



**TOWN OF LANESBOROUGH  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN  
2017**

Prepared by the Town of  
Lanesborough, the  
Lanesborough  
Economic Development  
Committee, and the  
Berkshire Regional  
Planning Commission

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION.....	6
Purpose.....	6
Vision .....	6
Mission Statement .....	6
Methodology.....	6
DATA & ANALYSIS.....	7
Description of Lanesborough.....	7
Geography .....	8
Demographics.....	10
Table 1 – Lanesborough Demographics.....	11
Income .....	11
Table 2 – Lanesborough Income Compared to Berkshire County .....	12
Housing.....	13
Table 3 – Housing Characteristics in Lanesborough.....	14
Workforce.....	15
Chart 1 – Civilian Employed Population .....	15
Chart 2 – Management, business, science, and arts occupations .....	16
Chart 3 – Service Occupations .....	16
Chart 4 – Sales and Office Occupations.....	17
Chart 5 – Natural Resources, Construction, and Maintenance Occupations.....	17
Chart 6 – Production, Transportation, and Material Moving Occupations .....	18
Lanesborough Business Profile.....	19
Table 4 – Businesses in Lanesborough .....	19
Chart 7 – Business by Type .....	19
Land Use.....	20
Chart 8 – Developed Land versus Undeveloped Land .....	20
Table 5 – Lanesborough Undeveloped Land by Use.....	20
Chart 9 – Undeveloped Land Use.....	21
Chart 10 – Agricultural versus Non-Agricultural Land Use .....	21

## TOWN OF LANESBOROUGH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Table 6 – Lanesborough Developed Land by Use .....	22
Chart 11 – Developed Land by Use .....	22
Chart 12 – Residential versus Non-Residential Land Use.....	23
Government .....	24
Education.....	24
VISION & MISSION STATEMENT .....	25
Vision Statement .....	25
Mission Statement: .....	25
SWOT ANALYSIS.....	26
Introduction .....	26
Results .....	27
Preserve: .....	28
Eliminate: .....	29
Achieve: .....	29
Avoid: .....	29
NEEDS & OPPORTUNITIES.....	30
Table 7 - Town of Lanesborough - Needs & Opportunities .....	30
Needs .....	31
Chart 13 – Prioritized Needs .....	31
Marketing and Branding .....	32
Berkshire Mall Revitalization and/or Redevelopment .....	32
Route 7 Corridor Improvements.....	34
Opportunities .....	35
Chart 14 – Prioritized Opportunities.....	35
Agri-Business .....	35
Favorable Commercial Tax Rate .....	35
Branding and Marketing .....	35
Goals, Strategies & Objectives.....	36
Goal 1 - Create a diverse economy with a wide range of employment opportunities. .....	36
Strategy .....	36
Objective.....	36

## TOWN OF LANESBOROUGH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Goal 2 – Recognize Berkshire Mall Redevelopment as a priority project for the Town of Lanesborough .....	36
Strategy .....	36
Objective.....	36
Goal 3 – Raise the profile of Lanesborough as a tourism destination .....	36
Strategy .....	36
Objective.....	36
Goal 4 - Establish a welcoming environment for business creation and sustainable growth.....	36
Strategy .....	37
Objective.....	37

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## INTRODUCTION

The Town of Lanesborough engaged the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) in the fall of 2016 to provide technical assistance to the town and its appointed Lanesborough Economic Development Committee (LEDC) to assist in the development of an economic development plan. Funding for this effort comes from a direct investment by the town to secure general economic development planning technical assistance from BRPC and from a Community Compact grant from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts specifically for the economic development plan.

### Purpose

The purpose of the economic development plan is to guide the town's economic development activities over the next five to ten years. Early in the process, the Economic Development Committee developed Vision and Mission Statements:

**Vision:** *To enhance quality of life by fostering a diverse economy, encouraging employment opportunities, and establishing a positive environment for business creation and sustainable growth.*

**Mission Statement:** *The Lanesborough Economic Development Committee is dedicated to the continuing evolution of a sustainable and thriving community by promoting a vibrant, diversified economy with abundant opportunities for employment, entrepreneurship, and economic development. We leverage our network of resources promote innovation and implement new strategies to enhance economic activity, promote business growth, and encourage environmental sustainability to build an economically and socially robust community.*

### Methodology

The plan is built upon a foundation of data and analysis gathered from various sources, such as U. S. Census 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates and the Massachusetts Executive Office of Workforce Development. In addition to the data and analysis, the LEDC participated in a facilitated SWOT analysis that examined the town's strengths and weaknesses and the opportunities and threats specific to economic development. The SWOT analysis led to a set of priority Needs and Opportunities. In addition to input from the committee and town staff, a community-wide survey was taken (Appendix A). From these, Goals, Strategies, and Objectives were developed.

## DATA & ANALYSIS

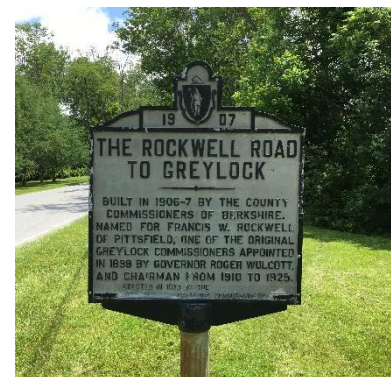
### Description of Lanesborough

Lanesborough was incorporated in 1765, and was one of the first towns to be settled in Berkshire County. Originally a farming community, the town grew to become a prosperous mining and industrial center and remained one until the railroad came through the City of Pittsfield. Lanesborough and the City of Pittsfield share Pontoosuc Lake, one of the largest lakes in Berkshire County and a popular recreation area. Lanesborough hosts the southern access to the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail, a bike path converted from an abandoned railroad bed which runs through the towns of Lanesborough, Cheshire and Adams.



Mount Greylock, the highest peak in Massachusetts, is partially situated in Lanesborough. Rockwell Road provides the main access to the summit. The road passes the Greylock Visitor's Center, where there are exhibits and a spectacular view of the Housatonic Valley stretching beyond.

Today, Lanesborough is a small residential community with a few farms and small businesses. Lanesborough has little industry of its own, more people from Lanesborough are employed in nearby communities or at the nearby Berkshire Mall, which is located on the southern edge of town, adjacent to the City of Pittsfield, and is the town's largest employer.

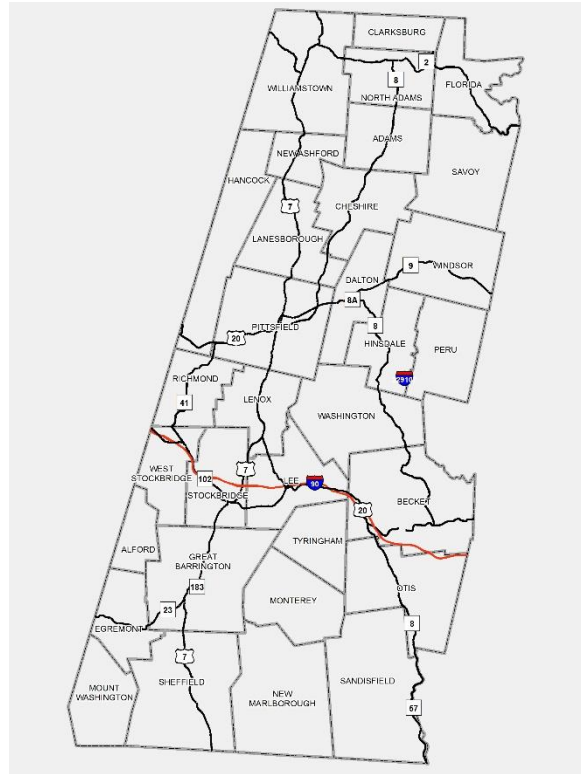




### Geography

According to the United States Census Bureau, the town has a total area of 29.6 square miles, of which 28.8 square miles is land and 0.73 square miles, or 2.49%, is water.

Lanesborough is bordered by New Ashford to the north, Cheshire to the northeast, Dalton to the east, Pittsfield to the south, and Hancock to the west. The town center is 5 miles north of Pittsfield, 50 miles northwest of Springfield and 140 miles west of Boston.



Lanesborough is situated in two valleys, with Town Brook running south through the central valley into Pontoosuc Lake; and the Cheshire Reservoir, the headwaters of the Hoosic River, running north through the town's smaller, eastern valley.

To the north, the beginning of Mount Greylock State Reservation is located in the town.

Pittsfield State Forest also has a large section within town, with Balance Rock being its main attraction. To the west, Jiminy Peak and Sheeps Heaven Mountain, the southern portion of Brodie Mountain, form much of the western border. While much of Jiminy Peak is in the town of Hancock, recent aerial mapping determined that the summit is indeed in Lanesborough. The ski area's Hendricks Summit Lodge (named after



## TOWN OF LANESBOROUGH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Lanesborough residents Bart and Mary Hendricks) is located within the town. Brodie Mountain Road, which passes between these two mountains, is one of the few roads which lead into neighboring Hancock from the east.

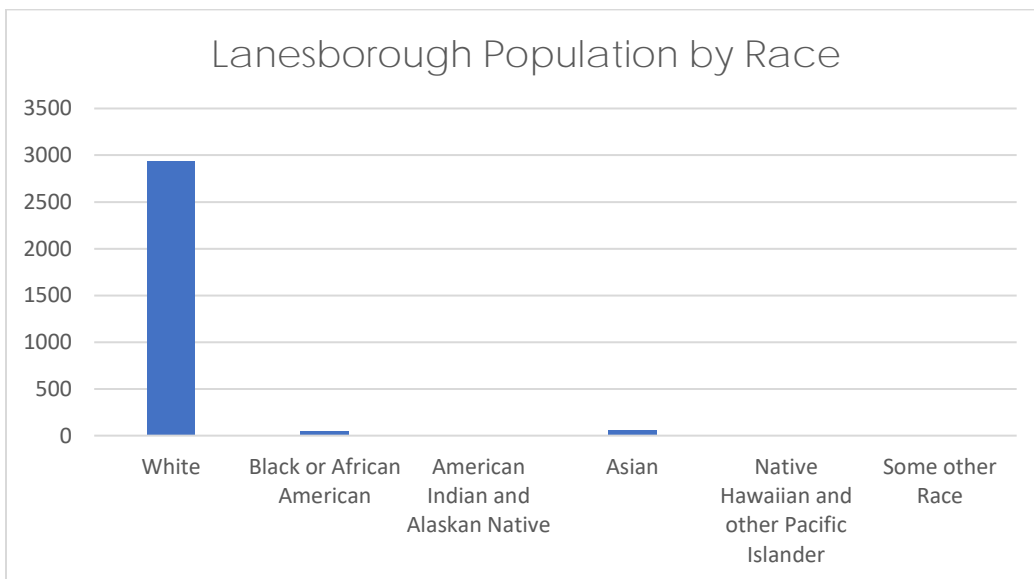
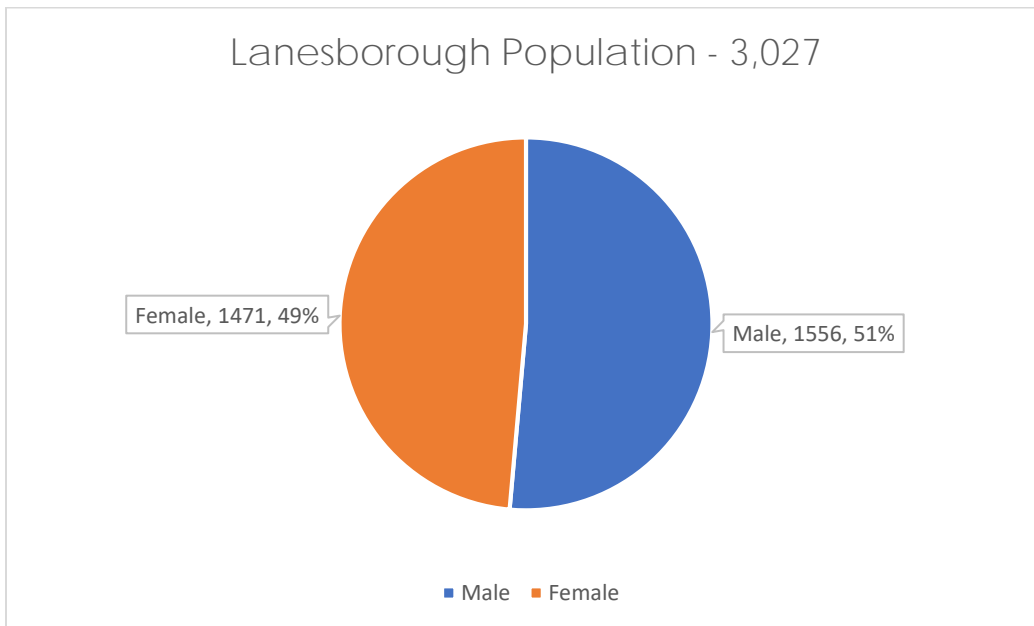


