

# Current Conditions & Future Decisions



*Becket Open Space and Recreation Advisory Committee  
12-5-22*

# Tonight's Agenda

1. The Planning Process – Major Findings
2. Next Steps
3. Interactive Feedback – Give us your Thoughts



Becket Open  
Space &  
Recreation  
Advisory  
Committee

Al Blake

Ken  
Smith

Cindy  
Delpapa

Meredyth  
Babcock\*

Karen  
Karlberg

Jeff  
Wilkinson

Larisa  
Shpitalnik

*\*Thank you Meredyth for the great photos!*

# Welcome

- Open Space & Recreation Plan:
  - Document existing conditions.
  - A blueprint to balance conservation and future development.
  - Maintain a vision of a rural Becket for future generations.
  
- Bonus: The plan will increase Becket's eligibility for some state grants



# What is open space?





# Vast intact connections



# Becket's Recreational Opportunities

- Many public lakes & ponds
- State-owned lands
- Appalachian Trail
- Becket Historic Quarry and Forest
- Town beach, playing fields, playgrounds, tennis/pickleball
- Winter sports







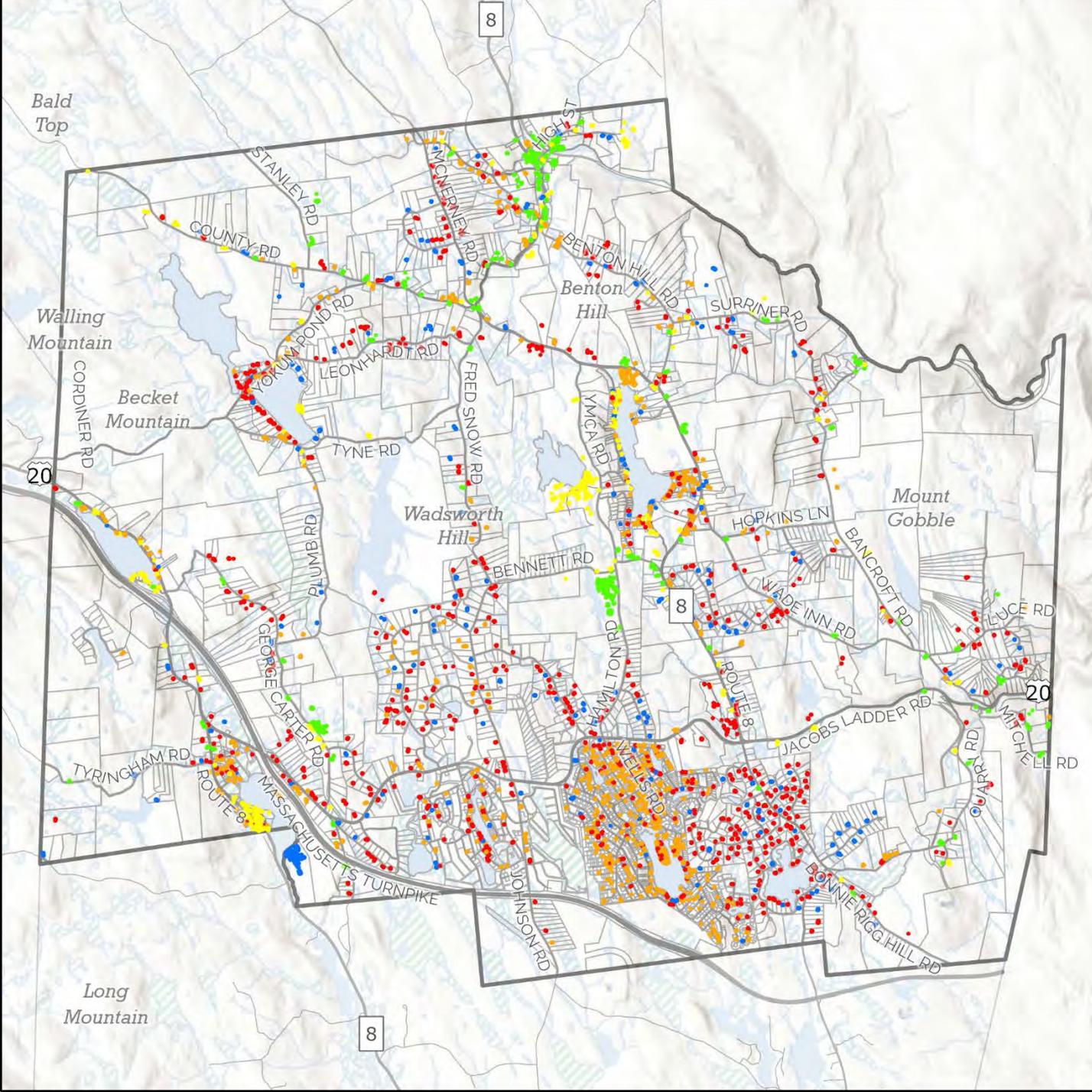
# Town of Becket Development Trends

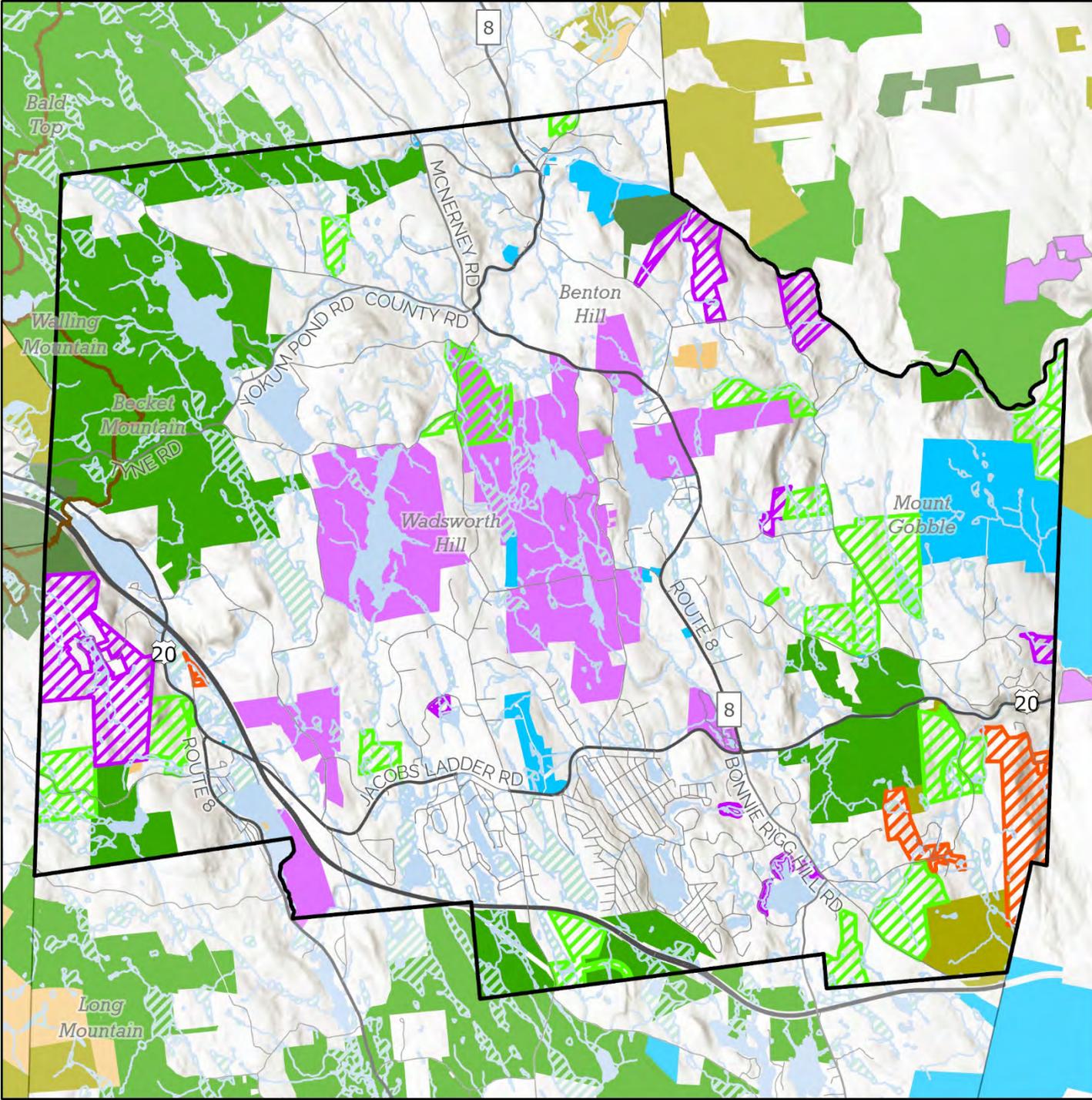
## Year House Built



## Land Use 2016

- 87% Forest
- 5% Developed
- 4% Open Water
- 3% Wetlands
- 1% Other





# Ownership

## Open Space Lands of Interest

-  Chapter 61
-  Chapter 61A
-  Chapter 61B
-  Conservation Restriction
-  Federal
-  State
-  Municipal
-  Land Trust
-  Conservation/Recreational Land (Not Protected)

