in Town.
- Address Wildlife Crossings in Future Roadway Projects.

### Land Use

Otis is mostly forested, and the primary land use is residential, which far exceeds industrial, commercial, or institutional uses within the town. The town has two zoning districts, including a residential (R-40)



district which covers most of the town, and a village (V -1) district which regulates the areas around Otis Center and East Otis Villages. A floodplain overlay district regulates areas within the 100-year flood plain and other flood prone areas in the town. The Master Plan Steering Committee (MPSC) identified Otis's village centers as critical areas in town to be reexamined, particularly East Otis Village. East Otis village will be reexamined by the town to potentially include future wastewater treatment, incentivize the use of underutilized properties, such as the J&D Marina. The town will also work to address future land use issues, such as commercial solar energy.

### Land Use Goals

- Revisit Otis' Village Centers.
- Research and Develop a Commercial Solar Energy By-law.

### Natural and Cultural Resources

Otis has significant natural resources, including eight state listed "Great Ponds", extensive wetlands, forests, wildlife habitat, and vernal pools. Otis' water resources are a major draw for tourists and second homeowners. Regionally, Otis is located at the headwaters of the Farmington River, the drinking water supply for the City of Hartford, CT and many other municipalities in MA and CT. In total, the Farmington River is estimated to supply drinking water to 600,000 people. A portion of the watershed protection land that surrounds the Cobble Mountain Reservoir is also found in Otis. This reservoir supplies roughly 150,000 residents of the City of Springfield, MA.

The town also has significant cultural resources in the form of historic buildings, areas, and monuments, including a portion of the Knox Trail which passes through the area. The town's Historic Commission has been an active leader in promoting and developing the



Knox Trail, as well as other historic resources. Major goals of this section are to continue to protect existing water and natural resources and to continue efforts to promote and develop the town's historic resources, such as the Knox Trail.

### Natural and Cultural Resource Goals

- Develop and Promote Otis' Cultural and Historic Resources.
- Protect Otis' Water and Natural Resources.

### Open Space and Recreation

Open Space is defined as land that has not been developed for residential, commercial or industrial use. Otis has significant open space resources including three state owned Wildlife Management Areas (WMA) and portions of three state forests. Open space can be either protected or unprotected. Protected lands include state forest or park land, properties owned by land trusts, or privately owned land protected by conservation restrictions. Roughly 27% of all land in Otis is permanently protected from development. Additionally, some Otis residents have chosen to participate in Chapter 61, a state program that lowers property taxes in exchange for conservation of land. Roughly 5% of all land in Otis is enrolled in Chapter 61. These open space areas create

---

significant space for recreation, especially in combination with the town's ample water resources including Otis Reservoir, and Big Pond. Otis Reservoir is the largest recreational body of water in the state. The town also owns several recreation areas including a recreation center, a town beach, a skate park, and a



playground. The open space and recreation chapter of the Otis master plan is a summary of the town's Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) a separate document.

### Open Space and Recreation Goals

- Water Resources are Protected.
- Natural Resources are Protected.
- Residents and Visitors are Aware of Otis' Open Space and Cultural Resources and Recreational Opportunities.
- The Town's Recreation Opportunities Meet Community Needs.

## IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

The plan calls for numerous actions. To make implementation easier, the final chapter lists each action and assigns a relative time priority and who is responsible for initiating the implementation of the action. Ideally, the town will use this tool as it plans annual priorities from year-to-year.

## APPENDICES

In addition to the plan for the town's future, there are a number of appendices that highlight current

conditions at the time of the plan, legal considerations, and survey feedback received from the community.

- A. Maps
- B. Key issues
- C. Existing Conditions Summary
- D. MGL 41
- E. Survey Results



## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

*This Master Plan for the Town of Otis was developed in 2015 to guide growth, policy, and investment decisions for the next 10 to 20 years. This chapter provides background to the planning process and describes the content of different chapters of the plan for easy reference and use.*

### WELCOME TO OTIS!

Otis is a small town located in the beautiful Berkshire region of Massachusetts. Located in western Massachusetts, the Berkshires are renowned for their natural beauty, rich arts and culture scene, and small New England town charm. In this setting lies the town of Otis, nestled in the Berkshire Hills east of Great Barrington, one of the larger communities in the Berkshires. Otis is bordered by the towns of Becket to the North, Monterey and Tyringham to the West, Sandisfield and Tolland to South and Blandford to the East.

Otis is a town of approximately 1,612 year-round residents and a substantial number of seasonal residents and second homeowners (seasonal and second homes comprise approximately 55-68% of all housing in town). Otis was incorporated as a town on June 13, 1810. The town was named after Harrison Gray Otis, a speaker in the House of Representatives (Town of Otis Open Space and Recreation Plan 1991). Otis celebrated its bicentennial in 2010 (see figure 2.1 in Chapter 2).

### WHAT DOES THIS PLAN ADDRESS?

This plan addresses a wide range of issues and priorities as expressed by the town through survey responses received at the start of the planning process. Some highlights, which illustrate recurring themes in the plan and its policies, include:

#### **Character:**

Residents value the peace and quiet and small town atmosphere of Otis. In addition, they value the natural and scenic beauty of the town's rural setting and the ability to be close to water and close to nature

and wildlife. However, residents disliked the town's distance from nearby services and amenities.

#### **Economy:**

Overall Otis residents and members of the Master Plan Steering Committee (MPSC) felt that economic development should be encouraged. Additionally, survey respondents felt that the town lacked businesses and services. This plan includes steps that will be taken by the town to address economic development through outreach to and cooperation with the existing business community as well as greater promotion of the town.

#### **Promotion:**

The master plan makes several recommendations for more effective promotion of town events, open space and recreation areas, historic resources, and the town itself. The Otis MPSC feels that greater promotion of the town as a destination will help to draw new residents and visitors and help to boost the local economy. Moreover, increased promotion of local events and resources will help improve the quality of life for year-round residents.

#### **Aging:**

The aging of Otis residents is an issue that impacts many aspects of the master plan, including the economy, transportation, housing, and town services. Regionally, the Berkshires is aging at a faster rate than the state of Massachusetts as a whole. The town will work to implement several measures to support and meet the needs of its older population.

#### **Infrastructure and Economic Development:**

Otis has invested significantly in its infrastructure, particularly its buildings, in recent years. The town has also undertaken several infrastructure projects including the Otis Wind Energy Project, a shared space study, and the implementation of broadband internet service in town. These projects will help to provide a level of economic development, in addition to providing energy cost savings to the town over the long run. Moreover, proposed projects such as the expansion of wastewater treatment in Otis will also help to support local business, while simultaneously



Figure 1.1—The Town of Otis is a rural community in the southern Berkshires with a year-round population of around 1,600 residents as of the 2010 census. Otis is known regionally for its abundant water resources and recreation opportunities, which have earned it the reputation as the “outdoor playground of the Berkshires”. Image is taken along Route 23 looking east toward Otis Center Village. Photograph credit John Phelan. Image licensed under CC by 3.0.

helping to preserve existing open space and protecting the natural resources that Otis residents and visitors cherish.

#### **Village Centers:**

Otis’ villages are crucial economic and population centers. The Master Plan lays out several goals to support its village centers, including an examination of parking in its villages, possible design guidelines for future development, and creation of a comprehensive plan for East Otis Village.

#### **Support of Ongoing Efforts and Projects:**

The Master Plan does not discount ongoing projects and work by the town, but seeks to support and enhance these efforts. Ongoing work has been identified throughout the master plan and has been added to its goals, objectives, and action items.

## **ABOUT MASTER PLANS**

A Master Plan is a document that sets a blueprint for town decision-makers to use in their day-to-day actions as part of managing the town. It is an advisory document not a regulatory document. The purpose of

this plan is to create an opportunity for the town to reflect and determine what it wants for its future and then chart out the preferred actions to achieve that vision. It is then the responsibility of the town’s elected and appointed officials to pursue the actions identified in the implementation chapter of this plan to gradually make the regulatory changes and priority investments needed to achieve the vision statement.

### **How does the Master Plan Relate to Other Town Plans and Documents?**

The Master Plan takes precedence over other plans for the community such as transportation plans, open space and recreation plans, area plans, and other area- or topic-specific documents. The Master Plan is typically more general than more focused plan documents, but provides overarching guidance to the content of these plans in that they should be consistent with the policies established in the Master Plan.

An important function of the Master Plan is to ensure priorities and approaches in one area such as land use relate to another, such as transportation. Because all



Figure 1.2—The vision, goals, objectives, and action items of the plan. Together these establish the blueprint for what the town will work to achieve in the future.

of the topics are addressed within a single document, the policies in these different areas are developed to be consistent and supportive, thus safeguarding the potential danger of conflicting policies that can occur in a more fragmented planning approach. Other town plans can then use this framework to reach a finer level of detail in a particular subject area. For a list of

the topics required by Massachusetts law to be addressed in a Master Plan, see Appendix D.

While the Master Plan is not a regulatory document, it does set the policy for the town to develop new bylaws to regulate land use decisions. For more on how the plan impacts land use and bylaw decisions see Chapter 8: Land Use.

## WHAT DOES THE PLAN CONTAIN?

Master Plan guidance is provided in a number of ways, including maps of current and desired conditions, illustrations of concepts, and policy language. The Vision provides the foundation for a number of goals and more specific policy and action statements. Together these establish the blueprint for what the town will do to achieve its vision and will serve as a guide for town policy and decision-makers for the life of the plan (see figure 1.2).

### Vision

The vision is the “big picture” statement of where the town would like to be five, ten, or twenty years from now.

### Goals

Goal statements go into greater detail on the different pieces that the town will need to pursue in order to make the vision a reality.

### Objectives

These are the specific strategies that the town will pursue to achieve the goal.

### Actions

Actions are the specific tasks that individuals or groups will need to do in order to achieve specific policy statements.

## THE PLANNING PROCESS

This plan was developed through a planning process that included participation and feedback from the community:





## Chapter 2: Population and Demographics

This chapter presents population and demographic trends in Otis and outlines key issues.

## Chapter 3: Economy

Chapter 3 provides an overview of the key economic sectors present in the town and makes recommendations for how the town can support the retention and expansion of economic activity in the future.

## Chapter 4: Infrastructure

Chapter 4 contains an overview of town infrastructure including sewer and communications and makes recommendations for future infrastructure improvement and development.

## Chapter 5: Services

This section provides an overview of the fire, police, and other services provided in the town and sets goals and policies for the town to pursue to maintain and enhance services in the future.

## Chapter 6: Housing

This element of the Master Plan provides an overview of housing supply and needs both now and in the future and then presents town goals and policies to address future housing in the town including options for young families and seniors.

## Chapter 7: Transportation

This chapter highlights key features and issues with the current transportation system in the town and then establishes goals and policies for the town to pursue to maintain and enhance this system in the future.

## Chapter 8: Land Use

This section contains a description of the current land use patterns and constraints, identifies goals and policies for future land use, and presents the future land use plan for the town.

## Chapter 9: Natural and Cultural Resources

This chapter summarizes the natural environment, as well as cultural and historic attributes of the town and sets goals and objectives for the town to pursue.

## Chapter 10: Open Space and Recreation

This chapter summarizes the open space and recreation elements of the town and sets goals and objectives for the town to pursue.

## Chapter 11: Vision

Chapter 11 contains the vision for each section in the Master Plan. The vision is a concise statement of what residents want their town to be like in the future.

## Chapter 12: Public Process

This chapter outlines the open and public process that was used to create the master plan.

## Chapter 13: Implementation Strategy

The final section of the Master Plan contains an overview of the different types of actions that will be needed to implement the plan and the range of entities that will be involved in that process. Additionally, it includes the Implementation Strategy, which details the actions, responsible parties, relative priority, and potential funding sources for each action called for in the plan.

## Appendices

- A. Maps
- B. Key issues
- C. Existing Conditions Summary
- D. MGL 41
- E. Survey Results

## CHAPTER 2: POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

### TRENDS AND CONDITIONS

#### Population

Otis is a small town in the Berkshires with a relatively low year-round population - 1,612 residents as of the 2010 census. However, Otis has experienced significant population growth over the past two decades. Census data indicates that the town population increased from 1,018 to 1,612 residents between 1990 and 2010. This amounts to a 50% increase in population over the 20 year period. Additionally, Otis is one of only a handful of Berkshire county towns projected to grow in the future. The Donahue Institute at UMass Amherst projects that Otis will grow by roughly 300 additional residents over the next two decades, reaching 1,980 year-round residents by 2030 (See Table C1 - Appendix C). Due to the high number of seasonal residents that come to Otis during summer months, it is unclear whether growth over past years has been comprised of newcomers to Otis, or of seasonal residents transitioning their second homes into their year round residences.

#### Seasonal Residents/Second Homeowners

Seasonal residents and second homeowners are a tremendous portion of the Otis population that are barely captured by census and other data. According to the 2010 census, 55% of all housing units in Otis are listed as seasonal. However, town assessor records place the percentage even higher, at 68% (Otis Town Assessor Records, 2015). Along with the towns of Becket, Stockbridge, and Lenox, Otis has one of the highest numbers of seasonal homes in the Berkshires. This seasonal population affects town services, infrastructure and housing. Additionally, they are likely a large contributor of new year-round residents to Otis. According to the survey results, 17 out of 79 year round residents (21%), indicated that they had at one time been seasonal residents or second homeowners. Additionally, 9 out of 50 seasonal residents or second homeowners (18%) reported that they were planning on becoming year round residents of Otis.

#### Age

Otis faces an increasingly older population. Between



### POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS AT A GLANCE

#### Age

The median age of an Otis resident increased from 42.3 to 48.3 between 2000 and 2010.

#### Seasonal Residents

Seasonal residents are a major portion of Otis' population. Town of Otis records indicate 68% of all housing in the town is seasonal.

#### Diversity

The population of Hispanic and Latino residents increased between 2000 and 2010, while the population of other ethnic groups decreased.

*Additional discussion of population and demographics may be found in Appendix C: Existing Conditions Summary*



Figure 2.1—In 2010, Otis celebrated its bicentennial with festivities and a large parade. Photograph credit Town of Otis.

the 2000 and 2010 census, the number of Otis residents below the age of 45 decreased while the residents age 45 and older increased (See Table 2.1). The change was most pronounced in the 45-64 age group, which saw an increase of 7.95% during the “aughts” decade. Between these years, the median age of town residents increased by 6 years from 42.3 to 48.3. The aging population could have effects on town services as well as its housing and recreation needs among others.

At the other end of the spectrum, the decline in younger residents could have an effect on school enrollment and funding as well as future volunteers and town workers such as police and firefighters. Enrollment at the local elementary school, the Farmington River School, has decreased by about 25% since 2003 (see Table 2.2). Available data indicates that the number of school choice students and those from Sandisfield decreased the most. The number of school choice students enrolled at Farmington River has decreased from 35 to 24 students since 2007. Students attending from Sandisfield decreased from 43 to 26. However, the number of students from Otis increased slightly – by 7 students – since 2007.

### Race, ethnicity, and Diversity

The population of several ethnic groups including African Americans and Asians fell between 2000 and 2010. The number of African Americans in Otis decreased from 8 persons to 2. The number of Asian Americans decreased from 12 to 9. However, the population of Hispanic and Latino residents in Otis increased from 4 to 18 between 2000 and 2010. Increasing diversity for Berkshire County as a whole is a trend that has been identified in regional planning work including the 2014 Sustainable Berkshires Plan.

## KEY POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHIC ISSUES

### An Older Populace

The increased number of older residents may affect the range of services the town wishes to provide as well as the range of housing options available. Additionally, it makes the need for accessibility to town buildings or amenities more important due to potential mobility impairment issues.



**Table 2.1 - Change in Age Distribution in Otis 2000-2010**

*Source: 2000 and 2010 U.S. Census*

Age	2000	2010	% Change 2000-2010
19 and under	23.81%	18.05%	-5.76%
20-44	31.72%	25.56%	-6.16%
45-64	30.33%	38.28%	+7.95%
65+	14.14%	18.11%	+3.97%

### Seasonal Residents

Seasonal residents have a potentially large impact on town population, as well as town services and local housing.

### Planning for Increased Diversity

The town may wish to consider potential language and cultural barriers that may be encountered in a potentially increasingly diverse town and county.

**TABLE 2.2 - Farmington River School District Enrollment**

*Source: Otis Annual Report 2007-2014, Massachusetts Dept. of Education\**

Year	Total Enrollment	From Otis	From Sandisfield	School Choice Students
2003	178*	-	-	-
2004	188*	-	-	-
2005	190*	-	-	-
2006	171*	-	-	-
2007	153	75	43	35
2008	143	68	42	33
2009	147	77	42	28
2010	149	87	41	21
2011	144	86	37	21
2012	150	88	39	23
2013	149	87	37	25
2014	132	82	26	24

## CHAPTER 3: ECONOMY

*Otis had twenty-two operating mills in 1885, which helped support the town's growing lumber industry. While a few sawmills and logging operations exist today, the economy has changed drastically. This chapter reviews the composition of economic activity in the town and then details the goals, objectives and actions for the town to take to achieve its vision. Otis' vision for its economy includes working with and supporting its base of local independent businesses and improving the daily life of year-round residents.*

### TRENDS AND CONDITIONS

#### Employment

As of the 2009-2013 American Community Survey, the civilian labor force of Otis was 737 persons, representing approximately 59.4% of the population over the age of 16 (737 out of an estimated 1,421 residents) (see Table 3.1).

It is important to note that employment data is not calculated based on the entire population. Only persons over the age of 16 who are not members of the military, or institutionalized (such as in prison, in a nursing home or mental health facility) are used to calculate employment figures. Individuals who have received any payment for work are considered employed. Individuals who are laid off from work or are actively seeking employment are considered unemployed. Individuals who are not employed, laid off, or actively seeking employment are considered not in the labor force and are not used to calculate unemployment figures. Individuals in this category might include retirees, homemakers, students, the independently wealthy, or a person without a job who has stopped looking for work (perhaps temporarily). A person who is unemployed and has stopped looking for work is sometimes referred to as a "discouraged worker".

Unemployment has increased in Otis since 2000 (3.3%), to its 2013 value of approximately 6.1% of the labor force. This value is lower than the value of 7.1% for Berkshire County (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015).



### ECONOMY AT A GLANCE

#### Composition

Otis has a business base comprised of small local businesses.

#### Shift Towards Retail

Workers employed in the retail industry grew by 9% between 2000 and 2010, while those employed in manufacturing declined by roughly the same percentage. This trend has also been identified for Berkshire County.

#### Seasonal Recreation

A number of camps and campgrounds as well as a ski area do business in Otis. This points towards the importance of tourism and seasonal recreation to the local economy.

*Additional discussion of economy may be found in Appendix C: Existing Conditions Summary*

Data from the 2009-2013 American Community Survey indicates that employment levels are highest for the 25-44 and 45-54 year old age groups (See Table C5 in Appendix C). The percentage of individuals not in the labor force, meaning they are not employed or actively seeking work, is highest in the 16-19 year old age group, and age groups over the age of 65. This likely includes many students or recent graduates that are not actively seeking employment. Additionally, in the older age group, it likely includes many retirees.

“Journey to work” commuting data available from the 2006-2010 American Community Survey indicates that 236, or 40% of, employed Otis residents work within the town. This figure includes commuters traveling to work within Otis, as well as self-employed workers and those that work from home. Another 37% travel to the towns of Lee, Great Barrington, Becket, and Tolland, as well as the cities of Pittsfield and Westfield. The remaining 22% travel to a variety of destinations in Massachusetts and Connecticut as well as major metropolitan areas such as New York City, NY and Philadelphia, PA (See Table C4-Employment Destinations of Otis Residents in Appendix C). Additional commuting data from the 2009-2013 American Community Survey indicates that the mean travel time to work for Otis residents was over half an hour (See Table 3.1—Otis Employment Statistics).

