

TOWN OF GREAT BARRINGTON
SELECTBOARD
STRATEGIC PRIORITIES PLAN
FY26-27



ADOPTED DECEMBER 1, 2025

The Town of Great Barrington’s FY26–27 Select Board Strategic Priorities Plan builds upon the community’s shared vision of progress, collaboration, and accountability. This plan serves as a guiding framework for decision-making, budget development, and project management across all Town departments. It reflects both ongoing commitments and new opportunities identified through public input, Select Board discussion, and staff collaboration. Organized into six Areas of Focus, the plan emphasizes alignment between policy direction and implementation—ensuring that resources, time, and effort are concentrated on the initiatives with the greatest significance and community impact. Through this structured and transparent approach, the Select Board reaffirms its commitment to maintaining Great Barrington’s vitality, enhancing quality of life, and strengthening the foundation for a sustainable and resilient future.

Mission Statement

Committed to providing quality services to the entire community through good planning and cost-effective measures.

Areas of Focus



The Select Board’s strategic priorities are organized into six Areas of Focus, each representing a core function of local government and a vital part of community life in Great Barrington. Together, they reflect the Board’s commitment to investing in infrastructure, supporting public health and safety, expanding housing opportunities, advancing sustainability, fostering economic vitality, and ensuring high-quality municipal services.



Within each Area of Focus, projects and initiatives are grouped according to their significance and community impact using a three-tiered framework. This structure allows the Select Board and staff to distinguish between initiatives that address essential or high-impact needs, those that advance strategic goals, and those that lay important groundwork for the Town’s long-term vision.



The tiered system enhances clarity and accountability by helping the community understand how resources and attention are directed. It also ensures that staff are set up for success, aligning their efforts with the Select Board’s guidance, available capacity, and shared priorities. By organizing the work in this way, the Town can maintain focus on what matters most while continuing to make progress across a broad range of community initiatives.



Areas of Focus



Areas of Focus



Infrastructure & Assets

Invest in, maintain, and modernize the Town's infrastructure and public assets to ensure long-term reliability, accessibility, and resilience. Ensure that roads, facilities, utilities, and technology systems are safe, efficient, and capable of supporting current and future community needs.

Public Health & Safety

Promote a safe, healthy, and prepared community through proactive public safety services, emergency readiness, and access to health and wellness resources. Strengthen collaboration among police, fire, public health, and social services to enhance safety, equity, and wellbeing.



Housing

Expand access to diverse, affordable, and attainable housing options that support residents at all income levels and life stages. Address housing affordability and availability through strategic partnerships, zoning tools, and targeted development initiatives.

Sustainability & Environment

Advance environmental stewardship and community resilience through sustainable practices, resource conservation, and climate action. Integrate sustainability into municipal operations, land use decisions, and community initiatives to protect natural assets and prepare for future challenges.



Economic Development

Foster a vibrant, resilient local economy that supports small businesses, creative industries, and equitable opportunities for growth. Strengthen the local economic base by investing in workforce development, infrastructure, and partnerships that align with Great Barrington's values and identity.

Municipal Service Delivery

Foster a vibrant, resilient local economy that supports small businesses, creative industries, and equitable opportunities for growth. Strengthen the local economic base by investing in workforce development, infrastructure, and partnerships that align with Great Barrington's values and identity.





Infrastructure & Assets

Goal

Invest in, maintain, and modernize the Town's infrastructure and public assets to ensure long-term reliability, accessibility, and resilience.

Intent

Ensure that roads, facilities, utilities, and technology systems are safe, efficient, and capable of supporting current and future community needs.

Tier 1 – Highest Impact / Core Priorities

HOUSATONIC WATER WORKS

- Continuing exploration of acquisition
- Continue identifying clean water opportunities
- Continue, and increase efforts to connect property owners to grant funding, for filtration and other improvements.
- Increase and strengthen being proactive with timing of information and outreach between the Housatonic Water Works and customers, on service impacts and other content.
- Increase relationship with the Housatonic Water Works on accountability of services being delivered.
- Update on filling station being available to users.
- Strengthen relationship with DEP, and sharing of communication to customers.
- Work with stakeholders on efforts to disseminate information and available resources.

