

7. COMMUNITY FACILITIES & SERVICES

1. Background

The following inventory of public facilities and services in Sheffield including location, general condition, capacity, and known capital needs is based on available local and state information. Annual town reports, the community-wide surveys, school district data, and other relevant plans and reports were reviewed for this section. Interviews were conducted with departments, boards, and service organizations currently providing public services to the community. An analysis was also conducted of the Town's tax base, tax rate, and municipal revenues/expenditures, and compared to similar communities around the state. From this inventory and analysis, future facility and service needs are projected over the next 5 years. The action plan that concludes this section results from this inventory and analysis, and community feedback and guidance during deliberations regarding the findings and recommendations of the Land Use component [see section 8. *Land Use*.]

2. Summary of Findings

Sheffield Municipal Facts	
2000 Population	2,956
2000 Population Over 65	420
Registered Voters	1,876
2003 School Enrollments	610
Public Road Miles, 2002	83
Avg. Single Family Home Value (FY04)	\$200,798
Avg. Single Family Tax Bill (FY04)	\$2,827
Tax Rate (FY04)	\$14.08
Residential Property Assessment Base	\$318,661,201
Commercial/Industrial Assessment Base	\$45,356,553
Operating Budget	\$ 5,328,331

Source: Massachusetts Municipal Association

- In 1989, the Town of Sheffield adopted and the state approved the Town Charter establishing a Board of Selectmen-Administrator form of government.
- The Sheffield Town Hall was built between 1839 and 1860. This historic facility houses offices for the Town Administrator, Treasurer /Collector, Town Clerk, and Inspectional Services, and currently meets the needs of Sheffield.

- The Sheffield Police Department currently has a full time Chief, 4 full-time officers supplemented by part-time staff. The ratio of officers to full-time residents is about 1:1,100 while standards recommend 2 to 2.5 officers/1,000 residents. In 2002, the department responded to over 2,000 calls, which has diminished slightly over the past several years due to proactive enforcement and increased staffing. The Department's primary concern is traffic safety and speed enforcement.
- The Voluntary Hose Company #1 officially became the Sheffield Fire Department in 1997. In 2002, the Department responded to over 100 alarms, which have steadily increased over the last 10 years. The Department has a full membership of 34 volunteers in 2003. Several facility and equipment upgrades are being considered over the next 10 years, including expansion or relocation of the Fire Station.

- The Sheffield Highway Department is located on Pike Road and included 4 full-time employees. The department is responsible for overall roadway maintenance and improvements. While demands on the department have grown with increasing population, state funding (Chapter 90) has declined over the last 10 years. The Department needs to assess, replace and upgrade equipment as needed. In addition, the town is considering the long-term relocation of the Highway Garage. The current facility was built in the mid-1960s and is located within the Sheffield Water Company public water supply recharge area.
- The Friendly Union/Dewey Hall is operated by the Sheffield Friendly Union (a non-profit organization) and used for several public and private functions including the Sheffield Council on Aging and Senior Center. This facility is an important public gathering space located in Sheffield Center but is becoming inadequate for the growing Senior Center membership and activities.
- The Stone Store, a circa 1834 structure on the Sheffield Green, is a unique edifice and the oldest commercial building in the Town of Sheffield. It is only one of the several buildings now owned and operated by the Sheffield Historical Society, a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting interest in the history of the Town, including the hamlet of Ashley Falls. The Store is used as an exhibit space, information center, and museum for the Sheffield area. It enhances the Town Green, provides a place for residents and visitors to learn about contemporary and historic Sheffield and Ashley Falls, and serves as a center for information about venues in the area. The Store is located directly in front of the 19th century Town Hall and adjacent to the 18th century Congregational meetinghouse.
- The Sheffield Council on Aging is developing plans for a new Senior Center.
- The Sheffield Transfer Station, located on Barnum Street, is a fee-based facility providing local residents and businesses cost-effective trash disposal and recycling services. Waste from the Transfer Station is transferred to the SeaMass B3 facility in Canaan, NY where it is transferred again out of state. The recycling program is currently operating at about 30%, a successful rate.
- The Bushnell-Sage Public Library, located in the renovated former grade and high school, opened in 1997. The additional space and facilities has provided the opportunity for new and expanded programs, exhibits, services and collections. This has resulted in increased membership and circulation, which is about 36,000 per year.
- The Sheffield Business Park was constructed with state funds in 1994 with a 30-year build out projection. The marketing study for the Business Park stressed the importance of getting the “right” first tenant to set the tone for the Park and its other tenants and that to do so might mean a 7-10 year horizon for finding that first tenant. The Business Park has tremendous potential, particularly with an update of its possible uses to today’s local and economic climate (recognizing the local constraints to attracting light industry and clean manufacturing, which were the original intentions of the park, in addition to the national trend of such jobs moving overseas).
- The Southern Berkshire Regional School District (SBRSD) was formed in 1953 and still represents the same communities of Sheffield, Alford, New Marlboro, Egremont, and Monterey. SBRSD is considered one of the best small regional districts in the State. Sheffield is the largest member of the School District with 55% of the student enrollment. The Mt. Everett Regional School was constructed in 1992 and includes grades PK-12. Over the past 10 years, student enrollment in the district as well as Sheffield has declined. The cost per pupil is significantly higher than the state average due to many factors. School expenses represent about 75% of the annual Town Budget, one of the highest in the State. Managing school costs is a primary issue in Sheffield.

- Sheffield's municipal expenses grew by 43% between FY93 and FY02. The per capita expense has also risen over this 10 year period particularly in education, public safety and public works. Much of this growth can be attributed to increased costs of services (including fixed costs such as health insurance, workers compensation and other employee benefits), demand in service by a growing population, and a steep decline in state revenue sharing. Much of the tax burden has been placed on residents as their property values have risen at a much higher rate than commercial and industrial properties.

3. Government Structure and Administration

In 1989, the Town of Sheffield adopted and the state approved the Town Charter establishing a Board of Selectmen-Administrator form of government. Under the Charter the Town elects the Moderator, Board of Selectmen, Library Trustees and Planning Board. By Federal court order, the school committee is appointed. All other officers, boards, committees, and commissions of the Town are appointed by the Board of Selectmen.

The executive powers of the Town are vested in the Board of Selectmen who serve as the chief policy-making board of the Town. To aid the Board in conducting official business are the Town Administrator, Town Counsel, Treasurer-Collector, Tree Warden, Constables, and all department heads, employees and subordinates except those persons serving under officers and multiple member bodies elected directly by the voters of Sheffield. The Board of Selectmen also appoints all multiple member boards, committees, and commissions except those appointed by the Moderator.

Sheffield has an open Town Meeting, which is held in May for the purpose of electing Town Officers and voting on questions as required by General or Special Law. All town residents can attend and those 18 years and older are allowed to vote on warrant articles including the municipal budget, capital improvements and other changes to town policy and regulation.

4. General Services & Facilities

Town Hall

The Sheffield Town Hall was built between 1839 and 1860. This historic community gathering place currently meets the needs of Sheffield. There are 2 public meeting rooms (one large meeting hall and another smaller meeting space), storage facilities and several offices. The first and second floors underwent a major renovation in 1998 including interior wall and ceiling repairs, a new staircase, a new elevator and bathrooms. The building is in good repair and no major building or equipment capital improvements are anticipated in the next 10 years. One possible long-term improvement would be to renovate the old Grand Army of the Republic meeting room on the 4th floor [CHECK IF 3RD] as an additional public gathering space. Town Hall currently houses the offices of the Town Administrator, Town Clerk, Inspections Department, Assessors, and Tax Collector.

Town Administrator's Office - The Town Administrator's Office is staffed by 2 full-time employees in 2004 including the Town Administrator and an Administrative Assistant. The Town Administrator's primary responsibility is keeping the Board fully informed as to the needs of the Town and recommending measures requiring action by the Board or by the Town as deemed necessary. The Administrator also has several other duties and responsibilities:

- Oversight of Town accounting;
- Supervising all offices and departments;
- Staffing regular and special meetings of the Board and attend sessions of the Town Meeting;
- Compiling the annual operating and capital budget for all Town departments and submitting the budget to the Finance Committee;
- Assisting the Board in the recruitment of department heads and employees;
- Administering the Town's personnel system;
- Acting as an agent for the Board on collective bargaining issues;
- Recording the financial and administrative activities of the Town; and
- Investigating or inquiring into the affairs of any Town department or office under the supervision of the Board;

Over the past few years, the Town Administrator and Board of Selectmen have been involved in a number of important issues and projects that impact the community such as the Berkshire School Road Reconstruction, completion of the Village Green Project, the Town Master Plan, Transfer Station disposal rule changes, creating a three-year labor agreement with the Highway Department, and preparing an Interim Regional School Operating Budget Agreement during remaining years of school bond financing.

The Town Administrator anticipates no significant equipment needs other than general office equipment replacement or staffing changes in the Department over the next 5 years.

□ *Please see Map # 13:
‘Town of Sheffield
Public Facilities & Services’
behind the MAPS tab.*

Assessors Office - The Assessors Department includes 3 half-time staff members which are responsible for determining real and personal property valuation and handling applications for tax abatements. The Office is considering the need for computerized assessors maps and the possible acquisition of hardware and software for a geographic information system (GIS) which would enable the Town to electronically inventory and analyze various ownership records, land uses, natural resources, and other regulatory boundaries (i.e. zoning districts).

Treasurer/Collector - The Treasurer/Collectors’ Office serves the Town of Sheffield as the receiver and custodian of all town funds. This office receives and processes payments for numerous types of taxes and fees. Real Estate and Personal Property Taxes total the largest amount of revenue followed by Motor Vehicle and Transfer Station Fees. There are various other departmental receivables turned over to the treasurer. These include license fees, such as Alcoholic Beverage, Antiques, Car Dealer, Lodging, Common Victualer and others paid to the Selectmen’s Office.