U.S. Route 7 is the main route through town, passing from Pittsfield north towards Williamstown and Vermont. To the east, Massachusetts Route 8, passes through the Berkshire Village community towards North Adams. The Berkshire Regional Transit Authority (BRTA) has three routes that travel through Lanesborough. Route 3 (North Adams – Williamstown) and Route 34 (North Adams) travel along U. S. Route 7; and Route 1 (Pittsfield – North Adams) travels along Massachusetts Route 8. In Pittsfield, BRTA offers routes to the southern Berkshire communities and routes within the city itself. Public transportation is very limited in Berkshire County and does not provide a good alternative to private automobile for commuters, especially on weekends and after hours. In Lanesborough, nearly 84% of the workforce drives alone to work, while less than 1% use public transportation.

Regional bus service and very limited passenger rail service can be found in Pittsfield. Albany International Airport, about one hour away in neighboring New York, is the nearest commercial airport.

## Demographics

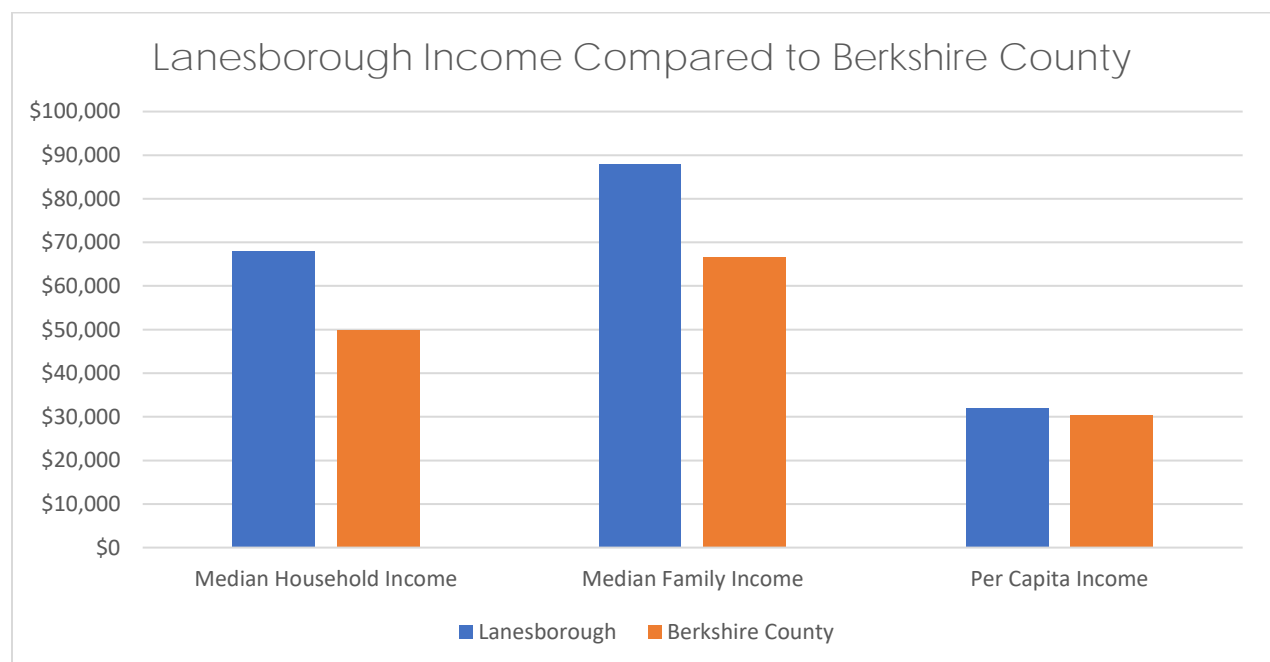
According to the U.S. Census, 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (ACS), there are 3,027 people and 1,478 housing units in the town. The racial makeup of the town is 97.0% White, 1.6% African American, 0.03% Native American, 1.9% Asian, and 0.03% Pacific Islander. The median age is 43.7 years; and the population is 51.4% male and 48.6% female.



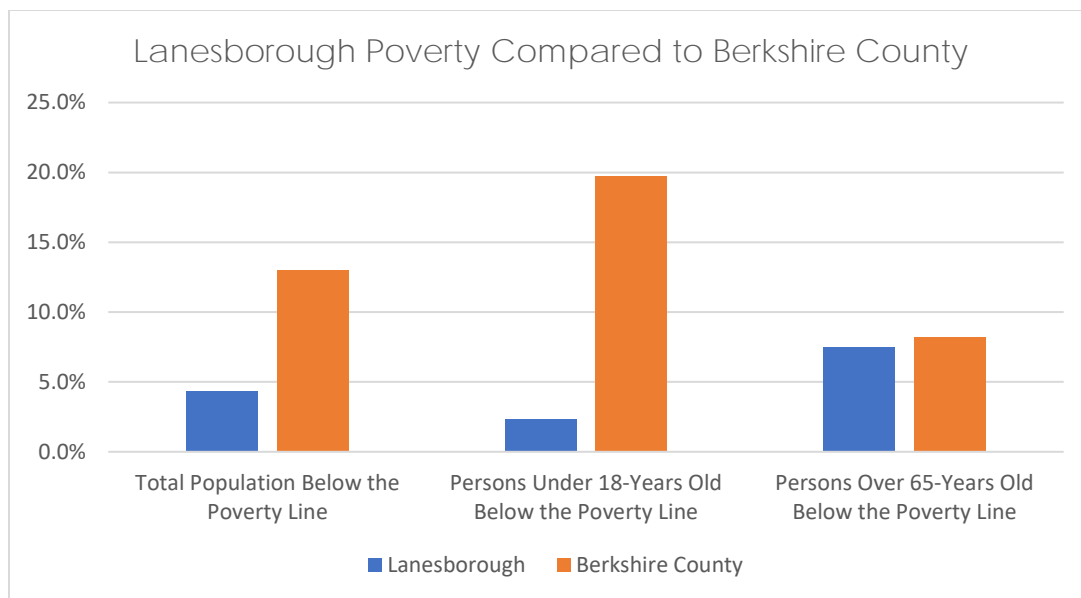
<b>Table 1 – Lanesborough Demographics</b>		
Total population	3,027	
Male	1,556	51.4%
Female	1,471	48.6%
Median Age	43.7	
Total population	3,027	
White	2,936	97.0%
Black or African American	49	1.6%
American Indian and Alaskan Native	9	0.3%
Asian	58	1.9%
Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander	10	0.3%
Some other race	0	0.0%
Source: U. S. Census 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates		

## Income

The ACS reports a median household income of \$68,036 and a median family income of \$87,989 for Lanesborough. The per capita income for the town is \$32,033. About 4.3% of the population were below the poverty line, including 2.3% of those under age 18 and 7.5% of those age 65 or over. Compared to Berkshire County, Lanesborough is more affluent with higher incomes and fewer people living below the poverty line.

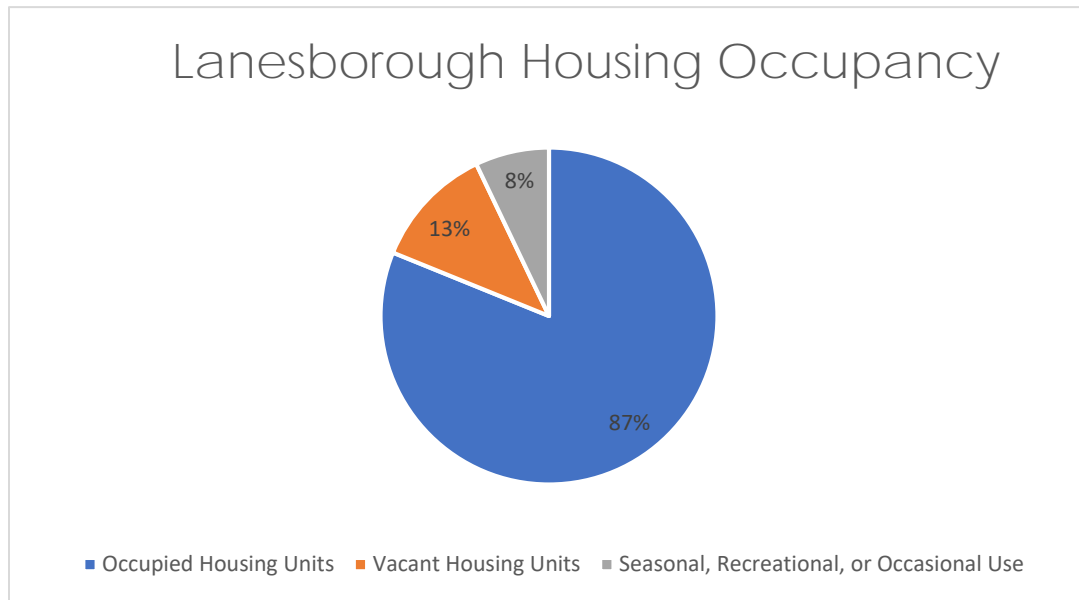


<b>Table 2 – Lanesborough Income Compared to Berkshire County</b>		
	Lanesborough	Berkshire County
Median Household Income	\$68,036	\$49,956
Median Family Income	\$87,989	\$66,604
Per Capita Income	\$32,033	\$30,469
Total Population Below Poverty Line	4.3%	13.0%
Persons Under 18-years Old Below Poverty Line	2.3%	19.7%
Persons Over 65-Years Old Below Poverty Line	7.5%	8.2%
Source: U. S. Census 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates		

