



ENVISIONING THE
MOHAWK TRAIL
WOODLANDS PARTNERSHIP
FOREST CENTER



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WOODLANDS PARTNERSHIP

“FOREST CENTER”

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ENVI 302: Environmental Planning Workshop

Williams College, Fall 2021

Under the direction of Professor Sarah Gardner

and

For the consideration of Henry “Hank” Art, MTWP Board Chair

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1. Land Acknowledgement

The namesake for the partnership is the Mohawk Trail: a vital and vibrant corridor, trade route, and footpath utilized by the region's dozens of Indigenous communities and sub-tribes, including the Mohawk, Mohican, Abenaki, Nipmuc, Wabanaki, and Pocumtuck, to connect the Connecticut and Hoosic river valleys. The trail has a rich history and was a place of kinship, hunting, fishing, trading, negotiating, and warring before and during European colonial settlement.

While today the Mohawk Trail largely refers to a section of Route 2 between Williamstown and Greenfield, many of the communities that utilized it or lived on it have not disappeared. Instead, they form a network of resilient tribes, including the Nipmuc Nation,¹ the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe,² the Nulhegan Abenaki Tribe,³ and the Stockbridge-Munsee Community.⁴ In Williamstown, we worked on the homelands of the Stockbridge Munsee Mohican. Today, many of their community members reside in Wisconsin due to being forced from this region as a result of genocide and dispossession.

Our work for the Forest Center all rests on the lands of the region's many Native people. We know that there are inherent tensions and contradictions in envisioning a Forest Center on these lands, and we are grateful to those Native individuals who have contributed to our vision and helped guide our thinking. There is always more work to be done, and we hope the MTWP will continue what is only the very beginning of imagining ways to repair this wrongdoing.

¹ "The Official Site of the Tribal Government and Citizens of Nipmuc Nation." *Home - Tribal Government of the Nipmuc Nation*, Nipmuc Nation, 2021, <https://www.nipmucnation.org/>.

² "Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe Home Page." *Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe*, Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe, 2021, <https://www.srmt-nsn.gov/>.

³ "Welcome from the Nulhegan Abenaki Tribe at Nulhegan~Memphremagog." *Nulhegan Abenaki Tribe*, Nulhegan Abenaki Tribe, 2021, <https://abenakitribe.org/>.

⁴ "Stockbridge-Munsee Band of Mohican Indians." *Stockbridge-Munsee Band of Mohican Indians*, 2021, <https://www.mohican.com/>.

2. Abstract

Our work for this report was part of a semester-long undergraduate project for the “ENVI 302: Environmental Planning Workshop” class at Williams College. Working under the guidance of Professor Sarah Gardner and for the consideration of our client Henry “Hank” Art, the chair of the Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership Board, we developed an envisioned use analysis based on stakeholder feedback, background research, and our best judgments. We recommend that the future planners of the Forest Center seriously consider implementing the following uses: a tourism/visitor center, public education center, conservation area, and forestry assistance center. We also provide a pro/con analysis of potential site locations along with the current status of negotiations with the owners and managers of each property. Finally, we discuss significant challenges faced by our team during this project and make general recommendations as to how the MTWP and future consulting teams can better plan for this multi-use, locally relevant project.

3. Project Goals

We were asked to propose recommendations to the MTWP Board regarding the establishment of a “Mohawk Trail Forest Center” that would reflect the Partnership’s mission of supporting conservation of forest land, increasing natural resource-based economic development, and improving municipal financial stability and sustainability. All components were to be locally informed, with our recommendations based on survey results, interviews, research, and our own best judgment and evaluation of the information collected. While the initial scope of services included

seven individual components for the project, we found that the short semester-long timeline and the depth of the knowledge needed to effectively achieve those deliverables would not allow us to consider them all. Ultimately, we culled the deliverables list and pursued the following goals:

1. **Stakeholder survey and report:** Develop and publish an online survey to gather feedback from stakeholders regarding the need for, and envisioned uses and functions, of a Forest Center. Analyze and summarize the results in a written report for the Board.
2. **Stakeholder interview analysis:** Conduct comprehensive interviews with a variety of stakeholders that reflect many relevant areas, including forestry, tourism, government, and education. Synthesize our findings and create an analytical report of their perspectives.
3. **Defined uses and spaces:** Define and describe potential functionalities for the Forest Center that would help characterize what it might look like given its multi-functional quality.
4. **Mission statement:** Draft a comprehensive, working mission statement that describes the purpose, goals, and long-term operational vision for the Forest Center.
5. **Potential locations:** Research, explore, and map strategic locations for the Forest Center along the Mohawk Trail corridor. Identify relevant factors to their feasibility, and rank locations based on an advantage/disadvantage assessment and analysis.
6. **Programming ideas:** Based on the defined uses and spaces recommended, develop and suggest potential programming ideas and curricula at the Forest Center.

3.1. Project Scope

Given our short timeline, role as full-time students, class requirements, desired deliverables from our client, and various other constraining factors, our project acknowledged and discussed, but did not extensively focus on the (1) pre-existing and continuing controversy over the MTWP's real or perceived mission, or (2) any detailed conceptual planning or considerations beyond the project goals. We recognize that these topics are areas of concern for some residents of the Northwestern Massachusetts region, but they were beyond our project's scope and our own capabilities.

Our project served as what we called the "exploratory pre-planning to the pre-planning," and was not meant to delve into MTWP policy, finances, or controversies. Our goal on this project was to focus on the outlined deliverables and present recommendations that aligned with the MTWP's mission. This does not mean that these concerns, which we encountered regularly throughout the process, are not legitimate or valuable. On the contrary, we felt strongly that these topics deserve and require extensive consideration during the actual planning of the Forest Center. However, it is up to the MTWP Board and a hired consulting team to tackle these areas in the future.

Additionally, considering that the information we collected reflected varying opinions and different conclusions on what was most important for the center's operations, our priorities for the center will inevitably leave out some perspectives that people feel strongly about. We used our best judgment to organize the information we collected during our project, and relied largely on the survey results to narrow and prioritize certain elements of our work. All the feedback we received, no matter the form or idea it took, is reflected in our final analysis and recommendations.

4. Project Background

4.1. Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership

The northwest corner of Massachusetts is endowed with an abundance of natural resources or “earthy gifts,” and people are drawn to the area for its recreational activities and rural mountain aesthetics.⁵ In 2012, the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental affairs convened 12 focus group sessions with forest landowners, town officials, recreationists, forest industry residents, and conservation organizations to highlight the desire for forest land conservation in northwestern Massachusetts, in lieu of establishing a National Forest administered by the U.S. Forest Service. In response to this request, the Franklin Regional Council of Governments, the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, the Franklin Land Trust, and the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs formed the Mohawk Trail Woodlands Advisory Committee in 2013.⁶ The purpose of the committee was to propose a partnership between 21 municipalities and various organizations in the northern Berkshire and western Franklin counties and oversee the specifics of applying for state and federal designation for this region. Such a designation would recognize the region’s outstanding forestry potential and could bring economic and environmental benefits to the area. The MTWP advisory committee submitted its draft business plan to the state in 2016. On October 30, 2018, Massachusetts Governor Charles Baker signed the bill enabling the creation of the Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership. Since then, the Partnership has operated

⁵ Kimmerer, Robin. Quotation in “Why is the world so beautiful? An Indigenous botanist on the spirit of life in everything.” *CBC Radio*, November 27, 2020, <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/tapestry/why-is-the-world-so-beautiful-an-indigenous-botanist-on-the-spirit-of-life-in-everything-1.5817787>.