Between 2000 and 2013, the percentage of Otis workers employed in the manufacturing industry declined by 9.4%. The number of workers in retail increased by 9%. Similarly, the number of workers in the “arts, entertainment, accommodation and food service” sector increased by 3.1%. This trend has been identified at the county level as well. With the shift away from manufacturing, the economy has fewer living wage jobs or those that provide benefits such as insurance and retirement savings (See Table C3 in Appendix C for a breakdown of employment changes by sector between 2000 and 2013).

### Income

Per capita income rose substantially from \$25,029 in 2000 (U.S. Census 2000) to \$45,492 in 2009 (U.S. Census ACS 2005-2009). However, since 2009, per capita income has declined to \$34,746 (U.S. Census ACS, 2009-2013). The median household income has also

**Table 3.1 - Otis Employment Statistics 2000-2013**

*Source: 2000 US Census and 2009-2013 American Community Survey*

	2000	2013
<b>Population 16 years and Over</b> (Considered the population eligible to work)	1089 (100%)	1239(100%) (Estimate)
<b>In Civilian Labor Force</b> (employed and unemployed individuals)	738 (67.9%)	737 (59.4%)
<b>Employed</b> (full and part time workers, or anyone receiving payment for work)	702 (64.4%)	662 (53.4%)
<b>Unemployed</b> (Individuals who are laid off from a job or are actively looking for work)	36 (3.3%)	75 (6.1%)
<b>Armed Forces</b>	2 (1.8%)	0
<b>Not In Labor Force</b> (Individuals who are not employed, not laid off and not seeking employment)	349 (30.3%)	502 (40.5%)
<b>Mean travel time to work</b> (minutes)	31.3	33.2

fallen over the same period, from \$64,219 to \$59,271. Otis’s median household income was higher than the surrounding towns of Monterey, Sandisfield and Becket as well as that of Berkshire County. However, it was lower than neighboring Tyringham’s.

### Local Business

Small local businesses dominate the business activity in Otis. Town Clerk records show that sixty-six businesses registered or renewed their “Doing Business As” (DBA) license in Otis between 2011 and 2014 (Otis Town Clerk Records, 2014). DBA records must be renewed every four years. These businesses fall into broad categories of construction and excavation, realty, childcare, restaurants, and a few farms. Business license data highlights another notable segment of the economy - seasonal and summer



Figure 3.1—The Otis Poultry Farm is an example of the one of the town’s small local businesses. Town records show that over 60 businesses registered with the town between 2011 and 2014. Photograph credit John Phelan. Image is licensed under CC by 3.0.

camp. These include Camp Bonnie Brae, Camp Overflow, Mountain-view, Camp Lenox and Berkshire Soccer Academy to name a few. Moreover, the town’s public and private campgrounds as well as a ski area contribute to the town’s well-known status as an outdoor recreation destination.

### Previous Plans

In 1995, Land Use Inc. and Hammer Siler George Associates prepared an economic development plan for Otis. The plan identified as its goals that economic development efforts should increase employment opportunities and expand the range of entertainment and cultural activities as well as local choices for food and lodging.

## KEY ECONOMY ISSUES

### Business Growth and Economic Development

Otis has a business environment comprised of small, locally based businesses. In the past, there was an active business association in town. The Town of Otis will pursue economic development efforts only with the cooperation, partnership, and input of the Otis business community to ensure the success of any potential projects.

### Aging / Changing Demographics

The Otis MPSC identified that many business owners in the town are becoming older, and there may not be younger employees, children, or other business owners in town willing or able to take over the operation of existing businesses once these owners retire. The town will explore efforts to help aging business owners with succession planning and other services to ensure that existing local business remains open in town.

### Broadband Internet Development

Otis has been pursuing the development of high speed broadband internet for some time, and voted to fund such efforts in the Fall of 2015. The Otis MPSC feels that broadband internet service in town will allow for the expansion of home-based and other local businesses, and provide incentive for other businesses to move to the area. For more information on broadband internet in Otis, see Chapter 4: Infrastructure.



Figure 3.2—The Otis town flag was created to help celebrate the town’s bicentennial. The flag could be a component of branding and promoting the town, in conjunction with other economic development activities.

## ECONOMY GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

### Goal 1: Improve the daily life of year-round residents and increase Otis attractions to second home-owners and seasonal visitors

The Town of Otis will work to improve the daily life of residents through economic development, supporting and promoting existing businesses, and enhancing infrastructure. The town will also work to promote itself as a tourist and seasonal destination.

#### **Objective: Business Outreach and Economic Development.**

The Town will work to support and expand existing town businesses through business promotion and potential technical assistance. The town will work with existing business owners to strengthen the following actions and ensure success.

ACTION 1: PROMOTE EXISTING BUSINESSES AND EVENTS (THROUGH PRINT, RADIO, WEB, ETC).

ACTION 2: DEVELOP SIGNAGE AND WAYFINDING IN VILLAGE CENTERS TO DIRECT RESIDENTS AND VISITORS TO BUSINESSES AND ATTRACTIONS.

ACTION 3: CONDUCT OUTREACH TO EXPLORE THE REFORMATION OF THE OTIS BUSINESS ASSOCIATION.

ACTION 4: EXPLORE THE DEVELOPMENT OF A GRANT PROGRAM TO PROVIDE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO OTIS BUSINESSES.

ACTION 5: UPDATE AND RENAME THE OTIS DEVELOPMENT REVIEW MANUAL.

ACTION 6: UPDATE AND REPRINT THE OTIS BUSINESS DIRECTORY.

ACTION 7: DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A “BUY LOCAL” CAMPAIGN.

ACTION 8: RESEARCH AND IMPLEMENT SUCCESSION PLANNING SERVICES FOR LOCAL BUSINESS OWNERS.

ACTION 9: WORK ON A REGIONAL BASIS TO ENCOURAGE TRADESPEOPLE IN TOWN TO BECOME CERTIFIED IN THEIR FIELDS.

ACTION 10: ENCOURAGE PARTICIPATION IN JOB APPRENTICESHIP AND MENTORING PROGRAMS.

ACTION 11: INVEST IN INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS, SUCH AS BROADBAND INTERNET AND IMPROVING ENERGY EFFICIENCY, AS A FORM OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND A MEANS TO SUPPORT LOCAL BUSINESS.

#### **Objective: Promote the Town as a Tourist and Seasonal Destination While Creating Draws for Future Year-Round Residents.**

The Town will work to increase tourism and seasonal visitors as a mechanism for economic development. The town will also work to create draws for future year-round residents.

ACTION 1: ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY TO DEVELOP A SIMPLIFIED TOWN LOGO.

ACTION 2: PROMOTE THE TOWN THROUGH THE EXISTING TOWN FLAG GRAPHIC.

ACTION 3: EXPAND AND DEVELOP PORTIONS OF THE TOWN WEBSITE THAT MARKET EXISTING BUSINESSES AND CONNECTS PEOPLE TO OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES.

ACTION 4: EXPLORE THE CREATION OF DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR OTIS’ VILLAGE CENTERS.

ACTION 5: PROMOTE THE TOWN THROUGH A “SPEND A DAY IN OTIS” EVENT OR CAMPAIGN, WHICH CONNECTS VISITORS TO BUSINESSES AND ACTIVITIES THROUGHOUT THE YEAR.



ACTION 6: CONTINUE TO DEVELOP THE HISTORIC KNOX TRAIL AS A VISITOR ATTRACTION.

ACTION 7: PROMOTE THE QUALITY OF LIFE AND FARMINGTON RIVER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AS POTENTIAL DRAWS FOR NEW RESIDENTS.

**Objective: Support Local Agriculture**

ACTION 1: INTEGRATE THE OTIS FARMER'S MARKET, FARMS AND FARMSTANDS, MAPLE SUGAR AND OTHER FOREST PRODUCT BUSINESSES INTO PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES.

## CHAPTER 4: INFRASTRUCTURE

*Otis has recently embarked on a variety of plans to reduce energy use and improve public facilities. Otis' vision for infrastructure includes energy efficiency and self-sufficiency for public and private buildings and continued improvement of town facilities and wastewater treatment.*

### TRENDS AND CONDITIONS

#### Otis Wind Energy Project

Otis has been working on the development of a wind energy project at a site on Algeria Road. The site is close to an existing wind turbine that helps to power a privately owned quarry and its operations. The proposed wind turbine will be 1.7 MW in size (Larry Gould, Personal Communication, 2015). Town support for the project has been strong, and has been shown in votes at several special town meetings. Development of the wind turbine will allow for the town to sell energy credits to other municipalities or educational institutions and will help to generate income for town projects and reduce municipal energy costs (See Appendix C—Existing Conditions for more information). In the summer and Fall of 2015, the town voted to approve funding for the \$6.4 million project. The town hopes to have the turbine up and running the end of 2016.

#### Needs Update

##### Existing Facilities and Upgrades / Improvements

In partnership with the state Department of Energy Resources (DOER), Otis received a grant to perform energy audits on six town-owned buildings in 2008. Based on the results of the energy audit, the town began to upgrade municipal buildings and has seen great improvements in energy efficiency. Money saved from energy efficiency improvements will be used to fund other town projects.

#### Town Hall

Town hall houses the town assessor, town clerk, town police department, Council on Aging, town administrator and building inspector. Town Hall provides meeting space for town boards and committees. The building also contains a small gymnasium which is



### INFRASTRUCTURE AT A GLANCE

#### Sewer

The town's wastewater treatment plant currently serves approximately 70 residences including town facilities.

#### Energy and Energy Efficiency

Otis has been moving forward with a wind energy project that will generate electricity which can then be sold to other municipalities or educational institutions. Additionally, energy use in town hall has decreased 60% since 2008 levels due to upgrades to lighting, heating and insulation.

#### Broadband Internet

Otis has been working to connect residents to broadband internet services.

*Additional discussion of infrastructure may be found in Appendix C: Existing Conditions Summary*



*Figure 5.1—The Williams Stone quarry wind turbine helps to power quarry operations for this local business. The town has been moving forward with plans to install a wind turbine in the northeast corner of town, that would help to offset municipal energy costs and create a revenue source for the town.*

used for town meetings and other gatherings.

The town hall lighting and heating system were also replaced in recent years. The building was also wrapped with insulated panels. These improvements achieved a 60% reduction in energy use since the 2008 audit (EECBG Grant Final Report, No Date)

### **Transfer Station**

The transfer station provides a site for Otis residents to dispose of household waste and sort materials for recycling. The station also contains a building that houses that town's maintenance department. In 2010, the town built a weather-tight shell around the transfer station (Otis Annual Report, 2010).

### **Fire Station #1**

Otis Fire Station #1 houses the Otis fire department and Rescue Squad. Energy upgrades were made to the main road firehouse in 2013. These upgrades in-

cluded roof replacement and the installation of insulated panels. The fire station now only uses 15% of the propane it previously consumed (EECBG Grant Final Report, No Date).

### **Police Garage**

The police garage (formerly the maintenance garage) was renovated in 2012 to add an interview and booking room.

### **Wastewater Treatment Plant and Sewer System**

The wastewater treatment plant and town sewer system were constructed in 1998 and serve the area around Otis Center village. The plant treats wastewater from approximately 70 Otis homes as well as the fire department, town hall, elementary school and post office. See Map 12—Infrastructure for a map of the town's existing sewer line.

In recent years the town has replaced electronic and automated systems at the wastewater treatment plant. Additionally, it has insulated some of the treatment units to reduce energy costs.

### **Town Building Reuse / Shared Space Study**

The town has been investigating the potential for shared space between town departments. Under current plans, the town would combine the highway and fire departments in a new facility that would replace the existing highway building. This plan would free up considerable space at the existing fire building. This would allow the town's recreation center to move from its current location in Harmony Hall to the existing fire station building. This could free up space for the library and town museum to use Harmony Hall as an annex. Moreover, the town has identified that Harmony Hall is in need of some upgrades as it is one of the town's oldest structures (Chris Morris, Personal Communication, 2015). It is important to note that at the time of this writing, these plans are preliminary and have not been finalized.

### **Potential Sewer Expansion**

In 2013, Otis worked with Berkshire Regional Planning Commission to map areas for potential sewer expansion. The Otis Ridge Ski area was one of the areas identified. In 2014, the town applied for a grant through



the Massworks infrastructure program to extend a sewer line to the ski area. This would have connected the ski area, its restaurant and two residential homes to the town sewer system. However, the grant was not chosen for funding.

As defined by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, public water systems are defined as those supplies having 15 or more connections, or regularly serving an average of at least 25 people daily, at least 60 days a year. Public water systems can be either Community Water Systems (CWS) or Non-Community Water systems (NCWS). Non-community water systems are either Transient Non-Community Systems (TNC), or Non Transient Non-Community Systems (NTNC). TNC Systems typically serve at least 25 different people, for at least 60 days a year, such as at a restaurant or campground. On the other hand, NTNC Systems serve at least 25 of the same people each day, at least 6 months a year, such as a workplace that provides water to its employees. All of the public water systems in Otis are of the TNC or NTNC type.

According to Mass. GIS, there are 43 public water supply wells in Otis (see Table C7). These wells serve town and public buildings, restaurants, and places of business. Additionally, they include many shared well systems around Big Pond and Otis Reservoir (see Map 6 –Water Resources). These public drinking water wells are all surrounded by interim well-head protection areas (IWPA), which provide a 500’ buffer around the well-head for TNC systems and a 750’ buffer around NTNC systems.

In the past, the town has experienced well contamination, primarily due to road salt used along Route 8. For more information, please refer to the transportation portion of this appendix or Chapter 7—Transportation.

## **BROADBAND INTERNET DEVELOPMENT**

Otis has been working to provide broadband internet service to its residents. Otis was one of the first municipalities to join WiredWest, a cooperative of western Massachusetts towns striving to install the “last mile” of broadband internet service in the region. Otis recently left this cooperative, citing funding concerns

and the desire to provide broadband service without the need for a middleman and to maintain local control over this vital infrastructure component. The town voted to approve funding for broadband development in the fall of 2015.

## **ROADS**

For discussion of roads and other transportation related infrastructure, see Chapter 7: transportation.

## **KEY INFRASTRUCTURE ISSUES**

### **Infrastructure as Economic Development**

Wastewater treatment expansion and broadband internet could allow for increased economic development in Otis. Wastewater treatment expansion could attract business to its village center as well as help Otis to retain existing business like the Otis Ridge ski area. Broadband internet development could attract workers and businesses to the area based on the ability to work remotely.

### **Economics of Energy Efficiency and Self-Sufficiency**

Major town initiatives have focused on reducing current energy use and improving the efficiency of existing buildings. Savings created by efficiency projects can be allocated for other purposes. In addition, the Otis Wind Energy Project is anticipated to produce enough energy to “zero out” municipal energy costs, and through sale of energy credits, create a revenue source for the town. The town will continue these ongoing projects and encourage residents to participate in energy efficiency and small scale energy production programs, such as Mass Saves and Solarize Mass. The town will emphasize the potential cost savings associated with these efforts, as well as the environmental benefits of such work.

## **INFRASTRUCTURE GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS**

**Goal 1: Energy efficiency and self-sufficiency for public and private buildings in Otis.**

---

**Objective: Continue the ongoing Otis Wind Energy Project**

ACTION 1: ADVANCE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION PHASE.

ACTION 2: FINALIZE TURBINE CONSTRUCTION.

**Objective: Connect Otis residents with energy efficiency programs and small scale energy development programs**

ACTION 1: CONTINUE TO MAKE OTIS RESIDENTS AWARE OF PROGRAMS THROUGH MASS SAVES.

ACTION 2: INVESTIGATE IMPLEMENTATION OF A SOLARIZE MASS PROGRAM IN OTIS, POSSIBLY IN COMBINATION WITH SURROUNDING TOWNS.

**Goal 2: Improve public facilities and infrastructure.**

*The town will work to improve public facilities and infrastructure to meet changing town needs and reduce energy costs. Additionally, the town will continue its ongoing work on the Otis Wind Energy Project, and its ongoing shared space study.*

**Objective: Integrate existing energy efficiency work, the Otis Wind Energy Project and the shared space study into a multi-year capital improvement plan (CIP)**

ACTION 1: DEVELOP A CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN THAT INCLUDES ALL TOWN DEPARTMENTS AND INTEGRATES ONGOING AND PROPOSED WORK, IS OPEN TO PUBLIC COMMENT AND IS APPROVED YEARLY AT TOWN MEETING.

**Objective: Continue ongoing work to improve the energy efficiency of town buildings**

ACTION 1: CONTINUE TO IDENTIFY, PRIORITIZE, AND IMPLEMENT ENERGY IMPROVEMENTS TO EXISTING FACILITIES.

**Objective: Continue ongoing shared space study**

ACTION 1: CONTINUE ONGOING SHARED SPACE STUDY TO

CREATE A COMBINED HIGHWAY AND FIRE DEPARTMENT BUILDING AND REUSE OTHER TOWN BUILDINGS.

ACTION 2: INVESTIGATE AND APPLY FOR GRANT FUNDING AS APPROPRIATE TO IMPLEMENT THE SHARED SPACE STUDY.

ACTION 3: IMPLEMENT THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE ENERGY SUBCOMMITTEE SHARED SPACE STUDY.

**Objective: Expand wastewater treatment in town**

ACTION 1: RESUBMIT A MASSWORKS GRANT APPLICATION TO FUND THE EXPANSION OF SEWER SERVICE TO THE SKI AREA AND UTILIZE THE EXCESS CAPACITY OF THE TOWN'S EXISTING WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT.

ACTION 2: EXAMINE THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ADDITIONAL WASTEWATER TREATMENT FACILITY IN EAST OTIS VILLAGE. EXAMINE POTENTIAL ALTERNATIVE OR ECOLOGICAL TREATMENT METHODS. INTEGRATE RECOMMENDATIONS WITH OTHER PLANS FOR EAST OTIS (SEE CHAPTER 8: LAND USE).

ACTION 3: RESEARCH AND APPLY FOR OTHER FUNDING SOURCES TO PURSUE EXPANSION OF WASTEWATER TREATMENT IN OTIS.

**Objective: Expedite broadband internet development in Otis.**

*The town will work to hasten the development of broadband internet which will provide a vital service to Otis residents and support and encourage the development of home-based and small businesses.*

ACTION 1: ADVANCE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION PHASE.

ACTION 2: FINALIZE BROADBAND INSTALLATION.

## CHAPTER 5: SERVICES

*Otis' vision for services includes continuing to support a safe and healthy community and providing efficient and fiscally responsible services. Moreover, the town will work to increase civic engagement and will examine other services for its older residents. This chapter provides an overview of the services offered through the town. It also establishes the town's work plan for goals, objectives, and actions to achieve its vision for the services it provides.*

### TRENDS AND CONDITIONS

#### Police

Otis operates a police force from town hall comprised of six officers and a police chief. The department actively trains with FEMA and the Department of Homeland Security. The department has been active in outreach to younger Otis residents and families, developing a series of children's camps during school vacations to help children develop a rapport with officers.

#### Library

The Otis Library has been actively modernizing and is part of a library system that connects its catalog to over 100 others in the region. This system allows for digital download and inter-library loan. The library has also added to its digital collection, including audiobooks and DVD's.

#### Fire Department

The Otis Fire Department currently has 26 members and is staffed primarily by volunteers. The department trains actively with surrounding fire departments and at the Massachusetts Fire Academy. The department helped with the response to Hurricane Irene in 2011 and a tornado that damaged parts of Springfield, MA.

#### Rescue Squad

The Otis Rescue Squad currently has 13 members including two full time EMTs. In 2011, the squad purchased a new ambulance.



### SERVICES AT A GLANCE

#### Police

Public safety services are provided through the Otis Police Department. The department includes 7 staff members.

#### Fire Department

The Otis Fire Department is a volunteer organization with 26 members.

