

INTRODUCTION

What is a Master Plan?

A master plan is a long-range strategic plan for a community. It captures the vision of where the community wants to be in the future and identifies strategies the town can undertake to advance that vision.

Massachusetts General Law 41, Section 81D requires planning boards to prepare master plans for their communities. Master plans should be regularly updated to reflect community changes. The Town of Barre undertook its master plan process under these provisions.

This master plan was created by and for Barre residents. It is a statement of how the community would like to navigate development, economy, and society over the next 10-20 years. The plan was developed using accepted frameworks and best practices but is a product of local effort and input. It summarizes community preferences and should be used to guide town leadership and voters when crucial decisions regarding spending, infrastructure projects, and zoning bylaws are made.

This master plan presents an opportunity for Barre residents

to unite around a common vision for the community. Many of its recommendations are interdisciplinary and will “take a village” to implement. The implementation matrix at the end of this plan provides timelines, priorities, and required stakeholders for each recommendation.

It is important to note that in Massachusetts, master plans do not create, mandate, or implement anything. This plan is a roadmap based on conditions, preferences, and information at the time of plan publication. It is expected that the needs of Barre will evolve over the lifespan of this plan.

Thank you to the volunteers who contributed their valuable time and energy. Thank you to Town staff, boards, and committees for their input. Finally, thank you to the Barre Master Plan Steering Committee for guiding the process and shepherding the plan to completion.



*Residents participate in a workshop to identify community needs and preferences.
Photo Source: CMRPC*



PRIOR PLANNING

The 2025 Master Plan builds on prior planning efforts undertaken by the Town of Barre in recent years.

2022 Town of Barre Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan

The Center for Living and Working, Inc., in partnership with James M. Mazik, AICP, prepared a self-evaluation and transition plan for the Town to determine its compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

2021 Town of Barre Rapid Recovery Plan

CMRPC assisted the Town with a Rapid Recovery Plan that assessed economic challenges and COVID-19- related impacts to commercial areas.

2020 Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Plan

This plan uncovers the top hazards facing the Town of Barre based on climate predictions, the state of Town infrastructure, and projected trends.

2019 Hazard Mitigation Plan Update

This plan identifies the natural hazards facing the Town of Barre. It assesses vulnerabilities of critical facilities, infrastructure, residents, and businesses, and presents recommendations on how to mitigate the negative effects of natural hazards.

2019 Economic Development Strategic Plan and 2021 South Barre Village Strategic Plan

In this two-part project, CMRPC identified economic development assets and opportunities with a special focus on South Barre.

2018 Quabbin Educational and Municipal Partnership Recommendations Report

This report reviews school strategies and building reuse scenarios. It explores cross-jurisdictional collaboration opportunities between the Quabbin Regional School District (QRSD) and

other school districts, opportunities for shared services and joint procurement, and avenues to support economic development.

2010 Barre Open Space & Recreation Plan

An Open Space and Recreation Committee identified opportunities to improve and enhance the Town's open space and recreation resources. The official plan was completed in 2021.

2008 Barre Reconnaissance Report

The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, CMRPC, and the North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership collaborated to bring the Heritage Landscape Inventory Program to fifteen communities in Central Massachusetts. The program sought to help communities identify a wide range of landscape resources, particularly those that were significant and unprotected, and to provide communities with strategies for preserving heritage landscapes.



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Town of Barre established this master plan using the American Planning Association Standards for Sustaining Places. These standards are foundational to the vision, goals, strategies, and action items that comprise the master plan. They informed all aspects of the master plan and should be used as guiding principles for implementation.¹

Livable Built Environment

Ensure that all elements of the built environment including land use, transportation, housing, energy, and infrastructure work together to provide sustainable, green places for living, working, and recreating, with a high quality of life.

Harmony with Nature

Ensure the contributions of natural resources to human well-being are explicitly recognized and valued and that maintaining their health is a primary objective.

Interwoven Equity

Ensure fairness and equity in providing for the housing, services, health, safety, and livelihood needs of all citizens and groups.

Healthy Community

Ensure that public health needs are recognized and addressed through provisions for healthy foods, physical activity, access to recreation, health care, environmental justice, and safety.

Responsible Regionalism

Ensure that all local proposals account for, connect with, and support the plans of adjacent jurisdictions and the region.