⁶ United States Congress and Forest Service, et al. *Shared Stewardship Framework*, Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the US Department of Agriculture, 2018, pp. 1-11.

largely remotely and administered funding through a variety of grants to the eligibility area's municipalities,

4.1.1. *Historical and Ongoing Controversy*

Early advisory committee discussions during the MTWP's conception included the potential for the Partnership to support the harvesting and production of wood-based biomass for electric generation and pellet manufacture. The burning of wood to use as an energy source, known as biomass, is a controversial fuel source and alternative to petroleum that requires the harvesting of trees to turn into wood pellets at a manufacturing facility. While technically potentially renewable, wood-based biomass is typically unsustainable given the usual magnitude of forest exploitation required for its production, and its contribution to air pollution and health hazards through the release of smoke during the burning process. The Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources (DOER), which had a presence on the advisory committee but no longer does, was interested in leveraging the MTWP to encourage wood pellet production for combustion heating. By the 2014-2015 MTWP plan, the DOER had committed \$350,000 to the Partnership for a feasibility study on the establishment of a wood pellet manufacturing facility for biomass, to "utilize low-quality wood from the region's forests to support demand for wood heat" in the MTWP's eligibility area as part of the "Mohawk Trail Renewable Heat Initiative."⁷ A shift to municipal wood-based biomass was intended to reduce the region's dependence on oil, decrease overall energy costs and greenhouse gas emissions, and encourage local economic development. The summary of the 2014-2015 MTWP plan stated that it

⁷ "Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership: A Plan for Forest-Based Economic Development and Conservation 2014-2015," 2015, <https://frcog.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Mohawk-Trail-Woodlands-Partnership-FINAL-PLAN.pdf>.

may support “funding for specific activities such as a feasibility study for a wood pellet manufacturing plant.”

Widespread public concern led the MTWP advisory committee and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to revise its legislation in 2016, striking any mention of biomass and prohibiting the use of MTWP funds to support biomass or its facilities. The DOER subsequently pulled its funding support for the MTWP vis-à-vis its wood-based biomass facility study. Since receiving feedback from residents and being governed by reenabled legislation, the MTWP has no intention of pursuing biomass fuels and will not do so in the future, given its explicit legal exclusion of funds pertaining to the support of wood pellet energy. The MTWP is currently in the process of formally updating the MTWP plan, and will open the draft to public input by early 2022 before its finalization in spring 2022. Despite the fact that the MTWP no longer supports or is capable of supporting wood-pellet facilities and biomass, a group of local residents remain opposed to the MTWP and, by extension, the Forest Center. In 2017, opponents claimed that the MTWP was controlled by special interest groups, and still intended to expand biomass energy production through the support of a wood pellet manufacturing facility.⁸ While this is an outdated mischaracterization of the MTWP’s mission, these attitudes have continued to impact how some people perceive the MTWP and the Forest Center.

In addition, there are some people who have opposed the MTWP based on the belief that the Partnership will encourage large-scale timber harvesting and subsequent deforestation in the

⁸ Tidwell, M.J. “Forest Group Opposes Mohawk Trail Partnership on Biomass Concerns.” *Daily Hampshire Gazette*, Concord Monitor, 12 Oct. 2017, <https://www.gazettenet.com/Forest-Group-Opposes-Mohawk-Trail-Partnership-on-Biomass-Concerns-13058086>.

western Massachusetts region, an especially pressing concern given the climate crisis and the ability of forests to sequester carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

The MTWP is indeed supportive of “sustainable forestry practices” and “natural resource-based economic development,” which might include regional timber harvesting for local production and consumption. However, in this report, we make the case that the MTWP’s encouragement of sustainable forestry practices is conducive to mitigating climate change for a few reasons. Since 2019, the MTWP has even facilitated grants to municipalities for managing woodlands to encourage carbon sequestration. Our report will discuss how these controversies impacted our work in envisioning the Forest Center. Ultimately, our envisioned uses assessment falls in line with the MTWP’s mission and the Forest Center’s legislative requirements outlined in Massachusetts State Law 209, Sections 89-91, detailed below.

4.2. Law and Policy

4.2.1. Massachusetts State Law 209, Sections 89-91

On October 30, 2018, Massachusetts Governor Charles Baker signed the bill enabling the creation of the Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership, a collaboration among municipalities in Northern Berkshire and Western Franklin Counties, the Commonwealth, and the U.S. Forest Service.⁹ This legislation outlines the purposes of the MTWP which include but are not limited to: supporting and expanding sustainable forest management, increasing forest land conservation, developing

⁹ Mass. Comm. No. 4835. The One Hundred and Nineteenth General Court, 2018.
http://www.mohawktrailwoodlandpartnership.org/uploads/1/1/7/5/117522940/mtwp_final_legislation.pdf

natural resource-based economic development, and advancing the public appreciation of the ecological, recreational, and economic benefits of forests. The legislation states that:

(3) Funds from the Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership Fund shall be used as defined in the Partnership Plan, as updated or amended and may include establishment of or support for the following... (ii) A multi-purpose center, known as the “Mohawk Trail Forest Center” to provide tourism services, technical assistance to forestry and tourism businesses and forest landowners, technical assistance on implementing sustainable forest management practices, technical assistance with selling carbon credits from private and municipal forests credits, research and development, marketing, public education and space for the Administrative Agent as described in subsection (f)...¹⁰

4.2.2. Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership: 2014-2015 Plan

The 2014-2015 MTWP plan, last updated in 2016, outlines the background and purpose of the Partnership.¹¹ It reviews the benefits and reasoning behind seeking federal forest designation. It then goes into each goal of the Partnership in greater detail and develops a timeline for how they plan to achieve each one. This document summarizes the public's input in the creation and implementation of the Partnership. It also surveys the demographics, land use, and natural resources of the eligibility area while outlining the key elements that form a framework for a potential federal and state

¹⁰ *ibid.* p. 122

¹¹ “Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership: A Plan for Forest-Based Economic Development and Conservation (2014-2015, Updated 2016),” 2016, pp. 1-70,

http://www.mohawktrailwoodlandspartnership.org/uploads/1/1/7/5/117522940/mtwp_plan_revised_oct2016.pdf

designation of the 21-town region. The last section of the plan describes the proposed projects and recommendations of the MTWP. It introduces the creation of a center in the following language:

“Through discussions at the community meetings and with the Advisory Committee, the concept of a visitor center for the Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership 21-Town region evolved into an idea for a center that would not only provide information to visitors about the region, but would also provide educational programming for the community in the region, be a clearinghouse for technical assistance for landowners, and a showcase for local wood products.”¹²

4.2.3. Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership: Draft Business Plan

The MTWP Draft Business plan, written in 2018 for discussion purposes, outlines the current programmatic and organizational structure of the MTWP.¹³ It explains how the financial structure for the MTWP will be self-sustaining over the long term. The initial funding for the center was to come from state and federal appropriations over a four-year time frame. According to the plan, the MTWP would be self-sustaining after this time and could raise additional funding through grants, donations, and other income-generating activities. The plan outlines potential funding for a high-level staff person from the U.S. Forest Service to have an office at the center and coordinate programs, services, and technical assistance for the MTWP. It also encourages the creation of a demonstration forest to support research related to climate change, carbon sequestration, and invasive species.

¹² *ibid.* p. 69

¹³ “Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership Draft Business Plan,” 2018, pp. 1-10

4.2.4. Shared Stewardship Framework

The Shared Stewardship Framework was created to assist the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and participating communities in achieving the goals of the MTWP.¹⁴ It outlines the unique qualities of the northwest corner of Massachusetts, highlighting its wetlands, diverse deciduous woodlands, and rich northern forests. It argues for the establishment of the MTWP by describing how some locals in the region make their living off the woodlands running recreation-based businesses, cutting and selling firewood, harvesting timber, and working as foresters. Ultimately, this framework emphasizes the priceless benefits of the Partnership to the region, Commonwealth, and forest service.

4.3. Financial Framework

The MTWP was formally established by Massachusetts enabling legislation in 2018 with a five-year financial plan in mind. A draft business plan developed for planning purposes in 2018 would allocate \$24 million provided by the federal government (U.S. Forest Service) and \$6 million by the state government (Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs) by the end of a four-year period.¹⁵ At that point, the MTWP would be self-sustaining through a trust fund, interest/investment income, grants, fundraising and income generation, and revolving loan fund drawdowns and repayments to cushion the budget in year five, when state and federal funding ended.

¹⁴ United States Congress and Forest Service, et al. "Shared Stewardship Framework," Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the US Department of Agriculture, 2018, pp. 1-11.

¹⁵ "Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership Draft Business Plan," 2018, p. 1

To date, the MTWP has not directly received any funding as part of this draft plan. That being said, municipalities and organizations in the region have received a series of grants and contracts from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the federal government under the umbrella of the Partnership to benefit municipal projects and support the continued development of the regional collaboration. Obtaining federal funds may require Congressional action, and the MTWP Board is actively meeting with legislators to access the \$24 million indicated in the 2018 Business Plan.