The Town of Sheffield operates on a Quarterly Tax Payment System for payment of Real Estate and Personal Property Taxes. The due dates of Aug. 1, Nov. 1, Feb. 1, and May 1 will remain constant on an annual basis. There are two annual mailings for these bills. The first mailing is on or before July 1st and the second, on or before December 31st.

Town Clerk - The Town Clerk is responsible for various meeting preparation and records management including town meetings, voter registrations and elections, local licenses and business registrations. The office is staffed by one full-time clerk and no major capital expense or additional staffing needs are anticipated over the next 5 years.

Inspectional Services - The Inspectional Services Department is responsible for zoning enforcement and issuing building permits for all new construction, alteration, and renovation. The department includes a part-time building inspector, plumbing and gas inspector, wiring inspector, sealer of weights & measures, Board of Health, and animal inspector.

The primary responsibility of the department is to ensure public safety through proper construction practices. Adequate inspectional services have a direct impact on the reduction of fires and injuries in the community, and adequate staffing enables the Town to maintain a good fire insurance rating which benefits the homeowner.

Permits Approved by Inspections Dept.				
Inspector	1993	1998	2002	% Change in 10 Years
Building	104	150	190	+83%
Plumbing	41	41	425	+936%
Gas	46	73	42	-9%
Wire	93	61	119	+28%
Title V*	NA	41	85	+100%
Animal**	183	86	120	-34%
* Includes new systems, witnessing perc. tests, and inspections;				
** Includes inspections and calls				

The Inspectional Services Department has been very busy over the past 10 years reviewing building permits for all types of residential, commercial and industrial development. The vast majority of building permits issued over the past several years have been for new single-family homes, which accounts for (83%) of all residential permits and over (20%) of all permits issued by the department since 1990.

No major capital or equipment improvement or staffing changes are anticipated by the department over the next 5 years.

Police Department

The Sheffield Police Department is located on the corner of Main Street and Berkshire School Road in Sheffield Center. The building served as the Town Library until 1997 when it was completely renovated and converted into the Police Department. The building includes a dispatch center, private offices, meeting rooms, storage, and restrooms.

The “Mission Statement” of the Sheffield Police Department

“To be an integral influence within our community in the enhancement of the community’s ability to create, maintain and improve the environment in which our community may grow, prosper and enjoy an enriched quality of life”.

The Department has a force of 4 full-time officers, the Police Chief, and 12 permanent interim officers (those that fill in for sick officers and those retiring) or special officers who are primarily retired and work road details. Full and

part-time staffing is up from approximately 11 in 1999 due primarily to the availability of federal grants. Staffing additions include 1 full-time officers and 6 part-time officers and administrative staff.

Police Department Requests For Services	
Year	Requests For Services
1998	2,319
1999	2,453
2000	1,925
2001	1,970
2002	2,009

Requests for service have decreased over the last several years. The department responded to 2,009 calls for service during the year 2002, of which 285 were for criminal offenses and 110 motor vehicle accidents.

Traffic safety is the main concern of the department particularly in the Town Center and at several intersections along Route 7. Domestic violence and juvenile programs are also a priority of the department. There is limited availability of support services, outside of probation, for domestic violence and juvenile issues that can address treatment for the accused and support for the victim.

The accepted standard for the ratio of police officers to every 1,000 people is about 2.0 to 2.5 officers. With a population of 3,335 full-time residents, Sheffield's ratio is about 1 officer to 1,112. Like a number of visitor-oriented communities, Sheffield has an extended population including non-resident second homeowners, faculty and students at the Southern Berkshire Regional School and at Berkshire School. This extended population and growing tourism in the region creates a sizable workload for the department's small staff.

The Police Station is in good condition and the only significant capital improvement that may be needed over the next 5 years is a prisoner holding cell that will be used as a temporary holding space until prisoners can be transferred to the facility in Great Barrington. The Department also has 3 cruisers which will have to be replaced periodically over the next several years. There is also a need to provide a secured parking area behind the station for police vehicles and equipment.

Fire Department

The Sheffield Fire Department, Voluntary Hose Company #1, is located on Depot Square in Sheffield Center. The Hose Company officially became the Fire Department in 1997, but no members are now covered by the Town insurance program. [CHECK DATE AND INSURANCE INFO WITH BOB W.]

The Fire Station was built in 1948 and is owned by the Voluntary Hose Company, while all equipment is owned by the Town. This facility includes a 3-bay garage, a meeting room, kitchen and one bathroom. The facility was renovated in 1998 raising the height of one bay to accommodate new apparatus. The Department currently had 3 pieces of apparatus including the main pumper truck (1994), the back-up pumper truck (1988), and a reserve pumper truck (1998).

The Fire Department had a full membership in 2003 including 6 officers and 28 regular members with an average of 10 years of service. While members of the Department are volunteers, they are well trained in programs such as HAZMAT, fire prevention, fire suppression, and EMS standards.

Fire Department Alarm Responses	
Year	Total Responses
1993	55
1998	82
1999	84
2000	93
2001	81
2002	88

The department primarily utilizes surface waters for fire suppression. There are approximately 25 dry hydrants around town and 20 wet hydrants connected to the Sheffield Water Company distribution lines in the Sheffield Center area. The Department averages 80 to 90 calls per year but responded to 108 calls in 2002, which was the busiest year on record. There has been an increase in the number of runs and demand for services over the past 10 years as documented in the table below. Between 1993 and 2002, department responses rose by over 85%. This increase in the demand for services, is largely due to the growing number of year-round and seasonal homes in Sheffield.

Ambulance services are provided to Sheffield by Southern Berkshire Volunteer Ambulance located in Great Barrington. The demand for ambulance service has also risen steadily over the past 10 years, and can be partially attributed to a rising vehicle accident rate, aging local population and the increasing population.

The Department is projecting the purchase of a new pumper/tanker truck in 2008. The Department also anticipates the purchase of a Jaws of Life cutting tool with ram over the next 5 years.

Over the next ten years there are a number of facility and service changes that need to occur. The Department is evaluating possible facilities expansion needs, which may include an addition to the building of 1 to 4 bays or renovations to increase the height of the current facility to accommodate larger apparatus. There are land constraints in the vicinity of the building that must be addressed by the department including septic systems and property owners that may have other plans for the land. Another possibility would be to relocate the Department to another location if these long-term issues can not be sufficiently addressed.

Another long-term consideration anticipated by the Department is the possible need for regional fire services. As more communities in the South Berkshire Region find difficulty in keeping volunteer membership, this option may become more necessary to adequately protect smaller communities.

Highway Department

The Highway Department, located in the Highway Garage at 35 Pike Road, is responsible for general roadway maintenance and repairs including sanding, snow plowing, grading and resurfacing of gravel roads, painting road centerlines, adding and changing culverts, cutting back edges for drainage, grading, graveling, patching and box paving, cutting brush, taking down and cleaning up trees, replacing signs, and equipment and facilities maintenance.

In 2003 the Highway Department had a staff of 4 full-time employees. The department also hires temporary summer help and encourages local residents to fill these positions. The Department also has 5 trucks used for various maintenance and repair services.

This Highway Garage was built in the mid-1960s and is approximately 16,000 square feet. It includes a 2-bay garage holding up to 6 vehicles, an administrative office, and storage facilities. The complex is located in a Zone I recharge area for the Sheffield Water Company Turnpike Well, and could be a potential threat of contamination. The Town anticipates the possible relocation of this facility within the next 10 years.

Chapter 90 Funding in Sheffield	
PY	Funding
1993	\$249,171
1998	\$406,640

Town of Sheffield, MA
Facilities & Services

Like other local services, the Highway Department has been affected by an increasing workload and demand for services with a growing and changing population in Sheffield. Chapter 90 Funds¹ are the primary source for major roadway construction projects in Town. Unfortunately, this major funding source has been cut back significantly in recent years. This has put a significant burden on department staff and resources.

The Department has identified several short and long-term projects for the next 5 to 10 years which are discussed in *Chapter 6: Transportation & Circulation*. However, most of these projects are dependent on Chapter 90 funding. Safety and volume are major concerns of the Highway Department.

Friendly Union/Dewey Hall

Dewey Hall, located in Sheffield Center, is privately owned and operated by the Sheffield Friendly Union. It was built in 1871 at the initiative of Reverend Orville Dewey and dedicated “to increase good and kindly feelings, and promote intelligence and cheerfulness”. The facility once served as the Town Library and is currently used by the Council of Aging as the Senior Center and for various public and private functions. The Friendly Union includes Dewey Hall (a small function hall with stage), 2 restrooms, offices and storage space. Renovations to the facility in the last few years include interior painting, restroom and kitchen improvements.

Council on Aging - The Council on Aging is a 9-member board comprised of a cross section of the community with the majority of board members over the age of 60. The Council is staffed by a part-time director, part-time assistant director with volunteer help for some activities.

The COA runs several projects and activities at the Senior Center such as weekly physical fitness classes, clinics for foot care and hearing, blood pressure and cholesterol testing, memory testing, and an annual clinic for flu shots. “Meals on Wheels” is provided to the Senior Center members through Elder Services of Berkshire County.

Sheffield Senior Center - The Town of Sheffield currently rents a small office in Dewey Hall from the Friends of Dewey Hall that acts as the center for many senior citizen activities. The Town pays for the use of the hall on a per day basis for fitness classes, potluck lunches, art classes, or speakers in the health field. However, as the elderly population in Sheffield grows and the Council on Aging provides more services and activities, the small office and hall are not sufficient to meet the needs of senior residents. Additionally, the facility is not fully handicapped accessible. The Friendly Union has asked the town to look for a new long-term location for the senior center, but will continue to house the center until a new location is found.

