

# UrbanRiver Visions 2

An initiative of the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs in partnership with the Town of Grafton

Dear Friend of UrbanRiver Visions:

UrbanRiver Visions is an innovative program of the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs that funds a community planning process leading to reuse of vacant and underutilized riverfront areas. Through this program, communities create consensus Vision and Action Plans for revitalizing downtown waterfront sites and restoring urban rivers. Incorporating the ideas of residents, businesses, local officials, local and regional organizations, and other community stakeholders, UrbanRiver Visions 2 (the second phase of this program) produced plans for Grafton, Greenfield, Haverhill, Northbridge, Pittsfield, and Shelburne Falls (Buckland and Shelburne).

Rivers have long defined the cores of our urban areas. Harnessing rivers for power and manufacturing characterized the Commonwealth's growth in the 19th century as a center for commerce and prosperity. The legacy of this era is reflected in the mill buildings that define the heart of many cities and towns and represent a celebrated element of our built environment. More recently, the industries that these mills once housed suffered decades of decline, and communities were often left with an unfortunate legacy of land and water pollution associated with previous industrial development.

Today, that scenario is changing, as many communities are poised to reexamine the role of their rivers as sources of urban vitality. These valuable resources present opportunities for redeveloping urban areas and attracting new enterprises, tourism, and jobs. UrbanRiver Visions 2 is designed to boost these efforts by working with six communities to provide the framework for reclaiming rivers as environmental and economic assets—integrating them back into our civic lives. It is a celebration of rivers, communities, and creativity.

I hope that you find the accompanying information useful. Electronic versions of these documents are available on the UrbanRiver Visions 2 web site at [www.urbanrivervisions2.org](http://www.urbanrivervisions2.org). I wish you the best of luck, and look forward to continuing our partnership as we work to make these vision and action plans a reality.

Sincerely,

Ian A. Bowles, Secretary  
Energy and Environmental Affairs



## UrbanRiver Visions 2 Grafton Charrette (Farnumsville Village)

The communities of Grafton, Greenfield, Haverhill, Northbridge, Pittsfield and Shelburne Falls held charrettes in the spring of 2007 as part of EOEEA's UrbanRiver Visions 2 project. Each community seized this opportunity to define a vision for the future of its riverfront. The visions reflect an overall public consensus about the relationship between the community and its river. The outcomes of this process represent important starting points that can continue to be refined and modified over time in response to new information, opportunities, or changing circumstances.

This poster documents the findings of the Grafton UrbanRiver Visions charrette, held on May 24, 2007 at the South Grafton Community House in Farnumsville. It also reflects community input from the June 14 public follow-up meeting. Shown here is a summary of the charrette process, documenting local goals and concerns, and an Action Plan for moving the community's vision forward. The Vision Plan can be found on the reverse side of this poster.

For additional information, including verbatim notes from the charrette, an expanded Action Plan, and copies of presentations and maps, please visit:

[www.UrbanRiverVisions2.org](http://www.UrbanRiverVisions2.org)

UrbanRiver Visions 2 Consultant Team:  
EOEEA selected Goody Clancy and its team of consultants to provide professional assistance to each of the communities in the program. The Grafton charrette team was led by Dodson Associates working with Goody Clancy and Maria Van Dusen.

[www.UrbanRiverVisions2.org](http://www.UrbanRiverVisions2.org)

# Grafton Charrette (Farnumsville Village)

## Revitalizing Our Riverfronts



**THE PLACE**  
The Grafton UrbanRiver Visions charrette focused on the historic village center of Farnumsville, including the Farnumsville Mill and land along the Blackstone River and Canal.

On May 24, 2007 community residents and other stakeholders came together to create a vision for the riverfront area.

**A SHARED VISION**  
Farnumsville today retains much of its identity as an historic mill village within the Town of Grafton. But the large Farnumsville Mill complex that was once the engine of the local economy is underutilized, and associated land of great natural beauty along the River is inaccessible to the public. The community's vision for the future is built on re-establishing the mill as an activity generator for the village, providing better access to and along the River, enhancing the identity of the village through streetscape improvements, and ensuring that all new development respects the scale and character of the historic village environment.

### ACTION PLAN

- Establish a Farnumsville Public Spaces Committee to consider next steps and define priorities for implementation of the Vision Plan.
- Consider rezoning for key properties and areas of the village to ensure that regulations adequately preserve and protect the character of the village, to prevent inappropriate new development, and to provide the right framework for reuse of the Farnumsville Mill complex as a vital center of activity within the village.
- Develop design standards for streetscape improvements in Farnumsville, including signage, sidewalks, lighting, landscaping and furnishings.
- Secure funds for implementing streetscape improvements.
- Hold a South Grafton Heritage Festival in Farnumsville this fall.
- Organize volunteers to plan and install a path system and boat launch at the Community House.
- Install interpretive and educational signs at the Community House relating to the history of the building and the Blackstone River.
- Schedule a meeting involving landowners and land conservation groups to discuss opportunities for collaborative efforts to advance the greenway concept.
- Organize volunteers for clean-up efforts along the Blackstone Canal (with landowners permission).
- Develop a South Grafton Trail System Plan, to include walking loops, water trail loops and interpretive materials and waystations.
- Pursue stormwater Best Management Practice (BMP) demonstration projects at the Community House.