BRIDGES / ROADS / SIDEWALKS / COMPLETE STREETS

- Schedule updates quarterly from Staff
- Continue implementation of Complete Streets Plan
- Create a sidewalk policy, establishing a standard for decision making of selected materials, areas for investing in new or upgrades, maintenance/repair expectations, and financial review prior to decisions being made.

ELEVATOR REPAIRS

- Ensure all elevators in town buildings are operating properly to ensure accessibility for all.



Infrastructure & Assets

Tier 2 – Strategic Priorities

HOUSATONIC COMMUNITY CENTER IMPROVEMENTS

- Continue, on an on-going basis, to look for grants to assist with continued improvements in identified areas of need.

RAMSDELL LIBRARY PROJECT

- Dedicate appropriate staff for continued assistance to the Building Committee with planning efforts.

Tier 3 – Foundational/Supportive Priorities

FIRE STATION/20 CASTLE EASEMENT- TELEPHONE POLE/UTILITY

- Continue to efforts for Utility Pole relocation to be finalized.

5G TECHNOLOGY

- Continue, on an on-going basis, effort to connect portions of the town, in collaboration with utilities.
- Drafting and implementing regulations to control location of 5G antennas in town





Public Health & Safety

Goal

Promote a safe, healthy, and prepared community through proactive public safety services, emergency readiness, and access to health and wellness resources.

Intent

Strengthen collaboration among police, fire, public health, and social services to enhance safety, equity, and wellbeing.

Tier 1 – Highest Impact / Core Priorities

AMBULANCE SERVICE STUDY

- Retain staff participation, and receive updates on the Regionalization Study
- Remain consistently engaged with Southern Berkshire Ambulance services supporting staff and the community; receive updates on future forecasts, level of services and financial impacts.

HEATING AND COOLING CENTERS

- Assure Town facilities are properly equipped to appropriately support the community needs of being heating/cooling centers.
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Tier 2 – Strategic Priorities

FIRE DEPARTMENT STUDY

- Continue efforts to consider recommendations in the 2018 Fire Service Study by Manitou, including the roadmap to adding career staff and increasing stand-by details to assure improved coverage while forecasting funding impacts on such decisions.

SPEED CALMING MEASURES / TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

- Continue to identify areas of need for reducing vehicle impacts, including East Street Corridor, South Main Street, and connecting thoroughfares from abutting communities.
- Staff to examine options for solutions with cost analysis and recommendations



Public Health & Safety

Tier 3 – Foundational/Supportive Priorities

CHILDCARE ACCESSIBILITY ASSESSMENT

- Continue staff support for the Child Care Committee on identifying needs and recommendations.
- Receive update on Report from Child Care Committee once complete.





Housing

Goal

Expand access to diverse, affordable, and attainable housing options that support residents at all income levels and life stages.

Intent

Address housing affordability and availability through strategic partnerships, zoning tools, and targeted development initiatives.

Tier 1 – Highest Impact / Core Priorities

AFFORDABLE & WORKFORCE HOUSING – AGING IN PLACE

- Continue on-going support for the Affordable Housing Trust with available resources to advance redevelopment and development opportunities.
- Explore and examine Workforce Housing options and opportunities currently being done by other communities, in the state and nationally, including Seasonal Community designation and Residential Tax Exemptions, and how those may benefit or impact if chosen to incorporate.
- Create a plan for promoting and making accessible all Tax Exemptions currently available for eligible residents to apply for and consider.

Tier 2 – Strategic Priorities

ZONING FOR MISSING-MIDDLE HOUSING OPTIONS

- Remain open to feedback from various stakeholders on how current regulations could be improved to assist with evolving needs and housing goals through zoning and regulatory changes.
- Examine ways to assist with promoting parcels that support housing reinvestment and reuse opportunities in the community.



Housing

Tier 3 – Foundational/Supportive Priorities

HOMEOWNER AND RENTERS' RETENTION

- Develop strategies to expand resident access to homeowner and renter retention resource, in partnership with outside agencies and non-profits
- Continue programs to support preservation of existing affordable housing options, including housing rehabilitation programs

PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

- Continue cooperating and collaborating with various organizations in the region working towards promoting workforce housing
- Continue to remain active with Simon's Rock and other available parcels on workforce housing reinvestment and reuse opportunities.