In 2002, plans were developed for the construction of the new Sheffield Senior Center. Preliminary drawings for a new facility show an attractively design, 1-story building in a Cape Cod Style. The new Senior Center would include a large dining hall, lounge, kitchen, restrooms, the director’s office, and storage space. An initial site next to Town Hall and an alternative site near the Bushnell-Sage Library were investigated, but found not to be feasible, so additional venues are being sought.

¹ Local transportation improvements funds provided by the State Department of Transportation

Town Park

Town Park encompasses 48 acres of mostly forested land off Miller Avenue. The park includes 2 small ball fields, a playground and pavilion which is used in the winter months for ice skating. The Sheffield Highway Department and the Town Park Committee are responsible for maintaining the park and have made several repairs to equipment and facilities over the past few years. Community businesses have also been generous in supporting the Town Park.

Expanding recreational activities in town is an important goal according to the 2002 Sheffield Community Survey. This survey also indicated that only about 1/2 of town residents use the Town Park and most were from the Sheffield Center area. Section 4.0: *Natural, Open Space, Recreation, and Agriculture Resources* discusses the Town Park and potential future recreational uses in greater detail.

Transfer Station

The Sheffield Transfer Station and Recycling Center is located on Barnum Street about 3/4 mile from the intersection with Salisbury Road. Staffing includes 3 part-time attendants. In addition to trash collection and recycling, this facility provides annual collection programs for bulk waste and household hazardous products (HHP).

The Transfer Station is open 4 days a week and is an enterprise operation with funding provided by annual resident and business user fees. The facility is expected to accommodate Sheffield's needs over the next several years, but additional capacity is likely to be needed in the ten year period covered by the plan.

From the transfer station, waste is trucked to the SeaMass B3 facility in Canaan, NY where it is hauled by rail to other locations out of state. As of 2001, trash from commercial haulers was no longer being disposed of at the Transfer Station. Customers using a commercial hauler became eligible to receive an abatement for the trash component of their solid waste user fee. With the exception of small businesses (defined as a business having no more than one non-owner employee), all businesses are now required to use a commercial hauler.

Recycling is required in Sheffield and products are sorted into 3 categories: mixed paper; bottles, cans, juice boxes and plastics; and metal. In 2003, the Town's Recycling Coordinator estimated the recycling rate to be 30%, an excellent success rate.

There have been some changes in the Town's recycling program over the past few years. Since recycling continues to be handled through the Transfer Station, there is a user fee bill to all residents and businesses. The non-trash component of the user fee covers the cost of recycling and special collections. Residents who use a commercial hauler for their trash, but wish to bring their recyclables to the transfer station themselves, may receive a special sticker allowing access to the recycling area only. These changes were made in response to increased concerns about the town's liability for solid waste brought to the Transfer Station by commercial haulers and a new state requirement to inspect solid waste from commercial haulers as it is being disposed. A new brochure has been published giving residents much useful information about the Transfer Station and recycling program.

An assessment of Transfer Station needs is recommended to meet the community's long-term needs and current equipment needs of the attendants.

Bushnell-Sage Public Library

The Bushnell-Sage Public Library is located off Main Street in Sheffield Center and has been a public institution for over 75 years. The building originally served as the town's high school and then middle school until 1993 when the building was reconstructed and expanded to serve as the Library. (Between 1923 and 1997 the library was located in the building that now houses the Police Station). This new facility is approximately 7,200 square feet allowing for substantially expanded space for collections, resources and meeting rooms. Additional parking has been recently added to the facility for a total of 20 spaces.

In 2003, the Library was staffed by the director and several part-time employees and volunteers. The Library's highest priority is good service to the community. They have added several new programs such as children's programs, exhibits and adult lectures, and public meeting spaces.

Bushnell-Sage Public Library Stats		
Year	Permanent Collection	Total Circulation
1993	22,991	31,665
1998	28,434	33,041
2002	NA	36,000

The quantity and quality of the collection has also grown over the past several years. As a result circulation of library materials and membership has increased over the past 10 years. Total circulation in 2003 was approximately 36,000.

The Bushnell-Sage Library is in the process of becoming a full member of CW/MARS (Central Western Massachusetts Regional System), the largest automated library network in Massachusetts. Membership will expand the capacity to process requests for materials, speed up delivery, and, eventually, enable patrons to place requests from their home computers. Membership will also enhance reference and research capabilities for patrons by giving them access to additional databases.

The Library is anticipating expansion needs in the very near future. And there is room to expand behind the existing building. Additional meeting room facilities might also be pursued through a combination of state grants and donations from the Friends of the Library.

Sheffield Business Park

The Sheffield Business Park is located in the southeast section of town between East Stahl Road and Hewins Street. The Town created the Park in 1994 when it bought the property out of Chapter 61A, which had been planned for a residential subdivision. The Town subsequently received a Public Works Economic Development (PWED) grant from the State to construct the roadway and install utilities.

The Sheffield Business Park was subdivided into 5 parcels each just over 4 acres. The Town set guidelines for providing an opportunity for light manufacturing and other clean industries that would add to the tax base and create employment opportunities for local residents while remaining compatible with the surrounding residential neighborhood.

The marketing study for the Business Park stressed the importance of getting the “right” first tenant to set the tone for the Park and its other tenants and that to do so might mean a 7-10 year horizon for finding that first tenant. While a number of inquiries have been made over the years, most have not been in keeping with both the Town’s economic development and neighborhood objectives.

Although the Business Park remains vacant today it has tremendous potential, particularly with an update of its possible uses to today’s local and economic climate (recognizing the local constraints to attracting light industry and clean manufacturing, which were the original intentions of the park, in addition to the national trend of such jobs moving overseas).

These issues and potential opportunities are discussed in greater detail in Section 3: *Economic Development*.

5. Educational Services & Facilities

The **Southern Berkshire Regional School District (SBRSD)** was founded in 1953 as the first regional district in the State to serve public school children from kindergarten through high school. It serves the Towns of Sheffield, Alford, Egremont, Monterey, and New Marlborough. The regional agreement has not been changed since 1954, when North Alford was added. The agreement is due to be renegotiated in 2008.

SBRSD is governed by an appointed 10-member **school district committee** with representatives from each of the five member towns. (Sheffield currently has 4 members on the school committee). Each member serves a 2-year term with a maximum of 6 years of contiguous service. The committee provides oversight of all school functions with the annual budget being the primary concern. The committee employs a superintendent to manage the school district, business administrator, and a part-time treasurer to oversee the annual budget process. SBRSD’s administrative team includes the superintendent, an elementary principal, a principal for grades 7-12, a special education director, a community relations coordinator, a plant director, and 12 teacher leaders. SBRSD has a full-time teaching staff of 82 with an average tenure of 14 years.

SBRSD and State Statistics		
	District	State
Drop Out Rate (2000-2001)	3.2%	3.5%
Attendance Rate	94.8%	94.9%
Special Education	16.6%	15.2%
Students per computer	2.7%	4.9%
Classrooms on the internet	100.0%	89.3%
H.S. Grads Plan to Attend:		
4-Year College	NA	52.4%
2-Year College	NA	20.4%
Work	NA	12.8%
SAT Results, 2001		
Verbal	504	506
Math	501	514
Per Pupil Expenditures		
1997	\$5,508	\$4,922
Town Master Plan; Town of Sheffield, MA		
Section 7: Community Facilities & Services		
2001	\$40,282	\$48,649

Source: Mass. Dept. of Education

In 2002, District students scored at or above the state average on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) categories. However, SAT scores in the district are slightly lower in the state-wide average. According to SBRSD, 82% of the 307 graduating seniors in 2001 are participating in post-secondary education, which is higher than the state average.

The district has more access to computers and the Internet than the state average. Also, the dropout rate is slightly lower than the state average. Mt. Everett High School is nationally recognized for its innovative schedule and programs.

The District still operates public school facilities for K through 6th grade in each of the towns except Alford, which voted to close their one-room school house in 1993. Each of the remaining towns has its own school facilities, and the Mt. Everett Regional School serves grades 7 through 12 for students from each community.

SBRSD Enrollment by Town, 1998 and 2002												
Town	Number of Students		School Facility									
			Monterey		South Egremont		New Marlboro		Undermountain (Sheffield)		Mt. Everett (Sheffield)	
Grade in School	Total		K		K-1		PK-6		PK-6		7 thru 12	
School Year	1998	2002	1998	2002	1998	2002	1998	2002	1998	2002	1998	2002
Alford	30	32	0	0	3	1	0	0	16	16	11	15
Egremont	128	113	0	0	6	7	2	1	61	58	59	47
Monterey	76	51	7	5	0	0	22	10	18	12	29	24
New Marlboro	162	179	1	0	0	0	43	48	50	52	68	81
Sheffield	554	515	0	1	0	3	24	20	294	280	236	211
Total Member Towns	950	890	8	6	9	11	91	77	439	418	403	378
All Others	138	141	0	8	0	2	0	12	0	74	0	45
Total	1088	1031	8	14	9	13	91	89	439	492	403	423

Source: SBRSD

Total school enrollment in SBRSD has declined over the past 5 years by about 5%. In particular, Sheffield student enrollment declined from 554 at the start of the 1998 school year to 515 in 2002 (a decline of 7%). In contrast, enrollment at Undermountain School has increased 12% over the past 5 years, and Mt. Everett has increased by 5%.