#### Rescue

The Otis rescue squad is a 13 member team with two full time EMTs.

#### Library

The Library has a catalog of over 10,000 items including more than 500 DVDs.

*Additional discussion of services may be found in Appendix C: Existing Conditions Summary*



Figure 5.1—The Otis Library loans books, DVDs, and audiobooks to town residents and provides public internet access through computer workstations. The library is also connected to the Central and Western Massachusetts Automated Resource Sharing (CWMARS) interlibrary loan system, allowing users to access multiple library collections across the region. The building also houses the town’s museum. Photograph credit Hal Kobrin.

### Recreation Center

The Otis Recreation center (located in Harmony Hall) contains two rooms of exercise equipment, pool tables and computers for use by Otis residents. The Rec. Center also provides passes to events and recreation areas. For additional discussion of the Rec. Center, see Chapter 10: Open Space and Recreation as well as Appendix C: Existing Conditions

### Town Website

The town operates a website (<http://www.townofotisma.com>) that serves as a central location for town data. The website allows for access to board and committee meeting times, agendas, and minutes. An online mapping service allows users to access parcel data for the entire town as well as view wetlands, FEMA flood areas, and roads. Additionally, the website contains a calendar of local events and displays links to area businesses.

## KEY SERVICE ISSUES

### Budget Related

The town has a limited budget with which to provide services, which makes efficiency all the more important.

### Public Participation and Civic Engagement

The first Master Plan public forum identified a need to increase public participation and civic engagement. Additionally, the town’s strong spirit of volunteerism and independence was discussed. The town will pursue several strategies to increase public participation and work to embrace the independent spirit of town residents to encourage initiatives from the “ground up”, rather than from the “top down”.

## SERVICE GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS



## **Goal 1: Support a Safe and Healthy Community**

*The town will continue to work individually and regionally to ensure residents are safe from natural and man-made hazards and emergencies.*

### **Objective: Continue to Participate in Regional Emergency Preparedness Training**

*The town has been and will continue to be an active and supportive participant in regional emergency preparedness planning efforts. This effort addresses response needs for fire, police, and flood events, among others.*

**ACTION 1: PARTICIPATE IN HOMELAND SECURITY PLANS AND ACTIONS FOR THE REGION.**

**ACTION 2: ENSURE APPROPRIATE STAFF AND RESOURCES FOR EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAMS.**

**ACTION 3: MAINTAIN UP-TO-DATE HAZARD MITIGATION AND COMPREHENSIVE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLANS.**

## **Goal 2: Efficient and Fiscally Responsible Services**

*The town will work individually and regionally to plan and provide services including police, fire, rescue, recreation, and library among others.*

### **Objective: Streamline Costs While Maintaining or Enhancing Levels of Service**

*The town will work on all levels to provide the highest level of service as efficiently as possible.*

**ACTION 1: EXPLORE THE POTENTIAL OF SHARED SERVICE DELIVERY ARRANGEMENTS.**

**ACTION 2: INCREASE THE USE OF REGIONAL GROUP PURCHASING PROGRAM.**

### **Objective: Improve the Town Website**

**ACTION 1: IDENTIFY ADDITIONAL CONTENT OR FEATURES TO BE PROVIDED ON THE TOWN WEBSITE.**

## **Goal 3: Increase Civic Engagement by Otis Residents**

*The Town of Otis will work to increase civic engagement by its residents, increase civic pride and promote Otis's spirit of volunteerism.*

### **Objective: Increase Participation in Town Boards, Committees, and Other Town Events.**

**ACTION 1: WORK TO IDENTIFY AND OVERCOME POTENTIAL BARRIERS TO PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.**

**ACTION 2: WORK TO "CROSS PROMOTE" EVENTS ACROSS TOWN EMAIL LIST SERVES AND THROUGH LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS.**

**ACTION 3: EXPLORE THE AUTHORIZATION OF "REMOTE PARTICIPATION" ON TOWN BOARDS AND COMMITTEES.**

**ACTION 4: DEVELOP A SYSTEM TO GET REGULAR FEEDBACK ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF MASTER PLAN GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS, SUCH AS A "CHECK IN" AT TOWN MEETING, POLLING, OR OTHER MEANS.**

**ACTION 5: POLL TOWN NEWS LIST SERVE USERS TO DETERMINE WHO IS USING THE SERVICE AND MORE EFFECTIVELY TARGET FUTURE EVENT PROMOTION AND NEWS DISTRIBUTION.**

### **Objective: Develop a "Send In Your Ideas" Campaign**

*The town will work to develop a "send in your ideas" campaign that solicits ideas for future town projects and other efforts and implements a few ideas each year. This program will help to spur efforts by local community groups and engage Otis' spirit of volunteerism to support community led initiatives.*

**ACTION 1: DEVELOP A "SEND IN YOUR IDEAS" CAMPAIGN WITH INPUT FROM TOWN BOARDS, COMMITTEES AND THE PUBLIC.**

**ACTION 2: SOLICIT IDEAS FROM OTIS RESIDENTS, COMMUNITY GROUPS AND BUSINESSES THROUGH A MAILING OR THROUGH THE TOWN WEBSITE.**

---

ACTION 3: VOTE TO IMPLEMENT THE TOP IDEAS AT TOWN MEETING OR A SIMILAR FORUM.

**Goal 4: Meet the Needs of an Older Population.**

*The Town of Otis will work to meet the needs of its older population by examining services to support the independence and healthy “aging in place” of Otis residents. The town will also participate in regional efforts to address aging, such as the Age Friendly Communities Task Force.*

ACTION 1: PARTICIPATE IN THE REGIONAL AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES TASK FORCE.

ACTION 2: WORK WITH OLDER RESIDENTS AND THE COUNCIL ON AGING TO EXAMINE NEEDS FOR HOUSING, TRANSPORTATION, HEALTH, AND OTHER SERVICES.

## CHAPTER 6: HOUSING

*Otis' vision for housing includes supporting its residents through participation in housing rehabilitation programs and connecting residents with existing tools that promote affordable home-ownership and aging in place. This chapter describes key trends and issues in the area of housing. It also establishes the town's work plan for goals, objectives and actions to achieve its vision for housing and community.*

### TRENDS AND CONDITIONS

#### Housing Stock

According to the 2009-2013 American Community Survey Otis has an estimated 1,666 housing units. Of these housing units, 1,564, or 93.9% of housing units in Otis are of the 1-unit detached type. Another 51 units, or 3.1% of housing, are in structures containing 2-units or more (as in multiple apartments that share a common roof). Mobile homes comprise 45 units, or 2.7% of all housing units. Finally, 4 units, or .2% of all housing is of the 1-unit attached type. These housing units consist of structures with one or more shared wall such as in a townhouse or row house.

Otis was identified in the regional Sustainable Berkshires plan as having a high number of seasonal homes. Along with the towns of Becket, Stockbridge and Lenox, Otis has one of the highest numbers of seasonal homes in the Berkshires. The most recent available information on seasonal housing comes from the 2010 U.S. Census. According to the 2010 census, Otis had 938 (out of 1,701 total housing units) listed "for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use". This amounts to 55% of all housing units within the town. Estimates by the town assessor are even higher. Each year, the assessor mails a questionnaire to Otis households which includes a question about whether they are second homeowners or not. The assessor's data indicates that 68% of all homes in Otis belong to second homeowners. Moreover, the percentage of rental units in Otis remained nearly constant over the period from 2000 to 2010 (See Table C8—Housing Occupancy in Otis 1990-2010 in Appendix C). Otis contains no units of affordable or low-income housing.



### HOUSING AT A GLANCE

#### Housing Stock

Nearly 94% of the current housing stock is comprised of single-family residences. 3% of housing contains two or more units.

#### Housing Prices

The median sales price of a home in Otis increased by 67% between 2000 and 2014 to \$260,000. In comparison, the median sales price for a home in Berkshire county in 2014 was \$184,500.

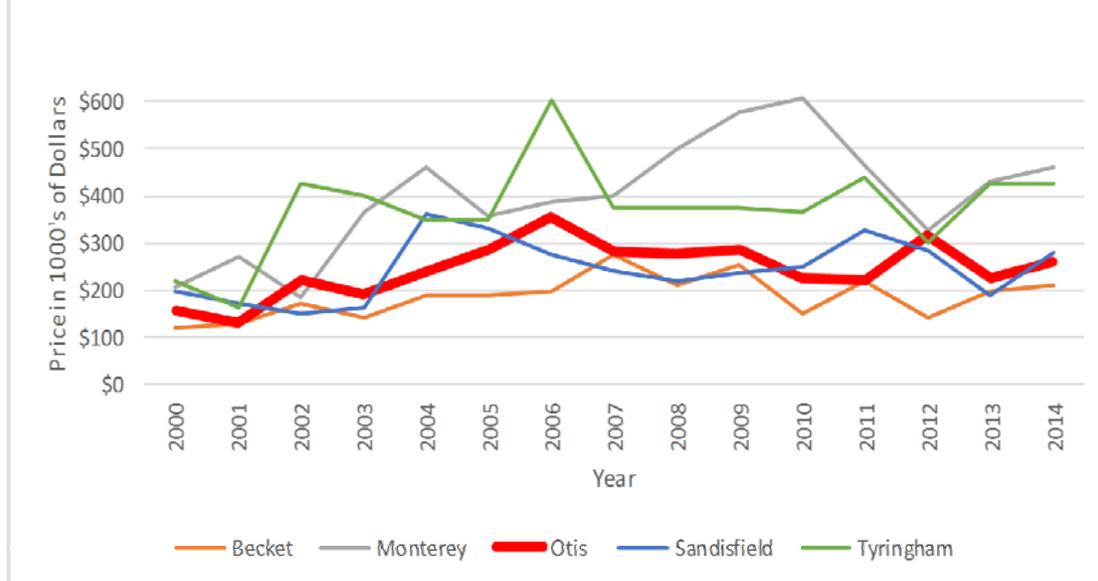
#### Age

Nearly 50% of homes in Otis were built in 1960 or earlier.

*Additional discussion of housing may be found in Appendix C: Existing Conditions Summary*

**Figure 6.1- Single Family Median Sale Price 2000 - 2014**

*Source: Banker and Tradesman Online, 2015*



### Home Prices

Since 2000, Otis has seen its median home sale price increase by 67.7% to \$260,000. In comparison, the median sale price for a home in Berkshire county in 2014 was \$184,500 (Banker and Tradesman Online, 2015). Housing affordability has been identified as an issue in all Berkshire County communities for both renters and owners.

### Housing Affordability

Data from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) indicates that based on income levels determined from the 2007-2011 American Community Survey, approximately 100, or 18% of households in Otis earn between 50 and 80% of the HUD Area Median Family Income (HAMFI). HAMFI for Otis in 2011 was \$71,500. In the town of Otis, an estimated 224 households, or 40% of households earn less than 80% of the HAMFI, meaning income for these households is less than \$57,200 per year. HUD defines these households as having low income.

Additionally, HUD data indicates that as many as 135 households, or 24% of households, have 1 of 4 possible housing problems (see Table C9 in Appendix C). These can include incomplete kitchen facilities, incomplete plumbing facilities, more than 1 person per room, or cost burden greater than 30%. Cost burden is defined as the ratio of housing costs to household income. When housing costs are equal to

or greater than 30% of income, a household is considered “housing burdened”. Within the Town of Otis, an estimated 130, or 23% of households are considered housing burdened, with the majority of these housing burdened households having a cost burden above 50%.

### Housing and Town Zoning

Otis has two major zoning districts, a village (V-1) district and a residential (R-40) district. The village district allows for greater housing density than the residential district due to its smaller allowable lot size. Multi-family dwellings are allowed in the V-1 district with a special permit from the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA). Additionally, Otis has established bylaws for the creation of townhouses, which allows development of multi-unit housing on parcels greater than 20 acres within either zoning district. Moreover, townhouse development requires that 30% of the parcel remain as contiguous open space. Otis also has bylaws allowing accessory apartment creation of up to 800 square feet. Accessory apartments help to increase the number of affordable rental units for residents. For a more in depth discussion of zoning, see Chapter 8: Land Use.

### Previous Planning and Assessment

A 2004 Community Development Plan produced by the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission identified the need for affordable housing within Otis.



Figure 6.1—View of Otis Center Village from the driveway of Otis Town Hall. Most housing in the town is of the single unit detached type, or single family residences. The town also has many seasonal and second homes.

Additionally, the plan identified the increasing age of homes as a potential barrier to preserving the quality and character of the community. There are also other implications for the town regarding affordable housing. Without meeting the minimum affordable housing standard (10% of housing stock), a developer is authorized to obtain a single comprehensive permit under Mass. General Law (MGL) Chapter 40B for construction of subsidized low- or moderate income housing. In addition to the simplified process, if the town denies the permit, the developer can appeal the decision to the state.

While the need for affordable housing is region wide, Otis' rural location and small population size make it a low priority for new affordable housing development, as the 2014 Sustainable Berkshires Plan identified. This plan classified Otis as needing "scaled production" of affordable housing. These communities are encouraged to increase their housing mix through duplex or accessory dwelling unit options.

## KEY HOUSING ISSUES

### Aging Population / Changing Demographics

The Town of Otis has an increasingly older population. Recent survey data from BRPC indicates that most older Berkshire residents want to remain in their own

homes as they age, rather than transitioning to other housing or into assisted living facilities. The town will work with existing business to examine potential services to support the housing needs of this population. Moreover, the town will participate in programs to address the housing needs of all its residents, and work to connect these residents to existing tools that support affordable home ownership and enable older residents to live within their residences as long as they choose.

## HOUSING GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

### Goal 1: Address Local Housing Needs.

*Otis will work to address its housing needs, with particular emphasis on the needs of its senior citizens and young families.*

#### **Objective: Participate in Housing Rehabilitation Programs.**

*Otis will work to support its residents' housing needs through participation in housing rehabilitation programs. These programs will help to improve existing housing stock and will support older residents who wish to stay in their homes as they age.*

---

ACTION 1: WORK WITH APPROPRIATE AGENCIES TO APPLY FOR CDBG FUNDS FOR REHABILITATION GRANTS AND LOANS.

ACTION 2: PURSUE NEW REHABILITATION FUNDS, WHICH MAY BECOME AVAILABLE.

ACTION 3: WORK WITH HOUSING ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS DHCD AND CONSTRUCT INC. TO DETERMINE THE NEED FOR GRANT PROGRAMS AND OR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR ALL HOUSEHOLDS, ESPECIALLY THOSE WITH ELDERLY RESIDENTS. IF A NEED IS IDENTIFIED, LOCATE SOURCES OF GRANT FUNDING TO ADDRESS LOCAL NEEDS.

**Objective: Consider options for the development of affordable home ownership.**

*The town will work to consider other options to increase affordability, such as low cost models like habitat for humanity, or through the creation of affordable building lots from the sale of town lands.*

ACTION 1: ENSURE LOCAL BANKS AND CREDIT UNIONS CONTINUE TO PARTICIPATE IN MASSHOUSING'S LENDING PROGRAMS.

ACTION 2: CONSIDER OTHER LOW-COST MODELS SUCH AS WORKING WITH HABITAT FOR HUMANITY OR PURSUING DEVELOPMENT WITH LOCAL VOCATIONAL SCHOOL PROGRAMS.

ACTION 3: CONSIDER THE POTENTIAL SALE OF TOWN OWNED LANDS TO CREATE AFFORDABLE BUILDING LOTS FOR RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT.

**Objective: Connect residents with programs, incentives, and contractors to address housing needs.**

ACTION 1: CONTINUE TO MAKE LOCAL RESIDENTS AWARE OF MASSHOUSING'S SEPTIC REPAIR LOAN PROGRAM AND THE LOW INCOME HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (LIHEAP).

ACTION 2: CONNECT CITIZENS WITH PROPERTY TAX ABATEMENT PROGRAMS SUCH AS THOSE AVAILABLE FOR RESIDENTS 70 YEARS AND OLDER.

ACTION 3: DEVELOP A LIST OF PREQUALIFIED CONTRACTORS TO ASSIST OLDER OTIS RESIDENTS WITH HOUSING NEEDS.

**Objective: Investigate funding sources and bylaw changes to address housing needs.**

ACTION 1: INVESTIGATE DEDICATED FUNDING SOURCES FOR HOUSING, INCLUDING POSSIBLE RE-EXPLORATION OF THE COMMUNITY PRESERVATION ACT IN OTIS.

ACTION 2: EXPLORE POSSIBLE CHANGES TO THE ACCESSORY APARTMENT BYLAW TO INCENTIVIZE CREATION AND USE.

# CHAPTER 7: TRANSPORTATION

Otis' vision for transportation includes continuing to provide a well maintained system of roadways and enhancing the bicycle and pedestrian environment in town. This chapter describes key trends and issues in the area of transportation. It also establishes the town's work plan for goals, objectives and actions to achieve its vision for transportation.

## TRENDS AND CONDITIONS

### Regional Roadways

Otis is served by two major roadways: Route 8 and Route 23. A portion of Interstate 90 runs through the northeast corner of town. These roadways are maintained by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT). A MassDOT maintenance garage is located just north of Otis Center along Route 8. In total, MassDOT maintains 23.52 miles of roadway within Otis, or 21.39% of all roads. The 2013 Road Condition Report prepared by BRPC notes that in comparison to other Berkshire towns, Otis benefits from the fact that its major arterial roadways (Routes 8 and 23) are maintained by the state. Other communities that must maintain portions of their arterials face significant annual costs because these roads carry the most traffic and can deteriorate the fastest.

### Local Roadways

Otis is a rural community, and as such, the predominant form of transportation is by automobiles or trucks. The town has many private roads, some of



## TRANSPORTATION AT A GLANCE

### Roads

Cars and trucks are the primary mode of transportation.

### Air

Large international airports are located in Hartford, CT or Albany, NY.

### Bus

The town does not have bus service and is not located on regional public transportation routes.

### Elderly or Disabled Transport

Transportation services through the BRTA or SBETC are available for elderly or disabled residents.

### Pedestrian

Route 8 in Otis center is served by sidewalks.

*Additional discussion of transportation may be found in Appendix C: Existing Conditions Summary*

Table 7.1- Road Maintenance Demand by Entity		
<i>Source: BRPC Town of Otis Road Condition Report, 2013</i>		
Maintained by	Road Miles	% of Total
Commonwealth (MassDOT and DCR)	23.52	21.39%
Town of Otis	43.91	39.94%
Privately Maintained	42.5	38.47%
<b>Total</b>	<b>109.93</b>	<b>100%</b>

---

which serve Otis’s private communities (See Table 7.1 for road maintenance demand by entity and Map 14—Road maintenance) Private roads rely on private contractors for maintenance and snow plowing needs. The Otis Highway Department maintains 43.91 miles or 39.94% of roads within town. These roadways include Tyringham Road, Becket Road, Lee Westfield Road, Reservoir Road, Tolland Road, and West Center Road, to name a few (See Table C10 in Appendix C for a list of town maintained roads). Private contractors maintain the remainder of Otis’s roadways. These roads total 42.5 miles or 38.47% of all roads in town.

### Public Transportation

Public transportation in Otis is available for elderly and disabled residents and is provided through two organizations, the Berkshire Regional Transportation Agency (BRTA) Paratransit and the Southern Berkshires Elderly Transportation Corporation (SBETC). These organizations provide on demand transportation for elderly and disabled residents for a small fee.

### Road Jurisdiction and Maintenance

The Town of Otis has an active highway department that is responsible for road maintenance, culvert repair and snow plowing. Recent roadway projects include the repaving of 1.8 miles of Reservoir Road, and the repaving of Kibbe Road and a portion of Tolland Road.