Authentic Participation

Ensure that the planning process actively involves all segments of the community in analyzing issues, generating visions, developing plans, and monitoring outcomes.

Accountable Implementation

Ensure that responsibilities for carrying out the plan are clearly stated, along

with metrics for evaluating progress and achieving desired outcomes.

Resilient Economy

Ensure the community is prepared to deal with positive and negative changes in its economic health and initiate sustainable urban development and redevelopment strategies that foster green business growth and build reliance on local assets.

¹ Godschalk, David; Rouse, David. "Sustaining Places: Best Practices for Comprehensive Plans". American Planning Association (2001).



GLOSSARY

Policy

A statement of principles that underlies a plan's overall strategy and directs decision-making.²

Vision Statement

A statement that describes a community's long-term aspirations based on a shared purpose and values. Expresses uniqueness and standards of excellence, focusing on people and quality of life. Provides a framework or hook upon which to hang ideas or information. The foundation that supports more specific goals and objectives.³

Goal

A general statement about desirable future conditions the community seeks to achieve to realize its vision for the future.

Strategy

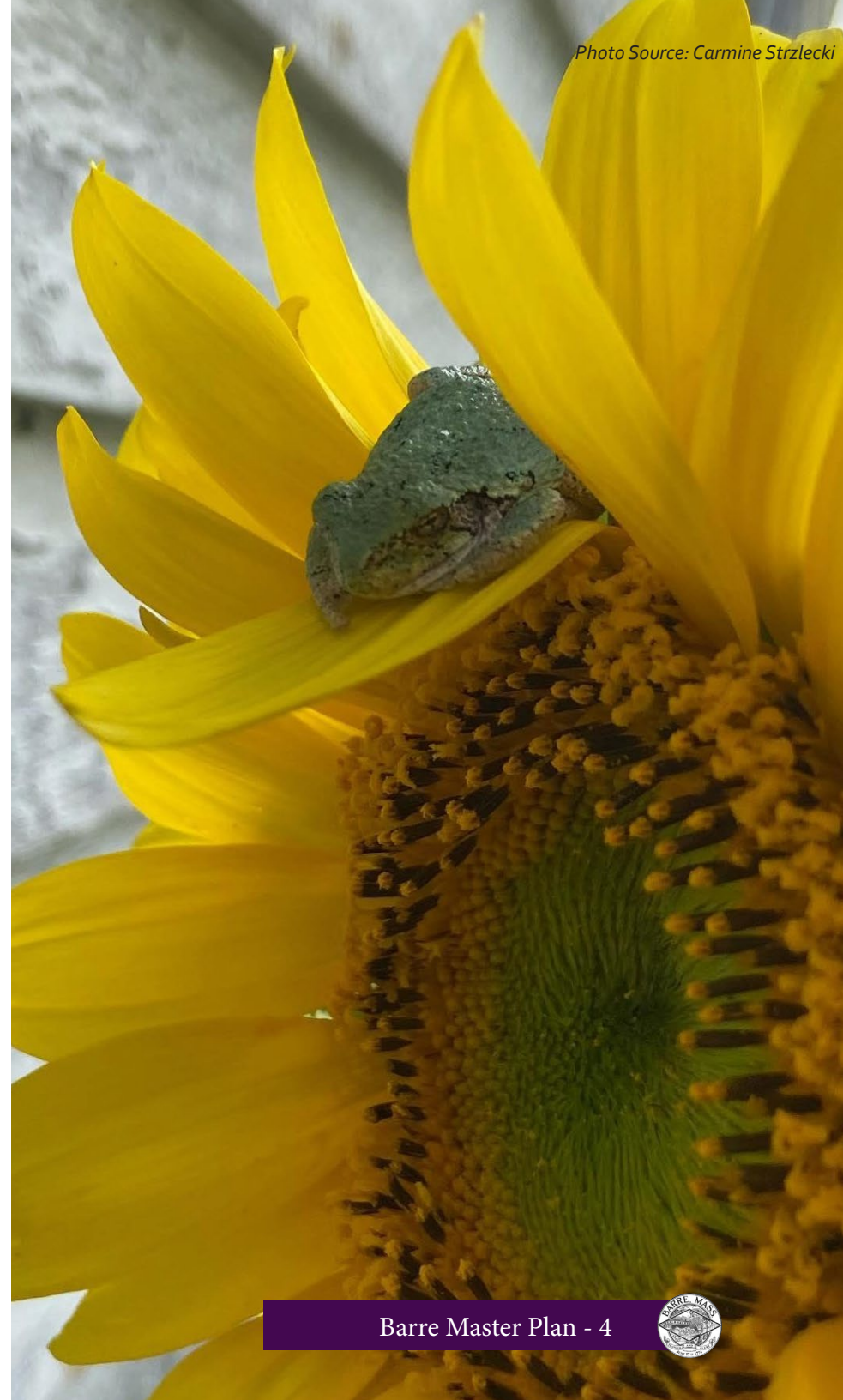
An approach designed to achieve or accomplish a goal.