The 2018 MTWP Business Plan predicted significant expenditure in the first five years on the design, construction, and operation of a Forest Center, estimated at 7% of the original appropriation, or approximately \$2 million.¹⁶ This number is a notable deviation from our client's rough estimate, who pitched \$20 million as a good starting point for the center's operations. A 2001 report from the U.S. General Accounting Office found that the average cost to build a National Park visitor center that year was \$6.7 million, ranging between \$500,000 to \$39 million.¹⁷ Adjusted for inflation (a 51.60% increase), this is equivalent to about \$10.5 million today.¹⁸ However, the same report noted a nearly \$4 million average difference between visitor center projects that were newly built (estimated at \$13.7 million today) and those that mainly renovated existing buildings (estimated at \$6.8 million today). Thus, the location of the site, and whether it will be housed inside an existing building or constructed entirely, will significantly alter the center's cost. Based on our preliminary findings, the \$20 million number offered by our client falls within the higher side of this average range,

¹⁶ "Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership Draft Business Plan," 2018, p. 2

¹⁷ U.S. Government Accountability Office. "Park Service: Visitor Center Project Costs, Size, and Functions Vary Widely." *Park Service: Visitor Center Project Costs, Size, and Functions Vary Widely*, 2001, <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-01-781>.

¹⁸ "Inflation Calculator." CoinNews Media Group LLC, 2021, <https://www.usinflationcalculator.com/>.

However, the MTWP is unlikely to secure the federal funding needed for the Forest Center before a comprehensive needs assessment is conducted. Our preliminary report and research on the potential uses and locations for a Forest Center is not a substitute for a formal environmental planning process initiated by a hired consulting team. As a result, there are no immediate plans for the development of a Forest Center. We hope that our project can guide the contracted team that will eventually conduct that study and develop a logistical plan for the Forest Center. Without logistical details as to how, where, and for what the Forest Center will be built, any of our estimates are purely speculative and not based on facts. Our work for this project will not look into the financial or economic logistics of establishing a Forest Center, but we tried to keep these restraints in mind as we narrowed down potential uses for the facility. General and notable costs for the development of the Center that we identified include, but are not limited to:

1. Consulting company to conduct a needs assessment
2. Purchase or lease of a property lot
3. The hiring of a design/architecture and construction team
4. Clearing, leveling, and/or maintenance of the property area*
5. Purchase of locally-sourced construction materials
6. Furnishing and decorative purchases
7. LEED or equivalent accreditation
8. Heating, electricity, water, waste disposal, etc.
9. The hiring of a museum consultant for exhibits
10. Staff or contracted employee salary and wages

11. Regular financing for programs, events, campaigns, etc.

** Not applicable if housed in an existing building.*

While the MTWP looks into obtaining the front-loaded funding promised by the federal government, the MTWP is financially supported by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA) via a major grant to cover administrative costs, and smaller, annual grants to the MTWP as a whole and to member municipalities. The MTWP is pursuing alternative funding methods via small lump sums from the U.S. Forest Service, as well as donations and grants from private foundations and non-profit organizations. These third-party funds would likely go towards the development of the Forest Center to ensure that the initially promised government funds are distributed equitably and not concentrated in establishing a visitor center.

Currently, the funding received from the EOEEA and the U.S. Forest Service is directed towards municipal grants and awards, with a total of over \$1 million administered to towns through 30 different grants over the first three years of the program for recreational trails, open space acquisition, forest stewardship planning, and a variety of town improvement projects. From 2021 through 2024, New England Forestry Foundation, a non-profit conservation and education organization, received a four-year \$475,000 contract from the EOEEA to serve as Administrative Agent for the MTWP, coordinating Board and Committee meetings and supporting fundraising and long-range planning to advance the Partnership's goals. Previously, the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission and the Franklin Regional Council of Governments were contracted with the Commonwealth in this administrative role.

5. Background Research

Our report is informed by a synthesis of survey results, stakeholder interviews, and background research. While we looked into too many sources to name and discuss in detail here, we have included a table-style summary of some of the major facilities and programs we researched.

5.1. Background Research on Comparable Centers

We reached out to several visitor and tourist centers to request more information about their facilities, and conducted background research through the center’s informational websites to glean best practices in creating a new visitor center. We have highlighted the findings below:

5.1.1. National Centers

Visitor Center	Best Practices
<p>Catskill Center Mt. Temper, New York</p> <p><i>Interviewed representative (11/05)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Information center and gift shop <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lists of hiking trails and camping site ○ Restaurants and lodging ○ Events in the Catskills ● Have a family friendly activities section ● Public restrooms, free wifi and cell service ● Picnic tables with umbrellas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Offers a covered pavilion ● Goal is to create a place where people could find out all of the opportunities to do in the Catskill Park ● Attract 30-60 year-old men and women interested in outdoor recreation and what they can do in the Catskills ● Summer is the busiest time of the year <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Winter is not as busy because people are just heading to the ski slopes ● Have had successful programming in their weekend “stop-in” events <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “How to pack a backpack” ○ “Bear Safety Tips” ● Had artists put sculptures on the land- to promote local artists ● Their location choice had to do with who owned the land and how easy it was to purchase it ● Right off the main highway, so people can stop in

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ However, you cannot see the visitor center from the main road -- not ideal ○ A lot of people walk through the door and say "we didn't know that was here"
<p>Marsh-Billings Rockefeller National Historic Site: Carriage Barn Visitor Center Woodstock, Vermont</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide an exhibit on conservation history - <i>People Taking Care of Places</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Visitor Reading Library ○ Self-guided map and activity brochures for those with limited time ● Administer working woodlands workshops <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Informative, hands-on and exciting workshops for the woodland enthusiast
<p>Fisher Museum at Harvard Forest Petersham, Massachusetts <i>Conversed via email</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Harvard's 4000-acre laboratory and classroom ● Conduct environmental/forestry research ● Maintains extensive records of institutional research and forestry operations ● Good information about field trips and tours ● Guided tours, meeting and dining space, and overnight stays ● Fisher Museum is free and open to the public, offering information on forest ecology, landscape history, and land conservation and management. ● "Most of our work regarding visitors is ensuring that the space and its content are welcoming and accessible to all" ● Primary mission is to serve academic audiences, so most of their work is simply organizing traffic
<p>HJ Andrews Experimental Forest Blue River, Oregon</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 16,000-acre ecological research site ● Collaborate with university/federal scientists, students, and managers to support ecosystem science, education, natural resource management, arts, humanities ● Apartments, offices, conference hall, and classroom, is available for year-round use, with a capacity of up to about 80 people. ● Facilities are available for a variety of group functions: short courses, workshops, overnight field trips, planning sessions, retreats, etc.
<p>Blue Ridge Parkway Visitor Center Asheville, NC</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A 1.5 mile- long loop trail following part of the Mountains-to-Sea trail on both sides of the parkway ● Exhibits that highlight the region's natural and cultural diversity, economic traditions and recreational opportunities ● Tourism site <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Travel tips and regulations ○ Parkway maps

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lodging, dining, things to do ○ Gas availability
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5.1.2. Regional Centers

Visitor Center	Best Practices
<p>Mount Greylock State Reservation Visitor Center Lanesborough, Massachusetts</p> <p><i>Visited and interviewed representative (Nov. 18)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Park trail maps, orientation, regional tourist information and exhibits on natural and cultural stories of the park ● Main demographic are hikers that are new to the area looking for information about the local trails ● Run programs year-round for schools, families, and local residents ● Winter programming involves <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Guided hikes for seniors ○ Hunter/gatherer hikes for kids ● Programming focuses on bringing people together <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “Mountain mindfulness” ○ “Cider-sip and singalongs” ● Success of their 13-minute informational video
<p>Greylock Glen Visitor Center Adams, Massachusetts</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Their goal is to have educational programs, camping, an outdoor amphitheater, and an environmentally-friendly lodge with conference facilities ● They have 1,063 acres of woodlands, open fields, wetlands, mountains streams, ponds and even a waterfall ● Trails used by hikers, naturalists, skiers, snowshoers, mountain bikers, and snowmobiles ● Programming will include speakers, films, and classes in environmental education ● It will provide field study opportunities for nearby educational institutions including public schools and MCLA ● The Performing Arts Amphitheater will offer concerts, plays, festivals and other events that will appeal to visitors and local residents alike
<p>Great Falls Discovery Center Turners Falls, Massachusetts</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Exhibits show the natural, cultural, and industrial history of the Connecticut River watershed ● They have a timeline that indicates the impacts of human habitation on each environment over time and suggests safeguards to keep the watershed healthy and useful for all that live here together. ● The building is a former machine shop, with a high ceiling, brick walls, large windows, and gleaming old wood floors ● Picnic area and campgrounds

<p>Shelburne Falls Information Center Shelburne Falls, Massachusetts</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Offers info about local attractions, events, restaurants, and lodging ● Accessible restrooms and internet access are available
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5.2. Background Research on Forestry Assistance Programs

Given the complexity of forestry and forestry-related programs, we completed separate background research on major forestry programs and institutes in this region to better understand how a Forest Center might support the “use of sustainable forestry practices.”