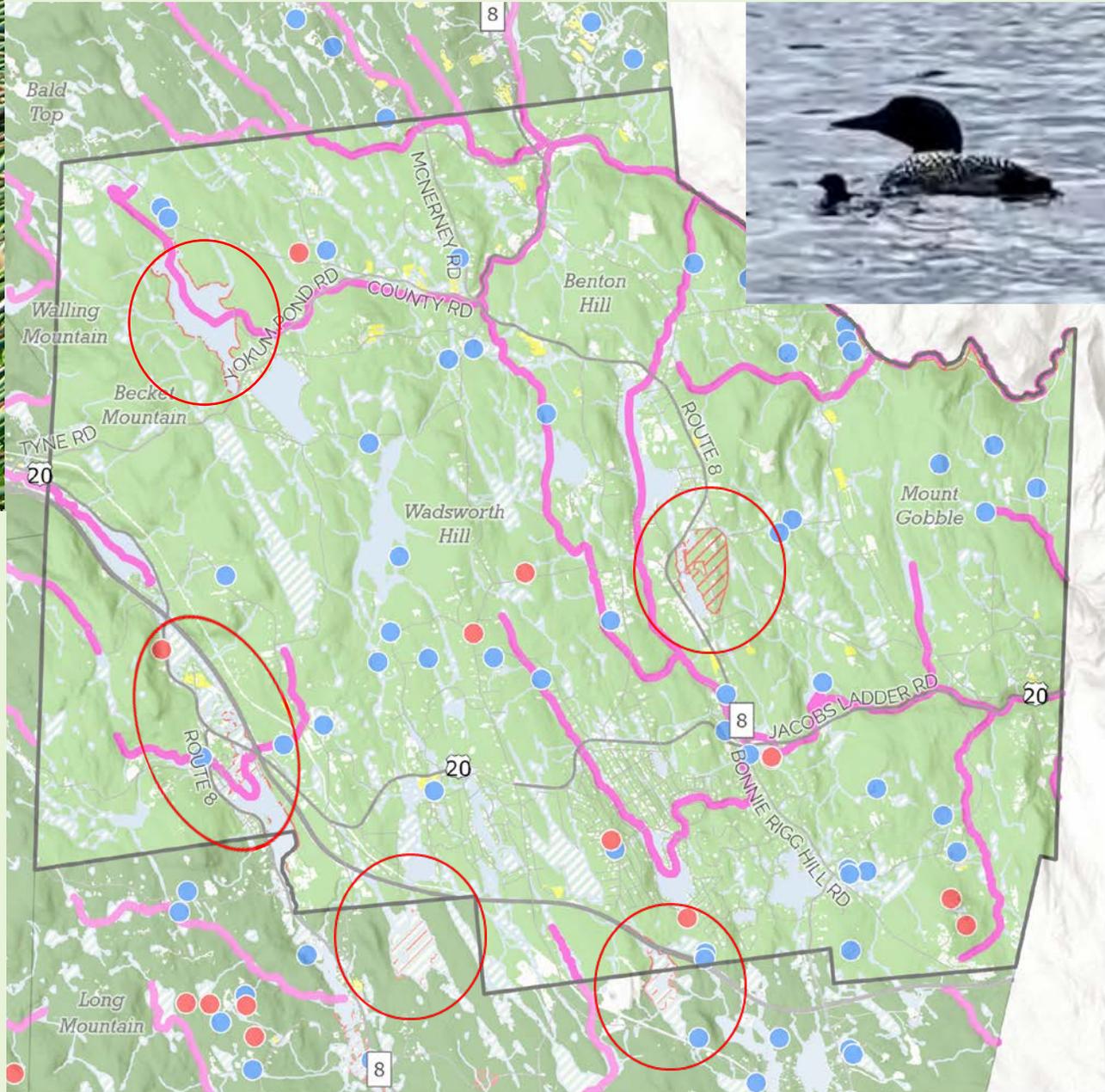
***Vast Majority of Becket is Private & Vulnerable to Development***

- Large private holdings

***22% is Protected Lands***

- State & Fed
- Municipal
- Other

# Rare Species Habitats



- Coldwater streams
- Bitterns & Loons
- 6 rare plants
- 10 rare animals
- 9 Cert. Vernal Pools
- 48 Potential VPs
- Moose habitat