SBRSD Enrollment by Towns & Grade, 2002-2003*						
Grade	Alford	Egremont	Monterey	New Marl.	Sheffield	Total
Pre-K	0	1	2	5	1	9
K	2	8	6	14	60	90
1	0	11	4	9	45	69
2	0	8	3	15	24	50
3	4	7	3	11	48	73

4	1	11	4	14	35	65
5	9	7	2	12	33	63
6	1	11	1	13	43	69
7	5	10	4	14	38	71
8	3	5	4	17	36	65
9	2	7	6	9	29	53
10	4	9	1	15	40	69
11	1	6	7	18	40	72
12	0	10	2	8	27	47
Sub-Total	32	111	49	174	499	865
Out Choice	14	15	26.5	14	36	105.5
TOTAL	46	126	75.5	188	535	970.5

Source: SBRSD;* Does not include inbound non-member students from School Choice

Sheffield is the largest member of SBRSD with a total of 515 students starting the 2002-2003 school year. This represents more than 50% of the total student body. Alford is the smallest member town with 32 students. SBRSD also participates in the Massachusetts School Choice Program and approximately 15% of students come from outside district towns.

Sheffield Children Attending Public Schools					
Grade	1970	1980	2000	2001	2002
K	36	43	45	54	60
1	61	41	48	24	45
2	53	38	39	45	24
3	59	27	37	37	48
4	52	42	42	33	35
5	44	38	42	41	33
6	53	33	38	41	43
7	60	43	35	36	38
8	46	31	35	38	36
9	42	55	45	36	29
10	36	33	36	44	40
11	42	33	32	37	40
12	40	28	31	26	27
TOTAL	624	485	510	495	499
Outgoing Choice			19	32	36

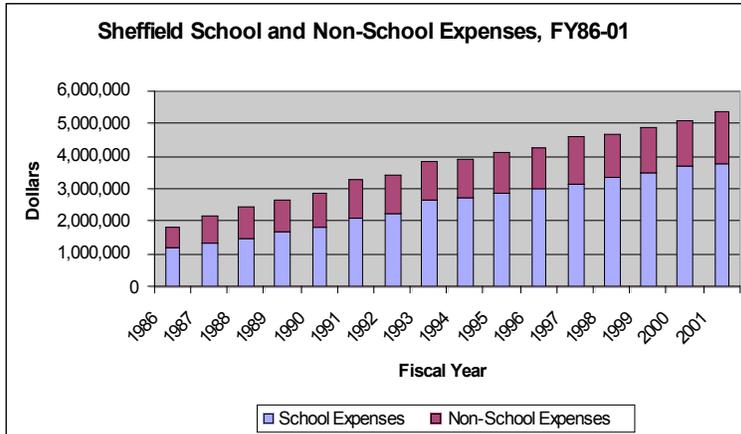
Source: Southern Berkshire Regional School District

The number of public school students from Sheffield has varied over the last several years. From a low of 501 local students in 1986, Sheffield school children peaked in 1999 at 722. Since then, the numbers of local students have dropped significantly to 515 at the beginning of the 2002-2003 school year.

In 1992, SBRSD completed a new \$25 million state-of-the-art school complex housing the Undermountain Elementary School and the Mount Everett School. This facility is located off Berkshire School Road and includes pre-kindergarten through 12th grade. In addition to the school buildings, the complex has several ball fields and playground for student and public use. No major capital improvements are anticipated by the SBRSD over the next 5 years.

Funding for the Mt. Everett Regional School was provided by the State as well as member towns. Sheffield, being the largest member town, was responsible for the bulk of the school construction bond. However, local student enrollment has declined for the last 5 years. In order to reduce cost and provide equity, an interim agreement was negotiated with the Towns of Alford, Egremont, Monterey and New Marlborough regarding the allocation of the operating budget for the Southern Berkshire Regional School District during the remaining years of the school construction bond. Under this agreement, which was approved by all five towns at respective town meetings, the school operating budget is allocated on a rolling average of the student enrollment from each town.

The cost of education is an on-going concern in Sheffield. The SBRSD constitutes approximately 75 to 85% of the annual town budget, which is one of the highest in the State. Transportation costs are also very high in the district due to the rural character of the communities served.



Being a rural school district, SBRSD is responsible for a relatively small number of students compared to the large geographic area of its member towns. It also operates 5 separate schools in 4 towns. These two factors may lead to higher than average school costs per capita. In fact, SBRSD costs per pupil are consistently higher than the statewide average (33% higher in FY01). In Sheffield alone, the cost per pupil has grown considerably over the past 15 years due to declining local enrollment. By comparison, the public school cost per capita have grown modestly as the population in town increases.



School choice has had an influence on the district. School and town officials estimate that the large majority of member-town students in younger grades, as well as a substantial number of students from outside the district, are sent to SBRSD schools. However, at the high school grades, the district tends to lose students to other districts, private schools or vocational schools.

The **Berkshire School**, located on North Undermountain Road, was founded in 1907 and enrolls 385 students from grades 9 through 12 and at a post-graduate level. Approximately 84% of the student body consists of boarders while the remaining are day students. The exact number of students from SBRSD member towns is not available but is estimated to be between 25 and 50. A number of district students attend regional vocational schools in Lee, Pittsfield, Berkshire Hills and Northampton's Smith Vocational School

6. Town Boards, Commissions & Committees

Board of Health - The Board of Health is composed of five (5) members appointed by the Board of Selectmen, three (3) of whom may be any or all of the members of the Board of Selectmen. The term for members of the Board of Health is 3 years.

The Board of Health is responsible for all health codes, tenant complaints of unsanitary conditions, rabies prevention, communicable disease prevention, environmental health issues, septic system installations, inspections of older septic systems, new and old wells, noise complaints, and odor complaints.

Over the past few years the Board has seen an increase in the number of Title V septic inspections, applications for disposal septic construction or upgrades, along with well permits for existing and new homes. Title 5 inspections (private septic systems) have also become more difficult with additional state requirements. The Town's Septic System Repair Loan Program has helped a number of homes with sewage problems make improvements to meet Title 5 requirements.

Many of the Board's responsibilities for inspections are carried out by the volunteer members. However, the Board also contracts with individuals for food inspection, and animal inspection.

The **Berkshire Visiting Nurses Association**, through the Sheffield Board of Health provides disease prevention and health promotion services throughout the year to the residents of Sheffield. These services include regularly scheduled prevention clinics where residents receive personal attention in monitoring blood pressure, testing blood sugar, counseling on health related issues and referral as necessary to other medical care providers and wellness programs.

Finance Committee - The Finance Committee consists of the Town Treasurer in an advisory capacity without voting power and five (5) other members to be appointed by the Moderator with the approval of the Selectmen within two (2) weeks following the Annual Town Meeting. Members are appointed for three (3) years and their duties are to make recommendations at Town Meeting on all appropriations and to make transfers from the reserve fund when needed.

Planning Board - The Planning Board is composed of five (5) members elected to three-year terms, and one (1) alternate member appointed by the Board of Selectmen, with the powers and duties under the provisions of MGL C. 41, § 81A. The Board is responsible for reviewing development projects including subdivisions, site plans, and Form A's (new building lots that do not require formal subdivision review, also known as Approval Not Required lots - ANRs).

Planning Board Cases, 1998-2002					
Year	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Town Master Plan; Town of Sheffield, MA				16	17
Section 7 on Community Facilities & Services				0	0
Comm./Ind. Site Plans	0	0	0	0	0
Special Permits	3	4	4	4	1

The Planning Board has been directly involved in the implementation of the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations through development review. Over the last 10 years the Planning Board has sponsored a number of amendments to the Zoning Bylaws and Subdivision Regulations to improve the development review process and guide growth in Sheffield. Two (2) members of the Board were also appointed to the Master Plan Steering Committee.

Zoning Board of Appeals - The Zoning Board of Appeals is a 3-member Board with 3 alternate members appointed by the Board of Selectmen. The ZBA is responsible for reviewing cases involving variances from the Zoning Bylaws (such as dimensional requirements), special permits (for specific types of uses and projects), and appeals of decisions made by the Planning Board and zoning administrator.

ZBA Cases 1998-2002				
Year	Appeals	Variances	Special Permits	TOTAL
1998	2	0	3	5
1999	0	4	6	10
2000	0	4	6	10
2001	0	6	5	11
2002	1	3	3	7

The ZBA has been active over the past 5 years with an average of over 8 decisions annually. Most cases involve requests for variances from dimensional requirements (i.e. setbacks, frontage and lot size), which is typical for ZBAs around the State.

Conservation Commission - The Conservation Commission is a 5-member board responsible for environmental permitting in the community. Commissioners are appointed by the Board of Selectmen for 3-year renewable terms. The Commission works with the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection in an effort to enforce the Wetlands Protection Act, which now incorporates the Rivers Protection Act. With the increase in residential development and changing state regulations, the Conservation Commission has been very active over the past 5 years. A main concern and priority is to protect wetlands habitat and other sensitive environmental areas in Sheffield.

Park and Recreation Committee- The Park and Recreation Committee is a 5-member and volunteer committee appointed by the Board of Selectmen. The Committee has made several facility and program improvements in recent years. However, even with the number of expanded programs the Committee has added, there continues to be a steady increase in the demand for recreational fields and facilities as a result of population growth in Town. The need to expand recreational activities is for both children and adults.

Ashley Falls Historic District Commission - The Ashley Falls Historic District Commission is a 7-member volunteer committee appointed by the Board of Selectmen. The mission of the Commission is to preserve Ashley Falls as a “rural village” community and to foster continued appreciation of this mission and efforts of residents and town government to achieve this goal. The Commission typically reviews new development or renovation to existing structures in the Historic District to ensure that efforts are made to preserve and enhance old buildings for their historical and rural significance. The District Commission also proactively works with property owners to restore the district’s preservation goals.

Sheffield Historical Commission - The Historical Commission was established under the provisions of MGL C. 40, § 8D, for the preservation, promotion and development of the historical assets of the town. The Commission is made up of 6-members who are appointed by the Board of

Selectmen to 3-year terms. This volunteer commission is primarily involved in preserving family histories and artifacts in Sheffield. They have also been involved in recent years in creating an oral history of Sheffield and Ashley Falls through the memories and stories of long-time residents, the Historic Walking Tour brochure (a self-guided tour of Sheffield Center and suggested other points of interest), and inventory of historic homes.