Forestry Program	Notable Components
<p>Masswoods¹⁹ University of Massachusetts at Amherst</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Online-based website with free resources and programming <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Maintained by Paul Catanzaro, professor and forester at UMass Amherst ○ Seemingly small staff ● Regular webinar series for landowners wherein viewers can participate live or watch a video recording online after; individual webinars include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “What’s the next step in planning the future of my land?” ○ “What’s my land worth financially and ecologically?” ○ “Who will own my land next?” ○ “How can I reduce my property taxes?” ○ “How can I conserve my land?” ○ “What are the financial benefits of land conservation?” ● “Find a Professional” resource to connect landowners with land trusts, foresters, estate planning professionals, or peer training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Interactive map, location-based ○ Offers ways of contacting resources, along with definitions of what their role is and how they can help landowners ● “Legacy Planning Tool” quiz to help landowners figure out what it is they want done with their land after death, and what tools are necessary to achieve those goals ● Extensive written content and explanations on web pages that cover a variety of topics that landowners must know, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How to plan for the future of your land <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Planning who it goes to and for what purposes

¹⁹“Masswoods.” *MassWoods*, 2021, <https://masswoods.org/>.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Contacting people who can help ■ Case studies of what you could do ○ How to care for your land presently <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ In-depth details for each land management option ■ Deciding to harvesting timber, and how to do so ■ Ecological implications, benefits, and threats ■ Land laws and regulations ■ Carbon sequestration and credits ○ Relevant programs, grants, and networks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ MassWildlife Habitat Management Grant Program ■ Ch. 61, 61A, and Ch. 61B Current Use Tax Programs ■ Forest Stewardship Program, including Green Certification ■ Foresters for the Birds ■ Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) ■ Landowner Incentive Program (LIP) ■ Tax Tips for Forest Landowners (2018) ○ Stumpage, or the price to harvest standing timber <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Estimated prices/value report based on data ■ Historical trends of prices for different species ■ Stumpage comparison between states ● Regular blog post 'spotlights' and links to free publications ● Directories for sawmills, forester licenses, research centers, etc. ● Extensive FAQ regarding many of these topics ● Mailing list to disseminate all the work noted
<p>Massachusetts Woodlands Institute²⁰ Franklin County, Massachusetts</p> <p><i>Interviewed representative (11/22)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Non-profit organization that helps landowners manage their woodlands responsibly via resources and program connections <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Subsidiary of the Franklin Land Trust ○ Partners often with Massachusetts DCR and Audubon ○ Provides assistance for demo forests, fisheries support, woodlands management ● Forester consulting services and financial assistance via the Forest Stewardship Program, which establishes a management plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Pages on eligibility, cost-share information, how to enroll, and resources on how to become involved in the plan ● Facilitates 'Foresters for the Birds' program to enhance bird habitat <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provides funding, assistance, expertise/consulting ○ Pages on how it works, eligibility, how to enroll, cost share information, why it is important to create bird habitat, ways to spread awareness ● Educational and awareness projects on wildlife and fisheries via In-person "walk" events for landowners during non-COVID times <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Bird walks, trout stream walks, invasive species walks

²⁰ "Welcome to the Massachusetts Woodlands Institute." *Mass Woodlands Institute*, 2021, <http://www.masswoodlands.org/>.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Webinars for landowners, woodworkers, birdwatchers, community foresters, and residents; individual webinars include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “Climate Adaptation and Resiliency in Your Community” on supportive funding, changing habitat, ecological results ○ “Grow, Build Live” series on wood and wood products ● Hosts Western Mass Wood website that keeps inventory of local wood products, with searchable listings and stories
<p>New England Forestry Foundation²¹ Littleton, Massachusetts <i>Interviewed representative (12/2)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Multi-functional organization that focuses on conserving forestland through the development, advocacy, and support of exemplary forestry standards <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Staff of about 20 with volunteers ○ Dozens of partnerships across states ● Targets landowners, conservationists, interested individuals and organizations, and the general public ● Owns over 150 forests that are managed under NEFF standards and used for demonstrative purposes, wildlife, timber, biodiversity, etc. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Forests are available for public use and guidelines and regulations are outlined on webpages ● Provide extensive web pages and content regarding their area of expertise, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ History of timber harvesting in New England ○ Importance of forestry and foresters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Overview of management plans, harvests, etc. ■ Summaries of recent timber harvests ■ FAQs on their own forestry techniques ■ FAQs for landowners ○ Land conservation and opportunities for landowners <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ How to conserve landowner-held land ■ Overview of recently-acquired forests ■ Information and FAQ about easement ■ Map and writing on conservation achievements ■ FAQs on conservation for landowners ○ Initiatives focusing on education, conservation, climate change mitigation, exemplary and sustainable forestry, including the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Exemplary forestry approach standards ■ Working with landowners to restore wildlife habitat ■ Landowner outreach strategies to communicate with and support landowners in New England ■ Support of innovative wood-based products as a substitute for steel and concrete

²¹ New England Forestry Foundation, 2021, <https://newenglandforestry.org/>.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Pooled Timber Income Fund ■ Heart of New England, conservation vision to protect 70% of regional forestland from development ■ Showcasing of locally-harvested wood and public educational programs at the Boston Market ● Provides resources for landowners, professionals, and land trusts to responsibly and effectively conserve and manage woodlands <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Online links lead to NEFF's own information as well as third-party resources ○ Landowner resources are separated by state given differences in law and regulations ○ Resources include tool kits, maps, case studies, contacts
<p>State of Massachusetts Forestry²² Mass.gov</p> <p><i>Interviewed DCR foresters (11/22 and 12/9)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Government web pages that offer information and resources on state forestry -- not a formal department or organization <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Could be much better organized and resourceful ● Provides links to the following resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Programs and Services for Forest Land Owners <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Forestry legacy program ■ Forest tax benefit (Chapter 61) ■ Foresters for the birds ■ Community forest grants ○ Forestry Technical Assistance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Timber harvesting licenses ■ Urban and community forestry grants ■ Community forestry programs ○ Forestry Programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Applying for forest tax programs ■ Participating in the Forest Stewardship Program ■ Utilization and Markets Program for wood products

5.3. Background Research on Regional Histories and Socioeconomics

Currently, 17 out of 21 towns in the Franklin County and Berkshire County eligibility area have voted to be members of the MTWP. The Partnership encompasses a significant portion of northwesternmost Massachusetts. While the area's environmental characteristics are especially

²² "Forestry." *Mass.gov*, 2021, <https://www.mass.gov/topics/forestry>.

diverse, the municipalities all share similar economic stressors: a declining population, business closure, low wages, and overstretched town budgets.²³ The region is largely under-resourced and is characterized by low or declining levels of economic development. For the most part, the towns in these counties all suffer from an aging population as well; its remaining residents will not have the financial and social support network they need in the coming years as enrollment in the school system decreases with fewer local children residing in the region. The MTWP was born out of concern to address this unsustainable and concerning trajectory, while maintaining the rural communities, jobs, and lifestyle that have shaped Franklin and Berkshire counties.

Statistically, Franklin County has an estimated population of 70,577 people,²⁴ with a per capita income of \$35,908 a year and 9.3% of the population living below the poverty line.²⁵ In September 2021, the county's estimated unemployment rate was 6%,²⁶ with its largest employment sectors including educational services (17.6%) and health and social assistance (16.1%).²⁷ Berkshire County has an estimated population of 126,425,²⁸ with a per capita income of \$35,616 a year and 11.2% of the population living below the poverty line.²⁹ In July 2021, the county's estimated unemployment rate was

²³ "Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) about the Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership." *Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership*, Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership, 2021,

http://www.mohawktrailwoodlandspartnership.org/uploads/1/1/7/5/117522940/mtwp_faq_final_5-2-18.pdf.