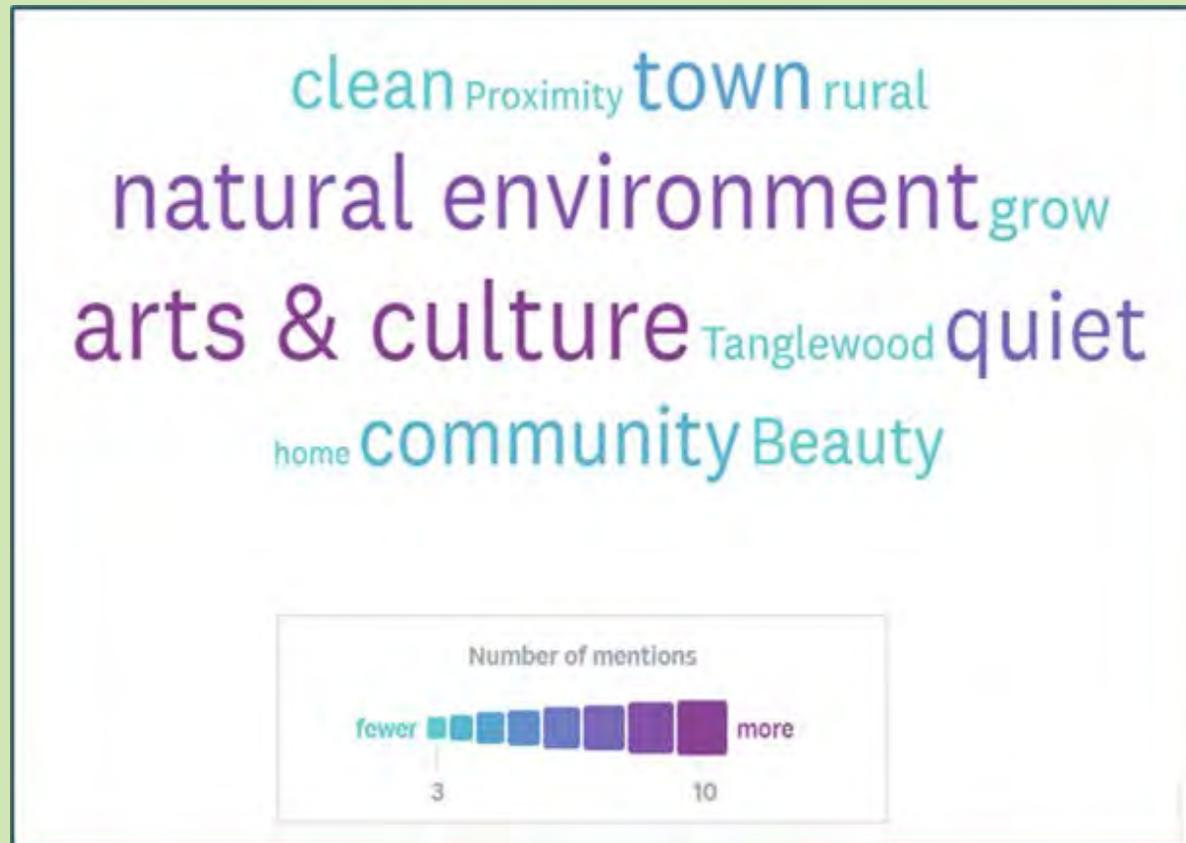
# Vulnerable Habitats: Vernal Pools



# Public Survey: 310 Responses

Most important reason why they live in Becket.

1. Rural character
2. Natural Res.
3. Quality of Life
4. Outdoor Rec. Opps.



# What outdoor recreation activities do you and your family most enjoy in Becket?





Survey:  
Town Beach the most visited  
of Town Properties

# What does Becket need more of?

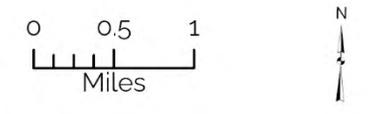
Walking, hiking, biking highest total number of needs