### THE CHARRETTE

The Charrette took place at the South Grafton Community House on Thursday, May 24, 2007. Over 30 community residents and regional stakeholders participated in a tour of the study area and the visioning session.

The visioning session began with an introductory presentation. This included a discussion of water issues such as quality and use, possible trail connections and potential opportunities for economic development with a particular focus on the Farnumsville Mill property and associated land.

Participants then worked in three groups to create vision plans. At the end of the session, each of the groups presented its vision and a list of priority projects to all charrette participants. These plans provided the basis for development of the final Vision Plan.

### The "Green" Group

The Green Group proposed development of a continuous greenspace connection from the Fisherville Mill Site down to the Northbridge line. They proposed the creation of trails along the River and the existing Canal towpath. The group also addressed the need for streetscape improvements.

The redevelopment of the Farnumsville Mill complex and restoration of Farnumsville as a "vibrant and thriving" village were featured in this plan. Suggestions for new activities and services included bike path supporting uses, a spa, theatre/performance space, a hydro-power facility and some retail.

The group agreed that everyone (the Town, local business owners, etc.) must work together to successfully find funding for these enhancements and to make this vision a reality.

### The "Blue" Group

The Blue Group's focus was the preservation and enhancement of Farnumsville's mill village character. The group proposed restoration of historic buildings along with a set of village design standards for new development. They addressed redevelopment of the Farnumsville Mill as a way to enhance the whole village, creating a center of activity for South Grafton.

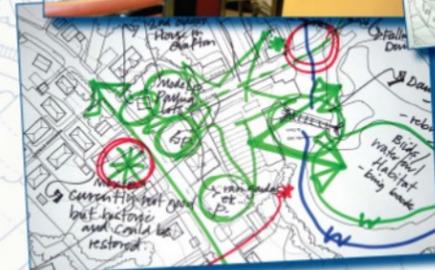
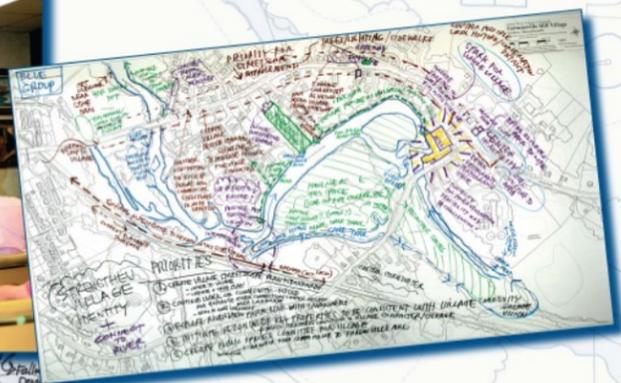
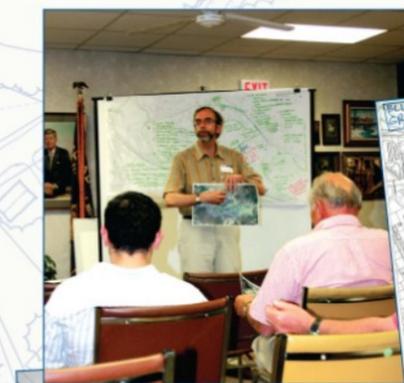
The Blue Group also called for streetscape improvements and a riverwalk. They recommended trying to re-route the Blackstone River Bikeway to the village side of the tracks so that users could better enjoy the River. Stormwater management, traffic calming along Cross Street and gateway to the area were other issues discussed by the group.

### The "Red" Group

The Red Group considered the Farnumsville Mill area to be the heart of the Village of Farnumsville. Their discussion focused on what needs to occur in the village before the mill can be successfully redeveloped. The group felt that by creating natural and recreational connections and amenities along the River, as well as by improving the streetscape, a solid framework could be created to spur reinvestment in the mill.

Discussion also focused on how the Fisherville and Farnumsville Mills could be connected along the Blackstone River. Participants brainstormed events that would draw people to the area, making South Grafton a true destination.

The group saw the need to improve the Blackstone River's health through better management of stormwater and improvements to wildlife habitat.



# Farnumsville Village: Building on the heritage and beauty of the Blackstone River in Grafton

## Establish a Riverfront Greenway from Fisherville to Northbridge

- Preserve the character of large undeveloped parcels of land along the River while incorporating appropriate recreational and commercial activities
- Protect the following parcels as open space: the land below the Fisherville Mill Site between the Canal and Blackstone River, the open space in the Farnumsville Mill floodplain, the Grafton Land Trust Parcel, the Waste Water Treatment Facility land, and the open space south of the Waste Water Treatment Facility
- Create public River access, hiking trails, and water trails in designated locations

## Create a plan and design standards to guide development; promote streetscape improvements with a particular focus on Main Street and Providence Road

- Define strategies for preservation and reuse of underutilized properties
- Consider zoning changes and develop new design standards to ensure that future development is compatible with the historic village center
- Install sidewalks, lighting, benches and trees along Main Street and Providence Road
- Work with residents and property owners to beautify the area



The firehouse is a significant community landmark, reflecting the historic scale and character of the village.