²⁴ "Selected Economic Characteristics." American Community Survey, United States Census Bureau, 2019,

https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?text=dp&g=0500000US25003.25011_0600000US2500324120.2501112505&tid=ACSDP5Y2019.DP03.

²⁵ "U.S. Census Bureau Quickfacts: Franklin County, Massachusetts." *United State Census Bureau*, United State Census Bureau, 2019, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/franklincountymassachusetts/PST045219>.

²⁶ "Unemployment Rate - Berkshire County, MA." *Reno Gazette Journal*, 2021,

<https://data.rgj.com/unemployment/berkshire-county-ma/CN250030000000/>.

²⁷ "Franklin County, MA." *Data USA*, <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/franklin-county-ma>.

²⁸ "Selected Economic Characteristics." American Community Survey, United States Census Bureau, 2019,

https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?text=dp&g=0500000US25003.25011_0600000US2500324120.2501112505&tid=ACSDP5Y2019.DP03.

²⁹ "U.S. Census Bureau Quickfacts: Franklin County, Massachusetts." *United State Census Bureau*, United State Census Bureau, 2019, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/franklincountymassachusetts/PST045219>.

4.5%.³⁰ Its largest employment sectors are more diversified than that of Franklin County and include office and administrative support occupations (11.1%), sales and related occupations (9.75%), management occupations (9.5%), and educational instruction and library occupations (8.97%).

Farming and forestry-related industries have declined significantly over the past several decades, though they were critically important to the culture and economy of the region before the 21st century. Farming and timber harvesting industries have dwindled in the past decades, as small agricultural and animal farms are bought up by larger conglomerates or go out of business, and more wood is purchased from Canada or Maine than produced locally.³¹ The timber harvesting industry in northwestern Massachusetts is very small-scale and declining, with few operational sawmills in existence and logging operations left without viable succession plans. While this has resulted in huge amounts of forest cover in the area, other regions nationally or internationally that supply Massachusetts' wood consumption do not share the same fortune.³²

Based on our "Potential Locations" findings and the particular towns that we focused our attention on, we present a more detailed history and socioeconomic analysis of Charlemont, MA in Franklin County and Florida, MA in Berkshire County below.

³⁰"Unemployment Rate - Berkshire County, MA." *Reno Gazette Journal*, 2021, <https://data.rgj.com/unemployment/berkshire-county-ma/CN2500300000000/>.

³¹ Interviews with foresters, forestry experts, and logging and sawmill operators, 2021

³² Berlik, M.M., Kittredge, D.B. and Foster, D.R. "The illusion of preservation: a global environmental argument for the local production of natural resources." *Journal of Biogeography*, 2002, 29: 1557-1568. <https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1365-2699.2002.00768.x>

5.3.1. *Charlemont, Franklin County*

Charlemont, MA is east of North Adams and just west of Greenfield. The town is located along the Deerfield River and scenic Mohawk Trail, a recently nationally designated Scenic Byway and historic footpath of Indigenous tribes in the Northern Berkshire Mountains connecting the Connecticut and Hudson river valleys. There were not believed to be permanent Indigenous settlements in Charlemont, but various Indigenous communities inhabited or visited the area seasonally for hunting and fishing for thousands of years. The Wabanaki (Dawnland Confederacy), Pocumtuc, and Nipmuc are three tribes known to have closer ties to the area.³³ Beginning in the 1740s, Charlemont was settled as a township by a handful of colonial families from Boston, but it wasn't fully incorporated until the mid-1760s. At that point, Charlemont established an economy based on agriculture, cow dairy, and sheep wool. The town also supported several industries including lumber, sawmill, and scythe-making before the 1870s.³⁴ Today, Charlemont is home to 1,086 people and is considered the outdoor recreational center of Massachusetts, with a variety of eco-tourism attractions including resorts and businesses for hiking, skiing, white water rafting, kayaking, and ziplining.³⁵ Charlemont's current economy is based on recreation and the public school system. Berkshire East is the largest year-round employer in the town, providing jobs to over 200 people.³⁶ Charlemont has a median household income of \$62,795, a little above that of Franklin County,

³³ "Charlemont." *Native Land Digital*, 2021, <https://native-land.ca/>

³⁴ "Archeological and Historic Resources - FRCOG." *Franklin Regional Council of Governments*, 2021, https://frcog.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/MTPLAN.05-historic.final_.pdf.

³⁵ U.S. Census Bureau. "American Community Survey 5-year estimates." Census Reporter Profile page for Charlemont town, Franklin County, MA, 2019, <http://censusreporter.org/profiles/06000US2501112505-charlemont-town-franklin-county-ma>

³⁶ Interview with Franklin Regional Council of Governments, 2021

\$60,950.³⁷ The unemployment rate stands at about 3.8%, marginally higher than the county unemployment rate, 3.3%.³⁸

5.3.2. *Florida, Berkshire County*

Florida, MA is southeast of North Adams and west of Charlemont, situated mostly along the highest point of Route 2/Mohawk Trail. It is one of four MTWP-eligible towns that have not yet opted into the Partnership. Florida was incorporated in 1805 but first settled around the 1780s, a few decades after Charlemont, as part of a Massachusetts land grant. Its economy at this time, and for decades after, was largely based on potatoes, maple syrup, and wool, as well as other less economically significant agrarian products.³⁹ By the mid-1900s, Florida supported an influx of workers who had arrived to build the Hoosac Tunnel rail tunnel, which runs west to North Adams along the Deerfield River. However, the town's rapidly booming population decreased drastically once work on the tunnel was completed. Today, Florida has a population of just over 800 residents, most of whom work in nearby towns due to the very few employment opportunities in the town itself. Florida does not have the significant recreational businesses that Charlemont does and has very little infrastructure, especially tourism-related. Its median household income is \$66,250, well above the median household income in Berkshire County, \$59,230, and its unemployment rate sits at about 6%, twice the rate of Berkshire County.⁴⁰

³⁷ "Selected Economic Characteristics." American Community Survey, United States Census Bureau (2019). https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?text=dp&q=0500000US25003.25011_0600000US2500324120.2501112505&tid=ACSDP5Y2019.DP03

³⁸ *ibid.*

³⁹ "History of Florida." *Town of Florida Official Website*, <https://www.townofflorida.org/history>.

⁴⁰ "Selected Economic Characteristics." *American Community Survey*, United States Census Bureau, 2019. https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?text=dp&q=0500000US25003.25011_0600000US2500324120.2501112505&tid=ACSDP5Y2019.DP03.

6. Research Findings

6.1. Stakeholder Survey

From October 22 to November 5, our online survey was left open for our client to distribute to various MTWP stakeholders due to privacy concerns. The survey was also linked on the MTWP's website. The survey consisted of 10 questions that focused on the envisioned uses, functions, and locations of the center. These stakeholders included individuals representing land trusts, business associations, zoning and planning boards, town councils, and municipal, state, and federal offices. Relevant museum consultants, private donors, landowners, business owners in the recreation and forestry industry, and community leaders were also considered stakeholders. We collected 26 responses and analyzed the feedback to help inform our vision for the center as we moved forward with the project. The remainder of our report will provide a discussion of its results.

After requesting information about their relationship to the MTWP, our stakeholder survey asked respondents to rank how important they found each of the defined uses. We determined which uses to include in the survey based on previous documentation and ideas proposed by the MTWP Board, and reflected in meetings with our client. We counted the number of times each use was deemed "most important", "very important," and "not important," and graphed the results below:



Figure 1: Displays pie graphs for each defined use offered in the survey, broken down by its percentage of response results. Each respondent was asked to rank one of eight uses by “most important,” “important,” or “not very important.” The defined uses with the greatest percentage of “most important” results were used to narrow down our focuses. Based on 26 responses.

From our results, we decided to proceed with the top four uses that people described as the “most important” to our center’s vision and purpose. While the “demonstration forest” was not ranked as a top priority, a large majority of respondents ranked this use as very important. As our forest could function as a demo forest and living forest preserve, we ultimately decided to combine these uses in the final vision for our center under a “conservation area.” Therefore, our proposed Forest Center will focus on four potential uses: informational and booking center for regional tourism and economic development; a public education center/field trip destination with permanent and temporary exhibits that focus on the region’s history, landscape, places, and communities; a conservation area with hikes, trails, and signage; and a forestry assistance center for landowners.