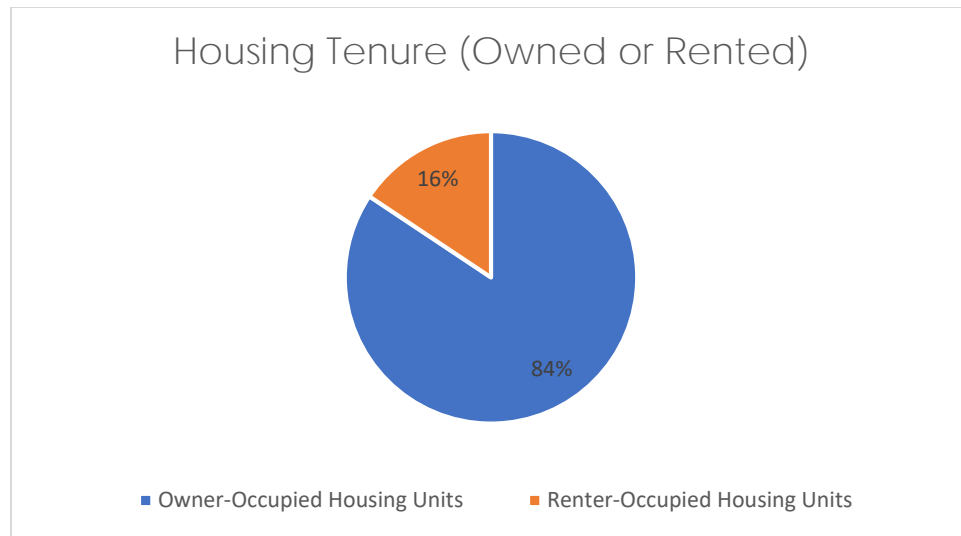


## Housing

The census reports 1,478 total housing units in Lanesborough, of these, 87% are occupied, 13% are vacant, and 8% are used for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use. The vacancy rate data does not delineate between full-time and seasonal housing.



The homeownership rate in Lanesborough is 84%. This is quite high compared to Berkshire County's homeownership rate of 67% and the national homeownership rate of 64%; and is further evidence of Lanesborough's stability as an attractive residential community.



**Table 3 – Housing Characteristics in Lanesborough**

<i>Housing Occupancy</i>		
Total housing units	1,478	
Occupied housing units	1,291	87.3%
Vacant housing units	187	12.7%
For seasonal, recreational, or occasional use	113	7.6%
<i>Housing Tenure</i>		
Occupied housing units	1,291	
Owner-occupied housing units	1,089	84.4%
Renter-occupied housing units	202	15.6%
Source: U. S. Census, 2010 Demographic Profile Data		

Most of the homes, 85%, are single-family detached houses. The median home value is \$209,200. Home prices can range from less than \$100,000 for small “starter homes” typically under 1,000 s.f. with two bedrooms; to the mid-\$600,000s for properties with acreage or waterfront.

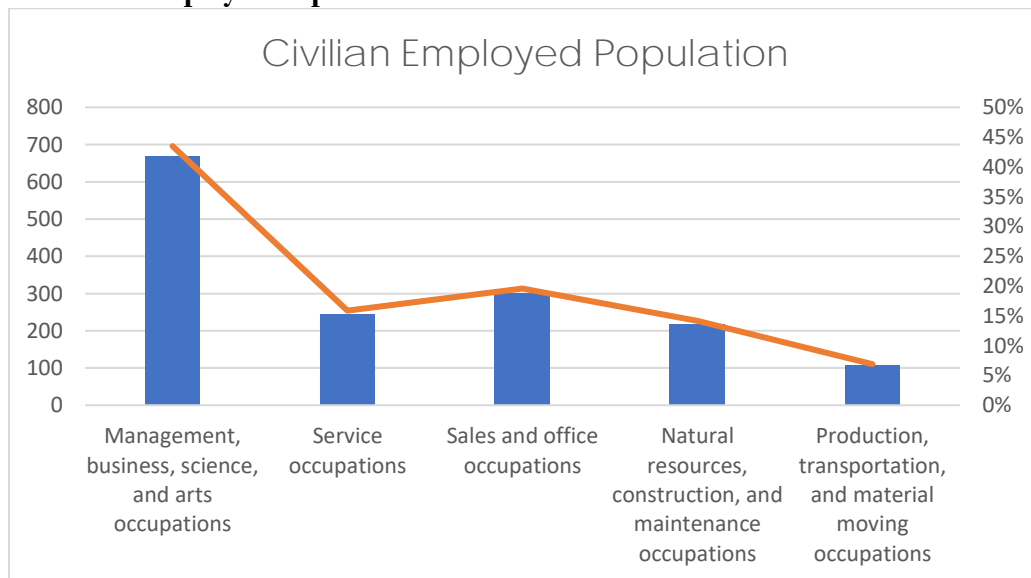
Approximately 32% of homeowners and 31% of renters report monthly housing costs more than 30% of their monthly income, and therefore, would be considered “housing cost burdened.” Without additional research, it is unclear whether these households are elderly on fixed incomes, or younger families just starting out. If any significant housing development were to occur in Lanesborough as part of an overall economic development project, consideration of including some lower priced homes would be appropriate.

## Workforce

The U. S. Census considers the potential civilian labor force to be the population 16-years old and over; however, not all of these people participate in the labor force for a variety of reasons; they may be full-time students, or they may be retirees. The population 16-years and over in Lanesborough is 2,419, of these 1,731 are in the labor force. Of those in the labor force, 1,538 are employed and 193 are unemployed. This reflects an unemployment rate of 11%; however, this number is likely too high since these data are from the 2011-2015 American Community Survey. According to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, in May 2017, Lanesborough had a labor force of 1,762, of which 1,684 people were employed and 78 were unemployed. This reflects an unemployment rate of 4.4%, which is slightly higher than the state's unemployment rate of 4.1%.

The largest percentage of Lanesborough's workforce (43%) is employed in the Management, Business, Science, and Arts Occupations sector, followed by Sales and Office Occupations (20%), Service Occupations (16%), Natural Resources, Construction, and Maintenance Occupations (14%) and Production, Transportation, and Material Moving Occupations (7%).

**Chart 1 – Civilian Employed Population**

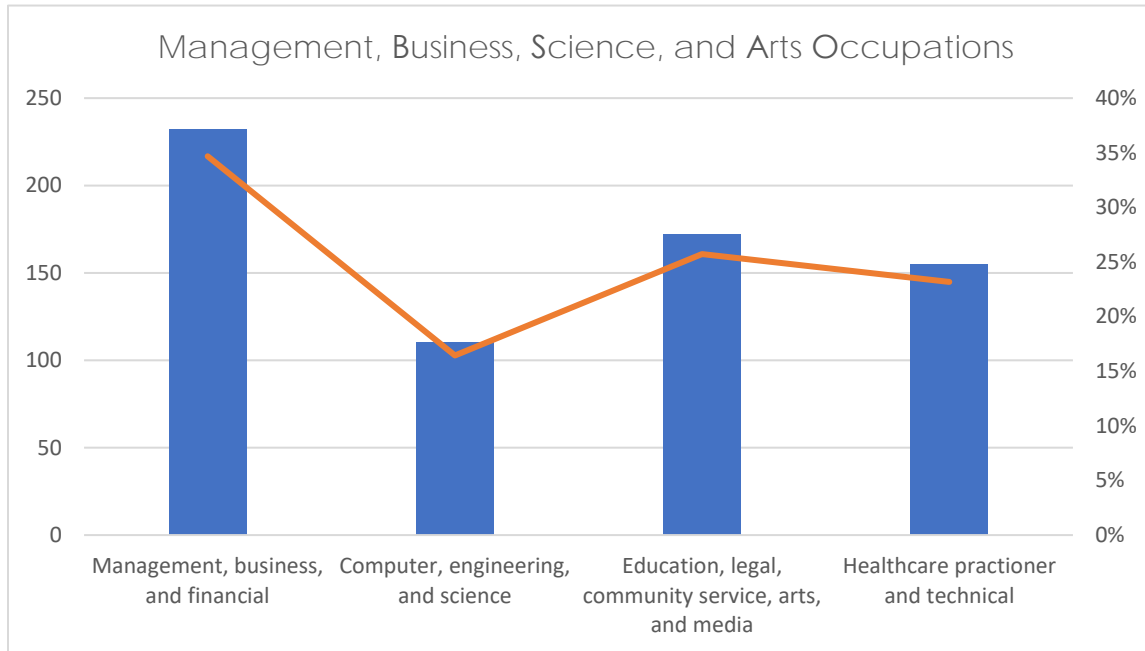




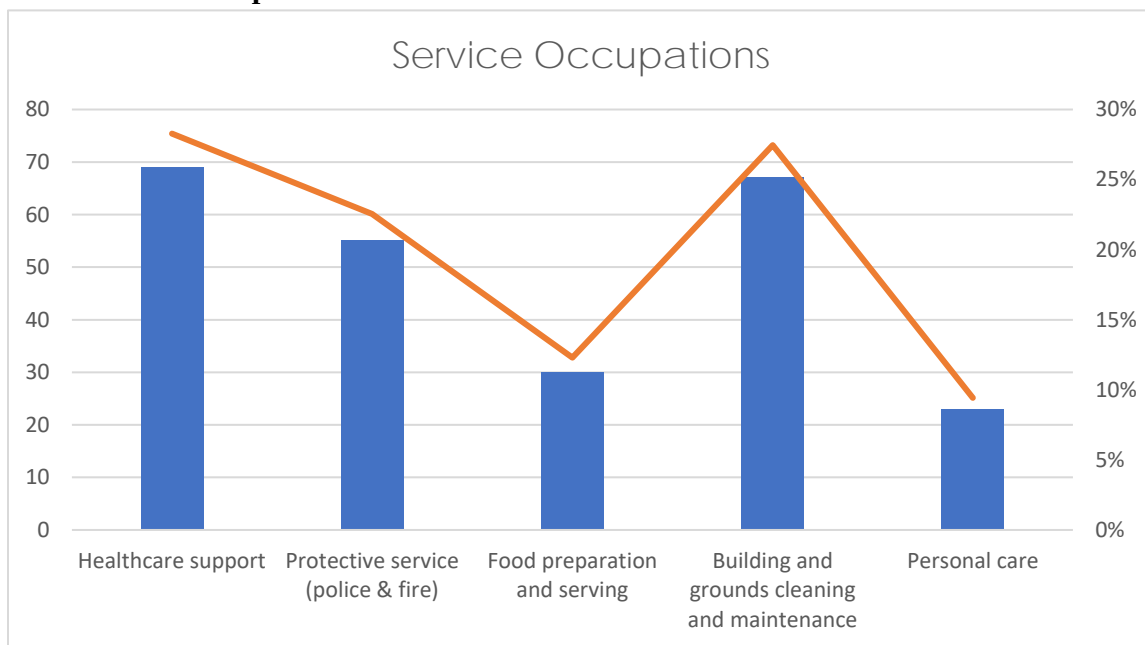
## TOWN OF LANESBOROUGH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The top occupations within these sectors are Management, Business, and Financial (35%), Healthcare Support (28%), Office and Administrative Support (65%), Construction and Extraction (65%), and Transportation (44%).