## Restore the Fisherville Mill site as a center of activity

- Support redevelopment of the property for retail, restaurant, and residential uses
- Install interpretive signs describing the site's history
- Establish a trail from the Fisherville Mill to Farnumsville
- Provide parking for the Blackstone River Bikeway, the trail, and for the canoe and kayak launches

## Establish a water trail on the Blackstone River and Canal

- Provide canoe/kayak access at the following sites:
  - South of Main Street, across from the Fisherville Mill redevelopment site
  - Behind the South Grafton Community House
  - Southwest of the Farnumsville Dam, north of Depot Street
- Selectively clean up debris to make the Blackstone Canal navigable for paddlers
- Establish a loop trail allowing paddlers to travel down the Blackstone River and back up the Canal

## Continue efforts to enhance the historic Community House as a community gathering place and riverfront destination

- Use the building and riverfront land as places for community events and celebrations
- Place a sign related to the building's history at the front of the property
- Install pervious pavement parking at the site to reduce stormwater run-off
- Work with the Massachusetts Audubon Society (MAS) and the Grafton Historical Commission to hold educational talks on village history and on the environment
- Create a canoe and kayak launch on the property
- Establish the site as a trailhead for the Farnumsville Village Riverwalk
- Install interpretive signs for environmental education and River heritage at the boat launch and along the trail



The Community House is an ideal location for riverside gatherings and events.

## Develop a riverwalk from the Community House to the Farnumsville Mill

- Work with property owners to clarify land ownership (much of the riverfront land is thought to be owned by the Farnumsville Mill) and assess riverwalk options
- Secure parking areas for trail users in front of the Community House and north of the mill
- Explore expansion of the trail along the River beyond the Community House
- Provide connections to the riverwalk from nearby neighborhoods



Use of the Farnumsville Mill land as a campground would bring new activity to the riverfront and the village.

## Attract new activities to the Farnumsville Mill, surrounding buildings and nearby land to enliven and revitalize the village

- Attract the public to the site and generate new economic activity within the area through uses such as: entertainment, retail, restaurants, theater/performance space, businesses supporting the Bikeway, a spa, canoe rentals, and/or a coffee shop
- Implement zoning changes needed to support this concept
- Investigate the possibility of power generation at the mill
- Incorporate new parking areas that can serve the mill in a way that fits with the character of the village
- Explore the feasibility of a multi-level garage
- Restore the "Moxie Building" at the intersection of Depot Street and Providence Road; establish the site as a destination recognizing the historic halfway point and horse changing station of the Providence to Boston stagecoach run
- Create a campground on mill land along the River, opening the River to recreational use

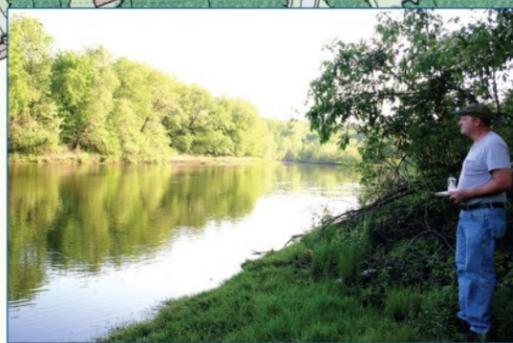
## Advocate for early implementation of the Blackstone River Bikeway; consider refinements to the plan to ensure stronger connections to the village and the River

- Create a sign for Farnumsville Village where the Bikeway intersects Ferry Street
- Create a parking area along Ferry Street next to the Bikeway
- Develop connections to Fisher Park from the Bikeway: one directly behind the park and another along Ferry Street
- Consider relocating the proposed Bikeway from its planned location to the village side of the tracks to provide more direct access to riverfront open space and the Canal

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The riverfront behind the Community House provides a great location for viewing the River or launching a canoe.



Farnumsville Mill is underutilized but could be redeveloped with a new mix of activities that would draw people to the village and the River.

## Develop a walking trail along the River and the Canal

- Create a walking trail on the east bank of the River north of Main Street that provides access to Town-owned property and brings people to an overlook of the stone dam
- Provide trailhead parking on the south side of Main Street, across from the Fisherville Mill Redevelopment Site
- Construct pedestrian bridges where the Canal branches to the Blackstone River
- Create low-impact boardwalks through wetlands
- Obtain an easement through the Farnumsville Mill floodplain parcel
- Continue the trail through the Grafton Land Trust parcel south of Depot Street and onward to the Northbridge town line



Preservation and reuse of the "Moxie Building," located on Providence Road near Depot Street, is a community goal.

Legend:

- Proposed Interpretive Sign
- Proposed Water Access/ Canoe Put-in & Take-out
- Potential park/ Conservation Site
- Proposed Pedestrian Bridge
- Proposed Off-Street Trail
- Proposed On-Street Trail
- Proposed Water Trail
- Blackstone River Bikeway
- Reuse/Redevelopment Priority

Scale: 0 25 50 100 200 400'