Sheffield Cultural Council - The Sheffield Cultural Council is a 5-member citizen board appointed by the Board of Selectmen. The goal of the Sheffield Cultural Council is to offer residents of Southern Berkshire County the opportunity to attend and participate in events that are designed to promote excellence in the arts, humanities, and interpretive sciences. These events not only focus on entertainment, but also provide a valuable source of education for all.

Programs presented in recent years included New England Folk Music concert, student art exhibits at Berkshire South, an African music and dance program, Earth Day Celebration at the Berkshire Museum, Fall Festival of Shakespeare (an annual event giving area high school students the opportunity to act in several Shakespearian plays under the direction of Shakespeare & Co.), juggling performances, and Music for Seniors. The Cultural Council has also been awarded grants in recent years including ShoeBox for KidsAct/Barrington Stage Co., and the continuation of “A Place in Time” offered by the Sheffield Historical Society.

Industrial Development Commission - The Industrial Development Commission is a 5-member committee appointed by the Board of Selectmen. The Commission is primarily responsible for interviewing and recruiting parties interested in purchasing parcels of land at the Sheffield Business Park located on East Stahl Road. The Commission is dedicated to locating businesses that will be compatible with the community and provide economic growth, property tax expansion, and high quality jobs for Sheffield residents.

7. Water and Wastewater Facilities & Services

Sheffield Water Company

The Sheffield Water Company (SWC), a private utility, was established in 1895 with 4 springs serving the Sheffield Center area. In 2004, SWC provides drinking to approximately 465 accounts

in Sheffield Center serving approximately 1,750 residents, or about 52% of the total population. An estimated 75% of the customers are residential and the remaining 25% are comprised of commercial, industrial and municipal users. Approximately 50 million gallons are pumped annually according to the SWC.

The Company is staffed by two (2) part-time employees providing supervision, plant operation, treatment plant handling, water distribution maintenance, and meter reading services. The Company is fully funded by water service user fees.

SWC's public water supply is derived from six (6) groundwater sources including two (2) wells and four (4) springs identified in the table below.

Sheffield Water Company Public Water Supply Source Characteristics					
Source	Location	Approx. Flow (gallons per min.)	Year Estab.	Zone I Area	Zone II Area
Farm House Spring	Off Water Farm Rd.	5.4 gpm	1895	467-ft Square	USGS 38.4-acre Delineation Pending Approval
Red Rock Spring	Off Water Farm Rd.	2.7 gpm	1895	377-ft. Square	
Smith Spring	Off Water Farm Rd.	5.4 gpm	1895	467-ft Square	
Barrel Spring	Off Water Farm Rd.	2.7 gpm	1895	377-ft. Square	
Pike Road Well	Off Pike Rd.	110 gpm	1956	400-ft Radius	18.3 Square Miles
Maple Ave. Well	Off Maple Ave.	70 gpm	1991	250-ft Radius	

Water from the Red Rock, Barrel Springs and Farm House Spring recharge the Lower Reservoir and the Smith Spring provides water to the Upper Reservoir. Both reservoirs consist of 30,000-gallon cistern/storage tanks. Overflow is discharged to nearby Soda Creek.

The Pike Road Well is a 250-foot deep gravel-packed well which is pumped directly into the distribution system. The Maple Avenue Well (also known as Hubbard Well) is a 311-foot deep gravel-packed well pumped directly into the distribution system. The two wells alternate operation depending on water demand, time of year, drought conditions and other variables. The Zone II Area² for the Maple Avenue and Pike Road wells was delineated and approved by the State in 2001. The Zone II Water Recharge Area covers a large area in Sheffield, Great Barrington and Egremont.

Average annual consumption has varied in response to droughts, water conservation, and fluctuating industrial and agricultural needs. Public water consumption, however, has increased over the past 20 years at a moderate rate due primarily to residential development in the service area. The total annual water consumption in 2003 was 56 million gallons and the average daily consumption was 153,000 gallons. Sheffield Plastics is the largest single customer with an annual consumption rate of approximately 6 million gallons.

Sheffield Water Company Consumption Trends						
Year	No. of Services*	Total Annual Consumption	% Res. Volume	Ave. Daily Volume (MGD)	Est. Pop. Served	Total Gal./Person/Day MGD
1980	350	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

² The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) delineated a single Zone II Area for the 4 springs in the fall of 2002. See Appendix 1:Glossary of Terms for a description of Zone I and II Areas.

1990	445	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
2000	528	47,000,000	75%	147,000	1,750	74
2003	465	56,000,000	75%	153,000	1,750	87

Source: Sheffield Water Company; * SWC installed new meter equipment in 2002 which changed the number of services from customer to service reading explaining the reduction in total Number of services between 2002 and 2003.

In 2003, the residential per service consumption averaged 259 gallons per day. This is within the range of normal consumption rate of 250 to 350 gallons per service per day. In 2002, SWC finished installing meters for individual customer service connections. Comparing individual meter readings to the master meters at the supply source verified that a significant amount of water was being lost through the distribution system. Corrective measures are being put in place to address the leakage.

To protect the existing water supply sources and provide for future public water needs, SWC owns approximately 375 acres of land around their water supply wells and springs. In 2003, SWC adopted a wellhead protection and emergency response plan.³ The purpose of the plan is to improve efforts to protect the company's six (6) existing drinking water sources. Targeted projects for water supply protection include the following:

- Funding for Zone I and Zone II acquisitions;
- Develop and implement a floor drain inspection program;
- Conduct a drainage study of the tributaries to the springs;
- Prepare an educational brochure specific to the Sheffield Public Water Supply System; and
- Increase storage capacity.

Wellhead protection is a strategy aimed at preventing drinking water contamination by managing the land area that supplies water to a well. Mapping and protecting recharge areas is critical to protecting water quality.

Different land uses located in Zone II Areas may potentially impact groundwater quality, thus are an important consideration in water supply protection. According to state and local mapping, the Zone II Area for the Pike Road and Maple Avenue wells primarily consists of croplands and woodlands. The Interim Zone II Area for the springs primarily consists of wooded lands. However, these two areas also contain small pockets of residential, commercial, agricultural and industrial uses. Field surveys conducted by the State identified several potential contamination sources (PCS) within the Zone II area for the Pike Road and Maple Avenue Wells.⁴ A total of 64 PCS locations were identified as illustrated on the map below; each is given a risk ranking by the State.

A specific site that poses potential contamination concerns is the Sheffield Highway Garage, which is located within the Zone I Area (primary recharge area) of the Pike Road well. Other specific concerns are oil and hazardous waste spills along Route 7 and the railroad tracks in the Zone II Area of the Pike Road and Maple Avenue wells, pesticide applications on agricultural lands, and

³ Wellhead Protection Plan and Emergency Response Plan for the Sheffield Public Water Supply System, Prepared by Tighe & Bond, June 2003.

⁴ Massachusetts Dept. of Environmental Protection, SWAP Zone II Delineation Project, November 1999 and March 2000.

Zone II residential development in Sheffield and Egremont that is not tied into public sanitary sewer systems.

The springs and their Zone II Area are entirely located within the Rural Zoning District which is intended primarily for private residential and agricultural uses. Most of the Zone II Area for the Pike Road well is also located in the Rural District. However, property located within the Zone I area is zoned General Business which permits a combination of light manufacturing as well as agricultural uses. The Maple Street well is located in the Village Center District which permits a mix of residential and commercial activities.

In 1991, the Town of Sheffield established Water Supply Protection Districts (WSPD) to protect the springs and well sources. WSPDs are overlay districts that cover the Interim Zone II Areas and are superimposed over the established zoning districts. These interim areas include all lands within a 0.5-mile radius of the wellheads and springs owned by SWC. The overlay districts establish additional protection measures by further controlling potential contamination sources. However, the protection measures recommended were not fully adopted into the zoning regulations.

Sewerage

The Town of Sheffield has no public sewer system and all residential and commercial building are served by private septic systems. However, there is a small sewage treatment system located at the Mt. Everett Regional School (South Berkshire Regional School District) on Berkshire School Road. This facility services the school facility and was required by the State at a cost of approximately \$1.5 million. This treatment system is in essence a large septic system, with 2 large tanks to retain sludge as grey water is released through the leach field. The Regional School's Septic System would need significant investment to provide service off-site⁵. The permitted capacity of 31,000 gallons per day is only for a rare, emergency surge. If the regular flow begins to approach 20,000 gallons per day, the increase would trigger a requirement for an upgrade. At present the sanitary reports indicate trying to stay below 10,000 gallons per day to lessen the expense and burden of required monitoring and reporting.

While the construction of a public sewer is probably not feasible today, an alternative approach would be to allow for small package treatment plants that could service commercial, industrial or residential growth in targeted areas. Currently, the Town has no package treatment plants and is concerned about compliance with state standards and long-term maintenance responsibilities. This issue should be explored further as fewer lands in identified growth centers are suitable for on-site disposal.