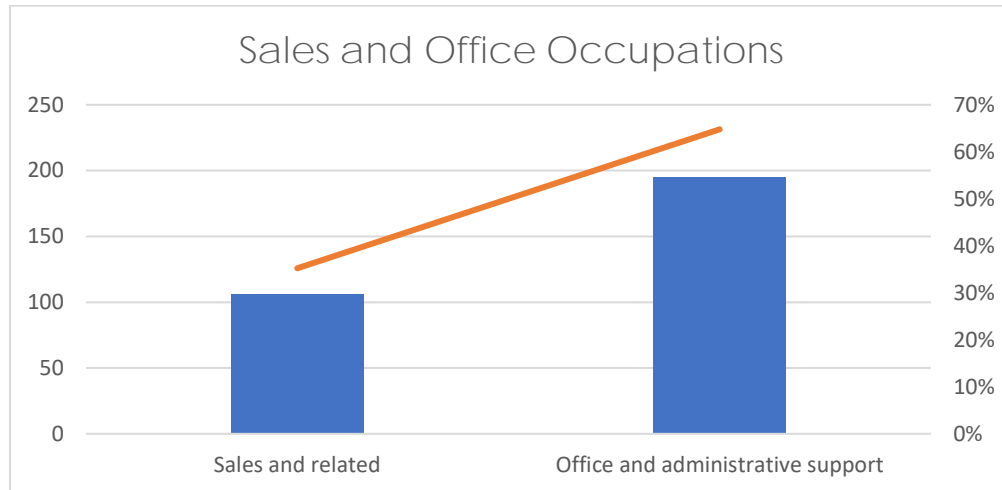
**Chart 2 – Management, Business, Science, and Arts Occupations**



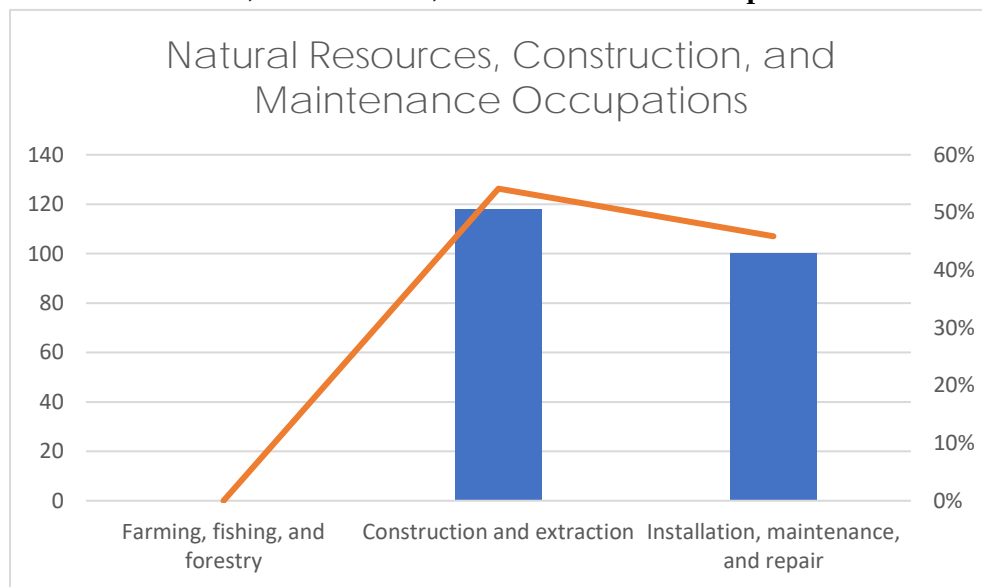
**Chart 3 – Service Occupations**



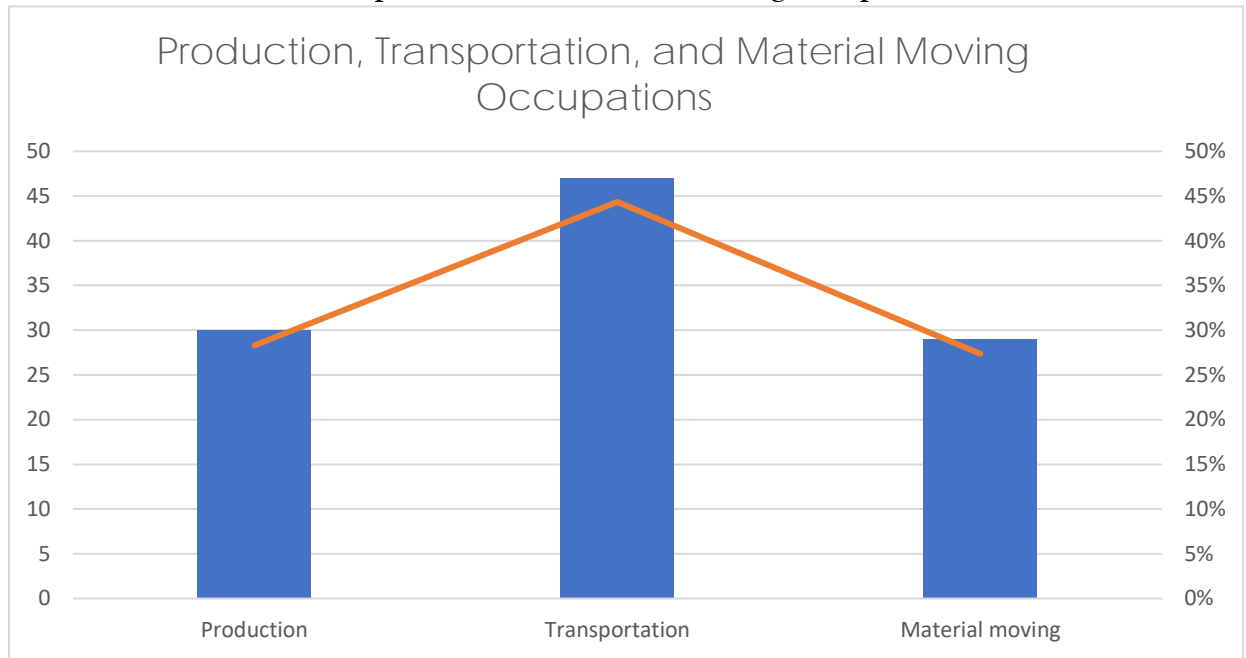
**Chart 4 – Sales and Office Occupations**



**Chart 5 – Natural Resources, Construction, and Maintenance Occupations**



**Chart 6 – Production, Transportation, and Material Moving Occupations**



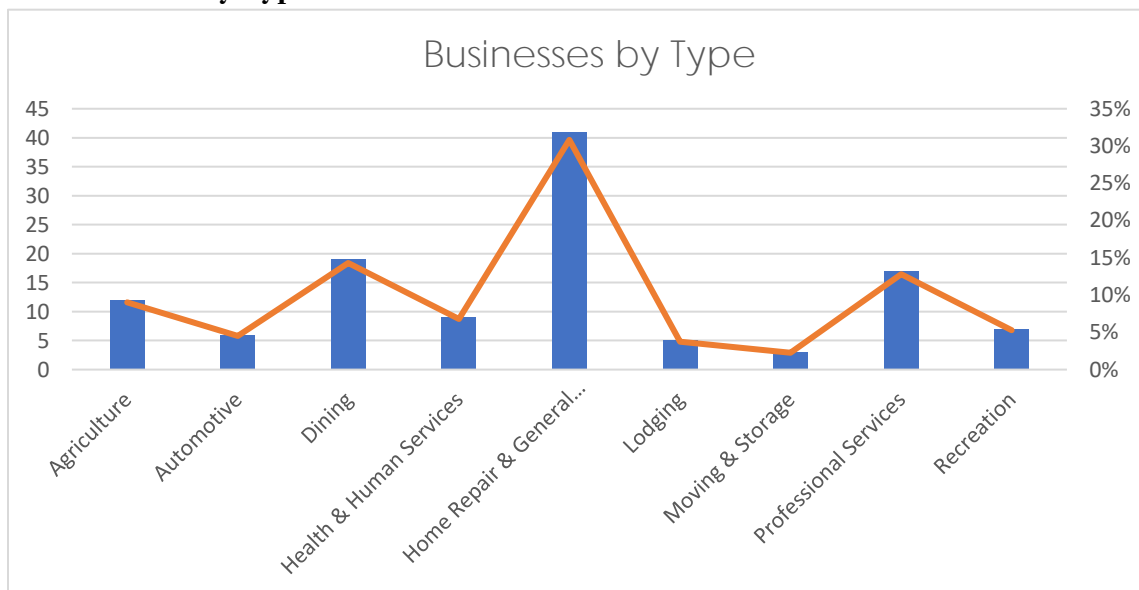
## Lanesborough Business Profile

While the workforce data above describes the types of jobs Lanesborough residents have, it does not describe the businesses located within Lanesborough. Based upon census data, it is assumed that the majority of Lanesborough residents work outside of Lanesborough in one of the nearby communities. 95% of Lanesborough's residents commute to work with a mean commute time of 20 minutes, while 5% of them report that they work from home.

The Town of Lanesborough's Business Directory lists 133 businesses in ten broad categories.

<b>Table 4 – Businesses in Lanesborough</b>	
Agriculture	12
Automotive	6
Dining	19
Health & Human Services	9
Home Repair & General Construction	41
Lodging	5
Moving & Storage	3
Professional Services	17
Recreation	7
Retail	14
Source: Town of Lanesborough	

**Chart 7 – Business by Type**



## Land Use

Lanesborough has a total land mass of 18,926 acres. Of this, only 1,328 acres (7%) is developed. The undeveloped area is 17,598 acres (4,674 of which are protected). 14,463 undeveloped acres represent forest, forested wetlands, and non-forested wetlands. There are 1,670 acres devoted to cropland, pasture, orchards, and plant nurseries.