During its research for the Master Plan, and to prepare the 2013 Road Condition Report and 2005 Status of Roads and Official Map Report, BRPC noted discrepancies in some road data available for the Town of Otis. In particular, it was noted that the miles of town maintained roadways measured by the town is slightly greater than list of town maintained roadways available through the state’s Road Inventory File (RIF). This file is used to help calculate yearly Chapter 90 funding. Chapter 90 is a state roadway funding program that provides money to the town in the form of a reimbursable grant. Additionally, it was noted that the town has ongoing issues of road jurisdiction, with several town owned roads maintained by private entities, and several private roads maintained by the town.

### Complete Streets

“Complete streets” is a transportation concept that examines the design of roadways to enable safe access for all users, regardless of age, ability, or mode of transportation (automobile, bicycle, or by foot). Complete streets is a kit of parts and possible solutions that can be applied to any roadway to help improve and promote walking and travel by bicycle as well as make the roadway safer for all users.

Within Otis, some minor changes to the roadway, such as increased signage and pavement markings, as well as restriping and recoloring sidewalks could help to enhance safety. These measures could also help to calm or slow traffic in the village center.

### Recent and Upcoming Roadway Work

Recently completed roadway work includes the repaving of 1.8 miles of Reservoir Road with hot mix asphalt (HMA). Additionally, Kibbe Road, as well as 3,840 feet of Tolland Road were recently reclaimed and topped with HMA. The town is also in the process of replacing several culverts.

### Roadway Needs

The following summarizes priority roadway needs for the town and was provided by Derek Poirier, superintendent of the Otis highway department.

#### Priority Asphalt Roads to be Repaired:

- Pine Road
- Tyringham Road
- West Center Road (1 mile portion from Monterey Road intersection)
- Pearl Road
- Town Hill Road

#### Recent TIP Requests (for full depth road reclamation):

- Old Blandford Road
- Cold Spring Road South
- Cold Spring Road West
- North Blandford Road

#### Bridges in Need of Repair:

- Gibbs Road Bridge



Tannery Road Bridge  
Cold Spring South Road Bridge

## Transportation and the Environment

### Road Salt and Well Contamination

In the 1990's, Otis experienced issues with well contamination due to road salt. Several rounds of testing led to the replacement of a few wells, including the well that serviced the MassDOT maintenance garage along Route 8. While levels of salt contamination were for the most part reduced by the most recent round of testing in 2001, there are still some ongoing contamination issues. The well that serves the town recreation center, library and the Congregational church was recently replaced due to the salt contamination.

### Unpaved Roads and Non-Point Source Pollution

Unpaved or dirt roads are a major source of non-point source pollution such as sediment, or soil particles that are suspended in water. Sediment from unpaved roads is one of the main contributors to water quality problems in the Farmington River Watershed in Massachusetts. (BRPC 1997).

Sediment can cause water quality issues for both humans and wildlife. Sediment can affect the aesthetic quality of recreation areas, as well as accumulate in drainage structures, causing them to fail. Moreover, sediment pollution and the related process of erosion can destroy critical infrastructure such as roads and culverts.

Proper maintenance of unpaved roads can help to address issues of NPS pollution by sediment. Many of the possible maintenance actions include those that are already performed by the town as part of routine road maintenance to prevent road failure or to address issues such as dust.

### Public Survey Results

The Master Plan public survey included a section with questions related to transportation. Otis residents were asked about road maintenance and elderly and disabled transportation services, as well as support for possible public transportation options. Roads identified as most in need of improvement were West Cen-

ter Road with 11 out of 67 or 16% of responses, Route 23, Kibbe Road and Pine Road. East Otis was also mentioned in 4 of 65 responses with no specific roads mentioned. Overall, 64% of survey respondents said they would support or highly support a public transportation route. The top three reasons for potential use included shopping or errands, access other regional transportation, or attend cultural events. In regards to potential expansion of elderly or disabled transportation services, 44% of respondents said to expand services, 39% said they did not now, and 15% said to keep the same.

## KEY TRANSPORTATION ISSUES

### Road Maintenance

Road maintenance needs are a major town expense.

### Lack of Public Transportation or Transportation Alternatives

The Town of Otis is not served by regional public transportation services available to the general public. Only services for elderly or disabled adults provide public transportation within the town of Otis. Moreover, the town should explore alternative transportation methods, such as ride sharing or carpooling, which could help to reduce individual transportation costs and the environmental impacts of transportation.

## TRANSPORTATION GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

### Goal 1: Provide a Complete and Well-Maintained System of Roads.

*The Town of Otis will work to provide a complete system of roadways—from arterials to rural roads—that are safe and well-maintained.*

### **Objective: Increase the Town's Access to Chapter 90 Funding.**

*The Town of Otis will develop and implement a multi-year plan for roadway spending that enables the town to fully utilize the state funding allocated for it yearly.*

---

Moreover, the plan will account for potential preventative maintenance costs that will help to delay more costly road repair and replacements.

**ACTION 1:** WORK WITH MASSDOT TO UPDATE THE LIST OF TOWN MAINTAINED ROADS TO RECEIVE ADDITIONAL CHAPTER 90 FUNDING.

**ACTION 2:** DEVELOP A MULTI-YEAR SPENDING PLAN TO TAKE FULL ADVANTAGE OF YEARLY CHAPTER 90 FUNDING. INTEGRATE THIS EFFORT WITH LARGER CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING.

**Objective: Continue to Place Eligible Road Maintenance Needs on the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).**

*Ensure that eligible road maintenance needs are included in the regional TIP so that they have the potential for federal financing.*

**Objective: Work to Resolve Road Jurisdiction and Maintenance Responsibility Issues.**

*The town will work to reexamine the status and maintenance responsibility of roads based on its current maintenance demands and previous transportation studies.*

**ACTION 1:** REVISIT THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 2005 BRPC TOWN OF OTIS STATUS OF ROADS AND OFFICIAL MAP REPORT WITH THE TOWN HIGHWAY SUPERINTENDENT, TOWN ADMINISTRATOR, TOWN COUNSEL, THE PLANNING BOARD AND THE SELECT BOARD.

**ACTION 2:** REVISE RECOMMENDATIONS AS NECESSARY BASED ON NEW FINDINGS AND EXISTING CONDITIONS.

**Objective: Plan for and Address Future Needs.**

*The town will ensure that future roadway work accounts for the impacts of extreme weather events and is coordinated with potential infrastructure projects, such as sewer expansion. These efforts will help to reduce project costs and mitigate future risks.*

**ACTION 1:** AS EXISTING CULVERTS AND BRIDGES NEED RE-

PLACEMENT, ENSURE THAT REPLACEMENT COMPONENTS ARE ADEQUATE TO ACCOMMODATE EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS.

**ACTION 2:** WORK TO COORDINATE FUTURE ROADWAY PROJECTS WITH POTENTIAL INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT, SUCH AS SEWER EXPANSION IN TOWN.

**Goal 2: Increase Access to Public and Alternative Transportation in Otis.**

*The Town of Otis will work to increase access to existing elderly and disabled public transportation and investigate the potential of a public bus route through town.*

**Objective: Work with Berkshire Regional Transportation Agency (BRTA) and Other Towns to Provide a Public Bus Stop in Otis.**

**ACTION 1:** INVESTIGATE THE FEASIBILITY OF A PUBLIC BUS ROUTE WITH A STOP IN OTIS. ADDRESS THE ROUTE'S LOCATION, THE NUMBER OF POTENTIAL STOPS, AND THE POTENTIAL DEMAND WITHIN THE TOWN.

**Objective: Investigate Options for Alternative Transportation in Town.**

**ACTION 1:** ENCOURAGE RESIDENTS TO PARTICIPATE IN ONLINE CAR SHARING OR CARPOOLING RESOURCES. LINK TO THESE RESOURCES ON THE TOWN WEBSITE.

**Objective: Work with the Council on Aging to Better Connect Elderly and Disabled Otis Residents with Transportation Services.**

**ACTION 1:** IMPROVE CONNECTIONS TO AVAILABLE ELDERLY AND DISABLED TRANSPORTATION, PROMOTE OPTIONS THROUGH THE TOWN WEBSITE AND IN TOWN MAILINGS AND COMMUNICATIONS.

**ACTION 2:** INVESTIGATE A POSSIBLE APPLICATION TO THE MASSDOT AND BRTA COMMUNITY TRANSIT GRANT PROGRAM, THAT COULD HELP FUND A VEHICLE FOR USE BY THE



COUNCIL ON AGING.

**Goal 3: Enhance the Bicycle and Pedestrian Environment in Town.**

*The Town will work to enhance the safety of and opportunity for bicycle and pedestrian transportation within town. These potential improvements will improve the health, safety, and quality of life of citizens and visitors.*

**Objective: Adopt a “Complete Streets” Approach to Future Roadway Projects.**

*The Town of Otis will ensure that future roadway projects integrate measures to increase use by pedestrians and cyclists, when and where applicable. The Town will coordinate with MassDOT and other agencies to ensure that potential pedestrian and cycling improvements are included in larger projects.*

**Objective: Enhance Warning Signage and Markings on Roads Frequented by Pedestrians and Cyclists.**

*The Town of Otis will explore and implement potential signage additions and alterations that will aid in promoting use by pedestrians and cyclists, especially in its village centers.*

ACTION 1: COORDINATE WITH MASSDOT AND OTHER AGENCIES TO ENSURE THAT POTENTIAL PEDESTRIAN AND CYCLING IMPROVEMENTS ARE INCLUDED IN LARGER PROJECTS AND IN NEW CONSTRUCTION ALONG STATE OWNED ROADWAYS.

ACTION 2: REQUEST THAT MASSDOT EXAMINE OPTIONS FOR TRAFFIC CALMING TO ENHANCE PEDESTRIAN SAFETY IN VILLAGE CENTERS.

ACTION 3: WORK WITH MASSDOT TO INSTALL SHARED LANE MARKINGS OR “SHARROWS” AND “SHARE THE ROAD” SIGNAGE ON ROADS FREQUENTED BY CYCLISTS.

ACTION 4: IDENTIFY POTENTIAL ROAD RESTRIPING AND LANE NARROWING THAT COULD HELP TO WIDEN THE ROAD SHOULDER AVAILABLE FOR PEDESTRIANS AND CYCLISTS.

ACTION 5: IDENTIFY AND IMPLEMENT PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLING IMPROVEMENTS THROUGHOUT TOWN.

**Objective: Establish A “Walking Loop” in Otis Center.**

*The town will install signage to mark a 1/2 mile and 1 mile walking loop in the Village Center that provides a safe and level walking surface for people of all ages and abilities. The signage will also help connect walkers to other recreational resources such as the Otis Recreation Center and the Farmington River Walk.*

ACTION 1: INSTALL SIGNAGE THAT MARKS A 1/2 MILE AND 1-MILE WALKING LOOP IN OTIS CENTER VILLAGE AND DIRECTS PEDESTRIANS TO THE FARMINGTON RIVER WALK AND OTIS RECREATION CENTER.

ACTION 2: PROMOTE THE WALKING LOOP THROUGH THE COUNCIL ON AGING AND THE TOWN WEBSITE.

**Goal 4: Address Wildlife Crossings in Future Roadway Projects.**

*The town will investigate enhancements that will reduce conflicts between transportation users, roadways, and wildlife.*

ACTION 1: COMMUNICATE WITH MASSDOT TO ENSURE THAT WILDLIFE CONNECTIVITY ENHANCEMENT IS INCLUDED IN FUTURE STATE ROADWAY WORK.

ACTION 2: EXAMINE OPTIONS TO ENHANCE WILDLIFE CONNECTIVITY IN FUTURE ROADWAY PROJECTS, PARTICULARLY BRIDGE AND CULVERT WORK.

ACTION 3: EXAMINE OPTIONS TO ENHANCE WARNING SIGNAGE IN WILDLIFE CROSSING AREAS OR IN AREAS WHERE COLLISIONS WITH WILDLIFE ARE FREQUENT.

## CHAPTER 8: LAND USE

*Otis' vision for land use includes reexamining its crucial village centers, particularly East Otis Village to examine features such as underutilized properties and potential wastewater treatment that will help to protect its important water resources. Additionally, the town will examine the possible creation of a commercial solar bylaw, and possible design guidelines for Otis Center Village. This chapter describes key trends and issues in the area of land use. It also establishes the town's work plan for goals, objectives and actions to achieve its vision for land use.*

### TRENDS AND CONDITIONS

#### Land Use Change 1971-1999

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has land use data for the town of Otis for a 28 year period from 1971-1999. While 1999 data is fairly dated, it does allow for a picture of land use change within the town to be developed. Between 1971 and 1999, residential acreage increased more than any other land use category, growing from 890.44 acres (3.65% of all land) to 1,439.01 acres (5.91% of all land) (see Table C11 for Otis land use 1971-1999). Institutional (which includes schools, town owned land and cemeteries), commercial, and industrial land uses also increased. However, they occupy minimal acreage within the town. Agricultural acreage decreased the most over the 28 year period from 1971-1999, changing from 333.19 to 267.65 acres, or a decrease of 19.67%.

#### Land Use 2005

Land use was also analyzed by the Commonwealth in 2005; however a change in methodology makes comparison with the 1971-1999 data statistically impossible (See Appendix C for a description of differences between 1971-1999 and 2005 land use data). The 2005 data shows that Otis is mostly forested (18,533 acres or 76.14% of the town). Water covers 6.14%, or 1,493.78 acres of Otis, while wetlands occupy another 2,773.14, or 11.39% of town. Of "man-made" land uses, residential land acreage is the greatest, extending across 824.76 acres or 3.39% of the town (See Map 9—Current Land Use and Table 8.1).



### LAND USE AT A GLANCE

#### Forest

As of 2005, forest covers over 18,500 acres or 76% of the town.

#### Residential Land Use

Residential land use extends across 824 acres of 3.4% of the town as of 2005, far exceeding the acreage devoted to commercial, industrial, or institutional uses.

#### Land Use Change

Between 1971 and 1999, residential land use increased the most, along with smaller increases in commercial, industrial and institutional land. Agricultural land decreased the most.

#### Zoning

The town has three zoning districts; a village district, a residential district, and a floodplain overlay district.

*Additional discussion of land use may be found in Appendix C: Existing Conditions Summary*

**Table 8.1 - Otis Land Use 2005**

*Source: Mass GIS Land Use, 2005*

Land Use Category	Acres	Percent of Total Land
Agriculture	234.66	0.96%
Commercial	49.46	0.20%
Forest	18533.84	76.14%
Industrial	6.26	0.03%
Institutional*	17.73	0.07%
Mining / Waste Disposal	55.46	0.23%
Recreation	112.48	0.46%
Residential	824.76	3.39%
Transportation	55.43	0.23%
Vacant**	185.74	0.76%
Water	1493.78	6.14%
Wetland***	2773.14	11.39%
Total	24342.73	100.00%

\*Institutional category includes town owned facilities as well as cemeteries.

\*\*Vacant category includes abandoned agriculture, areas like power lines and areas of no vegetation, as well as brushland and successional environments not dense enough to be classified as forest.

\*\*\*Wetland category includes both forested and non-forested wetlands.

### Development Trend

Available state data showing the construction date of buildings within the Town of Otis allows for a picture of development trends to emerge. These data show the last available construction date for a given building, so do not capture earlier structures that may have existing on a given parcel and been replaced. These data are based on assessor’s information current as of 2011.

The earliest structures in the Town of Otis, built prior to the year 1900, were located primarily in Otis Center Village, with additional pockets of development around West Otis and a few structures around Otis

Reservoir and Big Pond.

From 1901-1975, extensive construction or reconstruction of existing structures can be seen around Otis’ water resources, including Otis Reservoir, Big Pond and Benton Pond.

From 1976 onward, there is a visible shift away from development near Otis’ water resources. This can be seen in extensive development along areas such as Dimmock Road, Stebbins Road, West Center Road, Judd Road, Harrington Road and the Otis Woodlands (See Map 10—Development Trend).

### Zoning

Otis currently has three zoning districts. For a map of current zoning, please see Map 3—Zoning.

#### Residential (R-40) District

Minimum lot size: 1 Acre

Minimum Road Frontage: 150 Feet

Front Setback: 35 Feet

Side and Rear: 25 Feet

#### Village (V-1) District

Minimum lot size: 20,000 Square Feet (can be minimum of 10,000 Square Feet if the lot is serviced by the Otis sewer district).

Minimum Road Frontage: 100 feet for residential use, 60 feet for non residential

Front Setback: 35 Feet

Side and Rear: 25 Feet

#### Floodplain Overlay District (FPOD)

This overlay district is based on the Otis flood hazard boundary map issued by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for the 100 year regulatory floodplain.

Existing homes and structures within the floodplain are permitted; however, new development is restricted.

### Other Zoning Provisions

#### Nonconforming Single and Two Family Residential Structures



Figure 8.1—East Otis. Village District (V-1) boundaries are indicated by the red line. The town hopes to pursue additional planning in this area related to underutilized properties, such as the former J&D marina. The town will also examine potential wastewater treatment in this area through an ecological or alternative system.

Many parcels, particularly those located around Otis’ ponds and water bodies, were created prior to the adoption of zoning regulations. They are usually of a small size and do not meet the requirements for minimum lot size or setbacks.

The town amended its bylaws to create smaller setback requirements for construction on existing non-conforming structures. Additionally, reconstruction, replacement and renovation of existing non-conforming structures within the same building footprint and height are allowed.

### Townhouse Development

Otis’ Townhouse Development provision allows for any parcel larger than 20 acres to pursue townhouse development through special permit by the planning board. 30% of land in the proposed townhouse development must remain as open space.

### Remaining Buildable Land

An analysis of remaining buildable land within the Town of Otis can be created by subtracting areas that have already been developed, permanently protected state and other conservation lands, wetlands (100 foot buffer around all wetland areas), river protection

---

areas (200 foot buffer around rivers), and slopes greater than 25%. What remains are areas that could be used for new construction. Based on this analysis, 7,150.8 acres (29.34%) of buildable land remain within the town. Another 2,297 acres (9.42%) remain on land that is partially constrained for development, and include areas located in floodplain or on slopes between 15 and 25% (see Map 11—Buildable Land). This analysis only estimates remaining buildable acreage. It does not examine remaining buildable road frontage which would be needed to access these areas or account for new road construction and extensive subdivision that would be needed for development within these areas.

## KEY LAND USE ISSUES

### Village Centers

Otis' village centers are important economic and population centers, as well as gateways into the community. The town will examine options to expand parking in both its village centers as well as examine design guidelines for Otis Center Village.

Members of the Otis MPSC also identified East Otis as an area to be explored for future redevelopment. East Otis is the smaller of Otis's two village centers. Additionally, the areas around Big Pond and Otis Reservoir contain some of the town's largest neighborhoods. The committee identified several possible topics to examine in East Otis including the need for wastewater treatment to protect natural resources, additional infrastructure, and underutilized properties (See figure 8.1).