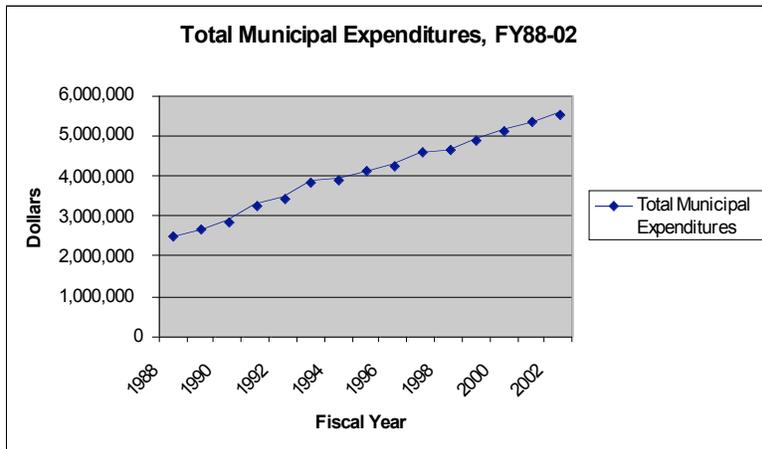
The lack of public sewer and limited area of public water supply through the Sheffield Water Company may limit the effectiveness of zoning techniques aimed at redeveloping or infilling areas in the community that are already built up such as Sheffield Center. Local zoning can be revised to create this opportunity. However policies that prohibit common strategies to manage and direct growth in small communities under Title V (such as shared septic systems, small package treatment plants and other alternative technologies) may unwittingly discourage the type of development most in character and sought after by Sheffield.

⁵ Thanks to Fred Finkle, Sanitary Technician, for interview

8. Trends in Municipal Revenue & Expenditures

Annual municipal budget appropriations are ordinarily made at the Annual Town Meeting held in the spring. Each department submits a budget to Town Meeting after review by the Town Administrator, the Finance Committee and the Board of Selectmen. Additionally, all capital improvements projects and bonds are presented at Town Meeting.

Sheffield's municipal expenses have grown substantially over the past 10 years. Overall expenses grew from \$3,885,383 in FY93 to \$5,555,639 in FY02. This represents an increase of 43%.



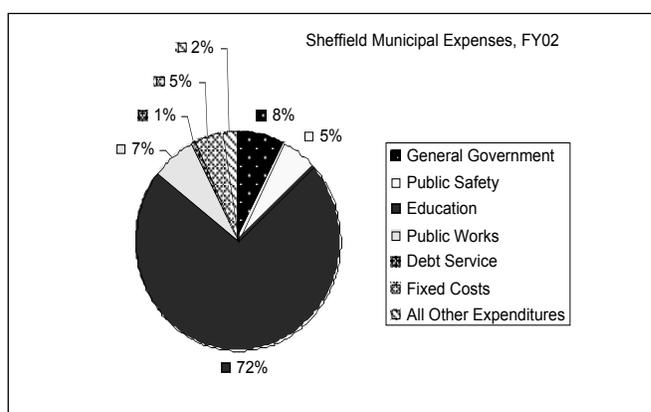
A number of factors have contributed to the growing town budget. Several important public projects in the early 1990s are probably the largest contributing factor including the construction of the Mt. Everett Regional School, the Bushnell-Sage Public Library, and major renovations to the Sheffield Police Station and Town Hall.

Service costs have also increased as a result of a growing population and associated demand for services. In terms of actual expenditures, education has grown the most over the past 10 years both in terms of funds spent and costs per capita. Other services that have grown rapidly include public safety, public works, and fixed costs such as unemployment, workers compensation, health insurance, retirement, and other employee benefits.

Town of Sheffield Actual Expenditures by Service, FY93 - FY02						
Service/Department	Actual Expenditures		Change in Services FY93-02		Per Capita Expense	
	FY1993	FY2002	\$ Change	% Change	FY93	FY02
Estimated Population	3,004	3,335	331	11%		
General Government	\$ 310,354	\$ 420,476	\$ 110,122	35%	103	126
Police	\$ 126,208	\$ 220,646	\$ 94,438	75%	42	66
Fire	\$ 6,012	\$ 23,771	\$ 17,759	295%	2	7

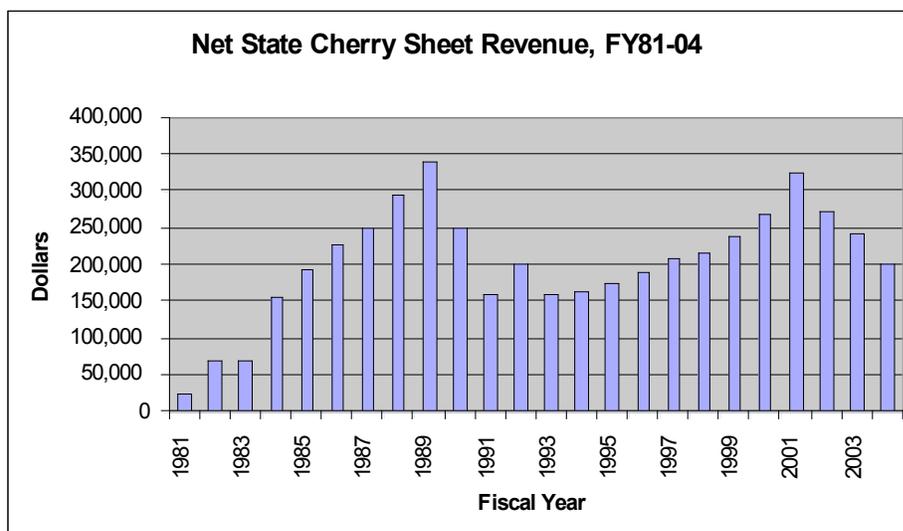
Other Public Safety	\$ 10,881	\$ 60,105	\$ 49,224	452%	4	18
Education	\$2,653,594	\$4,023,423	\$1,369,829	52%	883	1206
Public Work Highway	\$ 352,510	\$ 386,031	\$ 33,521	10%	117	116
Other Public Works	\$ 114,057	\$ -	\$ (114,057)	-100%	38	0
Health & Welfare	\$ 20,692	\$ 38,090	\$ 17,398	84%	7	11
Culture & Recreation	\$ 54,228	\$ 94,340	\$ 40,112	74%	18	28
Debt Services	\$ 27,700	\$ 37,053	\$ 9,353	34%	9	11
Fixed Costs	\$ 158,008	\$ 251,704	\$ 93,696	59%	53	75
Inter- Governmental	\$ 46,878	\$ -	\$ (46,878)	-100%	16	0
Other Expenses	\$ 4,261	\$ -	\$ (4,261)	-100%	1	0
Total Expenditures	\$3,885,383	\$5,555,639	\$1,670,256	43%	1293	1666

Source: Mass. Dept. of Revenue



Sheffield municipal expenses, like many comparable communities around the state, have grown steadily over the past several years as the costs of providing services, constructing new facilities, and fixed costs rise. However, an additional factor in Sheffield's growing budget is the loss of state revenues.

Over the past 5 years, the Town has lost state revenue, particularly for schools and public roads. State revenue for Sheffield peaked in FY01 at \$326,522 but has steadily declined to \$201,794 in FY04.



Tax revenues from local property value assessments have increased to kept pace with the municipal expenses. Between FY93 and FY02, residential property values increased by over

\$106,000,000 (or 50%). Residential property also carries a large share of the total tax burden - 85% of the total FY03 valuation is residential property compared to 10% commercial and 2% industrial. (See chart on next page.)

Town of Sheffield Property Valuation By Class & Tax Rate, Fiscal Years 1993-2003								
Fiscal Year	Tax Rate	Property Value By Class				Total Real Property Value	Total Personal Property Value	Total Valuation
		Residential	Open Space	Commercial	Industrial			
1993	13.68	\$ 212,628,600	\$ 1,405,000	\$ 23,230,100	\$7,294,500	\$244,558,200	\$ 7,651,800	\$252,210,000
1994	14.26	\$ 213,871,666	\$ 1,400,600	\$ 24,944,517	\$7,372,800	\$247,589,583	\$ 8,019,900	\$255,609,483
1995	14.36	\$ 218,643,900	\$ 1,347,100	\$ 29,514,200	\$7,157,900	\$256,663,100	\$ 7,988,223	\$264,651,323
1996	14.36	\$ 220,961,000	\$ -	\$ 29,956,600	\$7,157,900	\$258,075,500	\$ 7,806,713	\$265,882,213
1997	14.43	\$ 222,081,400	\$ -	\$ 29,693,700	\$7,339,100	\$259,114,200	\$ 7,588,190	\$266,702,390
1998	15.44	\$ 222,265,132	\$ -	\$ 32,470,004	\$6,732,700	\$261,467,836	\$ 7,548,100	\$269,015,936
1999	15.76	\$ 224,783,025	\$ -	\$ 32,675,917	\$6,660,400	\$264,119,342	\$ 8,159,530	\$272,278,872
2000	15.94	\$ 227,121,895	\$ -	\$ 32,736,375	\$6,857,000	\$266,715,270	\$ 8,633,600	\$275,348,870
2001	14.20	\$ 267,938,977	\$ -	\$ 35,334,446	\$7,787,800	\$311,061,223	\$ 8,709,789	\$319,771,012
2002	13.00	\$ 314,362,764	\$ -	\$ 37,339,629	\$7,423,800	\$359,126,193	\$ 8,998,099	\$368,124,292
2003	13.46	\$ 318,661,201	\$ -	\$ 37,836,053	\$7,520,500	\$364,017,754	\$ 8,880,350	\$372,898,104
Change in Value	-0.22	\$ 106,032,601	NA	\$ 14,605,953	\$ 226,000	\$119,459,554	\$ 1,228,550	\$120,688,104
FY03 % of Value		85%		10%	2%	98%	2%	100%
Change in % of Value	-2%	50%	NA	63%	3%	49%	16%	48%

Source: Town of Sheffield Assessors Office

A primary reason for the significant increase in demand for public services, and, consequently, the municipal budget is the amount and type of development in Sheffield over the past several years. Residential growth over the last decade has been relatively high (in comparison to the previous 20 years) while the commercial and industrial sectors have grown modestly.