**Chart 8 – Developed Land versus Undeveloped Land**

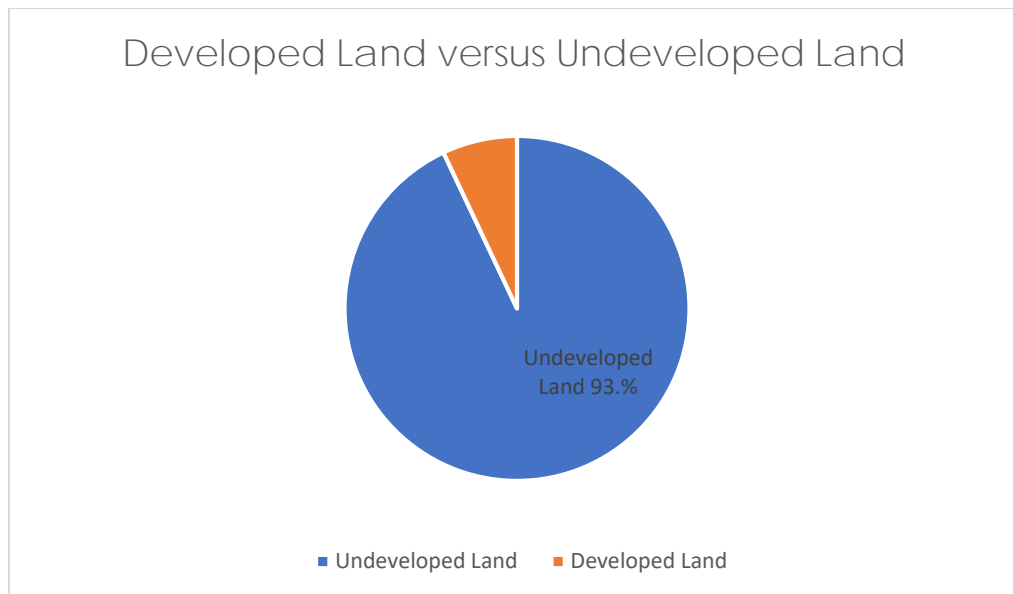
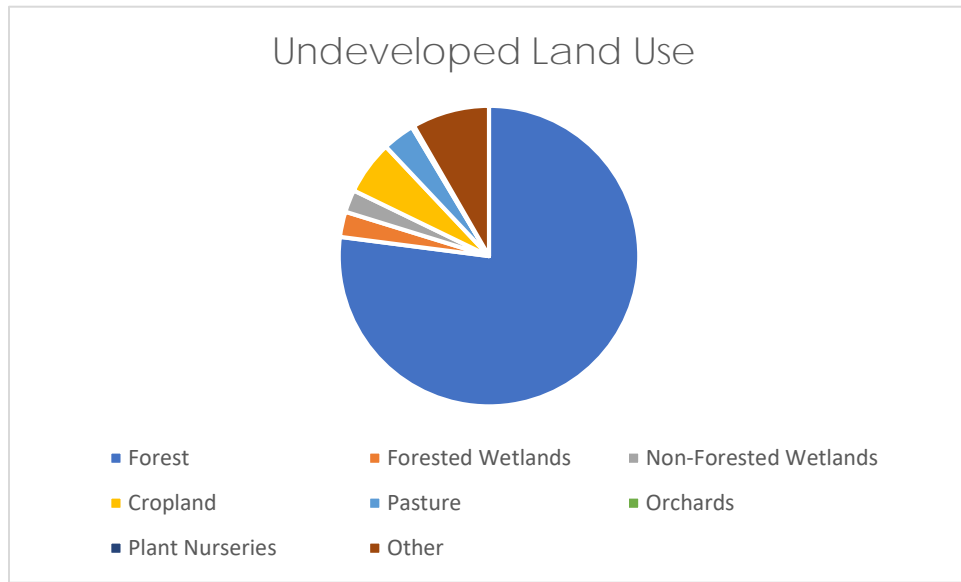
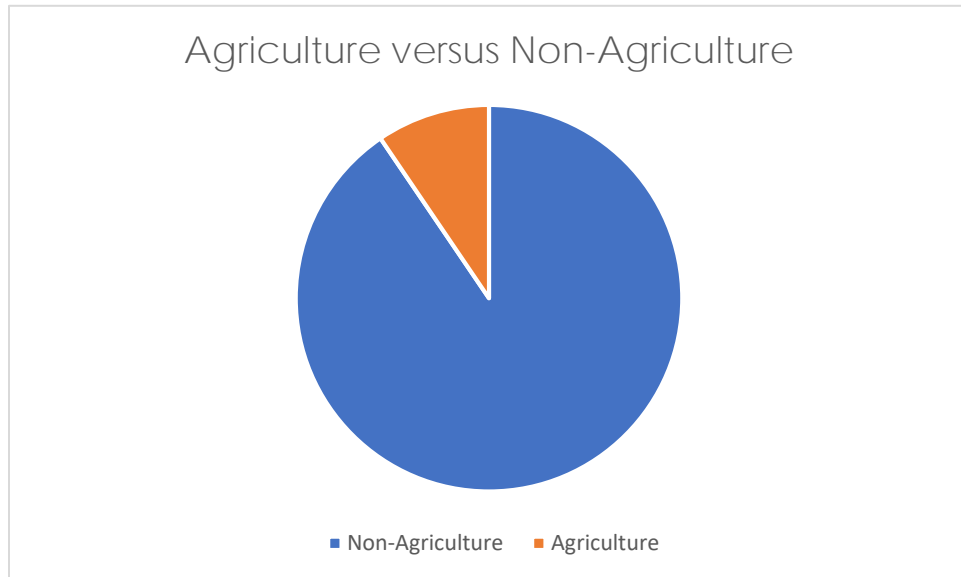


Table 5 – Lanesborough Undeveloped Land by Use	
Land Use	Acres
Forest	13,559
Forested Wetlands	479
Non-Forested Wetlands	426
Cropland	1,018
Pasture	608
Orchards	30
Plant Nurseries	15
Other	1,464
Total Undeveloped Land	17,598
Source: BPRC	

**Chart 9 – Undeveloped Land Use**



**Chart 10 – Agricultural versus Non-Agricultural Land Use**

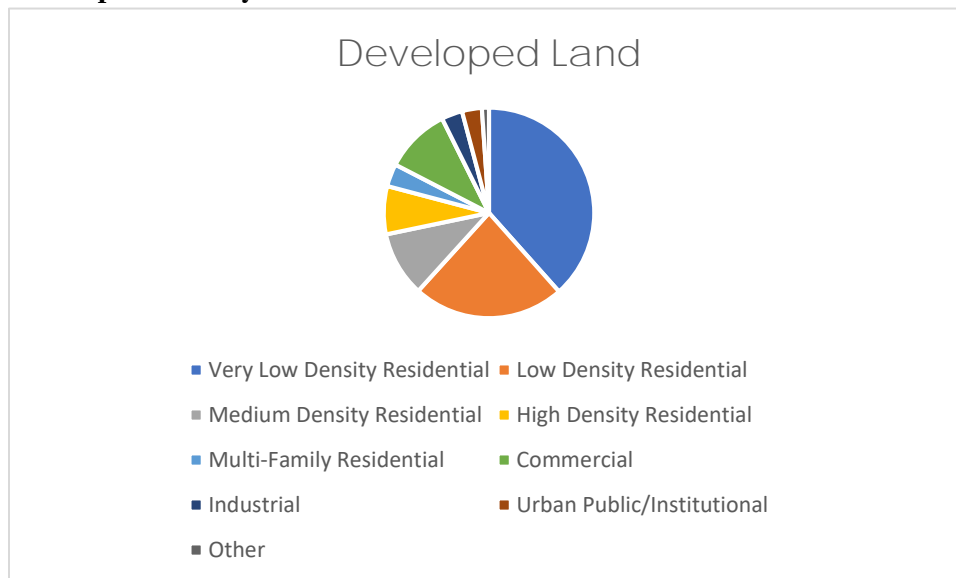


## TOWN OF LANESBOROUGH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

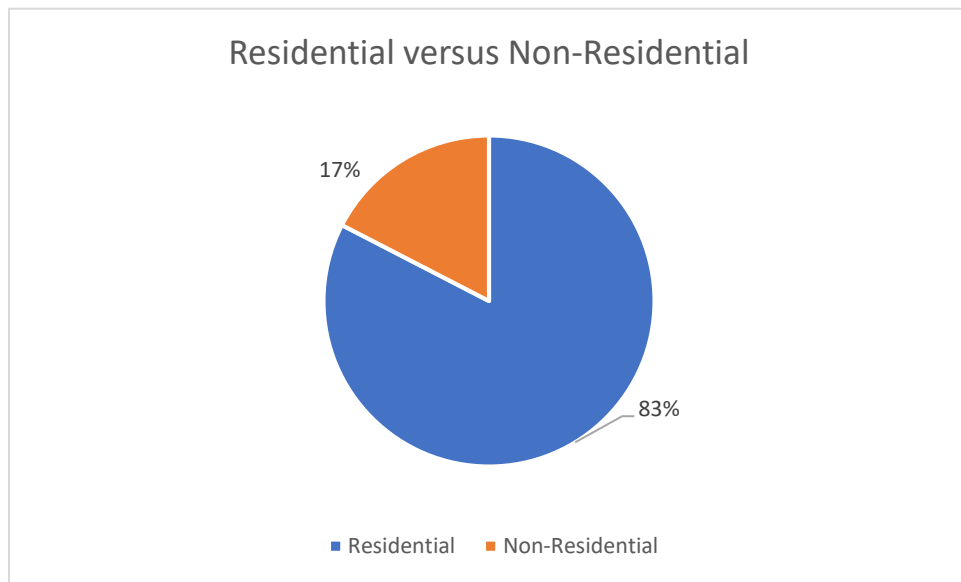
Of the developed land in Lanesborough, 1,097 acres are residential, 217 acres are commercial, industrial, or public use, and 14 acres consist of other uses. Residential use is predominately Very Low Density and Low Density; residential land use also includes Medium and High Density areas, and Multi-Family. Non-residential uses include Commercial, Industrial, and Public/Institutional.

<b>Table 6 – Lanesborough Developed Land by Use</b>	
Land Use	Acres
Very Low Density Residential	510
Low Density Residential	309
Medium Density Residential	133
High Density Residential	98
Multi-Family Residential	46
Commercial	134
Industrial	43
Public/Institutional	41
Other	14
Developed Land	1328
Source: BRPC	

**Chart 11 – Developed Land by Use**



**Chart 12 – Residential versus Non-Residential Land Use**





## **Government**

Lanesborough employs the open town meeting form of government, and is led by a board of selectmen. The town operates its own police, fire and public works departments. The town library, located in the annex of the town hall, is connected to the regional library networks.

On the state level, Lanesborough is represented in the Massachusetts House of Representatives as part of the First Berkshire District, which covers north Berkshire County and is represented by John Barrett III, who was elected by special election on November 7, 2017. In the Massachusetts Senate, the town is part of the Berkshire, Hampshire, Franklin and Hampden district, which includes all of Berkshire County as well as portions of Hampshire, Franklin and Hampden counties, represented by Sen. Adam Hinds. On the national level, Lanesborough is represented in the United States House of Representatives by Richard Neal as part of Massachusetts's 1st congressional district.

## **Education**

Lanesborough, along with Williamstown, form the Mount Greylock Regional School District, which includes Kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. The district operates Lanesborough Elementary School for students from pre-kindergarten through sixth grade, with the upper grades attending Mount Greylock Regional High School in Williamstown. Lanesborough Elementary has a tuition agreement to educate students from neighboring New Ashford. Additionally, there are private, parochial, charter and vocation schools in the nearby towns.

The nearest community college, Berkshire Community College, is in Pittsfield. The nearest state college is Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts in North Adams, and the nearest state university is the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Williams College in Williamstown is the nearest private college. Numerous other higher education institutions are located within an hour commute.

## **VISION & MISSION STATEMENTS**

### **Vision Statement**

To enhance quality of life by fostering a diverse economy, encouraging employment opportunities, and establishing a positive environment for business creation and sustainable growth.