## DRAFT LAND USE GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS (NOT FINAL)

### Goal 1: Revisit Otis' Village Centers

*Otis will examine the possible adoption of architectural design guidelines for Otis Center Village and develop a plan for potential wastewater, infrastructure, and underutilized properties in East Otis. The town will*

*also examine options to expand day to day and event parking in its village centers.*

### **Objective: Create a Redevelopment Plan for East Otis.**

*The Town of Otis will create a redevelopment plan for East Otis Village and the areas around Otis Reservoir to assist in this area becoming a small economic center and address concerns about water resources. The plan will address wastewater infrastructure, including a potential ecological wastewater treatment system and sewer expansion around Big Pond and Otis Reservoir. The ecological wastewater treatment system could also serve as a draw for visitors and a showcase for town sustainability practices. The plan will also address current plans for underutilized properties such as the former J&D marina. Moreover, the plan will examine basic improvements, such as sidewalks and lighting, that were included in the 1998 Clough, Harbour & Associates Plan for East Otis.*

**ACTION 1: REVISIT THE 1998 CLOUGH, HARBOUR & ASSOCIATES MASTER PLAN FOR THE EAST OTIS VILLAGE AREA, AS A BASIS FOR CURRENT EFFORTS.**

**ACTION 2: ENGAGE IN A PUBLIC PROCESS ON THE NEEDS OF EAST OTIS TO INFORM THE PLANNING PROCESS.**

**ACTION 3: EXAMINE TAX INCENTIVE FINANCING (TIF) AND OTHER FUNDING INCENTIVE OPTIONS TO SPUR THE REDEVELOPMENT OF UNDERUTILIZED PROPERTIES SUCH AS THE J&D MARINA.**

**ACTION 4: EXAMINE POSSIBLE ECOLOGICAL WASTEWATER TREATMENT OPTIONS FOR EAST OTIS, SUCH AS THROUGH A LIVING MACHINE OR SIMILAR SYSTEM, WHICH COULD ALSO SERVE AS AN ATTRACTION TO THE AREA. DEVELOP STRATEGIES FOR SITING AND FUNDING THE SYSTEM.**

**ACTION 5: DRAFT, ADOPT, AND IMPLEMENT A COMPREHENSIVE REDEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR THE AREA.**



**Objective: Examine implementation of design guidelines for Otis Center Village.**

*The Town of Otis will work to create clear guidance to those wishing to develop in village centers as to how new development or significant modifications can be designed to best retain the character of the center while still allowing for new development and change over time.*

**ACTION 1: RESEARCH ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN GUIDELINES IMPLEMENTED IN OTHER RURAL NEW ENGLAND COMMUNITIES.**

**ACTION 2: DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A STRATEGY FOR DESIGN GUIDELINES IN VILLAGE CENTERS.**

**Objective: Examine options for increased day to day and event parking in village centers.**

**ACTION 1: CONDUCT A STUDY OF EXISTING PARKING AREAS AND CAPACITY IN BOTH VILLAGE CENTERS AND ASSESS FUTURE PARKING NEEDS.**

**ACTION 2: RESEARCH AND IMPLEMENT OPTIONS TO EXPAND PARKING IN VILLAGE CENTERS.**

**Goal 2: Research and Develop a Commercial Solar Energy Bylaw.**

*The Town will examine the possible implementation of a commercial solar bylaw, for the purposes of regulating possible future commercial solar energy development in the Town.*

**ACTION1: RESEARCH, DEVELOP, AND VOTE TO IMPLEMENT A POTENTIAL COMMERCIAL SOLAR BYLAW.**

## CHAPTER 9: NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

*Otis' vision for its natural and cultural resources includes promoting and developing its historic areas, such as the Knox Trail and working to protect its cherished water and natural resources so that all residents in this rural community can remain close to water, nature, and wildlife. This chapter describes key trends and issues in the areas of natural and cultural resources. It also establishes the town's work plan for goals, objectives and actions to achieve its vision for these aspects of the town.*

### TRENDS AND CONDITIONS

#### Historic and Cultural Resources

##### History of the Community

The Town of Otis was primarily shaped by two forces, its proximity to the Great Road, also known as the Knox Trail or Boston-Albany Turnpike and its location along the West Branch of the Farmington River. Both of these forces allowed the creation of mills and industry and the free flow of goods and services in and out of the town.

Farming and lumbering, especially of pine and hemlock, were the town's major industries before shifting to the seasonal and tourism-based economy that exists today. The West Branch of the Farmington River provided an important source of waterpower to run the wheels of early mills, and later, for a couple of factories. The number of mills in Otis grew from four in 1829 to 22 in 1885 (Otis OSRP 1991).

Mills and industry also helped to shape Otis Reservoir, which was originally composed of three ponds. The outlet of these ponds was dammed by the Collins Company in 1867 and provided a steady source of water to power the company's metal forging operations in Connecticut. The dam raised the level of water 26 feet above the original elevation in the ponds.



### NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES AT A GLANCE

#### Historic Resources

Otis has 88 buildings, monuments, other historic areas and resources listed in the state's MACRIS database.

#### Knox Trail

A portion of the historic Knox Trail passes through Otis. This historic road played a key role in events that shaped the creation of the United States.

#### Natural Resources

Otis has a wealth of natural resources, including 8 state listed "Great Ponds", extensive wetlands and over 5,000 acres of "Core Habitat" according the state BioMap2 project.

*Additional discussion of Natural and Cultural Resources may be found in Appendix C: Existing Conditions Summary*

---

## Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System (MACRIS) Database

The Massachusetts Cultural Information Resource System (MACRIS) is a database maintained by the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) that lists historic structures, areas, objects and burial grounds recognized at the local, state, and national level. Within Otis, the MACRIS database lists 88 records comprising mostly historic buildings. However, the records also include the town green in front of the Congregational Church, Otis Center Village, Otis Reservoir, and Otis Reservoir Dam just to name a few places (See Map 8—Historic Resources and Table C14).

## East Otis Schoolhouse and Meetinghouse

The East Otis Schoolhouse and Meeting House are two town-owned buildings located on a single lot in East Otis at the corner of Pike Road and Old Blandford Road near the Papa’s Healthy Food and Fuel gas station. The East Otis Schoolhouse is a small one and half story structure that served as the “one room schoolhouse” for the area. The MACRIS database lists the building as the “East Otis Center School” and places the date of construction in 1850 (See Table C14, this appendix). The East Otis Meetinghouse, also known as the East Otis Church or East Otis Baptist Church, has functioned as both a public meetinghouse and church in the past and has been abandoned since the 1980’s. Both structures are in disrepair, with damage to the Meetinghouse considerably greater than that of the Schoolhouse. Plans for the Meetinghouse (including possible demolition or reuse) have generated significant debate within town.

The town’s Selectboard considers the Meeting House to be public safety hazard and potential liability and has advocated for the building’s demolition (Town Of Otis Select Board, 2013). The Selectboard has also discussed the possibility of repurposing the lot as a playground and picnic area. In this scheme, the East Otis Schoolhouse would remain and be repurposed for use by the town.

The Otis Planning Board and Historical Commission have advocated for the renovation or replication of the buildings and the designation of the parcel around them as a one lot historic district. A study committee

was formed by the town to examine the creation of a potential historic district. The creation of this historic district around the School House and Meeting House would allow the town to potentially access funds from the MHC for renovation or replication of the buildings and would require a match from the town. The opportunity for this funding would dissolve if the structures were demolished (Harold Kobrin, Personal Communication 2015). Renovations to the church have been estimated to cost up to \$300,000 (Sakata 2012). Once renovated, both the Schoolhouse and Meetinghouse could be repurposed for use by the town. Some suggested uses for the structures include housing the town’s museum (currently located in the Library), records storage, a town hall annex, additional meeting space, or an information center (Harold Kobrin Personal Communication 2015).

Current plans for the two structures are as follows. The Selectboard has decided to invest in the Schoolhouse building over time, through gradual and incremental repairs (Larry Gould Personal Communication 2015). The building would remain and be utilized by the town, perhaps as a restored historic building. Due to the deteriorating nature of the East Otis Meetinghouse, the Selectboard has determined that the structure should be removed and the lot be repurposed by the town.

## Knox Trail or Great Road

The Town of Otis developed along the historic route known as the Knox Trail, or Great Road, that connected Boston and Albany. The town’s location along this route was critical to accessing trade and for the flow of goods and services into and out of the town. The route is most famous for its use by General Henry Knox as he worked during the winter of 1775-1776 to move cannons from Fort Ticonderoga on Lake Champlain to Boston, Massachusetts. These cannons were used to support General George Washington during the siege of Boston by the British army. The relocation of the cannons from Ticonderoga was critical to American victory. Once deployed on the Dorchester heights, with a commanding view of Boston harbor, the cannons prompted the British fleet to relocate from Boston to Halifax, Nova Scotia. The abandonment of Boston harbor by the British fleet was a turning point in

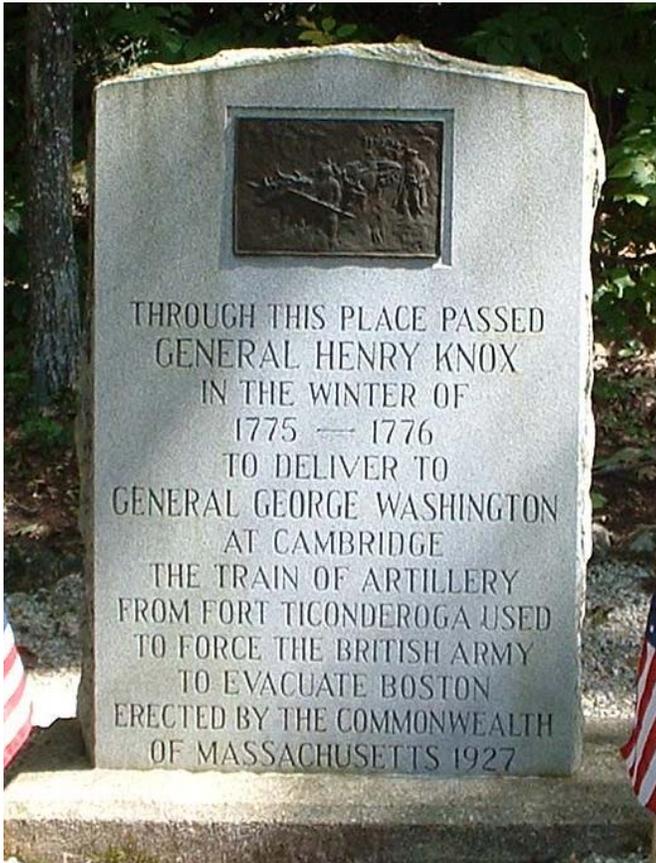


Figure 9.1—The Knox Trail Marker in East Otis near the intersection of Route 23 and Ray Hubbard Rd, East Otis, MA . These markers were placed in 56 locations in New York and Massachusetts beginning in the late 1920’s and trace the route of General Henry Knox. Image by Wikimedia commons user ToddC4176. Image licensed under CC by 3.0.

the American Revolutionary War.

Beginning in the late 1920’s, monuments were commissioned for every town in Massachusetts that General Knox passed through to provide a permanent marker to the events that helped shape the creation of the United States. The Knox Trail monument for the town of Otis is located near Benton Pond (see Figure 9.1). Additionally, a statue of General Knox is located on the Town Hall driveway.

The route of the Knox Trail crosses into Otis near Algeria Road in East Otis. It then moves west across the



Figure 9.2—Mile marker reading “65 Mile to Albany” along the Knox Trail near Algeria Road in Otis. This mile marker was recently identified by the Otis Historic Commission and granite posts were installed to protect it from potential damage.

town passing just north of Otis Reservoir. Beyond this point, the Knox Trail passes through portions of Otis State Forest where it then moves into Sandisfield. After moving just south of Upper Spectacle Pond, the Trail then crosses back into Otis near Cold Spring Road.

Much of the trail is currently used during the winter by Snowmobilers and the local snowmobile club, the Knox Trail Sno-riders. Members of the Otis Historic Commission have been active in identifying landmarks, markers (see Figure 9.2), tavern sites, and other historic resources along the trail. The Historic Commission has also secured permission to develop the trail through portions of state owned land like Otis State Forest.

### Other Unique Features

For a map of unique features in the Town of Otis, including historic and natural resources, please refer to Map 5—Unique Features.

### Natural Resources

#### Watersheds

Otis lies within three watersheds, the Farmington River Watershed (FRW), the Housatonic River Watershed (HRW) and the Westfield River Watershed (WRW).

---

The majority of the town lies within the FRW. The northeast corner of the town is located within the WRW and the eastern portion of town is located within the HRW. Otis's position at the headwaters of the Farmington River is regionally important. The Farmington River is the primary water supply for Hartford, Connecticut and other towns within the Farmington River Valley. The Farmington River Watershed Association (FRWA), the non-profit group that helps to address issues of water quality within the watershed, estimates that the river supplies drinking water to 600,000 people (FRWA 2003).

### Surface Waters

The town has spectacular water resources including eight "Great Ponds". Great Ponds are a state water body designation related to Massachusetts General Law Chapter 91 "The Massachusetts Public Waterfront Act". A Great Pond is defined as "any pond or lake that contained more than 10 acres in its natural state" (Mass DEP, 2015). Ponds which at one point in time were larger than 10 acres, but are now smaller are still considered to be great ponds.

### Wetlands

Otis has extensive wetland areas totaling over 2,700 acres (See Table C12). Wetlands perform important functions for both humans and wildlife. Wetlands are the most productive ecosystems on the planet, measured by the amount of biomass or living biological tissue they help to produce. Wetlands serve as habitat for a wide variety of plant and animal species and often function as critical nursery and breeding areas. Wetlands also provide functions for humans. The benefits to humans provided by wetlands and other natural environments are sometimes referred to as "ecosystem services". Valuable ecosystem services provided by wetlands include water purification, flood storage and control, and shoreline stabilization.

Seven types of wetland exist in Otis. Data included in Table C12 in Appendix C is derived from the interpretation of aerial photography which is then field checked by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). These data come from the most recent wetlands update which was performed in 2009.

Wooded coniferous swamps extend across 875 acres and comprise 31.63% of wetland areas within the town. Bog areas in Otis have the least acreage (122 acres) and comprise 4.44% of all wetlands in the town (See Table C12 in Appendix C).

### Wildlife Habitat

The Commonwealth's BioMap2 study provides the best assessment of wildlife habitat within the Town of Otis.

BioMap2 combines 30 years of rare species and natural community data from the Mass. Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP) with wildlife species and habitat assessments that were conducted as part of the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife's 2005 State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP). Additionally, BioMap2 data integrates the Nature Conservancy's assessment of large, connected and intact ecosystems across the state. (NHESP, 2012).

BioMap 2 has two primary components, Core Habitat and Critical Natural Landscape. Core Habitat includes "areas that are critical for the long term persistence of rare species and other species of conservation concern" (NHESP, 2012).

Critical Natural Landscape identifies large contiguous landscape blocks that have been minimally impacted by development. The BioMap2 report for the Town of Otis notes that "if protected, these areas will provide habitat for wide-ranging native species, support intact ecological processes, maintain connectivity among habitats, and enhance ecological resilience to natural and anthropogenic disturbances in a rapidly changing world" (NHESP, 2012). Critical natural landscape comprises 15,535 acres or 63% of all land within the town.

Large areas of core habitat have been identified around Long and Kingsbury Mountain on the western side of town. A portion of this area of core habitat is permanently protected as part of the Long Mountain Wildlife Management Area. Additional core habitat follows the length of the Farmington River corridor as it flows through town. Smaller areas extend around Whiting pond and in low lying areas near Church Hill



Figure 9.3—Wetland area in autumn near Stebbins Road. Photograph copyright Harold Kobrin.

Pond south to Dimmock Brook Pond. Additionally a large area of core habitat coincides with the extensive wetland areas north of Big Pond. Core habitat areas within Otis encompass 5,115 acres, or 21% of all land within the town. Core habitat areas are not mutually exclusive from areas of critical natural landscape. In general, core habitats are located within areas of critical natural landscape. For mapped critical natural landscape and core habitat areas, see Map 13 Vegetation and Fisheries and Wildlife.

## KEY NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCE ISSUES

### Water Quality

As mentioned in previous chapters, water quality is an important issue in Otis. Water quality impacts human health, and Otis' water resources are major draws to

the town that impact the local economy. The town will address water quality through ongoing testing and by working to both expand wastewater treatment at its existing WWTP near Otis Center Village and by working to develop a potential new wastewater treatment system in East Otis Village.

### Inventory, Documentation and Planning of Town Historic Resources

The town's Historic Commission has taken the lead on promoting the town's historic resources, including significant work to make the Knox Trail a four-season multi-use trail. The town will continue its ongoing work to develop and promote this trail, as well as update the inventory of the town's historic buildings and other resources. These historic resources create a potential draw for economically important tourists and other visitors.

---

## **NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCE GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS**

### **Goal 1: Develop and Promote Otis’s Cultural and Historic Resources.**

*The town will work to develop and promote its cultural and historic resources. The town will work update its inventory of historic resources and will work to promote these resources.*

#### **Objective: Identify and Nominate Town Historic Resources for State and National Recognition.**

*The town will continue its ongoing efforts to identify and nominate town historic and cultural resources for state and national recognition. These resources will help to create draws to the town for visitors and potential residents.*

**ACTION 1: CONTINUE TO WORK WITH PROPERTY OWNERS AND THE HISTORICAL COMMISSION TO UPDATE THE TOWN’S LISTING OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES.**

**ACTION 2: CONTINUE ONGOING WORK TO LIST THE KNOX TRAIL ON THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES.**

**ACTION 3: WORK TO NOMINATE OTHER HISTORIC TOWN RESOURCES FOR STATE AND NATIONAL RECOGNITION.**

#### **Objective: Promote The Town’s Historic Resources.**

*The town will more effectively promote its historic and cultural resources, particularly through the town website.*

**ACTION 1: ORGANIZE A WALKING OR DRIVING TOUR OF OTIS’ HISTORIC RESOURCES.**

**ACTION 2: PROMOTE OTIS’ HISTORIC RESOURCES THROUGH THE TOWN WEBSITE.**

#### **Objective: Continue the Ongoing Process to Develop the Knox Trail as a Four-season Multi-use Trail.**

*The town will continue its work to develop and promote the Knox Trail. This effort will help to add to*

*town recreation areas, as well as improve its historic resources.*

**ACTION 1: CONTINUE TO WORK WITH PROPERTY OWNERS AND USER GROUPS TO DEVELOP EASEMENTS AND OTHER PERMISSIONS FOR TRAIL ACCESS.**

**ACTION 2: CONTINUE TO IDENTIFY SIGNIFICANT HISTORIC RESOURCES AND OTHER SITES ALONG THE KNOX TRAIL.**

**ACTION 3: INVEST IN THE “65 MILE TO ALBANY” MILESTONE WAY, NEAR ALGERIE ROAD, AS A TOWN RECREATION AREA AND HISTORIC RESOURCE.**

### **Goal 2: Protect Otis’ Water and Natural Resources.**

*The town will protect its crucial water and natural resources through continued enforcement of existing regulations, and through possible future sewer expansion and development in town.*

**ACTION 1: CONTINUE ONGOING SEPTIC AND WATER QUALITY TESTING BY THE BOARD OF HEALTH AND OTHERS TO EXAMINE WATER QUALITY IN OTIS.**

**ACTION 2: CONTINUE TO ENFORCE EXISTING ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATIONS TO PROTECT DRINKING WATER RESOURCES.**

**ACTION 3: INVESTIGATE SEWER EXPANSION IN OTIS CENTER VILLAGE TO UTILIZE THE EXCESS CAPACITY IN THE WWTP. INVESTIGATE DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW WASTEWATER TREATMENT SYSTEM IN EAST OTIS.**

## CHAPTER 10: OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION

*Otis' vision for its open space and recreation includes protecting its treasured open spaces and maintaining the natural and scenic beauty of the town. The town will also work to better promote its existing recreation areas. This chapter describes key trends and issues in the areas of open space and recreation. It also establishes the town's work plan for goals, objectives and actions to achieve its vision for these aspects of the town. The creation of Otis's Master Plan was completed concurrently with an update to its Open Space and Recreation Plan. For additional information, please see the full text of the Open Space and Recreation Plan.*

### TRENDS AND CONDITIONS

#### Open Space

Open space is defined as land that has not been developed for residential, commercial or industrial uses and includes publicly and privately owned land. Open space often has particular interest to conservation or recreation and includes:

1. Land which contributes to the public water supply
2. Forests, fields, and agricultural lands
3. Wetlands
4. Rivers, streams, and lakes
5. Parks and other recreation lands
6. Wildlife or animal habitats
7. Land which preserves scenic views or town character

As described in previous chapters, Otis has an abundance of natural resources including forest, as well as wetlands, water resources and wildlife habitat (See Chapter 9-Natural and Cultural Resources, as well as the Otis Open Space and Recreation Plan). Moreover the town has a wealth of recreation opportunities that are created by its abundant natural resources, which has led the town to be called the "outdoor playground of the Berkshires" by some.



### OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION AT A GLANCE

#### Open Space

In total, protected open space areas in the Town of Otis extend across 8,114.16 acres, or 33.3%, of all land.

#### Public and Non-Profit Parcels

Public and non-profit lands cover 6,541 acres, or 26.8%, of all land within the town.

#### Privately Owned Parcels

Privately owned conservation lands in Otis with permanent levels of protection comprise 211.88 acres, or 0.87%, of all land within the town.

#### Recreation

Otis boasts two major state forests and three wildlife management areas (WMA), a ski area, extensive trails, three camping areas, and a town Recreation Center.

*Additional discussion of open space and recreation may be found in Appendix C: Existing Conditions Summary and the full text of the Otis Open Space and Recreation Plan.*



Figure 10.1—Otis’ many water bodies are important areas for recreation.

In total, protected lands in the town of Otis extend across 8,114.16 acres, or 33.3% of all land within the town (see Table C15 in Chapter 10 and Map 7 Inventory of Lands of Conservation and Recreation Interest).

### Privately Owned Parcels

Privately owned conservation lands in Otis with permanent levels of protection comprise 211.88 acres or 0.87% of all land within the town. These include three privately owned parcels with conservation restrictions held by the Berkshire Natural Resource Council. It should be noted, that unless otherwise stated, private parcels should be considered off limits to public access.

### Chapter 61, 61A, and 61B Lands

Chapter 61 is a state program that allows private landowners to manage their properties for forestry (Chapter 61), agricultural (Chapter 61A), or recreational purposes (Chapter 61B) in exchange for reduced taxes.

Chapter 61 properties in Otis total 1,360.79 acres, or

5.58% of all land in Otis (See Table C15). While these properties certainly contribute to the town’s rural character and scenic beauty, they currently offer no public access or recreation opportunities.

### Public and Non-Profit Parcels

Public and non-profit lands contribute significantly to the open space and recreation opportunities within town. In total, these areas cover 6,541 acres, or 26.8% of all land within the town.

### Municipally Owned Parcels

Municipally owned parcels of conservation or recreation interest total 511.65 acres in Otis, or 2.1% of all land within the town. This includes 245 acres of land owned by the City of Springfield in the northeast corner of town which is held to protect the public drinking water supply to Cobble Mountain Reservoir located in the towns of Russell and Blandford (Slate, 2008). There is no public access to these drinking water protection lands.

### Town of Otis Owned Parcels

The remaining 266.65 acres of municipally owned land



are controlled by the Town of Otis. These include 139.39 acres in 3 parcels between Route 23 and West Center Road near Otis Center Village. In the past, the town has had plans to develop these parcels as “100-Acre Park”. Recent planning by the Otis Parks and Recreation Commission has centered on the development of trails throughout the parcels and the possible integration of benches, accessible pathways and other features to make the park (or a portion of it) focused on the needs of Otis’ older residents (Robert Rosen, Personal Communication 2015).

Funding for the creation of 100-Acre park was going to be appropriated from Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds. The CPA is an optional surcharge on property taxes of 1-3% that can be used by towns to fund projects in the areas of affordable housing, historic preservation, or open space and recreation. However, the adoption of the CPA failed to pass at the 2014 Otis town meeting.

Additionally, the town owns 111.79 acres north of Great Woods Road. These parcels were acquired by tax lien and were originally part of a proposed housing subdivision. Some parcels in this area have already been auctioned off by the town. There has been some talk of possibly using this area as a town park, due to the proximity of these parcels to the town beach; however, there has been no formal planning (Chris Morris, Personal Communication, 2015). Additionally, the town has discussed the possible sale or auction of these lots to create affordable or low cost residential lots for families in town.

### State Owned Parcels

State owned parcels comprise 5,788 acres of land within Otis, or 23.75% of all land within the town (see Table C15).

### Recreation

Otis’ open space areas create a wealth of opportunities for recreation.

### State Owned Recreation Areas

- Farmington River WMA
- Otis WMA
- Long Mountain WMA

- Otis State Forest
- Tolland State Forest
- Beartown State Forest (no access from Otis)

### Other Recreation Areas

- Town Hall Park
- Firehouse Park
- Farmington River Walk
- Big Pond Town Beach
- Otis Recreation Center (Harmony Hall)
- Otis Ridge Ski Area

## KEY OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION ISSUES

### Water Quality

Water quality is an issue that impacts the health of Otis’ residents and visitors. Moreover, Otis’s high water quality and water recreation opportunities are an important draw for seasonal residents, which is crucial to the local economy. The town will pursue future expansion of sewer in Otis Center Village at its existing WWTP. Additionally, the town will pursue development of a second wastewater treatment system in East Otis, where the town’s major water bodies are located, with an emphasis on possible alternative or ecological wastewater treatment systems for this area.

## OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

### Goal 1: Water Resources are Protected.

*The Town will continue its ongoing work to protect its important water resources, and examine future projects that will enhance water quality. Moreover, the town will reach out to local organizations to examine potential issues in its bodies of water.*

**ACTION 1: CONTINUE ONGOING SEPTIC AND WATER QUALITY TESTING BY THE BOARD OF HEALTH AND OTHERS TO EXAMINE WATER QUALITY IN OTIS.**

---

ACTION 2: CONTINUE TO ENFORCE EXISTING ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATIONS TO PROTECT DRINKING WATER RESOURCES.

ACTION 3: INVESTIGATE SEWER EXPANSION IN OTIS CENTER VILLAGE TO UTILIZE THE EXCESS CAPACITY IN THE WWTP. INVESTIGATE DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW WASTEWATER TREATMENT SYSTEM IN EAST OTIS. EXAMINE POTENTIAL ALTERNATIVE OR ECOLOGICAL TREATMENT SYSTEMS.

ACTION 4: REACH OUT TO LOCAL CONSERVATION AND WATER BODY GROUPS (WATSON POND ASSOCIATION, ORPOA, BIG POND ASSOCIATION, ETC.) TO INVESTIGATE POTENTIAL ISSUES SUCH AS INVASIVE SPECIES AND BOATING, ETC.

### **Goal 2: Natural Resources are Protected.**

*The Town will continue its ongoing work to protect its natural resources.*

ACTION 1: CONTINUE TO ENFORCE EXISTING ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATIONS TO PROTECT OTIS' NATURAL RESOURCES.

### **Goal 3: Residents and Visitors are Aware of Otis' Open Space and Cultural Resources and Recreational Opportunities.**

#### **Objective: Promote Otis' Open Space and Recreation areas.**

*The Town will work to better promote its existing open space and recreation areas through its website and through collaborative efforts with local organizations and the state.*

ACTION 1: IMPROVE THE PORTION OF THE WEBSITE DEDICATED TO PROMOTING OTIS' OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION AREAS AND OPPORTUNITIES.

ACTION 2: WORK WITH EXISTING ORGANIZATIONS, VOLUNTEERS, AND THE STATE TO MARK AND REESTABLISH TRAIL SYSTEMS IN TOWN.

ACTION 3: ORGANIZE AND PROMOTE GUIDED AND INTERPRETIVE TRAIL WALKS, TOURS, AND SIMILAR EVENTS AT TOWN RECREATION AREAS.

### **Goal 4: The Town's Recreation Opportunities Meet Community Needs.**

*The Town will continue to examine needs and improvements at town parks and beaches.*

#### **Objective: Continue to Provide High Quality Recreation Programming Through the Otis Recreation Center.**

*The Town will continue to provide high quality programming through its recreation center at Harmony Hall, by polling its users about future needs and working to recruit additional volunteer staff.*

ACTION 1: POLL REC. CENTER USERS ABOUT POSSIBLE IMPROVEMENTS TO REC. CENTER PROGRAMS AND AMENITIES.

ACTION 2: WORK TO RECRUIT ADDITIONAL VOLUNTEERS TO MANAGE RECREATION PROGRAMS.

#### **Objective: Investigate the Possible Creation of "100-Acre Park" on Town-Owned Land Between Route 8 and West Center Road.**

*The Town will reexamine its past planning efforts related to the possible creation of "100-Acre Park". The town will engage in a public process to re-evaluate its needs for the park and work to implement recommendations from this process if they are identified.*

ACTION 1: HOLD A PUBLIC FORUM / WORKSHOP ON THE POSSIBLE CREATION OF 100-ACRE PARK.

ACTION 2: WORK TO IMPLEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE FORUM IF IDENTIFIED.

#### **Objective: Continue to Improve Town Parks.**

*The town will examine possible improvements to and continue to invest in Town Hall Park. The town will also continue ongoing work to establish a playground in the East Otis area.*



ACTION 1: REPAVE THE SKATE PARK.

ACTION 2: EXAMINE DEVELOPMENT OF A TEMPORARY ICE SKATING RINK ON THE SKATE PARK.

ACTION 3: INSTALL HORSESHOE PITS AT TOWN HALL PARK. INSTALL PICNIC TABLES, AND BENCHES AT TOWN HALL PARK. IMPROVE LANDSCAPING.

ACTION 4: IDENTIFY A LOCATION FOR AND ESTABLISH A PLAYGROUND AREA IN EAST OTIS.

ACTION 5: IMPROVE ADA ACCESSIBILITY AT TOWN HALL PARK.

**Objective: Continue to Improve the Big Pond Town Beach.**

*The town will examine possible improvements at the Big Pond Town Beach including enhancing accessibility and possible restrooms and changing facilities. The town will also investigate other future improvements.*

ACTION 1: IMPROVE ADA ACCESSIBILITY AT THE TOWN BEACH.

ACTION 2: EXAMINE INSTALLATION OF PERMANENT RESTROOMS AND CHANGING FACILITIES AT THE TOWN BEACH.

ACTION 3: IDENTIFY AND INSTALL IMPROVEMENTS AT THE TOWN BEACH.

**Objective: Continue the Ongoing Process to Develop the Knox Trail as a Four-Season Multi-Use Trail.**

*The town will continue its ongoing work to develop and establish the Knox Trail as a four-season multi-use Trail.*

ACTION 1: CONTINUE ONGOING WORK TO DEVELOP THE KNOX TRAIL THROUGH WORK WITH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE LANDOWNERS.



## CHAPTER 11: VISION

### INTRODUCTION

The vision statement is a concise description of the Town's desired future. This may include both those qualities of the town that residents would like to keep and attributes the town would like to see added or changed in the future. The vision serves as the basis for the creation of goals and objectives in the plan for the town to pursue in the future. A short vision statement was developed for each topic area of the master plan, based on the goals and objectives identified for each chapter.

### VISION

#### Economy

Otis's vision for the economy includes improving the daily life of year round residents and supporting its economic base of small local businesses through economic development efforts. Moreover Otis will work to increase attractions and draws for seasonal residents, visitors and future year-round residents that will help to strengthen the local economy.

#### Infrastructure

The town's vision for infrastructure includes energy efficiency and self-sufficiency for public and private buildings and continued improvement of town facilities and wastewater treatment.

#### Services

Otis' vision for services includes continuing to support a safe and healthy community and providing efficient and fiscally responsible services. Moreover, the town will work to increase civic engagement and will examine other services for its older residents.

#### Housing

Otis' vision for housing includes supporting its residents through participation in housing rehabilitation programs and connecting residents with existing tools that promote affordable home-ownership and aging in place.

#### Transportation

Otis' vision for transportation includes continuing to provide a well maintained system of roadways.

#### Land Use

Otis' vision for land use includes reexamining its crucial village centers, particularly East Otis Village to examine features such as underutilized properties and potential wastewater treatment that will help to protect its important water resources. Additionally, the town will examine possible creation of a commercial solar by-law, and possible design guidelines for Otis Center Village.

#### Natural and Cultural Resources

Otis' vision for its natural and cultural resources includes promoting and developing its historic areas, such as the Knox Trail and working to protect its cherished water and natural resources so that all residents in this rural community can remain close to water, nature, and wildlife.

#### Open Space and Recreation

Otis' vision for its open space and recreation includes protecting its treasured open spaces and maintaining the natural and scenic beauty of the town. Moreover, the town will continue to invest in its parks and the town beach.

# CHAPTER 12: PLANNING PROCESS

## INTRODUCTION

The Otis Master Plan was developed by the Otis Master Plan Steering Committee. Work on the Master Plan was also performed concurrently with an update of the Town's Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) which is summarized in Chapter 10 of this plan. These efforts engaged members of the community in a robust public process.

## PLANNING PROCESS

### Otis Master Plan Steering Committee

The Otis Master Plan Steering Committee (MPSC) met 11 times from March until December 2015. The Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, based in Pittsfield, was hired by the town to work with the Master Plan Steering Committee (MPSC) on plan development. Committee members were appointed by the Otis Select Board in February 2015. These members included:

- Terry Cook** (Planning Board)
- Geoff Geane** (Zoning Board of Appeals)
- Larry Gould** (Building Inspector, Chair of Energy Committee, Smart Growth Committee)
- Terry Gould** (Chair of Zoning Board of Appeals, Finance Board, Smart Growth Committee)
- Jim Kauffman** (Zoning Board of Appeals)
- Harold Kobrin** (MPSC Chair and Chair of Planning Board)
- Edward Partyka** (Zoning Board of Appeals)
- Charles Schwartz**
- Craig Westcott**

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission staff:  
**Thomas Matuszko** (Assistant Director)  
**Eammon Coughlin** (Planner)

### Stakeholder Interviews

To inform the master plan and open space and recreation plan process and its goals, several town staff members and representatives of local



## PLANNING PROCESS AT A GLANCE

### Public Opinion Survey

A public opinion was developed early in the process. The survey was available online and at Town Hall from 4/25/15 until 6/1/15. Due to popular demand, the survey was reopened online from 6/9/15 to 6/16/15. The survey received 179 total responses.

### Public Forums/ Informational Meetings

Two public forums were held in Town Hall. The first was held on 6/18/15 and the second was held on 11/9/15.

### Stakeholder Interviews

Representatives of several stakeholder groups and town staff and board members, were interviewed to inform the master plan.

### MPSC Meetings

Members of the Otis MPSC met 11 times from March until December 2015 to review draft material.

---

organizations were interviewed.

Those interviewed included:

**Harold Kobrin**, Chair of the Otis Planning Board

**Larry Gould**, Building Inspector, Chair of Energy Committee, Smart Growth Committee

**James Crandall**, Maintenance Superintendent

**Christopher Morris**, Town Administrator

**Lisa D’Orazio**, Secretary of Board of Selectmen and Planning Board

**Lee Marcella**, Former Otis Principal Assessor

**Robert Rosen**, Chair of Otis Parks and Recreation Commission

**Patricia Richard**, Otis Recreation Center staff member and Otis Parks and Recreation Commission

**Thomas Ragusa**, Chair of Otis Historical Commission

**Paul Adams**, Mass. Dept. of Conservation and Recreation, Southern District

**Robert Mellace**, Former Regional Director of Mass. Dept. of Conservation and Recreation

**Mark Amanti**, President of Otis Reservoir Property Owners Association (ORPOA)

**Rich Gallup**, President of Big Pond Association

**Jeff Gemelli**, President of Knox Trail Sno-Riders

### **Public Opinion Survey**

A public survey was developed early on in the planning process to help gauge opinion on a variety of topics. The survey was made available online, through the website SurveyMonkey.com and as hardcopies in Town Hall from April 25th, 2015, until June 1st, 2015. A local home owner asked that the survey be reopened and committee made the survey available online for an additional week, from June 9th, 2015 until June 16th, 2015. The survey received 11 additional responses during this time. In total, there were 179 responses to the survey, with most

responses coming from the online survey rather than paper hardcopies. A copy of the survey results are included as appendix E of the master plan.

### **Public Forums/Informational Meetings**

The Otis MPSC held two public forums or informational meetings on June 18th, 2015 and November 9th, 2015. The first public forum presented general information about the master plan including survey results and initial findings and included an open discussion of the town’s needs and desires.

The second public forum was held once draft goals and objectives had been developed, and reviewed these with members of the public. After a presentation, public forum participants were asked to identify what they felt were the most important goals, objectives, and action items of the draft plan by marking them with a sticker dot. This activity could aid the town in identifying which areas the plan are most important, as well as which specific actions are a high priority for implementation

The results of the prioritization activity revealed that the infrastructure and transportation sections of the plan were important to public forum participants.

**Economy**— Three total dots.

**Infrastructure**— 11 total dots, Items related to wastewater, the Otis Wind Energy Project, and expediting broadband were the most supported elements.

**Services**— Three total dots.

**Housing**—Seven total dots, connecting residents with existing housing programs had 5 dots in total.

**Transportation**—14 total dots, The goal relating to improving the bicycle and pedestrian environment in town had eight of the 14 dots.

**Land Use**—Seven total dots, exploration of potential Tax Increment Financing and Wastewater for East Otis were the most supported items.

**Natural and Cultural Resources**—One dot

**Open Space and Recreation**—Five dots in total.



## CHAPTER 13: IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

### IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

*This chapter describes the types of actions that will be needed to implement this plan, who will be responsible for taking action on each item, and the relative priority for timing of implementation. It also describes the procedure for amending and updating the plan over time.*

#### Implementation Actions

This plan will be implemented primarily through five types of actions:

- 1) Day-to-Day Policy Decisions
- 2) Regulatory Changes
- 3) Plans and Programs
- 4) Regional Coordination
- 5) Collaborative Action

Each of these actions will likely involve more than one group or individual in the town and region. Specific responsibilities will be detailed for each action in the next sections of this chapter.

#### Day to Day Policy Decisions

The town administration, boards, commissions, and departments will be responsible for many of the day-to-day decisions that will cumulatively help implement this plan. Many of these decisions will be made by the Select Board in the form of policy creation and support and task delegation.

#### Regulatory Changes

A number of recommendations of this plan are directly or indirectly related to the development of new regulations to govern growth and land use in the town. The Planning Board will be responsible for the initiation of the efforts to draft new bylaw language but it will take a united effort on the part of the town to conduct appropriate outreach to achieve a successful and appropriate bylaw product that meets the needs of the town.

#### Plans and Programs

The goals, policies, and actions of this plan impact other plans and programs of the town in a few ways. Future updates to other plans, such as the Open Space and Recreation Plan, will need to be in compliance with this plan. New programs called for in this plan will need to be systematically pursued and implemented by the responsible entity as resources allow – such as economic development activities and infrastructure planning and implementation.

#### Regional Governmental Coordination

In many cases, the implementation of this plan can and should involve other municipalities, the state, or the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission. The town will need to take the first step of starting a dialogue on items where collaborative planning or action is needed or where technical assistance is needed or desired.

#### Collaborative Action

At a very basic level, successful implementation of this plan will require collaborative action outside of the realm of formal government. Residents, various pond and watershed associations, recreation groups, state agencies, local business owners, and others will need to actively engage in the implementation of this plan – through both direct action and through support and participation with town-led implementations actions. This plan is working to achieve a shared vision of the town's future – achieving that will take a whole-town effort.

#### Who Will Implement the Plan?

This plan will be implemented through the collaborative and individual effort of a number of organizations, agencies, and individuals. The action plan uses the abbreviations listed at the bottom of each page to identify the parties that will likely be involved in the achievement of the corresponding action. The town may wish to consider appointing an implementation committee that would help to organize efforts to implement the

---

plan. This committee could be especially important in working to organizing and manage volunteers to help with implementation activities. The committee could also serve as an advocate for the plan and work with other town boards and committees on strategies for plan implementation. Moreover, it could work to “roll out” Master Plan implementation activities through integration into its regular all boards meetings.