In fact, commercial and industrial development has been limited and provided only a small amount of new tax revenue. Commercial property values over this 10-year period grew by \$14,600,000 and industrial by just \$226,000 (or 3%). Additionally, the type of commercial and industrial building stock in Sheffield (storage, trucking and smaller retail) does not typically appreciate at a very high rate.

Residential growth, however, does and has appreciated substantially over the past 10 years. Yet new year-round homes also place the largest burden on municipal facilities and services, particularly in schools, roads, recreational and other community services. If Sheffield is going to meet the growing demand and cost for services it has to either increase the tax burden on residential property, or expand the tax base through commercial and industrial development.

9. Municipal Comparisons

The growing tax burden on residential properties is evidenced by comparing Sheffield to other municipalities in Massachusetts with similar characteristics in terms of population, social-economic, and/or geography. (See Appendix 4 for full comparison of Sheffield to other municipalities). Three Criteria were used in this analysis:

- Population: Municipalities with Populations between 2,000 and 5,000
- Location: Municipalities in Berkshire County
- Socio-Economic Characteristics – Based on the State’s classification of Sheffield and other communities as a “Resort/Retirement/Artistic’ Community (RRA)”⁶

Based on these criteria, there are a total of 93 towns (including Sheffield) in the comparison as shown in the table below.

SHEFFIELD	C	P	R	Towns in Municipal Comparison			NORTH BROOKFIELD	P
STOCKBRIDGE	C	P	R				BOXBOROUGH	P
WILLIAMSTOWN	C		R				ROCHESTER	P
WINDSOR	C		R				CARLISLE	P
W. STOCKBRIDGE	C		R	HADLEY	P	R	BRIMFIELD	P
NEW ASHFORD	C		R	OAK BLUFFS	P	R	DEERFIELD	P
NEW MARLBORO	C		R	NAHANT	P	R	SUNDERLAND	P
EGREMONT	C		R	EDGARTOWN	P	R	AVON	P
MONTEREY	C		R	TISBURY	P	R	BOYLSTON	P
TYRINGHAM	C		R	WEST TISBURY	P	R	BERLIN	P
SANDISFIELD	C		R	TRURO	P	R	HATFIELD	P
ALFORD	C		R	WELLFLEET	P	R	HOLLAND	P
PITTSFIELD	C			ESSEX	P	R	SHERBORN	P
LANESBOROUGH	C	P		IPSWICH		R	PLYMPTON	P
CHESHIRE	C	P		ROCKPORT		R	WILLIAMSBURG	P
NORTH ADAMS	C			BREWSTER		R	BOLTON	P
LENOX	C			CHATHAM		R	PROVINCETOWN	P
LEE	C			NANTUCKET		R	WARREN	P
ADAMS	C			CONWAY		R	PAXTON	P
CLARKSBURG	C			SHUTESBURY		R	WENHAM	P
DALTON	C			DENNIS		R	NORTHFIELD	P
RICHMOND	C			ORLEANS		R	W. BROOKFIELD	P
GREAT BARRINGTON	C			UPTON		R	BERNARDSTON	P
FLORIDA	C			EASTHAM		R	ASHBY	P
SAVOY	C			WHATELY		R	HARDWICK	P
HINSDALE	C			LEVERETT		R	MILLVILLE	P
HANCOCK	C			ASHFIELD		R	HUBBARDSTON	P
BECKET	C			CUMMINGTON		R	WEST NEWBURY	P
PERU	C			HAWLEY		R	HUNTINGTON	P
WASHINGTON	C			ROWE		R	EAST BROOKFIELD	P
MT WASHINGTON	C			GOSNOLD		R	SHELBURNE	P
OTIS	C			CHILMARK		R	DUNSTABLE	P

C = In Berkshire County; P = Population between 2,000 and 5,000;

⁶ “Report/Retirement/Artistic Communities (RRA)” are part of a classification system devised by the Massachusetts Department of Revenue (DOR) based on socio-economic characteristics such as employment and business types, location, income, and other financial criteria. Four towns in South Berkshire County qualify as RRA communities including Egremont, Sheffield, Stockbridge, and West Stockbridge. Lenox is identified as a “growth community”. Lee is identified as a “rural economic center”, and Great Barrington an “urbanized center”.

In all, there are 32 communities in Berkshire County, 44 communities with populations between 2,000 and 5,000, and 40 communities with RRA classification. Many of the RRA are located in the Berkshires or coastal areas of Massachusetts (such as Cape Cod and the Islands). Several of these communities fit 2 or more of the criteria for comparison to Sheffield.

Summary of Sheffield Rank in Comparison to Other Communities			
Category	Sheffield Rank		
	Berkshire County Communities	Communities with Populations Between 2,000 and 5,000	Resort/Retirement/Artistic Communities
Total Number	32	44	40
Population, Housing, Land & Water			
2000 Population	10	23	16
Total Housing Units	9	17	19
Water Area	14	29	27
Land Area	2	1	2
Total Area	2	2	6
Pop Per Square Mile	17	42	25
Housing Per Square Mile	18	41	24
Income and Property Wealth			
1989 Per Capita Income	22	16	17
1999 Per Capita Income	13	19	30
1989 Median Household Income	29	37	35
1999 Median Household Income	22	33	28
1989 Median Family Income	23	38	32
1999 Median Family Income	25	40	35
Roads, Taxes & Budget			
2000 EQV/ 2000 US Census	17	20	31
Land SQ Miles	3	1	4
2001 Public Road Mileage	2	1	6
FY02 Operations Budget	9	28	20
Average Single Family Home Tax Bill	6	13	14
FY02 Total Parcel	10	5	18
Revenue			
Tax Levy	9	19	19
State Aid	16	39	27
Local Receipts	12	30	23
All Other	14	23	36
Total Receipts	10	10	19
Expenditures			
General Government	9	21	21
Police	10	33	22
Fire	16	40	31
Public Safety	7	28	21
Education	8	13	15
Public Works	15	30	23
Human Services	9	27	23
Culture & Recreation	9	29	22
Debt Service	18	38	30
Fixed Costs	11	29	22

Intergovernmental	11	25	23
Other Expenditures	16	29	28
Total Expenditures	9	26	20
Municipal Receipts from State			
Lottery, Beano & Charity Games	12	24	10
Additional Assistance	12	4	10
Exemptions: Vets, Blind and Surviving Spouses	17	33	24
Exemptions: Elderly	12	16	10
State Owned Land	13	11	13
Public Libraries	11	27	18
Subtotal General Government	12	33	13
Total Receipts	16	43	25
Labor Force			
Labor Force	9	20	19
Employment	9	24	19
Unemployment	12	37	19
Unemployment Rate	27	42	25
Expenditures Per Capita			
General Government	14	26	8
Police	6	29	16
Fire	12	17	21
Public Safety	12	26	14
Education	15	17	13
Public Works	21	25	12
Human Services	10	29	18
Culture & Recreation	3	28	13
Debt Service	24	41	32
Fixed Costs	9	27	16
Intergovernmental	1	16	1
Total Expenditures	24	13	11

Source: Mass. Department of Revenue

The most comparable municipalities to Sheffield are those that meet all three of the criteria as Sheffield does. There is only one other community, Stockbridge, that meets all three criteria. There are two other communities (Cheshire and Lanesboro) that meet the criteria for Location and Population; 11 other communities that meet the RRA and Location Criteria, and 9 communities that meet both Population and RRA criteria.

Based on these comparisons, the following observations are made:

Berkshire County Communities

- Sheffield ranks 2nd in total land area (second only to Sandisfield).
- Sheffield ranks in the lowest quartile for median family income in 1999.
- Sheffield ranks 2nd in public road mileage (second only to New Marlboro).
- Sheffield has the 6th highest average single family tax bill.
- Sheffield is in the top quartile for public safety and educational expenditures. It is also in the top quartile for police, culture & recreation, and intergovernmental expenses per capita. However, Sheffield is in the lowest quartile for debt service and total expenditures per capita.

- Sheffield has the 7th lowest unemployment rate.

Communities with Populations between 2,000 – 5,000

- Sheffield ranks 2nd in total square miles.
- Sheffield's density is one of the very lowest in terms of population and homes per square miles.
- Sheffield has the most public road mileage.
- Sheffield is the 5th lowest in receiving state aid.
- Sheffield is in the lowest quartile for police, fire, and debt service expenditures.
- Sheffield has one of the lowest unemployment rates.
- Sheffield has one of the lowest debt services per capita.

Resort/Retirement Artistic Communities

- Sheffield is in the highest quartile for total land area.
- Sheffield ranks in the lowest quartile for per capita, family and household income.
- Sheffield ranks in the highest quartile in public road mileage.
- Sheffield ranks in the lowest quartile for expenditures on fire and debt services.
- Sheffield ranks in the highest quartile for general government and intergovernmental expenditures per capita.

Community Facilities & Services Action Plan

Based on the inventory and assessment presented above, the following are recommended improvements in the Community's facilities and services. Recommended improvements reflect the existing and anticipated future needs for each department based on the amount and type of growth anticipated in Sheffield. The practicality of improvements is also based on a limited annual budget.

Overall Goal

Carefully invest in the facilities and services that support the goals and objectives of Sheffield's Master Plan.

Community Facilities & Services Objectives

1. Assess infrastructure & improvements required for vibrant Village Centers and neighborhoods.
2. Strive to maintain rural roadway character in outlying areas.
3. Explore appropriate designs and locations for community facilities & services.
4. Anticipate and assess services needed for a growing population.

Community Facilities & Services Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Assess and plan for needs in Village Centers and neighborhoods.