Action Item

A task carried out within a specific time frame as part of the strategy to achieve an outcome; a directive intended to guide the implementation of strategies.

2 For a discussion on developing policies, goals, objectives, and action items, see, Rouse, David and Rocky Piro. *The Comprehensive Plan: Sustainable, Resilient, and Equitable Communities for the 21st Century*. Routledge, 2021, 41.

3 Haines, Anna. "Using Visioning in a Comprehensive Planning Process." University of Wisconsin Extension (2001).



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Meaningful community engagement is at the heart of this plan. Resident ideas were collected through a master plan survey, a student survey, and a workshop. Nearly seven hundred people answered the Phase I surveys, and over one hundred people attended the visioning workshop. Input from survey results, workshop discussions, stakeholder interviews, and Master Plan Steering Committee meetings helped inform the vision and priorities in this plan. Survey and workshop results are in Appendix A. Secondary data such as census data and analysis is in Appendix B.



Residents participate in a workshop to identify community needs and preferences. Over 100 Barre residents participated in the event. Photo Source: CMRPC




Barre Community Visioning Night at Stone Cow Brewery

Help inform Barre's future!



What is this about?

Barre is in the process of updating its municipal master plan. This plan will serve as a future vision and policy guide for the town. This visioning workshop is a key opportunity for community members to voice their concerns and interests for Barre's future.

Benefits of visioning:

- + The master plan will be better aligned with the interests of the community
- + Barre residents will get an opportunity to learn more about the interests and needs of their neighbors



Who can attend?

This workshop is open to the public. Free pizza to the first 100 guests! Kids activities on site.



Where?

Stone Cow Brewery
500 West St. B, Barre,
MA 01005



When?

Wed, March 1st, 2023
Time: 5:00-7:30.

Registration is appreciated (but not mandatory). To register, visit townofbarremasterplan.com



WELCOME TO BARRE

The Town of Barre was named after Isaac Barré, a member of the British Parliament who opposed the taxation of America.⁴ It is a rural community of approximately 5,500 people.⁵ Located 61 miles from Boston and 22 miles northwest of Worcester, it is located in the center of Massachusetts.

Its 45 square miles include three villages: Barre (also known as Barre

Center), South Barre, and Barre Plains. It is located along the Lost Villages Scenic Byway, a picturesque stretch of Route 122 whose name nods to the relocation of various villages to make way for the Quabbin Reservoir. A bedroom community, Barre offers quiet living within reasonable commuting distance of the Worcester and Boston metro areas.

Barre is governed by a three-member Board of Selectmen and an Open Town Meeting form of government. It is part of the Quabbin Regional School District and home to the Quabbin Regional Middle High School.

Barre is known for its unspoiled landscapes and small-town character. Rolling fields, country lanes, and a slow pace are central to the local identity. The town is characterized by a historic town common surrounded by rural single-family housing and agricultural land. Pockets of commercial development dot major roadways, and limited denser housing development is found in certain villages.

Located in Barre Center, Barre Common is a focal point of the community. A weekly farmers' market and other events bring together residents and visitors for festive moments. Small shops and public buildings ring the Common, with the Town Hall located a few blocks up the street. The Barre



*A Barre firefighter participates in festivities on the Town Common.
Photo source: Town Common District Facebook.*

⁴ Town of Barre
<https://www.townofbarre.com/about>

⁵ United States Census Bureau, "American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates", 2023.



Players Theater draws community theater patrons to the village center throughout the year. In South Barre, small pocket parks, pavilions, and playgrounds serve a somewhat denser residential neighborhood.