The action plan has been developed to span a period of five years after the Master Plan’s initial adoption. Actions were categorized based on several likely periods for implementation. Items listed as “ongoing” in the schedule are actions that the town is already in the process of implementing and will likely continue to work on in the future. Actions listed as “immediate and ongoing” are items that can be implemented on an ongoing basis by the town, or integrated into other activities, but are not yet being acted on by the town. Finally, other actions are divided between three broad time periods; 1-3 years, 3-5 years, and 5+ years. Some actions, particularly those in the 1-3 year time period may reoccur regularly or continuously after initial implementation. It will be up to the town to evaluate its successes and determine if these actions occur once, or are implemented regularly.

Some items on the action plan can be completed within this five year period, while many others will not. It is recommended that the town reevaluate the action plan after this five year period to reflect on its successes and review its priorities. The town will likely not choose to pursue a full update of the Master Plan at this point, but may revise the action plan to more effectively implement the plan.

Additionally, it should be noted that some items in the action plan are redundant. These include items related to the expansion of wastewater treatment in town among others. As development of potential wastewater treatment is an infrastructure project, it was first developed in the accompanying infrastructure chapter and its set of goals and objectives. However, as this action impacts water quality and land use it was mentioned concurrently in the actions for these subjects. This was intentional, and attempts to make the plan actions supporting and reinforcing, and to emphasize the interdisciplinary nature of many of the

items to be acted on by the town. Moreover, as the Open Space and Recreation Plan that was developed concurrently with this Master Plan will be a stand alone document, an effort was made to ensure natural resources related actions were redundant between the two plans. This effort was made because natural resources in Otis are discussed thoroughly in the Open Space and Recreation Plan, in addition to the two subjects mentioned in its name. Thus a reader would find all subjects discussed in the OSRP addressed its goals, with no “loose ends.”

## **UPDATING THE PLAN**

A Master Plan looks far into the future and establishes a roadmap of goals, policies, and actions for the town to implement over time. In order for the plan to remain a relevant document, however, periodic updates will be necessary. Updates can occur in two general ways: plan amendments and a full plan update.

### **Plan Amendments**

The town may, from time to time, encounter changing conditions, new laws or programs, or other circumstances that it wishes to reflect or respond to through the Master Plan document. The plan amendment process is fairly simple (see below) and allows the planning board to make small but important changes to the document over time to keep pace with changing circumstances.

### **Plan Update**

Eventually, conditions will shift to a degree that a minor amendment is insufficient to achieve a document that provides meaningful and forward-thinking guidance to the town. At this time, typically 10-15 years from initial adoption of a new or fully updated plan, municipalities can go through a plan update process. At this time, the community initiates a full new planning process to rethink or reaffirm the vision and chart out new policy directions and carry forward any relevant directions from the prior document.

### **Amendment and Update Procedure**

MGL 41 S81D (Appendix D) describes the practice and procedure for amending and updating an adopted Master Plan.



**Vote:**

An amendment of the Master Plan may be made through a formal majority vote of the planning board and recorded for public record.

**Filing:**

The planning board must supply a copy of the amended or updated plan to the Department of Housing and Community Development. In the case of an amendment, a good practice would be to include a cover memo highlighting the amendment that was made.

## ACTION PLAN

The action plan details each implementation action contained in the prior chapters of the Master Plan, the proposed timing for the action to be taken, potential leadership, and other interested parties responsible for implementing the action.

Economy	Suggested Leadership	Other Participants	Schedule
<b>Goal 1: Improve the daily life of year-round residents and increase Otis attractions to second home-owners and seasonal visitors</b>			
<b>Objective: Business outreach and economic development.</b>			
Promote existing businesses and events (through print, radio, web, etc).	Staff	Vol.	Ongoing
Invest in infrastructure projects, such as broadband internet and improving energy efficiency, as a form of economic development and a means to support local business.	Staff	BOS, Vol.	Ongoing
Work on a regional basis to encourage tradespeople in town to become certified in their fields.	Staff	BOS, Vol.	Immediate & Ongoing
Encourage participation in job apprenticeship and mentoring programs.	Staff	BOS, Vol.	Immediate & Ongoing
Conduct outreach to explore the reformation of the Otis Business Association.	Admin.	BOS, Staff	1-3 Years
Update and reprint the Otis business directory.	Vol.	Staff, BOS	1-3 Years
Develop and implement a “buy local” campaign.	Cul. Co.	Vol.	1-3 Years
Develop signage and wayfinding in village centers to direct residents and visitors to businesses and attractions.	Maint.	Highway	3-5 Years
Explore the development of a grant program to provide technical assistance to Otis businesses.	Smart Growth	Vol.	3-5 Years
Update and rename the Otis development review manual.	Planning	Smart Growth	3-5 Years
Research and implement succession planning services for local business owners.	Staff	Vol., COA	3-5 Years
<b>Objective: Promote the town as a tourist and seasonal destination while creating draws for future year-round residents.</b>			
Promote the town through the existing town flag graphic.	Staff	BOS	Ongoing
Continue to develop the historic Knox Trail as a visitor attraction.	Hist. Com.	Parks, BOS	Ongoing
Promote the quality of life and Farmington River elementary school as potential draws for new residents.	School	Staff, BOS	Ongoing
Expand and develop portions of the town website that market existing businesses and connects people to outdoor activities.	Staff	BOS, Parks, Vol.	1-3 Years
Explore the creation of design guidelines for Otis’s village centers.	Planning	BOS	1-3 Years
Promote the town through a “spend a day in Otis” event or campaign, which connects visitors to businesses and activities throughout the year.	Cul. Co.	Vol.	1-3 Years
Engage the community to develop a simplified town logo.	Cul. Co.	Vol.	1-3 Years
<b>Objective: Support local agriculture.</b>			
Integrate the Otis farmer’s market, farms and farm stands, maple sugar and other forest product businesses into promotional activities.	Staff, Vol.	BOS, Cul. Co.	Ongoing

13-4

Parties Involved in Plan Implementation						Schedule	
<b>Admin.</b>	Town Administrator	<b>Con. Com.</b>	Conservation Commission	<b>Finance</b>	Finance Committee	<b>Ongoing</b>	Actions already in progress by the town
<b>All</b>	All Boards, Committees, and Staff	<b>Energy</b>	Energy Committee	<b>Hist. Com.</b>	Historical Commission	<b>Immediate &amp; Ongoing</b>	Actions that can be acted on immediately and integrated throughout implementation
<b>BOH</b>	Board of Health	<b>EMD</b>	Emergency Management Director	<b>Highway</b>	Highway Department	<b>1-3 Years</b>	Projects to be implemented within a 1-3 year time frame
<b>BOS</b>	Board of Selectmen	<b>School</b>	Farmington River School	<b>Maint.</b>	Maintenance	<b>3-5 Years</b>	Projects to be implemented within a 3-5 year time frame
<b>Cul. Co.</b>	Otis Cultural Council	<b>Planning</b>	Planning Board	<b>Parks</b>	Parks and Recreation	<b>5+ Years</b>	Projects likely requiring 5 or more years for implementation
<b>Staff</b>	Town Staff	<b>Vol.</b>	Volunteers (residents, local businesses, etc.)	<b>ZBA</b>	Zoning Board of Appeals	<b>Tech.</b>	Technology Committee
<b>BRPC</b>	Berkshire Regional Planning Commission	<b>DCR</b>	Dept. of Conservation and Recreation	<b>Police, Fire, etc.</b>	Other town departments	<b>COA</b>	Council on Aging
<b>MassDOT</b>	Mass. Dept. of Transportation	<b>Smart Growth</b>	Smart Growth Committee				

INFRASTRUCTURE		Suggested Leadership	Other Participants	Schedule
<b>Goal 1: Energy efficiency and self-sufficiency for public and private buildings in Otis.</b>				
<b>Objective: Continue the ongoing Otis Wind Energy Project</b>				
Advance design and construction phase.		Staff	Energy	1-3 Years
Finalize turbine construction.		Staff	Energy	1-3 Years
<b>Objective: Connect Otis residents with energy efficiency programs and small scale energy development programs.</b>				
Continue to make Otis residents aware of programs through Mass Saves.		Energy	Planning, BOS	Ongoing
Investigate implementation of a Solarize Mass program in Otis, possibly in combination with surrounding towns.		Energy	Planning, BOS	3-5 Years
<b>Goal 2: Improve Public Facilities and Infrastructure.</b>				
<b>Objective: Integrate existing energy efficiency work, the Otis Wind Energy Project and the shared space study into a multi-year capital improvement plan (CIP).</b>				
Develop a capital improvement plan that includes all town departments and integrates on-going and proposed work, is open to public comment, and is approved yearly at town meeting.		Finance	BOS	1-3 Years
<b>Objective: Continue ongoing work to improve the energy efficiency of town buildings.</b>				
Continue to identify, prioritize, and implement energy improvements to existing facilities.		Energy	BOS, Staff	Ongoing
<b>Objective: Continue ongoing shared space study.</b>				
Continue ongoing shared space study to create a combined Highway and Fire Department building and reuse other town buildings.		Energy	Staff	Ongoing
Investigate and apply for grant funding as appropriate to implement the shared space study.		Energy	Staff	Ongoing
Implement the recommendations of the energy subcommittee shared space study.		Energy	Staff	5+ Years
<b>Objective: Expand wastewater treatment in town.</b>				
Research and apply for other funding sources to pursue expansion of wastewater treatment in Otis.		Planning	Smart Growth	Ongoing
Resubmit a MassWorks Grant application to fund the expansion of sewer service to the ski area and utilize the excess capacity of the town's existing Wastewater Treatment Plant.		Planning	BOS, BRPC	1-3 Years
Examine the development of an additional wastewater treatment facility in East Otis Village. Examine potential alternative or ecological treatment methods. Integrate recommendations with other plans for East Otis. (See also goals for natural & cultural resources, land use and open space and recreation chapters)		Smart Growth	Planning, BOS, Vol.	5+ Years
<b>Objective: Expedite broadband internet development in Otis.</b>				
Advance design and construction phase.		Tech.	Staff	1-3 Years
Finalize broadband installation.		Tech.	Staff	1-3 Years

Parties Involved in Plan Implementation						Schedule	
<b>Admin.</b>	Town Administrator	<b>Con. Com.</b>	Conservation Commission	<b>Finance</b>	Finance Committee	<b>Ongoing</b>	Actions already in progress by the town
<b>All</b>	All Boards, Committees, and Staff	<b>Energy</b>	Energy Committee	<b>Hist. Com.</b>	Historical Commission	<b>Immediate &amp; Ongoing</b>	Actions that can be acted on immediately and integrated throughout implementation
<b>BOH</b>	Board of Health	<b>EMD</b>	Emergency Management Director	<b>Highway</b>	Highway Department	<b>1-3 Years</b>	Projects to be implemented within a 1-3 year time frame
<b>BOS</b>	Board of Selectmen	<b>School</b>	Farmington River School	<b>Maint.</b>	Maintenance	<b>3-5 Years</b>	Projects to be implemented within a 3-5 year time frame
<b>Cul. Co.</b>	Otis Cultural Council	<b>Planning</b>	Planning Board	<b>Parks</b>	Parks and Recreation Commission	<b>5+ Years</b>	Projects likely requiring 5 or more years for implementation
<b>Staff</b>	Town Staff	<b>Vol.</b>	Volunteers (residents, local businesses, etc.)	<b>ZBA</b>	Zoning Board of Appeals	<b>Tech.</b>	Technology Committee
<b>BRPC</b>	Berkshire Regional Planning Commission	<b>DCR</b>	Dept. of Conservation and Recreation	<b>Police, Fire, etc.</b>	Other town departments	<b>COA</b>	Council on Aging
<b>MassDOT</b>	Mass. Dept. of Transportation	<b>Smart Growth</b>	Smart Growth Committee				

SERVICES	Suggested Leadership	Other Participants	Schedule
<b>Goal 1: Support a Safe and Healthy Community</b>			
<b>Objective: Continue to participate in regional emergency preparedness training.</b>			
Participate in Homeland Security Plans and Actions for the region.	EMD	BOS	Ongoing
Ensure appropriate staff and resources for emergency response teams.	EMD	BOS, Police, Fire	Ongoing
Maintain up-to-date hazard mitigation and comprehensive emergency management plans.	EMD	BOS, BRPC	Ongoing
<b>Goal 2: Efficient and Fiscally Responsible Services</b>			
<b>Objective: Streamline costs while maintaining or enhancing levels of service.</b>			
Explore the potential of shared service delivery arrangements.	Admin.	Staff	Ongoing
Increase the use of regional group purchasing program.	Admin.	Staff	Ongoing
<b>Objective: Improve the town website.</b>			
Identify additional content or features to be provided on the town website.	Staff	BOS	1-3 Years
<b>Goal 3: Increase Civic Engagement by Otis Residents</b>			
<b>Objective: Increase participation in town boards, committees, and other town events.</b>			
Work to identify and overcome potential barriers to public participation.	All	Vol.	Ongoing
Work to “cross promote” events across town email list serves and through local organizations.	Staff	Vol.	1-3 Years
Explore the authorization of “remote participation” on town boards and committees.	BOS		1-3 Years
Develop a system to get regular feedback on the implementation of master plan goals, objectives and actions, such as a “check in” at town meeting, polling, or other means.	BOS	Vol.	1-3 Years
Poll town news list serve users to determine who is using the service and more effectively target future event promotion and news distribution.	Staff	Vol., Cul. Co.	1-3 Years
<b>Objective: Develop a “Send In Your Ideas” campaign.</b>			
Develop a “send in your ideas” campaign with input from town boards, committees and the public.	Cul. Co.	Vol.	1-3 Years
Solicit ideas from Otis residents, community groups and businesses through a mailing or through the town website.	BOS	Staff	1-3 Years
Vote to implement the top ideas at town meeting or a similar forum.	BOS		1-3 Years
<b>Objective: Meet the needs of an older population.</b>			
Work with older residents and the Council on Aging to examine needs for housing, transportation, health, and other services.	COA	BOS	Ongoing
Participate in the regional Age-friendly Communities task force.	COA	BOS, BRPC	1-3 Years

13-6

Parties Involved in Plan Implementation						Schedule	
Admin.	Town Administrator	Con. Com.	Conservation Commission	Finance	Finance Committee	Ongoing	Actions already in progress by the town
All	All Boards, Committees, and Staff	Energy	Energy Committee	Hist. Com.	Historical Commission	Immediate & Ongoing	Actions that can be acted on immediately and integrated throughout implementation
BOH	Board of Health	EMD	Emergency Management Director	Highway	Highway Department	1-3 Years	Projects to be implemented within a 1-3 year time frame
BOS	Board of Selectmen	School	Farmington River School	Maint.	Maintenance	3-5 Years	Projects to be implemented within a 3-5 year time frame
Cul. Co.	Otis Cultural Council	Planning	Planning Board	Parks	Parks and Recreation Commission	5+ Years	Projects likely requiring 5 or more years for implementation
Staff	Town Staff	Vol.	Volunteers (residents, local businesses, etc.)	ZBA	Zoning Board of Appeals	Tech.	Technology Committee
BRPC	Berkshire Regional Planning Commission	DCR	Dept. of Conservation and Recreation	Police, Fire, etc.	Other town departments	COA	Council on Aging
MassDOT	Mass. Dept. of Transportation	Smart Growth	Smart Growth Committee				

HOUSING	Suggested Leadership	Other Participants	Schedule
<b>Goal 1: Address Local Housing Needs.</b>			
<b>Objective: Participate in housing rehabilitation programs.</b>			
Work with housing organizations such as DHCD and Construct Inc. to determine the need for grant programs and or technical assistance for all households, especially those with elderly residents. If a need is identified, locate sources of grant funding to address local needs.	Admin.	Staff., BOS	Ongoing
Pursue new rehabilitation funds, which may become available.	Admin.	Staff., BOS	Ongoing
Work with appropriate agencies to apply for CDBG funds for rehabilitation grants and loans.	Admin.	Staff., BOS	3-5 Years
<b>Objective: Consider options for the development of affordable home ownership.</b>			
Ensure local banks and credit unions continue to participate in Masshousing's lending programs.	Staff	Admin.	Ongoing
Consider the potential sale of town-owned lands to create affordable building lots for residential development.	BOS	Staff	1-3 Years
Consider other low-cost models such as working with Habitat for Humanity or pursuing development with local vocational school programs.	BOS	Admin.	3-5 Years
<b>Objective: Connect residents with programs, incentives, and contractors to address housing needs.</b>			
Continue to make local residents aware of MassHousing's Septic Repair Loan Program and the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).	Staff	Vol.	1-3 Years
Connect citizens with property tax abatement programs such as those available for residents 70 years and older.	Staff	Vol.	1-3 Years
Develop a list of prequalified contractors to assist older Otis residents with housing needs.	Staff	Vol.	1-3 Years
<b>Objective: Investigate funding sources and bylaw changes to address housing needs.</b>			
Investigate dedicated funding sources for housing, including possible re-exploration of the Community Preservation Act in Otis.	Planning	Smart Growth, BOS	1-3 Years
Explore possible changes to the accessory apartment bylaw to incentivize creation and use.	Planning	Smart Growth, BOS	1-3 Years

13-7

Parties Involved in Plan Implementation						Schedule	
<b>Admin.</b>	Town Administrator	<b>Con. Com.</b>	Conservation Commission	<b>Finance</b>	Finance Committee	<b>Ongoing</b>	Actions already in progress by the town
<b>All</b>	All Boards, Committees, and Staff	<b>Energy</b>	Energy Committee	<b>Hist. Com.</b>	Historical Commission	<b>Immediate &amp; Ongoing</b>	Actions that can be acted on immediately and integrated throughout implementation
<b>BOH</b>	Board of Health	<b>EMD</b>	Emergency Management Director	<b>Highway</b>	Highway Department	<b>1-3 Years</b>	Projects to be implemented within a 1-3 year time frame
<b>BOS</b>	Board of Selectmen	<b>School</b>	Farmington River School	<b>Maint.</b>	Maintenance	<b>3-5 Years</b>	Projects to be implemented within a 3-5 year time frame
<b>Cul. Co.</b>	Otis Cultural Council	<b>Planning</b>	Planning Board	<b>Parks</b>	Parks and Recreation Commission	<b>5+ Years</b>	Projects likely requiring 5 or more years for implementation
<b>Staff</b>	Town Staff	<b>Vol.</b>	Volunteers (residents, local businesses, etc.)	<b>ZBA</b>	Zoning Board of Appeals	<b>Tech.</b>	Technology Committee
<b>BRPC</b>	Berkshire Regional Planning Commission	<b>DCR</b>	Dept. of Conservation and Recreation	<b>Police, Fire, etc.</b>	Other town departments	<b>COA</b>	Council on Aging
<b>MassDOT</b>	Mass. Dept. of Transportation	<b>Smart Growth</b>	Smart Growth Committee				

TRANSPORTATION		Suggested Leadership	Other Participants	Schedule
<b>Goal 1: Provide a Complete and Well-Maintained System of Roads.</b>				
<b>Objective: Increase the Town's Access to Chapter 90 Funding.</b>				
Work with MassDOT to update the list of town maintained roads to receive additional Chapter 90 funding.	Highway	Admin.	1-3 Years	
Develop a multi-year spending plan to take full advantage of yearly chapter 90 funding. Integrate this effort with larger capital improvement planning.	Finance	Highway, BOS	3-5 Years	
<b>Objective: Continue to place eligible road maintenance needs on the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).</b>				
<b>Objective: Work to resolve road jurisdiction and maintenance responsibility issues.</b>				
Revisit the Recommendations of the 2005 BRPC Town of Otis Status of Roads and Official Map Report with the Town Highway Superintendent, Town Administrator, Town Counsel, the Planning Board and the Select Board.	BOS	Highway, Admin., Planning	3-5 Years	
Revise Recommendations as necessary based on new findings and existing conditions.	BOS	Highway, Admin., Planning	3-5 Years	
<b>Objective: Plan for and Address Future Needs.</b>				
As existing culverts and bridges need replacement, ensure that replacement components are adequate to accommodate anticipated future storms.	Highway	BOS	Immediate & Ongoing	
Work to coordinate future roadway projects with potential infrastructure development, such as sewer expansion in Town.	Highway	BOS	Immediate & Ongoing	
<b>Goal 2: Increase Access to Public and Alternative Transportation in Otis.</b>				
<b>Objective: Work with Berkshire Regional Transportation Agency (BRTA) and other towns to provide a public bus stop in Otis.</b>				
Investigate the feasibility of a public bus route with a stop in Otis. Address the route's location, the number of potential stops, and the potential demand within the town.	Planning	BOS	3-5 Years	
<b>Objective: Investigate Options for Alternative Transportation in Town.</b>				
Encourage residents to participate in online car sharing or carpooling resources. Link to these resources on the town website.	Staff		1-3 Years	
<b>Objective: Work with the Council on Aging to better connect elderly and disabled Otis residents with transportation services.</b>				
Improve connections to available elderly and disabled transportation, promote options through the town website and in town mailings and communications.	Staff	COA	1-3 Years	
Investigate a possible application to the MassDOT and BRTA community transit grant program, that could help fund a vehicle for use by the Council on Aging.	BOS	COA	1-3 Years	