6.1.1. Additional Results

After not receiving survey responses for several weeks, we had unofficially stopped collecting survey responses by November 5, but did not formally close the form. On November 16, an individual critical of the MTWP submitted a survey response that condemned the potential development of a Forest Center as well as our general approach; they felt that only the “living forest preserve” was worth entertaining, and marked everything else as unimportant. We noted their addition, but did not take down the survey. On November 22, we checked the Google Form and found an additional 29 responses, over double the original response number of 26. The new set of survey results was also generally critical of the Forest Center and its potential uses listed. These responses altered the percentages of what was “most important” and “very important.” As a result, forestry assistance, tourism center, and the demo forest uses seemed largely unpopular when they were previously

considered “most important,” while the research center and living forest preserve rose in prevalence.

The significant statistical changes are represented in the pie chart and table below:



Figure 2: Pie charts that demonstrate how our stakeholder survey results changed when taking into account the new responses received after November 5. Based on 56 results total.

Use	Original Survey Cohort	Current Survey Cohort
Tourism center	30% ranked most important 33% ranked not very important	16% ranked most important 63% ranked not very important
Forestry assistance	36% ranked most important 40% ranked not very important	18% ranked most important 68% ranked not very important
Demo forest	56% ranked very important	29% ranked very important
Living forest preserve	40% ranked most important	70% ranked most important

Figure 3: The statistical analysis illustrating how the stakeholder survey results changed when taking into account the new responses received after November 5th.

Before the new responses, 30% of people ranked the tourism center as most important, and 36% of people ranked the forestry assistance center as most important. The new responses caused these percentages to fall to 16% and 18%, half of their previous ratings, while the percentage of people who ranked these uses as “not very important” increased to 63% and 68% from 33% and 40% respectively. In addition, 56% of respondents originally ranked the demo forest as very important, but this number fell to 29% after the new results. The new respondents emphasized the living forest preserve, and therefore, the updated results show that 70% of people now rank the living forest preserve as most important, whereas only 40% had ranked it as most important before. With the new results, a research center replaced a tourism center in the top four ranked uses for our center.

However, considering how far we were in the project process and the amount of research we had already invested into defining the tourism center use, we decided to proceed with the original top four uses and maintain the tourism center instead of swapping it out with a research center. While it is important to acknowledge that there is clearly strong opposition to logging and increased tourism, the center needed our center to reflect the wishes of the MTWP stakeholders and board

members that had already filled it out, and we had already put a lot of work into the tourism component of the envisioned center. We were also uncomfortable redefining the scope of the project on the basis of a seemingly biased and coordinated set of responses; given the sudden influx of the new responses and the similarities between these responses and that of the original MTWP critic who filled it out on November 16, we believe the form link or website page may have been circulated to like-minded acquaintances. This is obviously a significant concern for sample size bias that should not reorient the trajectory of the project without further investigation to find out what happened.

6.2. Stakeholder Interview Analysis

We initially reached out to numerous individuals who filled out the survey, as well as contacts recommended to us by our client and other MTWP Board members, for in-depth interviews ranging from 30 minutes to over 90 minutes. The interview list was developed organically, as we continued to interview people recommended to us by previous interviewees. While most were conducted over Zoom, a handful occurred in-person or via email exchange. In total, we conducted over 24 interviews between October 28 and December 10. All of the individuals interviewed were considered MTWP stakeholders and some were current or past MTWP Board members with varying degrees of involvement in the Forest Center. Here, we provide a short anonymized summary and analysis of the most insightful interviews we conducted, as well as what their perspectives brought to our findings and recommendations. Names have been removed for privacy reasons, but pronouns are retained.

6.2.1. *Division of Conservation Services Representative (10/28)*

This interviewee was invited by Professor Gardner to speak to our class about statewide policies for land conservation. We met with him to discuss his recommendations for our center, as he was involved with the MTWP early on in its inception and later at his job in the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA), the department which provides funding for the MTWP. He emphasized the importance of adding an agricultural component to create new green jobs that keep young people from leaving the region. He said that residents of the Berkshires would not want a national forest because they would be afraid of a government takeover and additional federal control of land and that our efforts needed to focus on land conservation through other means. Lastly, he recommended that we place our center in Shelburne Falls as it is the gateway into the region. Our conversation with this interviewee helped us continue to shape the land conservation component of our center. We want our center to bring economic development, in the way of new green jobs, to the region and be in accordance with MTWP priorities.

6.2.2. *Hall Tavern Farm Representative (10/28)*

We met with a representative of Hall Tavern Farm, a sawmill located in east Charlemont. We met with this interviewee to discuss his vision for a partnership between Hall Tavern Farm and the MTWP. He emphasized the importance of having a forestry component to the center that highlights how sustainable forestry techniques positively impact the carbon sequestration capability of the forest. He also wants the farm to become a site where local wood businesses can sell and promote their products throughout the northern Berkshires. He said that as of now, only 2% of the trees that

grow in Massachusetts are used to create and sell wood products within the region; the rest are exported to Canada. His goal is to promote the inter-related small-scale commercial wood industries of the northern Berkshires to emphasize the importance of natural resources to the rural economy. Hall Tavern Farm would also provide educational programs on forestry and local wood industries to one-time visitors and organized groups. Our conversation with this interviewee sold us on his plan for a collaboration between the Forest Center and Hall Tavern Farm. It is located directly off of Route 2 and sits on 350 acres of land that could serve as the demo forest for our center. He gave us a tour of the forest and sawmill while telling us about the consistent flow of customers through the area.

6.2.3. Catskill Center for Conservation and Development Representative (11/4)

This interviewee currently works for the Catskill Center for Conservation and Development and agreed to speak with us about the best practices for a visitor center and what their center has done to build their clientele. The primary goal of their center is to create a place where people could find out all of the opportunities to do in the Catskills. This goal is similar to one of the defined uses for our center: an informational and booking center for regional tourism and economic development in the northern Berkshires. They primarily attract 30-60 year-olds interested in outdoor recreation. We feel as though this demographic will be the prominent visitors to our center as well. However, they also get people from all over the world and are currently trying to print their brochures in multiple languages. They have found that summer is their busiest time of the year; while, in the winter, people are primarily headed straight to the ski slopes. They promote their center through Facebook and partnerships with local REI stores. Our conversation with this interviewee informed us

of potential programming ideas for our center. They have held “stop-in” events on the weekend such as “How to Build a Backpack” or “Bear Safety Tips” that have been very successful in attracting visitors. In fact, these small-scale weekend events have been more popular than large festivals where people feel overwhelmed with the number of activities available. She also emphasized the importance of placing our center directly off of Route 2. The Catskill Center is set back from the main road, and many visitors exclaim that they have no idea it is there until they actively search for it.

6.2.4. Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership Board Member (11/4)

This interviewee is an upper-level MTWP Board member; however, he is not on the executive committee responsible for the planning of the Forest Center. He was very knowledgeable about the background and history of the MTWP because he has been involved since the beginning. He wanted the center to be an educational/field trip destination with exhibits focusing on issues that current students will deal with during their lifetime, such as the causes and consequences of modern century climate change. He was hesitant about rushing into a set location before conducting a full cost/benefit analysis of placing the center there. He wanted to ensure that we would not place the center on the first plot of land that became identifiably available. He was also skeptical of private landowners and institutions because he did not feel as though a private institution should be a host of a public partnership. Our conversation with this interviewee gave us the perspective of an MTWP board member who is separated from the direct planning of the Forest Center. He gave us advice on the programming for our educational exhibits and stressed the importance of ensuring that the

center would be relevant for our generation. He also emphasized the importance of building the center on public land and gave recommendations for specific locations to place it.