Those seeking spiritual or natural retreat are often drawn to Barre. The town has several spiritual centers, including a Buddhist monastery. The Barre Falls Recreation Area, Mohawk Trail, and the Quabbin Reservoir are popular among nature lovers. The largest inland water body in Massachusetts, the reservoir offers hiking, walking trails, bird watching, snowshoeing, and scenic views, within and beyond Barre. The town is also popular with ATV users and horse riders, who frequent the lesser-known paths that crisscross Barre's forests.

With 75% of the town forested, it is possible to travel miles under a quiet canopy. A rich industrial history also sets Barre apart. During the Industrial Revolution, Barre became known for producing farming equipment and palm leaf hats. During the Civil War, it supplied much of the gunpowder used by the Union Army.⁶ Vestiges of this history can be found in Barre Plains and South Barre, where immigrant families settled to work in the mills. Former

mill buildings, worker housing, and the historic Polish/Lithuanian and Italian neighborhoods speak to the recent past, memorialized by Nornay Park.

The town is also historically noteworthy for the case of Quock Walker, an enslaved person who, in 1781, fled his captors, sued for freedom, and won. Walker's escape from Worcester to his hometown near present-day Barre is celebrated across Massachusetts each July 8 ("Emancipation Day"). Walker's case abolished slavery in the State of Massachusetts, with the courts determining that slavery was contrary to the State Constitution and Bible. Barre residents are proud of their connection to this landmark case, which represents the earliest abolition of slavery in the United States.⁷

Barre is predominantly Caucasian, middle-class, and English-speaking. Approximately 90% of the residents identify as white alone, with bi-racial Black or African American and white residents representing the most sizeable minority (5.4%).⁸ English is spoken at home by 98% of residents. Compared to nearby communities and Massachusetts, the town has modest per-capita and median household incomes (\$37,463 and \$81,109, respectively).⁹



A rendering of Quock Walker, a formerly enslaved resident of present-day Barre who sued for his freedom in 1781 and won. Walker's lawsuit verdict resulted in the first abolition of slavery in the United States. Photo source: Barremahistory.com

6 Historic New England. "BARRE, Massachusetts" <https://newenglandtowns.org/massachusetts/barre>

7 Peddle, Meghan "Quock Walker" <https://barremahistory.wixsite.com/quockwalker/quock-and-elizabeth-walker>

8 United States Census Bureau, "American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates", 2023.

9 United States Census Bureau, "American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates", 2023.



By various metrics, South Barre is disadvantaged compared to the rest of Barre, with a younger and poorer population and a substantial portion of the population residing in older rental properties. Until recently, it was classified as an environmental justice area. In 2020, the median household income in South Barre was \$76,859, 75.8% of the statewide average, and 80.4% of Barre.¹⁰

Barre’s population has grown since the 1960s, with a boom between 1990 and 2010. However, growth slowed in recent decades, at just 5.4 percent between 2000 and 2010 and 2.6 percent between 2010 and 2020.¹¹ 2040 Population projections for the town vary. UMass Donahue Institute forecasts slight decline to about 5,000 residents, while CMRPC projections estimate significant growth to over 6,000 residents in 2040.¹²

Although Barre is one of the more affordable towns in the region with most homes valued between \$200,000 and \$499,999,¹³ there is still a disparity between housing needs and availability that needs to be addressed. Approximately 43.5% of renters and 19.1% of homeowners are housing cost-burdened, and a shortage of modestly priced units threatens the tenure of

retirees, early-career workers, young families, and those who grew up in Barre and wish to remain in or return to their hometown.¹⁴