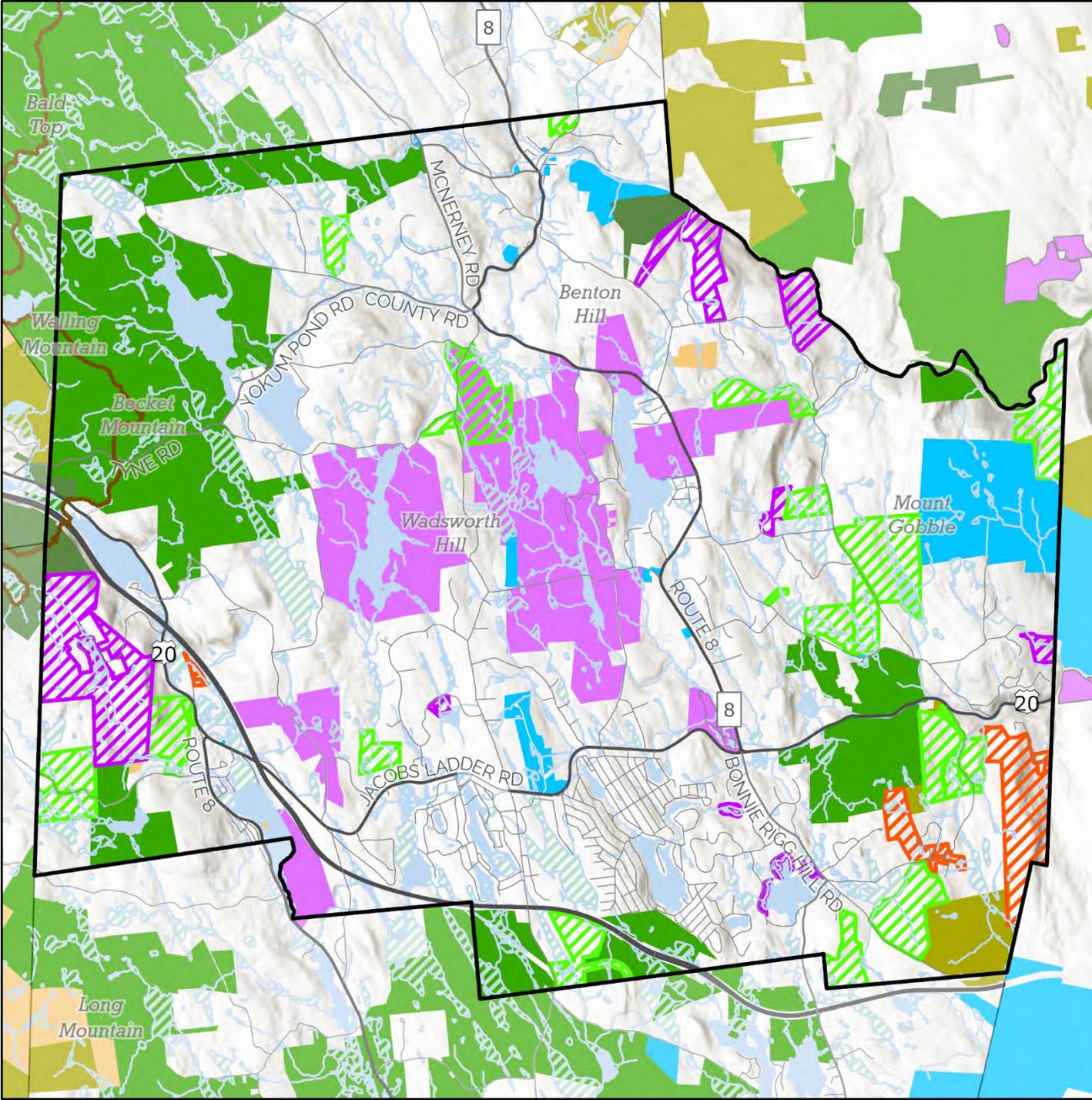
# Town of Becket

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-  Appalachian Trail



This map was created by the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission and is intended for general planning purposes only. This map shall not be used for engineering, survey, legal, or regulatory purposes. MassGIS, MassDOT, BRPC or the municipality may have supplied portions of this data.



# Qs: Barriers; what would make it easier to recreate in Becket?

- >200 open-ended responses to each question
- Barriers: lack of time, lack of knowledge of public lands.
- More information and/or map on where places are with parking and trailheads.
- Safer biking and walking on roads.
- Better access to walking & hiking trails.
- Pickleball and dog park often mentioned.