- a. **In conjunction with the Village Center Plan process, consider contracting for engineering services to:**
 - i. Estimate how much more infill and expansion can be supported by the septic filtering capacity of the soils in Sheffield Center.
 - ii. Estimate the costs and benefits of establishing a village deep well and distribution system to support desired infill and enhancement in the Ashley Falls Village Center and 'Clayton Area'.
 - iii. If deemed necessary, investigate alternative sewage treatment technologies that might be appropriate for one or both of the Village Centers and nearby neighborhoods.
- b. **Consider creating an Artisan and Craft Center to promote and market locally produced goods, combining workspace with public space.**
- c. **Assess the needs of the Farmers' Market and locate appropriate site.**

- d. **Work to keep the Post Office on the Village Green.**
- e. **Evaluate and decide on a suitable location for the Senior Center.**

Recommendation 2. Assess and plan for Sheffield's participation in the school district.

- a. **Assess the impact of the Regional School District on Sheffield.**
- b. **Address the expiration of Regional School District assessment formula contract in 2008.**
- c. **Assess the impact of town provided services to the school on Sheffield's fiscal budget and town services.**
- d. **Assess the future infrastructure needs of the schools.**
- e. **Explore additional ways the grounds and facilities might be utilized by the community.**
- f. **Explore opportunities for student mentoring and training with local businesses and other schools.**

Recommendation 3: Evaluate protective services and facilities as necessary for a growing population.

a. Police Department:

- i. Continue to evaluate the quality of all department equipment and consider replacement of equipment and vehicles as necessary.
- ii. Assess wireless communication systems.
- iii. Consider providing an improved prisoner holding cell.
- iv. Consider fencing around the police parking lot.
- v. Consider seeking additional grants to expand police staffing and community-oriented programs such as KOPS for KIDS and DARE programs.

The Sheffield Police Vision Statement identifies the use of problem solving techniques and communication with the community to enhance the quality of life. The department values open communication, high standards, training and education, and input from the community.

b. Fire Department:

- i. Review the costs and benefits of a new pumper / tanker truck by 2008.
- ii. Consider a Jaws of Life cutting tool with ram.
- iii. Identify and plan for the long-term needs of the Sheffield Fire Station.
- iv. Evaluate the costs and benefits of establishing regional fire services.
- v. Assess long-term staffing needs.

The Fire Department is anticipating significant expansion or relocation needs in the near future and over the next 10 years a number of additional facility and service needs can be anticipated. The Department is evaluating possible facilities expansion needs which may include an addition to the existing station or a new station in or close to Sheffield Center.

Another long-term consideration anticipated by the Department is the possible need for regional fire services. As more communities in the South Berkshire Region find it difficult in keeping volunteer membership this may become more necessary to adequately protect smaller communities.

Recommendation 4: Evaluate expansion and improvement of municipal services and facilities as necessary.

a. Highway Department:

- i. Evaluate relocating the Highway Garage.
- ii. Consider developing a short and long-range road maintenance and improvement program in conjunction with the recommendations in the Transportation & Circulation section of the Master Plan.
- iii. Consider an advisory committee as noted in the Transportation & Circulation section of the Master Plan.
- iv. Encourage working with the Board of Selectmen and local interest groups to expand the tree planning program to beautify the town.
- v. Consider protective sheds for equipment.

This Highway Garage was built in the mid-1960s and is approximately 16,000 square feet. It includes a 2-bay garage holding up to 6 vehicles, an administrative office, and storage facilities. The complex is located in a Zone I recharge area for the Sheffield Water Company Turnpike Well, and is a likely threat of contamination, so the Town anticipates the need to relocate this facility within the next 10 years.

b. Transfer Station:

- i. Assess equipment and safety needs of the existing facility.
- ii. Assess the carrying capacity of the current facility and extending hours to meet community needs.
- iii. Explore alternatives to address future and changing needs.

The Transfer Station is currently open portions of 4 days a week and is an enterprise operation with funding provided by annual resident and business user fees. The facility is expected to

accommodate Sheffield's needs over the next several years, but additional capacity is likely to be needed in the ten-year period covered by the plan.

c. Town Hall and Departments:

- i. Evaluate a comprehensive 10-year capital improvement program and service strategy.
- ii. Assess the municipal computer system.
- iii. Evaluate a centralized purchasing system.
- iv. Evaluate municipal facilities for ADA compliance.
- v. Consider options for a Geographic Information System (GIS) for use by various town departments.
- vi. Consider renovating the Grand Army of the Republic space in Town Hall as a public meeting space and provide handicapped accessibility.
- vii. Consider providing additional office and file space for town boards.
- viii. Consider expanding the Board of Selectmen to five members.
- ix. Consider establishing a stabilization fund for the capital and equipment recommendations for all Town departments.
- x. Review the structure of Town governance.

d. Senior Center:

- i. Evaluate, decide on and secure a suitable location for the Senior Center to meet projected needs.

The Senior Center administrative offices are currently operating out of Dewey Hall. This space has become inadequate for a growing senior population and with the increasing variety of activities sponsored by the organization. The Council on Aging has developed preliminary plans for a new Senior Center.

e. Bushnell-Sage Public Library:

- i. Support staff efforts to improve computer networking with other library systems to improve access to publications and materials to all Sheffield residents.
- ii. Support expansion of public events and exhibits.
- iii. Consider the costs and benefits of expanding the facilities to accommodate library needs and larger public events, meetings and other gatherings.

f. Business Park:

- i. Review Business park criteria and ways to streamline the approval process.
- ii. Consider developing the Business Park around agriculture-related activities.
- iii. Consider broadening the scope of businesses sought.
- iv. Consider allowing a developer to own, build and manage appropriate spaces and rent to smaller businesses and cottage industries.
- v. Explore alternative uses for the Business Park.

Update and revise the criteria used to consider and accept tenants for the Business Park, to bring in jobs and tax revenues. Changes in the business and economic climate since the Business Park was created nearly 10 years ago (recognizing the local constraints to attracting light industry and clean manufacturing, in addition to the national trend of such jobs moving overseas), create a need to up-date some of the criteria to recognize the full potential of this resource.

Recommendation 5: Evaluate active and passive recreational programs and facilities to serve the community.

a. Assess existing playgrounds and picnic sites, including the need for a secure area for children.

A potential source of funding is the Small Town Program administered by the State Division of Conservation Services (DCS). A Self-Help Grant may also be possible.

b. Evaluate new locations for small public parks and playgrounds in growing residential areas.

Such locations evaluated may include surplus public parcels for such purposes as picnic areas and playgrounds, athletic fields and community gardens.

c. Evaluate improvements to the Town Park.

d. Promote use of the Town Park.

e. Facilitate the scheduling of events at town recreational facilities.

f. Continue to promote volunteer stewardship and sustainable management of Town Park and land by local service organizations and clubs.

g. Evaluate connecting the Town park and surrounding neighborhoods, Sheffield Center and other areas through green corridors and trails.

h. Investigate the opportunity to cooperate with the Southern Berkshire Regional School District and Berkshire School in expanding joint recreational programs for youths and adults.

i. Seek potential locations for a town beach.

The town could create a Swimming Area Committee to evaluate natural beach swimming opportunities. The Committee could explore available locations, costs, funding programs and liability issues. Possible sites could include Three Mile Pond (owned by the State) and Mill and Trout Ponds (privately owned) as well as others.

Recommendation 6: Foster inter-town cooperation where opportunities exist to improve services and reduce costs. Potential areas of cooperation include:

- a. **Participating in joint community planning efforts.**
- b. **Creating greenways and open space projects across town borders.**
- c. **Sharing services, equipment and/or personnel.**
- d. **Shared recreational programs and facilities.**
- e. **Participating in regional affordable housing development and economic development activities.**
- f. **Purchase of materials and equipment in bulk.**

Neighboring communities can benefit greatly by inter-local cooperative agreements. Funds can be pooled for roadway improvement and maintenance, utility expansion, resource protection, and many other municipal services (i.e. emergency, schools, recreation, and cultural activities). For small communities like Sheffield facing rapid growth, decisions regarding the location of public facilities, infrastructure expansion, and transportation are likely to have direct or indirect impacts on neighboring communities.

Recommendation 7: Work with the Sheffield Water Company (SWC) to improve public water service to the community.

- a. **Establish a Wellhead Protection Committee and adopt and implement the Wellhead Protection Plan and Emergency Response Plan.**

The main steps involved in implementing the plan are as follows:

- Funding for Zone I and Zone II property acquisitions
- Revise the Water Supply Overlay Protection District (WSPD) to apply to the updated Zone II designations and meet current state requirements.
- Develop and implement a floor drain inspection program
- Conduct a drainage study in the area tributary to the springs
- Prepare an educational brochure specific to the Sheffield public water supply system
- Increase storage capacity and hydrant flows.

- b. **Assess carrying capacity and current infrastructure and continue to expand the water distribution system, improve water quality and install water volume and quality monitoring equipment as needed.**
- c. **Develop new water sources as needed.**

- d. Consider the long-term costs and benefits of acquiring the SWC to ensure that adequate funding is provided to maintain and expand the water system as necessary.**

There are approximately 467 homes and businesses that rely on the Sheffield Water Company for safe drinking water. The SWC's Wellhead Protection Plan can provide many community benefits including reducing risk to human health, potential cost savings with respect to long-term monitoring and treatment, support for local bylaws making them less likely to be challenged, assurance of clean drinking water supply for future generations, enhancing real estate values, and protecting valuable conservation lands from development.

Recommendation 8: Address other community development issues and needs.

- a. Establish a Town Visitor Center.**
- b. Identify discrete locations for future cell towers, bury overhead power lines in appropriate locations and create high speed Internet infrastructure.**
- c. Update, maintain and expand the town's website and promote town information sources such as the *Sheffield Times*.**
- d. Evaluate the costs and benefits of extending Mt. Everett Regional Schools' sewage treatment facility to its surrounding neighborhood.**
- e. Investigate, develop guidelines and provide for the use of package treatment plants and other alternative technologies for septic and sewage needs.**
- f. Continue to seek state, federal and private funding for community development projects and goals.**