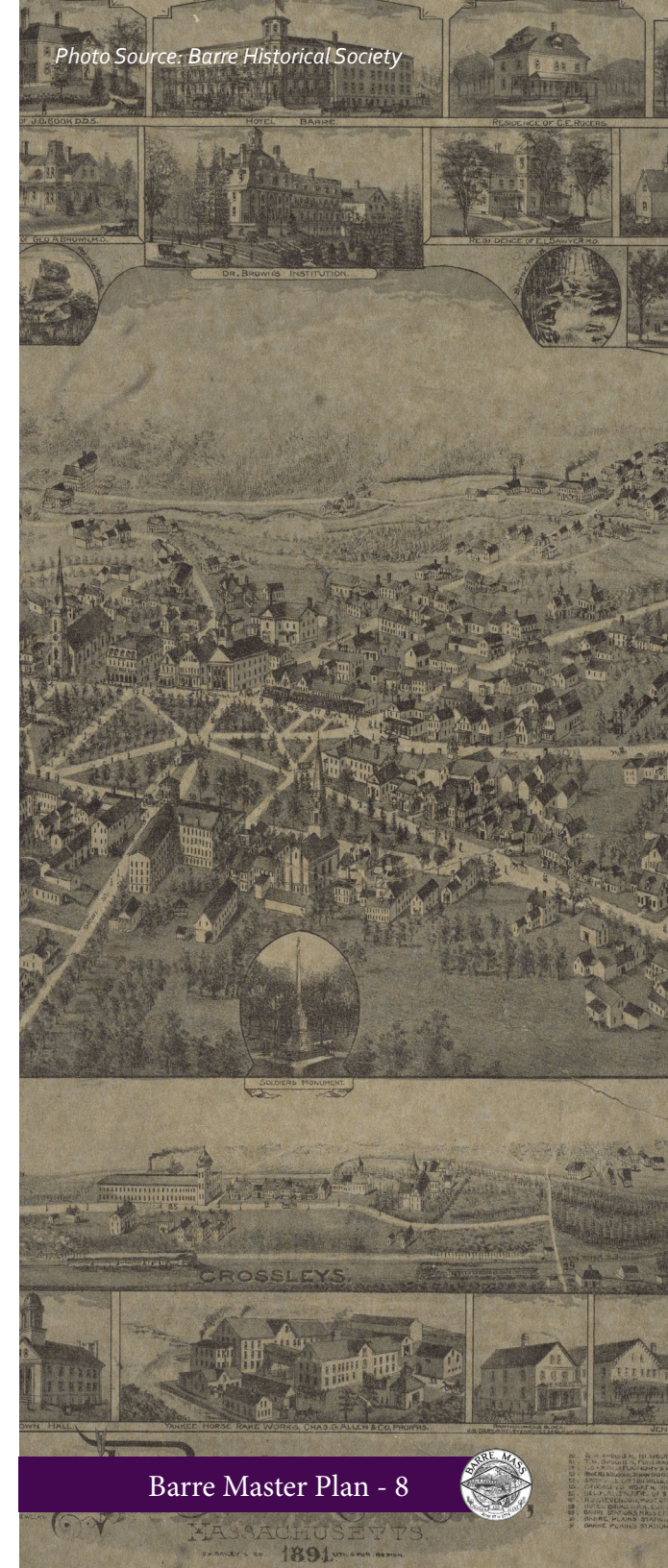
10 United States Census Bureau, “American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates”, 2020.

11 United States Census Bureau, “Decennial Census” 2000, 2010, 2020.

12 UMass Donahue Institute Massachusetts Population Projections https://donahue.umass.edu/business-groups/economic-public-policy-research/massachusetts-population-estimates-program/population-projections#projections_dashboard
CMRPC Regional Projections <https://cmrpc.org/data-center/socio-economic-projections/>

13 United States Census Bureau, “American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates”, 2023.

14 United States Census Bureau, “American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates”, 2023.



VISION STATEMENT

“Barre is a tranquil and alert small town with a strong sense of community. We seek to honor our agricultural heritage and cherish the farms, open spaces, and small local businesses that define our community by balancing preservation and growth to maintain rural charm, vibrancy, and high quality education and public services.”

Creating the vision statement

Visioning is a process in which communities define the future they want. A vision statement lays out what the community should look like physically, socially, and environmentally in the next ten to twenty years.

This vision statement is based on input from hundreds of Barre residents. It guides the entire Master Plan, with all goals, strategies, and action items falling underneath.

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“We love Barre because of the quiet, rural way of life. We love the farms and small businesses... But we are hoping that new development does not change the character and quietness of the town. That is what makes this place truly special and wonderful.”

“Barre is a great rural town. More can be done to make it more appealing. Center of town needs updating. Glad to see new planning in town government. Everyone needs change in their lives.”

“Cluster zoning around all villages rather than widespread roadside development.”

“We need to carefully preserve our rural character, while encouraging small businesses, locally owned.”

“Keep new construction to the ‘town centers’ and keep as much land for agriculture, recreation and preservation as possible.”

“Focus on quality and not quantity. There’s a reason Barre is pretty nice compared to other places. Don’t screw it up”

“We URGENTLY need better public transportation for seniors. The current senior van services are extremely inadequate”

(2023 Community Survey)