# What should the Town do to conserve open space areas and outdoor recreation?

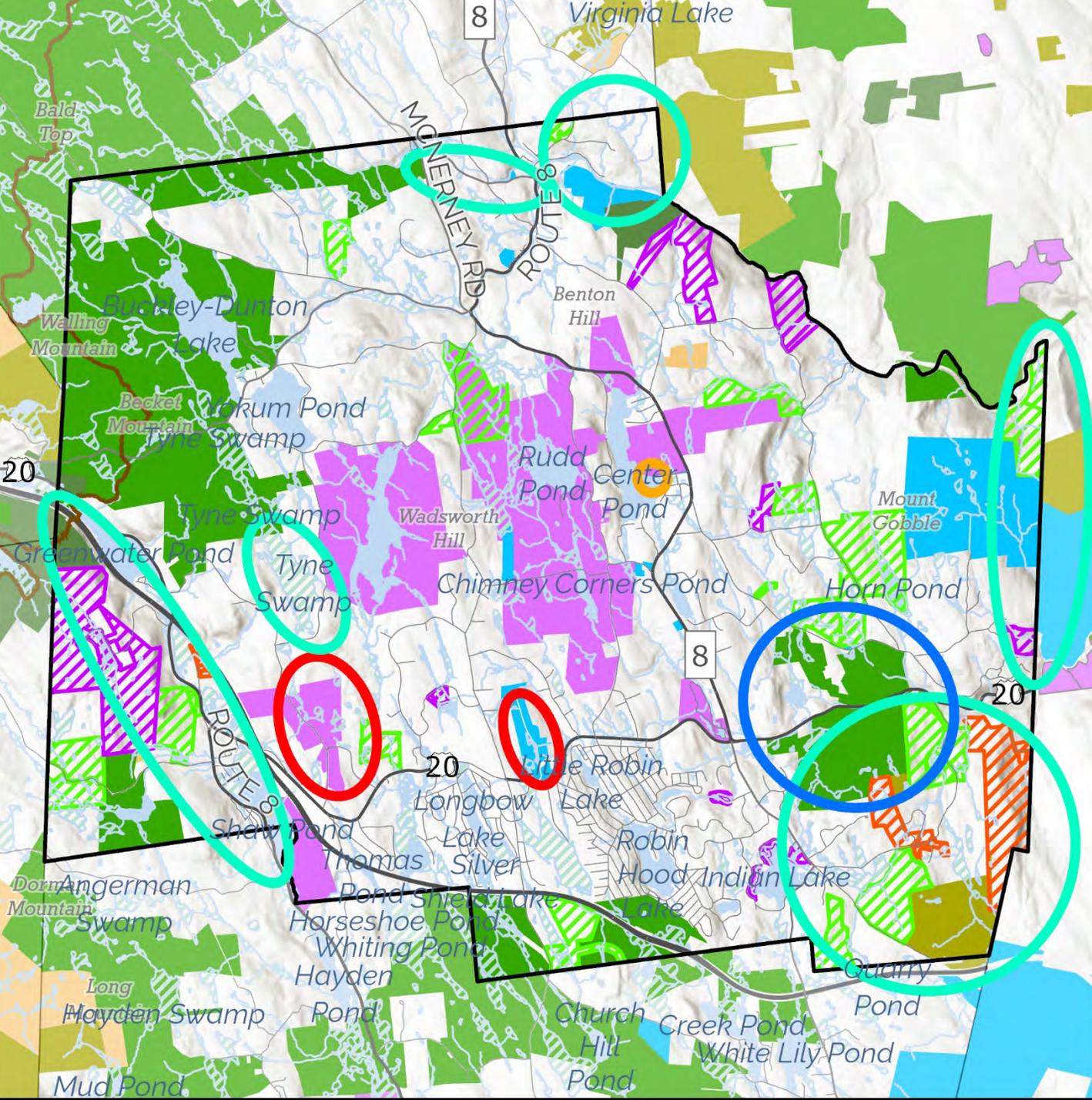
	YES	NO	NOT SURE
Allocate town staff time for open space and recreation priorities	63.79% 185	9.31% 27	26.90% 78
Partner with a land conservation organization to conserve land permanently	84.87% 258	4.28% 13	10.86% 33
Work with the state to protect/acquire land	84.44% 255	6.29% 19	9.27% 28
Assess and keep properties taken for nonpayment of taxes that are rich in natural resources or offer more outdoor recreation	69.84% 213	9.84% 30	20.33% 62
Adopt a bylaw requiring minimal land disturbance in new development	71.81% 214	11.41% 34	16.78% 50
Adopt a lake and river protection Overlay District	60.20% 180	8.36% 25	31.44% 94
Adopt a local wetland bylaw	62.46% 183	12.97% 38	24.57% 72
Practice minimal clearing on new lots or revegetate existing lots	72.09% 217	10.96% 33	16.94% 51
Increase the Community Preservation Act surcharge from 1.5% to 2%	42.23% 125	22.30% 66	35.47% 105
Purchase lands for outdoor recreation	57.91% 172	17.17% 51	24.92% 74