### **Mission Statement**

The Lanesborough Economic Development Committee is dedicated to the continuing evolution of a sustainable and thriving community by promoting a vibrant, diversified economy with abundant opportunities for employment, entrepreneurship, and economic development. We leverage our network of resources to promote innovation and implement new strategies to enhance economic activity, promote business growth, and encourage environmental sustainability to build an economically and socially robust community.

## SWOT ANALYSIS

### Introduction

On January 25, 2017, the Lanesborough Economic Development Committee met to conduct a SWOT Analysis. Also present at the meeting were Paul Sieloff, Town Manager and John Salemi, a student at Williams College who completed a Winter Study Program examining the Berkshire Mall.

SWOT is an acronym representing Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. Strengths and weaknesses are internal factors that are helpful or harmful, respectively. Opportunities and threats are external factors that are helpful or harmful. The SWOT Analysis can be represented in matrix form as shown below.

	Helpful	Harmful
Internal	Strengths	Weaknesses
External	Opportunities	Threats

## TOWN OF LANESBOROUGH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The discussion around the SWOT analysis can be framed in the following fashion:

*Strengths* are those things you want to preserve. Do you want it? Yes. Do you have it? Yes. These are the things that the town sees as assets, that the town is proud of, and that the town enjoys.

*Weaknesses* are those things the town wants to eliminate. Do you want it? No. Do you have it? Yes. These are things that the town has that it feels are holding the town back from realizing its full potential.

*Opportunities* are those things the town wants to achieve. Do you want it? Yes. Do you have it? No. These are the things that the town feels would help them achieve their economic development goals.

*Threats* are those things the town wants to avoid. Do you want it? No. Do you have it? No. These are things that could threaten the town if they were to appear in the community.

Similar to the basic SWOT Analysis, these may also be represented in matrix form.

		Helpful	Harmful
Internal	Internal	<b>Preserve:</b> <b>Do you want it?</b> Yes. <b>Do you have it?</b> Yes.	<b>Eliminate:</b> <b>Do you want it?</b> No. <b>Do you have it?</b> Yes.
		<b>Achieve:</b> <b>Do you want it?</b> Yes. <b>Do you have it?</b> No.	<b>Avoid:</b> <b>Do you want it?</b> No. <b>Do you have it?</b> No.

Results

## TOWN OF LANESBOROUGH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The committee spent about an hour and a half to develop the following lists in response to the SWOT Analysis.

### **Preserve:**

History & heritage of Lanesborough

High quality K-12 schools

- all Lanesborough schools are above average Level 1 schools

High Quality of Life

- Low crime rate
- Low traffic volumes
- Ease of mobility
- Great water quality
- Healthy, clean air
- Reasonable housing costs

Outdoor Lifestyle

- Hiking
- Biking
- Skiing
- Lakes
- Golf courses

Open space

Premier outdoor spaces

- Mount Greylock
- Balance Rock State Park
- Ramblewild

Berkshire Mall

Regal Berkshire Mall Theater

Convenient central location

- Arts & culture

- Clark Museum
- Williams College
- Williams College Museum of Art
- Norman Rockwell Museum
- Mass MOCA
- Tanglewood
- Shakespeare & Company
- Jacob's Ladder

- Transportation

- Albany International Airport
- Bradley International Airport
- Amtrak (Pittsfield, MA or Rensselaer, NY)
- Metro North – Wassaic, NY

Farming

Organic foods

Horses & stables

## **Eliminate:**

Neglected/dilapidated housing

Overhead utilities

Septic systems

Out migration – especially young people

Neglected/dilapidated business properties

Unsightly signs

Vacancies at the mall

Duplicative services

Private garbage pick-up

## **Achieve:**

High-Speed Broadband Internet Service  
– fully connected (96%)

Attractive Route 7 corridor

Access to transportation – air & rail

Sewer and water infrastructure  
improvements

Increase the commercial tax base  
(lower the reliance on residential  
property tax)

Senior housing (all types – independent  
and assisted living)

Better access to healthcare

Food Co-op

Agri-business with a regional focus

Master Plan

## **Avoid:**

Incompatible development, for  
example

- Heavy industry
- Waste
- Big box store
- Adult shops
- Unscreened developments of  
any type

Overdevelopment near Pontoosuc Lake

Unbalanced development (keep an  
appropriate ratio of housing:  
commercial)

Gas transmission lines

Fast food restaurants with drive-through  
on Route 7 (avoid traffic issues)

Stand-alone ATMs

Heavy traffic on Route 7

## NEEDS & OPPORTUNITIES

The Town of Lanesborough's Economic Development Committee met on January 25, 2017 to conduct a SWOT analysis; and again, on March 9, 2017 to further refine a list of Needs and Opportunities based upon the SWOT Analysis. Subsequently, on March 16, 2017, the committee participated in an exercise, where each member could choose their top five Needs and their top five Opportunities. See Table 7.

<b>Table 7 - Town of Lanesborough - Needs &amp; Opportunities</b>			
<b>Needs</b>	<b>Votes</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Votes</b>
Restart Mall	4	Available buildings on Route 7 near Bailey Road	1
Make Route 7 corridor more attractive	4	Small commercial spaces for sale	1
Identify a Gateway and "Town Square"	1	Ease of access	0
Attractive street lights in the core area	0	Access to transportation - air & rail	0
Entry signs/logo	2	Senior housing (all types - independent and assisted living)	1
New housing (at all price points)	0	Branding/marketing	3
Senior housing (all types - independent and assisted living)	2	Marketing natural features (Ashuwillitcook, Mt. Greylock, Pontoosuc Lake)	2
Hotel with convention center	0	Manage the message	0
Clean technology/industry	1	Agri-business with a regional focus	4
Better access to healthcare	0	Marketing organic foods	0
Marketing campaign/branding	5	Food co-op	0
Collective marketing programs	0	Capitalize on what makes Berkshire County unique	2
Social media presence (website and Facebook)	1	Laston Field for events	2
Events/festivals	2	High-speed internet and cable	1
High-speed broadband internet service	0	Favorable commercial tax rate	4
Increase commercial tax base (lower reliance on residential property tax)	2		
Master Plan and Zoning Update	1		

By prioritizing the list of Needs and Opportunities, the town can then use this information to develop its Economic Development Goals, Objectives, and Strategies.

Of the seventeen needs listed, six (35%) did not receive any votes, while eight (47%) received one or two votes, and three (18%) received four or five votes. The top ranked needs were, Marketing and Branding (5 votes), Berkshire Mall Revitalization and/or Redevelopment (4 votes), and Route 7 Corridor Improvements (4 votes). See Chart 13.

Of the fifteen opportunities listed, five (33%) received no votes and seven (47%) received one or two votes. Three (20%) received three or four votes. The top ranked opportunities were Favorable Commercial Tax Rate (4 votes), Agri-Business (4 votes), and Branding and Marketing (3 votes). See Chart 14.

## Needs

**Chart 13 – Prioritized Needs**





**Needs, cont.**

**Marketing and Branding**

The Economic Development Committee clearly recognized the need to develop a marketing and branding strategy for Lanesborough to boost the town's economic development efforts and also to help existing businesses grow and reach their full potential. Many of the other needs that were identified relate to marketing and branding, even though they weren't necessarily high scoring. For example, identifying a gateway and a "Town Square" and creating entry signs with a unique Lanesborough logo speak directly to marketing. Creating collective marketing programs, in the manner of a Chamber of Commerce, and having a robust social media presence with a website and Facebook should be part of a contemporary marketing campaign.

Additionally, Lanesborough needs to market itself as a gateway to the natural features of the region that makes Berkshire County unique. Lanesborough offers direct access to the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail, Mount Greylock, Jiminy Peak Ski Resort, and Pontoosuc Lake. Lanesborough has many local farms and can easily position itself as an agri-business community offering high quality goods and organic foods. Lanesborough could easily use Laston Field for events and festivals to celebrate the many things it has to offer.

When Lanesborough is recruiting new businesses, it has many things to offer – one of the lowest commercial tax rates in Northern Berkshire County, high-speed internet and cable service, and a central location in Berkshire County with easy access to the rest of the county and to the greater region.

**Berkshire Mall Revitalization and/or Redevelopment**

The Berkshire Mall represents one of the greatest needs and greatest opportunities in the Town of Lanesborough. The Berkshire Mall, like many malls throughout the country is experiencing financial stress. The mall has recently lost the majority of its anchor stores, including BestBuy, Macy's, and JC Penney, all of which have been closing multiple locations nationwide. Sears has also recently announced their departure. A telling

passage in the article “The Rise and Fall of the US Mall,” by Callum Glennen, World Finance, April 7, 2017; seems to be describing the Berkshire Mall.

Unfortunately for mall developers, the department stores that supported them in the past are now beginning to flounder. In 2016, Macy's announced it would be closing 100 stores. Sears also plans to close over 150 stores, while JC Penney has announced a number of store closures over the last two years.

The challenge for many malls is, once a department store closes, it can be difficult to find something to fill the void. For a start, there are few modern retailers operating on the scale of a traditional department store. While some malls may be able to find a cinema to fill the space, many already have one. If a mall were to lose multiple department stores at the same time, the drop in footfall would be catastrophic.

The article cites a number of salient points by Robert J. Gibbs, President of Gibbs Planning and author of *Principles of Urban Retail Planning and Development*.

- Failed malls are easily re-developable into other land uses – keeping the mall structure and turning them into employment centres, community colleges and city halls.
- Redevelopments don't necessarily mean retail is completely removed from the equation, but rather scaled down to a more suitable level – dropping retail space from one million square feet to 100,000 square feet – a level far more sustainable in the long term.
- Another alternative: tear the mall down and redevelop the property into a walkable and dense mixed-use community. In a relatively small space, retail, housing and employment are all connected, reducing the average person's dependence on a car and encouraging more integrated communities.

The Berkshire mall property sits on just over 86 acres and has 656,071 s.f. of finished area. The Target department store is connected to the mall, but is a separately owned 8.22 acre parcel with 124,490 s.f. of finished area. While the Berkshire Mall is not a 1 million+ s.f. mega mall, like many of the more successful malls these days are, it is still potentially the largest redevelopment site in Berkshire County. It is 2.5 times the size of the largest existing redevelopment site in the county (Pittsfield Airport) and has 2.7 times the amount of building space as the largest commercial property available (234 Union Street, North Adams).

Currently, there is a bill in the state legislature that would allow the Baker Hill Road District to acquire the mall should it become available. This, of course, would require a willingness to sell upon the part of the mall's current owner; however, should the transaction occur, this could be an important first step in redevelopment of the mall property.

A site of this size lends itself to a mixed-use development as referred to in the Robert Gibbs quote above. Lanesborough's Economic Development Committee identified housing of all types, particularly senior housing, as both a need and an opportunity. A continuum of senior housing, ranging from independent living to assisted living, would work particularly well in a redevelopment project like this. Combining smaller lot homes, town homes, and a traditional assisted living facility on the same campus as office and retail uses would create a vibrant mixed-use community.