6.2.5. *Franklin Regional Council of Governments Planner (11/10)*

This interviewee is a development planner and member of the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG). In her survey responses, she ranked tourism center, forestry research, and MTWP headquarters as the most important uses for the Center. Given the lack of any formal rest stop along Route 2, she felt that the Center should be right along Route 2 (preferably on a riverfront property), have WiFi and bathroom amenities for tourists, who would stop by and get information about local activities and opportunities. She told us that there is no travel/visitor data on a county level; state data is based on hotel reservations but is not an accurate dataset since most visitors only stop by for the day or rent Airbnbs. The interviewee said that the FRCOG is trying to encourage visitors, especially from Boston, to stay overnight and complete a 'recreation-art-shopping' tour. She felt that this exploratory vision process should come before any financial plans in order to scope what the preferred use is and that the center needs to figure out what wood products it will highlight in order to respond to its controversy. She also suggested we issue a formal request for information (RFI) in order to see what properties within the parameters of our search are currently available. Our conversation with her was essential in better understanding what the tourism goals of Franklin County are and what we need to consider in order to attract that clientele. After our conversation, we worked to thoroughly define what type of wood products will have a place at the center. She also

helped us identify a gap in necessary research (regional tourism visitorship) that will have to be bridged before any Center is established.

6.2.6. *Charlemont Town Representatives (11/10)*

We interviewed two town representatives, “A” and “R” of Charlemont who were concerned about the Forest Center due to the uncertainty and controversies of its organizational parent, the MTWP, as well as the short and long-term funding necessities and its potential negative economic impact. “A” felt that uses for the center could not be conceptualized before there was a financial and logistic plan for its construction and maintenance. “A” and “R” characterized Charlemont as an economically-stressed town with an unsustainable declining population and a strong employment dependency on recreational businesses and the public school system. They noted that there is little room for residential development or necessary seasonal visitor and employee accommodations, since over 80% of the town is forested and much of it has deed restrictions on it. They said that Charlemont’s goal is to bring in young people who want to be part of a small town, but a stable economy is needed for that. They described the variety of recreational opportunities in the area and said that tourists mostly come from Connecticut, New York, and central Massachusetts for day trips; rarely do Boston residents travel this far west, but it should be a goal of the Center in order to facilitate societal awareness and state support. Our conversation with them helped us better understand the current struggles of Charlemont economically and socially. This informed our vision of the Forest Center as a space to help foster Charlemont’s economic development by increasing outreach to Boston residents and offering job opportunities through the center’s activities. After

speaking with them, we also felt more prepared to respond to concerns regarding the MTWP's activities, finances, and the overall role of the center if it were to be placed in Charlemont.

6.2.7. Hoosic River Watershed Association Representative (11/12)

We interviewed a representative of the Hoosic River Watershed Association and a member of the MTWP board. In his survey responses, he ranked tourism center, technical assistance, and public education as the most important uses for the center. The interviewee pointed out that a tourism component would require high-speed internet (not found reliably in this region) and clean public restrooms. He envisioned the Forest Center as a place for booking reservations throughout the region, not just the county, and thought that it must provide forestry-related educational content. He felt that the Forest Center must be located along Route 2 for exposure to a mountain or water vista, and emphasized that the smaller towns in the region cannot be ignored in favor of the downtowns of North Adams or Shelburne Falls. Additionally, he said that any educational components must include literature and exhibits on the watersheds and the region's Indigenous communities. Our conversation with him gave us a better sense of the various components at play for a successful tourism center and guided our vision for a public-facing facility with desirable amenities and a strong educational base. His perspective on the aesthetic and practical needs of the location was helpful and inspired us to narrow down our list of sites and strike explicit land plots off our recommendations since they posed logistical challenges that we could not effectively address.

6.2.8. *Harvard Forest Employee, Franklin Regional Planning Board Representative*
(11/12)

This interviewee is a member of the Franklin Regional Planning Board, an employee of Harvard Forest, and a member of the MTWP Board. In her survey responses, she ranked technical assistance, forestry research, and public education as the most important uses for the center. She discussed the potential for the center to assess and address the needs of forest landowners and support economic growth by establishing a tool-sharing library and connecting them with pre-existing research institutions. While she felt that having a research focus was important, she thought the center should not be so biologically or ecologically focused but instead figure out what specific towns need in relation to forest-related knowledge, support, legislation, tools, etc. to sustainably manage their forests, both economically and environmentally. This might include planning or recreational research. She emphasized that a goal of the mission should be to get towns to understand the value and benefits of the forest. She identified a gap in research knowledge and said that the Forest Center should connect landowners with research initiatives at nearby institutions, including Harvard Forest and the Jericho Research Forest. The interviewee said that the Charlemont area may not have any additional activities to make it worthwhile for generational families to visit, so the Forest Center would have to have a strong visitor component and should be situated as close to Shelburne Falls as possible to attract visitors from Boston. She did not think that a demonstration forest would be a good enough reason for tourism and pointed to the existence of the existing Plainfield demo forest. Our conversation with her informed our perspective on what forestry assistance might look like: bridging the gap between research institutions and landowners. However,

it was still unclear what exactly landowners think they need from the Forest Center, so we made plans to reach out to forest property owners. Speaking with her was very helpful in understanding our next steps: identifying and reaching out to our clientele, shaping our center to address their needs, and evaluating the potential for success of the sites we've scoped out thus far.

6.2.9. Mount Greylock Visitor Center Representative (11/18)

We spoke with a representative of the Mount Greylock Visitor Center, who is the only full-time staff member in the winter. She talked about the different types of programming that have been successful in attracting visitors to her center. The main demographic of visitors to the Mt. Greylock Visitor Center are hikers that are new to the area looking for information about the local trails. However, the center runs programs year-round for schools, families, and residents. She stated that most places across the state do not have winter programming, and this is a unique aspect of the Mt. Greylock Visitor Center. Their winter programming involves guided hikes for seniors and hunter/gatherer hikes for kids, focusing on bringing people together for social events such as "mountain mindfulness" or "cider-sip and singalongs." Finally, she emphasized the success of their 13-minute informational video that covers the assets of the Mt. Greylock reservation. She stated that with a limited staff, she cannot help every visitor and that the video helps ensure that every person leaves the center more knowledgeable about the reservation than when they entered.

6.2.10. Shelburne-based Artisan Woodworker (11/18)

We spoke with a local woodworker who owns a small woodworking business in Shelburne. He has lived in the area for over 40 years and works with local clients to build furniture and other wood-based products for their homes. He receives trees for his business from people who cut them down from their land and need a place to dispose of them. He builds his clientele through networking; he is also prominent on a popular social media platform and has over 10,000 followers, where he discusses and shows his work. He gave us the name of potential logging companies in the region that may also be able to help our vision. Our conversation with him helped inform our vision of the 'woodworking sector' in northwestern Massachusetts. We learned that not a lot of people have woodworking businesses in this region because it is difficult to make a profit and the work is largely custom. However, there are many quasi-hobbyist artisan woodworkers scattered around the area working on the margins. He told us there is a strong interest to buy local but the price is generally too high for regular purchase, and emphasized the importance of having existing infrastructure that supports harvesting, milling, and selling lumber sustainably on a larger-than-current scale for the success of our Forest Center. A potential goal for our center is to bring these people together and offer a place for them to promote their products within the region.

6.2.11. Williamstown-based Forest Manager (11/19)

We spoke with a forest manager who was involved with the MTWP early on in its development. We reached out to him as a starting point to learn more about what forestry assistance might encompass, what the logging industry in the eligibility region is like, and how managing forests

can help mitigate climate change and increase biodiversity. He talked about the grading of wood products (low to high), state programs that encourage forest preservation, the stakeholders involved in logging processes (landowners, foresters, mills, and loggers), and the importance of working with foresters for both preservation and logging purposes. We gained a better sense of the logging industry in northwestern Massachusetts as small-scale and low-intensity, declining with a lack of succession plans for logging companies, and mostly scattered around New York in relation to the Williamstown area. Our interview with him was hands-on and involved examining various trees in our walk around the forest to explain particular forest types, pre-commercial cutting, and the impact that forest management could have on certain areas. He emphasized the importance of foresters, both as interviewees and potential employees for the center. He also encouraged us to reach out to ecologists to get a better sense of the current state of carbon sequestration research, since it is highly complicated and leveraged on both a pro- and anti-logging and forestry management perspective. Our conversation with him was very insightful and provided an essential foundation for defining both the conservation area and the forestry assistance uses.