# What would you do individually for conservation/recreation?

	YES	NO	NOT SURE
Contribute to acquire/protect a specific piece of land	53.29% 154	18.69% 54	28.03% 81
Partner with a land conservation organization to improve open space and recreation	67.35% 198	14.29% 42	18.37% 54
Pay a little more in taxes dedicated to open space and recreation	57.33% 172	21.67% 65	21.00% 63
Attend an informational session to learn about protective bylaws for lakes, streams and wetlands	75.25% 225	11.04% 33	13.71% 41
Increase protective buffers where my land borders a water resource	55.33% 161	11.68% 34	32.99% 96
Attend an informational session about the tax benefits of protecting undeveloped land	63.64% 189	17.85% 53	18.52% 55
Reduce the use of chemical applications on my lawns and gardens	90.24% 268	5.05% 15	4.71% 14
Sell or donate a deeded conservation restriction to permanently protect my land from future development	24.48% 71	30.69% 89	44.83% 130
Sell land to the town or land trust	21.03% 61	40.00% 116	38.97% 113
Learn how to manage my land for wildlife	79.25% 233	9.52% 28	11.22% 33
Learn how to conserve my land for future generations	80.55% 236	10.92% 32	8.53% 25

Action Map

- Conservation Connections
- Improve Access
- Town Beach Improvements
- Trail Improvements



Conservation & Recreation Focus Areas

# Land Conservation Tools



- Conservation Deed Restrictions
- Land Donations / Life Estates
- Chapter 61s Program
  - 61 – Forests
  - 61A – Agriculture
  - 61B – Recreation
- Community Preservation Act

# Protect the town's natural resources with climate change impacts in mind

- Update the Becket Master Plan to reflect this Plan's findings.
- Update the Town's floodplain overlay district zoning bylaw.
- Map priority Floodplain areas to reflect climate change impacts.
- Investigate bylaw amendments that increase protection of the environment; possible amendments might include:
  - Minimizing land disturbance in new development, including steps to manage erosion, runoff and steep slopes.
  - Better Wetlands protections.
  - Limiting chemical applications in sensitive habitats.
- Establish policies and procedures to evaluate conservation and/or hazard mitigation value of tax titles of parcels before the Town resells the land.
- Support a shared full-time Conservation Commission Agent.
- Conduct work at Town Beach to secure long-term public use of the site.

# Partner for resource protection and conservation

- Maintain a list of Chapter 61s properties so the Town is prepared to handle future sales.
- Support a conservation focus on the areas of Becket shown on the Action Map's; this includes finalizing the transfer of Town-owned land to the U.S. Dept. of the Interior.
- Support the permanent conservation of land along the Shaker Mill Brook, working with willing landowners to make conservation connections.
- Support the conservation of land along the Westfield River and its tributaries.
- Support the conservation of additional lands in the area of Becket Historic Forest, working with willing landowners to make conservation connections.
- Ensure all town permitting authorities are aware of locations of rare species habitats.
- Investigate the option of increasing the CPA surcharge for conservation of land and/or enhancement of recreational uses.