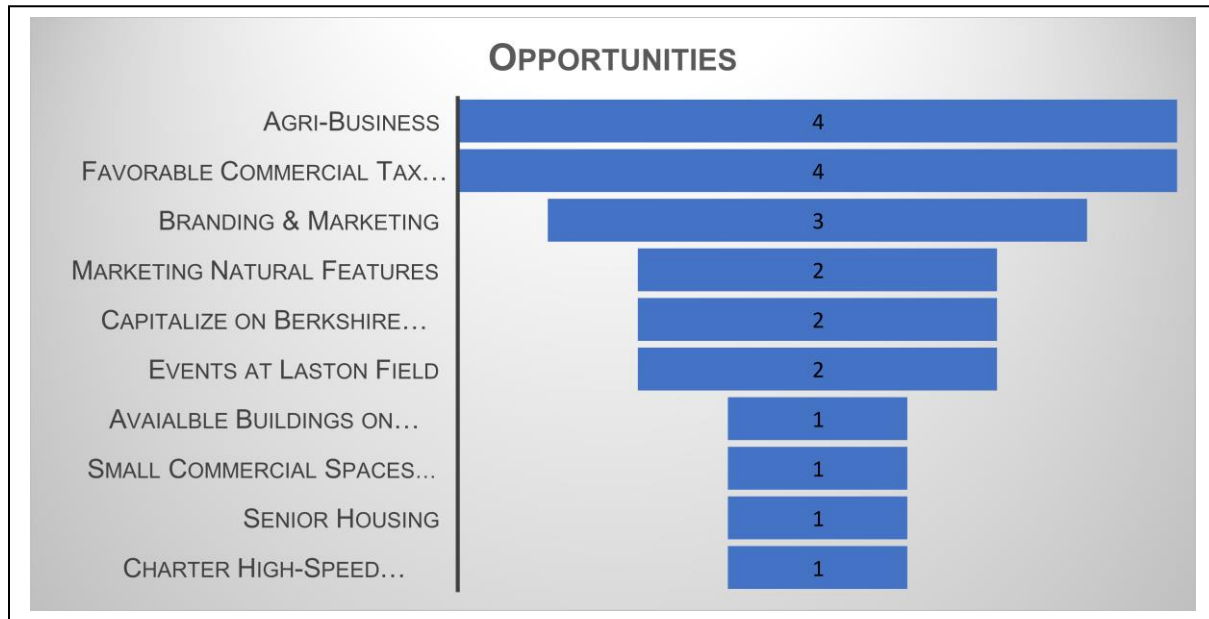
## **Route 7 Corridor Improvements**

The Economic Development Committee felt that improving the appearance of the Route 7 Corridor would make Lanesborough a more enticing place, and that these improvements would encourage people to patronize Lanesborough's businesses, and consider Lanesborough as a place to locate their business.

Some improvements, as mentioned above would be identifying a gateway and a "Town Square" and creating entry signs with a unique Lanesborough logo speak directly to marketing. Also, adding attractive street lights to the core area was identified as an improvement, and, if feasible, removing overhead power and communications lines and switching to underground utilities. It has also been noted that Lanesborough lacks consistency in the use of signage throughout the community. If, and when, Lanesborough develops a Master Plan and updates its Zoning Ordinance, development of a sign ordinance that meets contemporary practice would be a benefit.

## Opportunities

**Chart 14 – Prioritized Opportunities**



**Agri-Business.** There are a dozen farms, orchards, and stables located in Lanesborough. 1,670 acres, or nearly 9% of the land is used for agriculture, although much of this is pasture land rather than active farming. This compares to the 1,096 acres of residential land use, or just under 6%. The vast majority of land in Lanesborough is forest, more than 13,500 acres, or nearly 72%.

**Favorable Commercial Tax Rate.** Lanesborough's tax rate of \$20.89/thousand is nearly half of neighboring Pittsfield's; and unlike many communities, Lanesborough does not use a split rate, so that its residential and non-residential tax rates are the same.

**Branding and Marketing.** As discussed above in the Needs section, Branding and Marketing presents multiple opportunities. Lanesborough's emphasis on agri-business, its favorable tax rate, natural features, and access to the best the Berkshires has to offer in year-round recreation activities are all things to be marketed by Lanesborough. Bill Laston Memorial Park, a centrally located recreation facility, offers ball fields and a

walking trail. This park is also an excellent location to hold festivals and other events to market Lanesborough and its unique assets.

## **GOALS, STRATEGIES & OBJECTIVES**

### **Goal 1 - Create a diverse economy with a wide range of employment opportunities.**

**Strategy** - Communicate Lanesborough's favorable tax rate for commercial properties, available commercial spaces, and developable parcels to current and potential investors, while sharing information with current and potential residents about the school system, housing opportunities, and quality of life.

**Objective** - Improve communication with both business and residential community members, as well as municipal and state officials, while actively planning for improvements to sewer and water infrastructure as well as access to transportation options.

### **Goal 2 – Recognize Berkshire Mall Redevelopment as a priority for the town of Lanesborough.**

**Strategy** - Explore market feasibility and possible redevelopment scenarios through a methodical process in cooperation with Berkshire Regional Planning Commission and the Baker Hill Road District, as well as our elected officials at the state and federal levels.

**Objective** - Pursue grant funding and technical assistance for the purposes of researching, assessing, documenting, visioning and marketing for the Berkshire Mall location.

### **Goal 3 – Raise the profile of Lanesborough as tourism destination.**

**Strategy** - Promote the town as a gateway to the natural features that make the Berkshires unique, including the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail, Mount Greylock, Jiminy Peak, Ramblewild, and Pontoosuc Lake, along with golf courses and many equestrian and agritourism destinations.

**Objective** - Increase visitation to Lanesborough's website which will house content specifically geared toward visitors, including appealing content about the town's assets, and specific information about dining, lodging, and recreation.

### **Goal 4 - Establish a welcoming environment for business creation and sustainable growth.**

**Strategy -** Leverage our network of resources to support the business community of Lanesborough, offering connectivity and marketing opportunities. Work collaboratively with planning and zoning boards.

**Objective -** Complete the installation of high-speed broadband internet access. Improve and maintain our business directory both online and in print, and continue to bring the business community together for in-person networking events.

# APPENDIX A

## Aggregated Survey Results and Open-Ended Responses

The Lanesborough Economic Development Plan is built upon a foundation of data and analysis gathered from various sources, including:

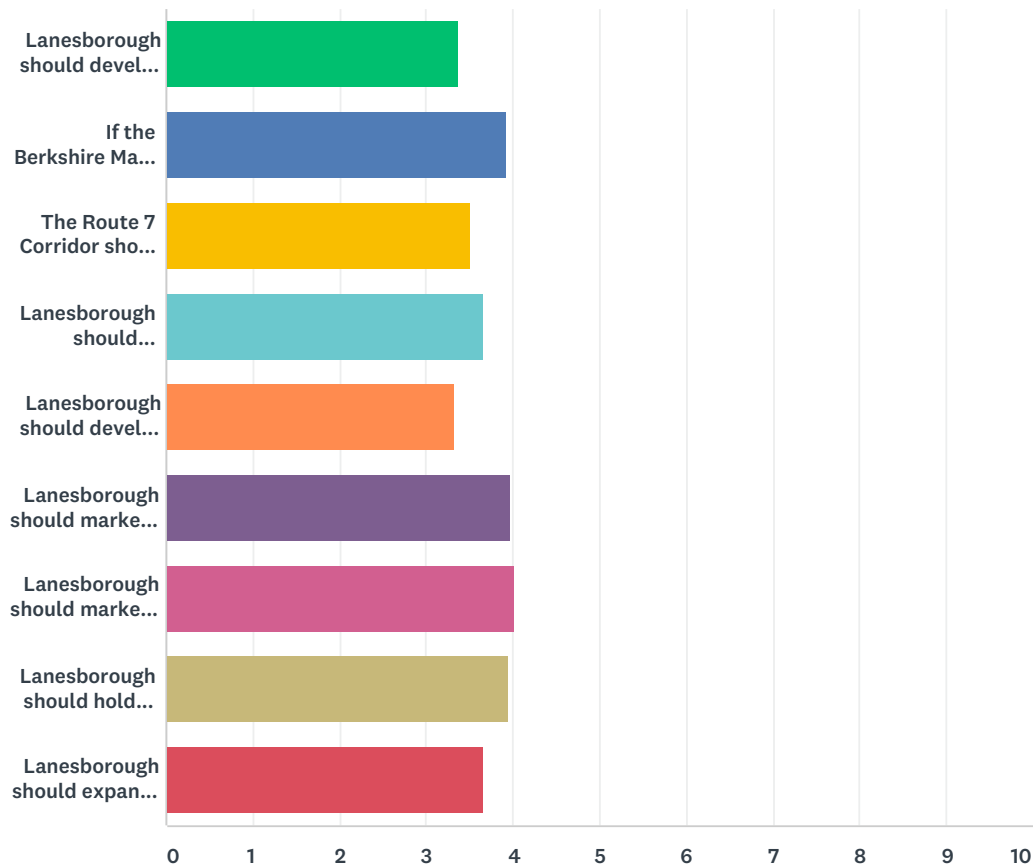
- U. S. Census 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
- the Massachusetts Executive Office of Workforce Development
- a facilitated **SWOT analysis that examined the town's strengths and weaknesses** and the opportunities and threats specific to economic development.
- a community-wide survey which both asked for respondent's level of concurrence with pre-formulated statements, and solicited their open-ended feedback on topics which Lanesborough should prioritize.

The aggregated responses/ratings as well as open-ended responses regarding prioritization are provided here (see Appendix A). A full record of anonymous, individual responses is available at Town Hall.