Parties Involved in Plan Implementation						Schedule	
<b>Admin.</b>	Town Administrator	<b>Con. Com.</b>	Conservation Commission	<b>Finance</b>	Finance Committee	<b>Ongoing</b>	Actions already in progress by the town
<b>All</b>	All Boards, Committees, and Staff	<b>Energy</b>	Energy Committee	<b>Hist. Com.</b>	Historical Commission	<b>Immediate &amp; Ongoing</b>	Actions that can be acted on immediately and integrated throughout implementation
<b>BOH</b>	Board of Health	<b>EMD</b>	Emergency Management Director	<b>Highway</b>	Highway Department	<b>1-3 Years</b>	Projects to be implemented within a 1-3 year time frame
<b>BOS</b>	Board of Selectmen	<b>School</b>	Farmington River School	<b>Maint.</b>	Maintenance	<b>3-5 Years</b>	Projects to be implemented within a 3-5 year time frame
<b>Cul. Co.</b>	Otis Cultural Council	<b>Planning</b>	Planning Board	<b>Parks</b>	Parks and Recreation Commission	<b>5+ Years</b>	Projects likely requiring 5 or more years for implementation
<b>Staff</b>	Town Staff	<b>Vol.</b>	Volunteers (residents, local businesses, etc.)	<b>ZBA</b>	Zoning Board of Appeals	<b>Tech.</b>	Technology Committee
<b>BRPC</b>	Berkshire Regional Planning Commission	<b>DCR</b>	Dept. of Conservation and Recreation	<b>Police, Fire, etc.</b>	Other town departments	<b>COA</b>	Council on Aging
<b>MassDOT</b>	Mass. Dept. of Transportation	<b>Smart Growth</b>	Smart Growth Committee				

**Goal 3: Enhance the Bicycle and Pedestrian Environment in Town.**

**Objective: Adopt a “Complete Streets” approach to future roadway projects.**

**Objective: Enhance warning signage and markings on roads frequented by pedestrians and cyclists.**

Identify potential road restriping and lane narrowing that could help to widen the road shoulder available for pedestrians and cyclists.	Highway	BOS	Immediate & Ongoing
Identify and implement pedestrian and bicycling improvements throughout town.	Highway	BOS	Immediate & Ongoing
Coordinate with MassDOT and other agencies to ensure that potential pedestrian and cycling improvements are included in larger projects and in new construction along state-owned roadways.	Highway	BOS, MassDOT	1-3 Years
Request that MassDOT examine options for traffic calming to enhance pedestrian safety in village centers.	Highway	BOS, MassDOT	1-3 Years
Work with MassDOT to install shared lane markings or “sharrows” and “share the Road” signage on roads frequented by cyclists.	Highway	BOS, MassDOT	3-5 Years

**Objective: Establish a “walking loop” in Otis Center.**

Install signage that marks a 1/2 mile and 1-mile walking loop in Otis Center Village and directs pedestrians to the Farmington River Walk and Otis Recreation center.	Maint.	Parks, Vol.	1-3 Years
Promote the walking loop through the Council on Aging and the town website.	COA	Staff	1-3 Years

**Goal 4: Address Wildlife Crossings in Future Roadway Projects.**

Examine options to enhance wildlife connectivity in future roadway projects, particularly bridge and culvert work.	Highway	BOS, MassDOT	Immediate & Ongoing
Examine options to enhance warning signage in wildlife crossing areas or in areas where collisions with wildlife are frequent.	Highway	BOS, MassDOT	Immediate & Ongoing
Communicate with MassDOT to ensure that wildlife connectivity enhancement is included in future state roadway work.	Highway	BOS, MassDOT	1-3 Years

13-9

Parties Involved in Plan Implementation				Schedule			
<b>Admin.</b>	Town Administrator	<b>Con. Com.</b>	Conservation Commission	<b>Finance</b>	Finance Committee	<b>Ongoing</b>	Actions already in progress by the town
<b>All</b>	All Boards, Committees, and Staff	<b>Energy</b>	Energy Committee	<b>Hist. Com.</b>	Historical Commission	<b>Immediate &amp; Ongoing</b>	Actions that can be acted on immediately and integrated throughout implementation
<b>BOH</b>	Board of Health	<b>EMD</b>	Emergency Management Director	<b>Highway</b>	Highway Department	<b>1-3 Years</b>	Projects to be implemented within a 1-3 year time frame
<b>BOS</b>	Board of Selectmen	<b>School</b>	Farmington River School	<b>Maint.</b>	Maintenance	<b>3-5 Years</b>	Projects to be implemented within a 3-5 year time frame
<b>Cul. Co.</b>	Otis Cultural Council	<b>Planning</b>	Planning Board	<b>Parks</b>	Parks and Recreation Commission	<b>5+ Years</b>	Projects likely requiring 5 or more years for implementation
<b>Staff</b>	Town Staff	<b>Vol.</b>	Volunteers (residents, local businesses, etc.)	<b>ZBA</b>	Zoning Board of Appeals	<b>Tech.</b>	Technology Committee
<b>BRPC</b>	Berkshire Regional Planning Commission	<b>DCR</b>	Dept. of Conservation and Recreation	<b>Police, Fire, etc.</b>	Other town departments	<b>COA</b>	Council on Aging
<b>MassDOT</b>	Mass. Dept. of Transportation	<b>Smart Growth</b>	Smart Growth Committee				

LAND USE	Suggested Leadership	Other Participants	Schedule
<b>Goal 1: Revisit Otis' Village Centers</b>			
<b>Objective: Create a redevelopment plan for East Otis</b>			
Revisit the 1998 Clough, Harbour & Associates Master Plan for the East Otis Village Area, as a basis for current efforts.	BOS	Planning, Smart Growth	1-3 Years
Engage in a public process on the needs of East Otis to inform the planning process.	Planning	Smart Growth, Vol.	1-3 Years
Examine Tax Incentive Financing (TIF) and other funding incentive options to spur the redevelopment of underutilized properties such as the J&D marina.	Finance	Planning, BOS	1-3 Years
Examine possible ecological wastewater treatment options for East Otis, such as through a living machine or similar system, which could also serve as an attraction to the area. Develop strategies for siting and funding the system. (See also goals for infrastructure, natural & cultural resources, and open space and recreation chapters)	Smart Growth	Energy	3-5 Years
Draft, adopt, and implement a comprehensive redevelopment plan for the area.	BOS	Planning	5+ Years
<b>Examine implementation of design guidelines for Otis Center Village.</b>			
Research architectural design guidelines implemented in other rural New England communities.	Planning	BOS, Vol.	1-3 Years
Develop and implement a strategy for design guidelines in village centers.	Planning	BOS, Vol.	3-5 Years
<b>Examine options for increased day to day and event parking in village centers.</b>			
Conduct a study of existing parking areas and capacity in both village centers and assess future parking needs.	Smart Growth	Maint., Highway	1-3 Years
Research and implement options to expand parking in village centers.	Smart Growth	BOS, Highway	5+ Years
<b>Goal 2: Research and Develop a Commercial Solar Energy Bylaw.</b>			
Research, develop, and vote to implement a potential commercial solar bylaw.	Planning	BOS	1-3 Years

13-10

Parties Involved in Plan Implementation						Schedule	
<b>Admin.</b>	Town Administrator	<b>Con. Com.</b>	Conservation Commission	<b>Finance</b>	Finance Committee	<b>Ongoing</b>	Actions already in progress by the town
<b>All</b>	All Boards, Committees, and Staff	<b>Energy</b>	Energy Committee	<b>Hist. Com.</b>	Historical Commission	<b>Immediate &amp; Ongoing</b>	Actions that can be acted on immediately and integrated throughout implementation
<b>BOH</b>	Board of Health	<b>EMD</b>	Emergency Management Director	<b>Highway</b>	Highway Department	<b>1-3 Years</b>	Projects to be implemented within a 1-3 year time frame
<b>BOS</b>	Board of Selectmen	<b>School</b>	Farmington River School	<b>Maint.</b>	Maintenance	<b>3-5 Years</b>	Projects to be implemented within a 3-5 year time frame
<b>Cul. Co.</b>	Otis Cultural Council	<b>Planning</b>	Planning Board	<b>Parks</b>	Parks and Recreation Commission	<b>5+ Years</b>	Projects likely requiring 5 or more years for implementation
<b>Staff</b>	Town Staff	<b>Vol.</b>	Volunteers (residents, local businesses, etc.)	<b>ZBA</b>	Zoning Board of Appeals	<b>Tech.</b>	Technology Committee
<b>BRPC</b>	Berkshire Regional Planning Commission	<b>DCR</b>	Dept. of Conservation and Recreation	<b>Police, Fire, etc.</b>	Other town departments	<b>COA</b>	Council on Aging
<b>MassDOT</b>	Mass. Dept. of Transportation	<b>Smart Growth</b>	Smart Growth Committee				

NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES		Suggested Leadership	Other Participants	Schedule
<b>Goal 1: Develop and Promote Otis's Cultural and Historic Resources.</b>				
<b>Objective: Identify and nominate town historic resources for state and national Recognition.</b>				
Continue to work with property owners and the historical commission to update the town's listing of historic properties.	Hist. Com.	Vol.	Ongoing	
Continue ongoing work to list the Knox Trail on the National Register of Historic places.	Hist. Com.	Parks, Vol.	Ongoing	
Work to nominate other historic town resources for state and national recognition.	Hist. Com.	Vol.	Ongoing	
<b>Objective: Promote the town's historic resources.</b>				
Organize a walking or driving tour of Otis' historic resources.	Hist. Com.	Vol.	1-3 Years	
Promote Otis' historic resources through the town website.	Staff	Hist. Com.	1-3 Years	
<b>Objective: Continue the ongoing process to develop the Knox Trail as a four-season multi-use trail.</b>				
Continue to work with property owners and user groups to develop easements and other permissions for trail access.	Hist. Com.	Vol.	Ongoing	
Continue to identify significant historic resources and other sites along the Knox Trail.	Hist. Com.	Vol.	Ongoing	
Invest in the "65 Mile to Albany" Milestone Way, near Algeria road, as a town recreation area and historic resource.	Hist. Com.	BOS	Ongoing	
<b>Goal 2: Protect Otis' Water and Natural Resources.</b>				
Continue ongoing septic and water quality testing by the Board of Health and others to examine water quality in Otis.	BOH	BOS	Ongoing	
Continue to enforce existing environmental regulations to protect drinking water resources.	BOH	Con. Com., BOS	Ongoing	
Investigate sewer expansion in Otis Center Village to utilize the excess capacity in the WWTP. Investigate development of a new wastewater treatment system in East Otis. (See also goals for open space and recreation, land use, and natural & cultural resource chapters)	Smart Growth	Planning	5+ Years	

Parties Involved in Plan Implementation						Schedule	
<b>Admin.</b>	Town Administrator	<b>Con. Com.</b>	Conservation Commission	<b>Finance</b>	Finance Committee	<b>Ongoing</b>	Actions already in progress by the town
<b>All</b>	All Boards, Committees, and Staff	<b>Energy</b>	Energy Committee	<b>Hist. Com.</b>	Historical Commission	<b>Immediate &amp; Ongoing</b>	Actions that can be acted on immediately and integrated throughout implementation
<b>BOH</b>	Board of Health	<b>EMD</b>	Emergency Management Director	<b>Highway</b>	Highway Department	<b>1-3 Years</b>	Projects to be implemented within a 1-3 year time frame
<b>BOS</b>	Board of Selectmen	<b>School</b>	Farmington River School	<b>Maint.</b>	Maintenance	<b>3-5 Years</b>	Projects to be implemented within a 3-5 year time frame
<b>Cul. Co.</b>	Otis Cultural Council	<b>Planning</b>	Planning Board	<b>Parks</b>	Parks and Recreation Commission	<b>5+ Years</b>	Projects likely requiring 5 or more years for implementation
<b>Staff</b>	Town Staff	<b>Vol.</b>	Volunteers (residents, local businesses, etc.)	<b>ZBA</b>	Zoning Board of Appeals	<b>Tech.</b>	Technology Committee
<b>BRPC</b>	Berkshire Regional Planning Commission	<b>DCR</b>	Dept. of Conservation and Recreation	<b>Police, Fire, etc.</b>	Other town departments	<b>COA</b>	Council on Aging
<b>MassDOT</b>	Mass. Dept. of Transportation	<b>Smart Growth</b>	Smart Growth Committee				

OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION		Suggested Leadership	Other Participants	Schedule
<b>Goal 1: Water Resources are Protected.</b>				
Continue ongoing septic and water quality testing by the Board of Health and others to examine water quality in Otis.		BOH	Con. Com.	Ongoing
Continue to enforce existing environmental regulations to protect drinking water resources.		Con. Com.	BOH, BOS	Ongoing
Reach out to local conservation and water body groups (Watson Pond Association, ORPOA, Big Pond Association, etc.) to investigate potential issues such as invasive species and boating, etc.		Con. Com.	BOS	1-3 Years
Investigate sewer expansion in Otis Village Center to utilize the excess capacity in the WWTP. Investigate development of a new wastewater treatment system in East Otis. Examine potential alternative or ecological treatment systems. (See also goals for infrastructure, land use, and natural & cultural resource chapters)		Smart Growth	Planning	5+ Years
<b>Goal 2: Natural Resources are Protected.</b>				
Continue to enforce existing environmental regulations to protect Otis' natural resources.		Con. Com.	BOS	Ongoing
<b>Goal 3: Residents and Visitors are Aware of Otis' Open Space and Cultural Resources and Recreational Opportunities.</b>				
<b>Objective: Promote Otis' open space and recreation areas.</b>				
Improve the portion of the website dedicated to promoting Otis' open space and recreation areas and opportunities.		Staff	Parks	1-3 Years
Work with existing organizations, volunteers, and the state to mark and reestablish trail systems in town.		Parks	DCR, Vol.	1-3 Years
Organize and promote guided and interpretive trail walks, tours, and similar events at town recreation areas.		Parks	DCR, Vol.	1-3 Years
<b>Goal 4: The Town's Recreation Opportunities Meet Community Needs.</b>				
<b>Objective: Continue to provide high quality recreation programming through the Otis Recreation Center.</b>				
Work to recruit additional volunteers to manage recreation programs.		Parks	Vol.	Ongoing
Poll Rec. Center users about possible improvements to Rec. center programs and amenities.		Parks	Vol.	1-3 Years
<b>Objective: Investigate the possible creation of "100-Acre Park" on town-owned land between Route 8 and West Center Road.</b>				
Hold a public forum / workshop on the possible creation of 100-Acre Park.		Parks	BOS	1-3 Years
Work to implement recommendations from the forum if identified.		Parks	BOS	3-5 Years

13-12

Parties Involved in Plan Implementation						Schedule	
Admin.	Town Administrator	Con. Com.	Conservation Commission	Finance	Finance Committee	Ongoing	Actions already in progress by the town
All	All Boards, Committees, and Staff	Energy	Energy Committee	Hist. Com.	Historical Commission	Immediate & Ongoing	Actions that can be acted on immediately and integrated throughout implementation
BOH	Board of Health	EMD	Emergency Management Director	Highway	Highway Department	1-3 Years	Projects to be implemented within a 1-3 year time frame
BOS	Board of Selectmen	School	Farmington River School	Maint.	Maintenance	3-5 Years	Projects to be implemented within a 3-5 year time frame
Cul. Co.	Otis Cultural Council	Planning	Planning Board	Parks	Parks and Recreation Commission	5+ Years	Projects likely requiring 5 or more years for implementation
Staff	Town Staff	Vol.	Volunteers (residents, local businesses, etc.)	ZBA	Zoning Board of Appeals	Tech.	Technology Committee
BRPC	Berkshire Regional Planning Commission	DCR	Dept. of Conservation and Recreation	Police, Fire, etc.	Other town departments	COA	Council on Aging
MassDOT	Mass. Dept. of Transportation	Smart Growth	Smart Growth Committee				

<b>Objective: Continue to improve town parks.</b>			
Examine development of a temporary ice skating rink on the Skate Park.	Parks	Maint.	1-3 Years
Identify a location for and establish a playground area in East Otis.	Parks	BOS	1-3 Years
Repave the Skate Park.	Maint.	Parks	3-5 Years
Install horseshoe pits at Town Hall Park. Install picnic tables, and benches at Town Hall Park. Improve landscaping.	Parks	Maint.	3-5 Years
Improve ADA accessibility at Town Hall Park.	Parks	Maint.	3-5 Years
<b>Objective: Continue to improve the Big Pond town beach.</b>			
Identify and install improvements at the town beach.	Parks	Maint.	Ongoing
Improve ADA accessibility at the town beach.	Parks	Maint.	3-5 Years
Examine installation of permanent restrooms and changing facilities at the town beach.	Parks	BOS, Maint.	5+ Years
<b>Objective: Continue the ongoing process to develop the Knox Trail as a four-season multi-use trail.</b>			
Continue ongoing work to develop the Knox Trail through work with public and private landowners.	Hist. Com.	Vol.	Ongoing

Parties Involved in Plan Implementation				Schedule			
<b>Admin.</b>	Town Administrator	<b>Con. Com.</b>	Conservation Commission	<b>Finance</b>	Finance Committee	<b>Ongoing</b>	Actions already in progress by the town
<b>All</b>	All Boards, Committees, and Staff	<b>Energy</b>	Energy Committee	<b>Hist. Com.</b>	Historical Commission	<b>Immediate &amp; Ongoing</b>	Actions that can be acted on immediately and integrated throughout implementation
<b>BOH</b>	Board of Health	<b>EMD</b>	Emergency Management Director	<b>Highway</b>	Highway Department	<b>1-3 Years</b>	Projects to be implemented within a 1-3 year time frame
<b>BOS</b>	Board of Selectmen	<b>School</b>	Farmington River School	<b>Maint.</b>	Maintenance	<b>3-5 Years</b>	Projects to be implemented within a 3-5 year time frame
<b>Cul. Co.</b>	Otis Cultural Council	<b>Planning</b>	Planning Board	<b>Parks</b>	Parks and Recreation Commission	<b>5+ Years</b>	Projects likely requiring 5 or more years for implementation
<b>Staff</b>	Town Staff	<b>Vol.</b>	Volunteers (residents, local businesses, etc.)	<b>ZBA</b>	Zoning Board of Appeals	<b>Tech.</b>	Technology Committee
<b>BRPC</b>	Berkshire Regional Planning Commission	<b>DCR</b>	Dept. of Conservation and Recreation	<b>Police, Fire, etc.</b>	Other town departments	<b>COA</b>	Council on Aging
<b>MassDOT</b>	Mass. Dept. of Transportation	<b>Smart Growth</b>	Smart Growth Committee				



# **MASTER PLAN**

Town of Otis, Massachusetts