# Support the development of sustainable recreation while respecting natural resources

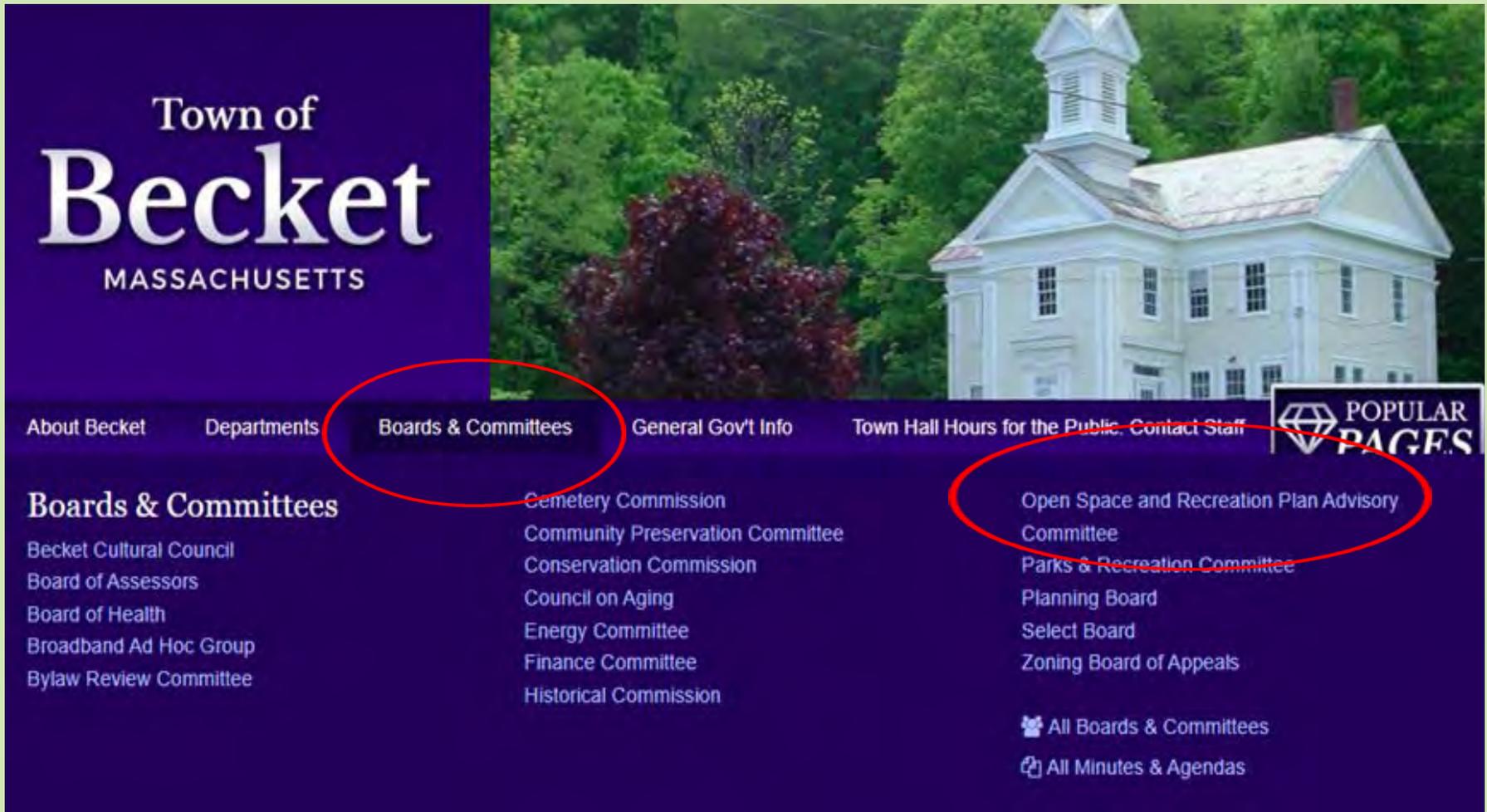
- Support Jacob's Pillows efforts to maintain and restore the existing wetlands trail.
- Support the ongoing Highlands Footpath initiative to create a long-distance trail.
- Determine which Jacob's Well / Esau's Heel Trail parcels are best suited for conservation and which others may be suited for other town uses; consider creating all-persons access.
- Encourage and help landowners become stewards of their land, lakeshores, streams and other sensitive habitats; options might include topics such as:
  - Develop a Better Your Buffer program for protection and/or restoration of shoreline and wetlands
  - Creating and maintaining wildlife habitat, including forest management and pollinator-friendly habitats
  - Conservation tools, such as estate planning, donation options, deed restrictions, Ch. 61
  - Chemical application laws and best practices
- Explore and assess the need for alternative access and parking at North Becket Village Park
- Determine best ways to expand the awareness and locations of outdoor recreational opportunities in and around Becket, including directions to parking and trailheads; paper/web-based.
- Advocate for bike racks at key public spaces.
- Support landowners with maintenance and upgrades of existing recreational facilities that serve the public.

# Next Steps



- Draft Plan offered for public review and comment through Dec. 30<sup>th</sup>
- Send comments to Lauren Gaherty at [lauren@berkshireplanning.org](mailto:lauren@berkshireplanning.org)
- Revisions made to draft plan-Committee & Town
- Revised Draft Plan sent to Mass. Div. of Conservation Services for approval
- Town becomes eligible for wider array of grants upon approval

<https://www.townofbecket.org>



**Town of Becket**  
MASSACHUSETTS

About Becket Departments **Boards & Committees** General Gov't Info Town Hall Hours for the Public. Contact Staff

**Boards & Committees**

- Becket Cultural Council
- Board of Assessors
- Board of Health
- Broadband Ad Hoc Group
- Bylaw Review Committee
- Cemetery Commission
- Community Preservation Committee
- Conservation Commission
- Council on Aging
- Energy Committee
- Finance Committee
- Historical Commission
- Open Space and Recreation Plan Advisory Committee**
- Parks & Recreation Committee
- Planning Board
- Select Board
- Zoning Board of Appeals

 All Boards & Committees  
 All Minutes & Agendas



***Thank you for attending!***

# Now It's Your Turn



- Join us at the maps
- Provide ideas on post-it notes and Zoom poll
- Send ideas and comments to Lauren Gaherty at:

**[lauren@berkshireplanning.org](mailto:lauren@berkshireplanning.org)**