Sustainability & Environment

Goal

Advance environmental stewardship and community resilience through sustainable practices, resource conservation, and climate action.

Intent

Integrate sustainability into municipal operations, land use decisions, and community initiatives to protect natural assets and prepare for future challenges.

Tier 1 – Highest Impact / Core Priorities

REID CLEANERS PROPERTY

- Create a plan for future of parcel, after testing report has been finalized.

SUSTAINABLE WASTE MANAGEMENT

- Receive an update from Board of Health on the Composting Pilot Program, and assess next steps if value of continuing.

Tier 2 – Strategic Priorities

OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN UPDATE

- Continue to provide necessary staff support for the plan's update, and implementation.

Tier 3 – Foundational/Supportive Priorities

REST OF RIVER STATUS MONITORING

- Retain staff resources to assist with monitoring and evaluation.





Economic Development

Goal

Foster a vibrant, resilient local economy that supports small businesses, creative industries, and equitable opportunities for growth.

Intent

Strengthen the local economic base by investing in workforce development, infrastructure, and partnerships that align with Great Barrington's values and identity.

Tier 1 – Highest Impact / Core Priorities

426 PARK STREET (COOK'S GARAGE PROPERTY)

- Building on efforts of the Housatonic Improvement Committee, develop and issue RFP and market the property for redevelopment.

SIGN BY-LAW

- Review current bylaw with stakeholders and present reform recommendations focused on simplifying the process and ensuring compliance is simplifying the process
- Improving management and enforcement of the bylaw.

Tier 2 – Strategic Priorities

DOWNTOWN PARKING STRATEGY

- Reevaluate previous studies and plans for opportunities that may be of value to consider aiding in future management including wayfinding signage.
- Survey businesses, residents and visitors to ensure current experiences and usage are incorporated into ongoing short and long-term strategies.
- Examine Special Permit process within meeting parking strategies.





Economic Development

Tier 3 – Foundational/Supportive Priorities

SMALL BUSINESS ASSISTANCE & JOB CREATION PROGRAM

- Continue efforts to improve the permitting processes and coordinate user-friendly guidance.
- Evaluate existing tools, effectiveness from an internal and external perspective.
- Create ways for on-going feedback to be collected and incorporated into improvement decisions.
- Utilize community resources and stakeholders such as the Chamber for improving education, access to services, etc.





Municipal Service Delivery

Goal

Provide efficient, transparent, and high-quality municipal services that meet community expectations and support staff success.

Intent

Streamline operations, leverage technology, and cultivate an engaged workforce to continuously improve service delivery and customer experience.

Tier 1 – Highest Impact / Core Priorities

EMPLOYEE RECRUITMENT & RETENTION

- Expanding professional development opportunities to encourage advancement and elevation of staff within the organization.
- Creating an organizational culture that hires, trains and recognizes staff as valuable contributors to the community.

TOWN WEBSITE

- Continue, on an on-going basis, efforts to have up to date, and accurate information on the website as an essential tool for transparency and engagement.
- Ensure all Committee pages are updated with current members, minutes, and agendas.
- Increase awareness of committee vacancies and opportunities for the community to participate.

COMMUNICATION

- Conduct a baseline assessment of existing communication channels, practices, and capacities to understand current strengths, weaknesses, and unmet needs.





Municipal Service Delivery

Tier 2 – Strategic Priorities

PUBLIC SAFETY STAFFING PLAN

- Explore, on an ongoing basis, options for retention opportunities

UPDATE SELECT BOARD POLICIES

- Create an on-going review schedule for policies to be reviewed to ensure necessary updates, and/or effectiveness remains properly aligned to best achieve intent.

INCLUSIVENESS / DIVERSITY INITIATIVES

- Research, develop, recommend, and execute strategies to foster a staff, organizational programs and services that reflect the value of the Town's diversity.
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Tier 3 – Foundational/Supportive Priorities

MASTER PLAN REVIEW WITH PLANNING BOARD

- Continue supporting Planning Board with updating the 2013 Master Plan.
- Continue receiving updates on the progress of the Plan's update.

REGULATORY PROCESS AND PERFORMANCE

- Examine the Special Permit process, as well as conditions being placed on a parcel's use, and if compliance can be properly monitored and enforced by staff.