## Q1 Please rate the statements below by indicating the extent with which you agree

Answered: 237 Skipped: 1



	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Lanesborough should develop a marketing and branding campaign	9.21% 21	9.21% 21	34.65% 79	29.82% 68	17.11% 39	228	3.36
If the Berkshire Mall is redeveloped, it should become mixed-use (e.g., retail, office, commercial, housing)	4.31% 10	6.47% 15	15.52% 36	39.66% 92	34.05% 79	232	3.93
The Route 7 Corridor should be improved (e.g., attractive street lights, bike lanes, sidewalks, landscaping, etc.)	10.39% 24	9.96% 23	22.51% 52	32.03% 74	25.11% 58	231	3.52
Lanesborough should encourage development of senior housing, including an assisted living facility	7.33% 17	7.76% 18	22.84% 53	35.78% 83	26.29% 61	232	3.66
Lanesborough should develop a Gateway and/or Town Square (e.g., welcome signs with unique logo, landscaping, improved parking, etc.)	9.96% 23	15.15% 35	28.14% 65	26.41% 61	20.35% 47	231	3.32
Lanesborough should market and promote local agri-business (e.g., farms, orchards, stables)	4.72% 11	4.72% 11	15.02% 35	38.63% 90	36.91% 86	233	3.98

Lanesborough should market its natural features and capitalize on what makes the Berkshires unique (e.g., forest lands, Mount Greylock, Jiminy Peak, Ashuwillticook Trail, Pontoosuc Lake)	4.31% 10	6.03% 14	10.78% 25	42.24% 98	36.64% 85	232	4.01
Lanesborough should hold events and festivals at Bill Laston Memorial Park	2.55% 6	2.98% 7	22.98% 54	40.00% 94	31.49% 74	235	3.95
Lanesborough should expand the sewer district	9.09% 21	9.09% 21	24.68% 57	21.21% 49	35.93% 83	231	3.66

## Q2 What else should Lanesborough prioritize? Add your own thoughts!

Answered: 55   Skipped: 183

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	Lanesborough should send an envelope with their tax and water bills.	9/7/2017 1:33 PM
2	We have nothing here in the Berkshires. We need more retail to choose from.	9/7/2017 1:30 PM
3	Reliable and strong communications network(internet) for ALL residents.	8/28/2017 3:49 PM
4	Connect the rail trail to route 7 via summer st. sidewalk/bike lane Neutralize future tax increases by promoting small business/economic development along route 7 (create a walkable town area between Laston Park and the Pittsfield line with adequate parking and businesses that the route 7 travelers will be attracted to stop at. Expand/capitalize on popularity of the Old Forge, Krispy Cone, Bakers, Skyline, new Lakeview development, etc.	8/16/2017 2:25 PM
5	Get the taxes down please. Barely afford to live here. Part of the mall could be used for Assisted living and or Home for elderly and make it a small town in itself where residents would shop and yet be safe. Bring in more business with incentives for a number of years. Need a five star restaurant on main street, that would be exposure. Similar to Mario's in New York.	8/6/2017 6:55 PM
6	attracting and sustaining businesses so that our taxes can stay at a reasonable rate. They are too high for the services we are offered.	8/5/2017 12:59 PM
7	Bringing in new businesses.	8/2/2017 5:17 PM
8	We love living in Lanesboro, but we really don't get a lot for the amount of taxes we pay. No garbage pick-up and/or a transfer station, NO sewer or pay big bucks to get it, the tiny beach area could be cleaned up, put benches/seating, it looks terrible. Offer summer time activities, music, etc.?	8/1/2017 11:08 AM
9	If for some reason we are going to be required to continue to pay for the Berkshire Mall, then make it a space that is free and accessible to everyone. Even if that means razing the building and making a park area. Thank you.	7/31/2017 1:00 PM
10	Economic Development. Would like to know how to have input on this. Mall would be perfect for indoor activities - see Flight - trampolines and Kick ball, Sr. Living.	7/30/2017 8:49 AM
11	Needs a brewery. What have other towns done with failing malls? Maybe BCC or MCLA could use the mall if classrm space was designed.	7/26/2017 10:16 PM
12	Get a competent individual to run the mall. Also as you are aware Mass legalized the use of marijuana. I think Lanesboro should strongly consider areas in town for indoor growing operations for medicinal marijuana(the type used for children with seizure disorders-see Youtube Charlotte's Web) The potheads do not get all stoned up on this type of cannabis due to low THC levels. The revenue is be substantial. Lanesboro has GOT to think out of the box. PS. I am a healthcare provider not a pothead.	7/26/2017 9:44 PM
13	I hate this town. I have lived here 20 years and have been overtaxed for most of it. I have paid 8 to 10,000 more than I should have due to your over assessments and your somehow adding rooms and square footage to my house. I live on a dirt road that's poorly maintained and I have to close windows in the summer to keep dust out. What makes it worse is how people involved in the town government are ridiculously under taxed, their roads are better maintained and they get breaks on anything having to do with their properties. I don't care what you do, my hope is to leave. The only thing that I feel that I actually get for my money is the police dept. They are great.	7/25/2017 10:50 PM
14	Lowering taxes.	7/25/2017 4:41 PM
15	Upgrade police station. Create senior center - (space by post office?)	7/25/2017 1:03 PM
16	Attracting young families to the town.	7/23/2017 3:30 PM
17	sidewalks	7/23/2017 11:29 AM
18	Bring in businesses	7/19/2017 3:02 PM
19	Reduce taxes	7/19/2017 11:04 AM

20	Attracting businesses to the existing empty storefronts already existing on Route 7. Investigate establishing a senior or community center, maybe at the former Vacation Village site.	7/18/2017 12:07 PM
21	Lanesborough should regular update the town website with current Events, meetings, etc. If not the website, invest in a bulletin system similar to Cheshire F.D.	7/17/2017 9:49 PM
22	Lanesboro should be coming up with plans to REDUCE spending and reduce taxes for residents. Neighboring Hancock has some of the lowest taxes in the state, and we have some of the highest. Address the abandoned buildings/ houses. Families are leaving in droves. Make Lanesboro livable again.	7/16/2017 7:48 AM
23	Retirement living/assisted living should be part of the redevelopment of the Mall. 'Gated community' on a second floor or higher and medical, dental, chiro, etc + indoor sports, restaurants, arts workshops, shuttles to Jiminy, Williamstown, Greylock. Resulting in lower taxes so more are attracted to the town and less are driven away.	7/14/2017 10:09 PM
24	Sewer through center of town so businesses can expand and residential can't afford elaborate septic systems because of town or state lack of maintenance to Brook and wetlands.	7/14/2017 9:36 AM
25	expand water district to Berkshire Village and the Berkshire Mall	7/13/2017 11:09 AM
26	Sewer is the biggest need, now that internet has been addressed. While the expansion is happening on Narragansett, please consider running it up the side streets; everyone would be very happy to be rid of their septic, and it would be better for the soil/water quality around the lake! Are there any environmental grants we could apply for to make this happen more quickly?	7/13/2017 7:08 AM
27	Email list and regular email newsletter to town residents. Little investment and will promote more engagement from residents in town meetings, votes and overall feeling of community.	7/12/2017 11:00 AM
28	Lowering taxes so elderly people can afford continue to live in their current homes	7/11/2017 12:37 PM
29	We need to model after down town Dalton or Adams or Barrington - we need a LONG term plan to make a "center of town" with cool services all located in a central area. How about developing a new town hall, and indoor ice skating rink (would be a money maker for sure) and an outdoor mountain bike park	7/11/2017 12:31 PM
30	The old rusted sign at Memorial Park needs to come down. It is such an eyesore. Senior living should happen but NOT at the cost of the taxpayers.	7/11/2017 10:06 AM
31	Add to the agri-business a marijuana dispensary and growing area as the town could benefit from the added revenue in our cash strapped town. And no I do not use marijuana myself.	7/10/2017 12:55 PM
32	whatever will increase the towns tax base, thereby encouraging people to move to Lanesborough as well as stay in Lanesborough. right now, it is quite difficult to pay property taxes for those middle income residents as well as retirees.	7/8/2017 8:53 PM
33	Developing an identity in the county	7/8/2017 6:01 PM
34	provide fair water rates to businesses by allowing metering which would then allow the town to be eligible for grants to expand the sewer district.	7/8/2017 6:33 AM
35	At the mall there is space for stores that would cater to youth and 20-40 population, there needs to be work done on soliciting these types of businesses to the area, there is also space for laser tag/sports arena type area at the mall....more community events!	7/7/2017 11:28 PM
36	1- should buy the vacation village property for gov offices and community center , post office, coffee shop...a town square. Use berkshire mall for retail and some professional office space... 2- set up a community bulletin board and public interest alert system on their web site.in which live alerts could be broadcast ie... look for suspicious cars, house break alerts and a system where anon tips can come in from public. 3. Have a senior center... use Dalton as a perfect example...	7/7/2017 10:02 PM
37	I would love to see our town encourage the use of sustainable, renewable energy and environmentally-friendly practices, so that our town could someday become a positive example of a healthy, active community which generates its own energy.	7/7/2017 9:11 PM
38	Econ development should focus on quality of life (education, nature, sense of community) to maintain and build reputation as a nice place to live. A town center will support this and foster more social interaction and cohesion	7/7/2017 6:58 PM
39	Lanesboro should be allowing residents to have metered water. It is very unfair to charge a flat rate to all of the residents.	7/7/2017 2:19 PM
40	Common sense	7/7/2017 1:21 PM

41	The town has lost a considerable amount of revenue with the mall in difficulty. We need to bring in businesses, tourism and/or other means of revenue. Seeing that our town logo is a wyvern and J.K. Rowling has now made our Mt Greylock the home of Ilvermorny School of witchcraft and wizardry, and, that it was established with Irish beginnings, just like our town of Lanesborough. I think we should use this to help us better our town.	7/7/2017 12:25 PM
42	Anything that will bring revenue to the town and reduce the taxes. Bring a big box store into the mall like a Lowes to service the North County towns, look into converting half or it into a convention hall for smaller corporations. Do not let Dollar Generals and Dollar Trees become our draw. Try to get a large hotel chain to build in Lanesboro and market to the Williams College families that need accommodations for various events. Become the North County place to stay when visiting instead of Lenox or South County.	7/7/2017 9:17 AM
43	Town water to all residents. Grant writers are needed.	7/6/2017 7:01 PM
44	The speed limit on Summer street should be reduced from 35 mph to 25 mph. Being all residential the speed limit should be reduced. During the school year the 20mph school zone speed limit MUST be enforced. Vehicles go way too fast knowing the 20mph is never enforced.	7/6/2017 3:40 PM
45	I have noticed the historical markers for the 250th anniversary. I would like to see an informational plaque on the bike path at the Berkshire Glassworks intersection detailing the history and even the history of the ski slope on North Mountain Road. Also it would be a huge benefit to be able to get up to Target via the bike path.	7/6/2017 11:17 AM
46	The mall should be a large focus. It is such a sad site to see. Tax breaks or lower rent rates need to be done to attract businesses. People go out of their way to Lee to go to the outlet mall there. That should be our mall brining the business to Lanesborough. Rather than having events at Bill Latson Memeorial park, why not designate one of the larger retail spots, like where best buy was, for town events. That will bring people to the mall and possibly more business would open.	7/6/2017 10:00 AM
47	developing some type of centralized "downtown" with things that give people a desire to be there- such as a coffee shop - like tunnel city or panera - that allows people access to wifi while they relax and have coffee +/- socialize; whole foods/organic market; tourist info spot: etc	7/6/2017 7:11 AM
48	Keeping a strong school system!	7/5/2017 10:04 PM
49	Walkability of town, expand sewer lines, community center to build sense of community	7/5/2017 8:31 AM
50	A set of signal lights at the intersection of Bull Hill Rd and Rt. 7. Very dangerous intersection. Have seen a fair share of nasty accidents there in my time.	7/4/2017 8:06 PM
51	Keep infrastructure and public areas in good condition. Those are the "first impression" items that visitors notice.	7/4/2017 6:29 AM
52	how about cutting the mil rate 25% and cutting spending? this town has never met an expense it doesn't like. how can a town of not even 3000 people have such a burdensome and horrid tax rate?? total craziness.	7/4/2017 12:00 AM
53	Strengthening ambulance, health and emergency services, streamlining town administration. Overall, town employees do a good job.	7/3/2017 8:18 PM
54	Build a new and adequate Police Dept. Headquarters and tear down the dump that they are currently forced to occupy	7/3/2017 12:09 PM
55	consolidate services as much as possible in town government, municipal offices (Water/Sewer/Highway) to bring costs down for businesses to enable more businesses to thrive in town.	6/10/2017 8:34 AM