6.2.12. Expert on the History of the Mohawk Trail (11/22)

We interviewed a local expert on the history of the Mohawk Trail. Our conversation consisted of the entire history of the trail and the Indigenous communities that live along it. He emphasized that the Mohawk Trail runs along Mohican territory; the Mohawks inhabited the land over in the Mohawk River on the other side of the Hudson. People liked the name Mohawk over Mohican because people remembered the Mohawk's intertribal warfare and eventual conquest over the Pocumtuc

tribe, which allowed for ease of settlement since there was no longer a permanent community in that area. He highlighted the excitement in this region toward the Native Americans in the western United States, saying, "People were really excited about the West, and it seemed more immediate to think about the Western Indians than the Eastern Indians." Our conversation with him helped inform our vision for our educational exhibit on the local history of the Mohawk Trail, particularly from a colonial perspective. He emphasized the importance of highlighting the Mohican territory in our exhibit and contacting other local experts, especially Indigenous ones, to help design and curate the display. He also encouraged us to examine the senior thesis of Robert Quay '04. However, we want to ensure that his perspective of the history of the Mohawk Trail and Indigenous communities in this region is shared by current Indigenous experts, so we have reached out to Mohican representatives to confirm our findings.

6.2.13. Massachusetts Woodlands Institute Representative (11/22)

We spoke with a representative of the Massachusetts Woodlands Institute who specializes in the New England logging industry and woodlands management. Our discussion with him helped us better understand the logging industry in this region, ways that forestry could improve, and how most landowners manage their plots. He felt strongly that a small-scale, locally-based wood and timber economy in the western Massachusetts region is both possible and necessary; Massachusetts should be reducing its overall wood consumption, while producing as much as it sustainably can to meet state consumption levels. He emphasized the difficulty in obtaining a clear number in regard to how much wood would have to be produced to meet these demands and remain 'sustainable' so that

forests would have time to grow and regenerate, but argued that leaving Massachusetts' forests largely untouched while continuing to import and consume unethically and unsustainably harvested wood from other regions was detrimental from both a carbon footprint and healthy forests aspect. He pointed us to resources such as the Massachusetts Woodlands Institute and the Wildlands and Woodlands initiative that advocate for a balance between wild, unmanaged forests, and actively managed forests used for wood production, wherein both generate the same ecological benefits. He said that the Forest Center should collaborate with these organizations and have a physical presence where people could interact with local wood products and be exposed to responsible forestry techniques. The interviewee encouraged us to have a consulting forester on-site and potentially a small sawmill operation to peak visitors' interest in buying local wood products.

6.2.14. Franklin Regional Planning Board Representative (11/22)

We interviewed a member of the Planning & Development team at the Franklin Regional Council of Governments. She told us that there had been a longstanding need for a visitor/tourism center in this area, as well as a research and educational center with a strong 'four seasons' component to drive traffic into the area, support small-scale businesses, and help build a potential village center that could benefit local artisans and other businesses. She told us that residents of Franklin County were greatly concerned about climate change, which has resulted in ambivalent or negative feelings about the MTWP and the potential for more logging in the region. Because of that, she felt that the Forest Center ought to focus on driving recreational tourism and conducting climate change research instead of forestry assistance. She said that the Forest Center should have a physical

presence and collaborate with other research institutions such as UMass, Harvard Forest, and Hopkins Memorial Forest; it should also serve as a staffing office for the USFS agent. Much of our interview focused on the MTWP's support of ecotourism and natural resource-based economy, which has been controversial with some town residents, but beyond the scope of our work. We learned more about grants distributed to towns for recreational improvement, and the necessity for a regional approach as well as the general feeling of Franklin County residents about the Forest Center: they want something long-lived with stable financial planning and programming that will regularly attract visitors at all times of the year.

6.2.15. Berkshire County Area DCR Service Forester (11/22)

We spoke with the service forester who manages most of the Berkshire County region through the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), which means he offers technical assistance and services to landowners and municipalities in his region. He works almost exclusively with private landowners to review forest management plans for tax benefits, approve timber cutting plans for stream and wetland protection, and advise them on how to best take care of their woodlands. He explained that best forestry practices come from caring, conscientious landowners who are invested in the wellbeing of their forests and want to improve them for posterity. He feels that the most significant way to instill care in landowners is for a forester to evaluate the land plot, explain its history, and discuss how it might look in the future if they manage it or leave it alone. He felt that the state of woodlands in Massachusetts has vastly improved in the last century since clearcut lands have been reforested, and said that logging activity was self-regulating and not

particularly active. However, many of these formerly cut lands are degraded and have uneven age, size, and species distribution, so they are vulnerable to ice storms and other blanket disturbances. He helped us understand the dynamic between landowners and loggers, wherein loggers will reach out to landowners and offer to harvest since they keep track of which plots are suitable for timber. He noted that log prices in the region are unstable and loggers are aging since the industry is difficult to stay in, and he believed that current loggers may be replaced by people who care less about the environmental impact and are trying to make a quick buck. Our discussion with him helped us realize that a comprehensive description of a demo forest would be impossible without knowing the layout and makeup of the forest; best practices for logging land depend on a variety of complex factors. He also confirmed that forester-landowner relationships are essential for conserving and maintaining healthy forests, as well as ensuring landowners are paid fairly for the timber, which helped orient our forestry assistance component on this dynamic. He believed that a research facility in Berkshire County was necessary for climate change research because of the elevation gradient, easily accessible from Mount Greylock. He said that the MTWP lumped together the rural parts of the state, but ecologically they are very different.

6.2.16. DCR Forest Reserves Science Advisory Committee Representative (11/23)

We spoke to a representative of the DCR Forest Reserves Science Advisory Committee about his research on carbon sequestration. He stated that the current state of research on carbon sequestration has ballooned, and there have been many statistical models published to illustrate carbon sequestration. However, he questions how good these models are, because they only use

certain factors to determine the amount of carbon stored in the tree, such as its diameter. His goal is to assess the accuracy of these models by taking into account all of the factors that impact the amount of carbon trees can store. He claims that there is no question that older trees can store the most amount of carbon due to their size; however, it boils down to the rates of sequestration, because the rates can differ between younger versus older forests and the individual species of the tree. Our conversation with him helped refine our definitions of preservation, conservation, biodiversity, and sustainability.

6.2.17. Stockbridge-Munsee Community Representative (11/24)

We spoke with a cultural affairs representative for the Stockbridge-Munsee Mohican community. In an email conversation, she helped inform our vision for our educational exhibit on the local indigenous communities. She also emphasized the importance of the trail crossing through Mohican territory. She recommended reaching out to the Cultural Affairs Director, Monique Tyndall, to collaborate with Stockbridge-Munsee's Cultural Affairs Department on consulting and shaping this exhibit. Their department curated two major exhibits this year, one at the Berkshire Museum and one at the Mission House in Stockbridge, that she recommended would be helpful in creating the vision for our exhibit. She offered other helpful contacts for the curation of our exhibit and reiterated that the curators of our exhibit should "review content with our community to present our history accurately and center the community's traditional stewardship of these lands." While our final report will not include comprehensive exhibit content, the information gleaned from our conversation with the local history expert, as well as other non-Indigenous resources, should all be fact and

sensitivity-checked with the Stockbridge-Munsee Community and Nipmuc Nation in Massachusetts, the Nulhegan Abenaki Tribe in Vermont, and the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe in New York.

6.2.18. Pantermehl Land Clearing Company Representative (12/2)

We spoke with the office manager for Pantermehl Land Clearing in Ashfield, Franklin County. Much of Pantermehl's logging work includes putting together forest plans for landowners and loggers to appraise, but other landowners prefer that Pantermehl works directly for the landowner and hires a reputable logger through them. In recent years, the logging company has pivoted and operates largely in the land clearing sector for buildings, vistas, parking lots, solar panel fields, etc. They also convert those logged trees and stumps to wood chips on-site for use in sewage maintenance and steam generation. This by-product use ensures that the trees that are cut down are fully utilized, and helps cut costs for the landowners since Pantermehl can sell the raw wood chips, which are distinct from processed wood pellets for biomass. She also discussed the history of clearcutting in Massachusetts, the need for forest management and strategic logging to improve forest health, and the declining logging industry. She felt that landowners need workshops and classes, and suggested outreach in the form of booths and tents at fairs, festivals, and home shows since she didn't think that simply having a forester in the office would be successful in connecting with landowners. She said that landowners could benefit from pamphlets and brochures, and that new landowners, in particular, are somewhat nervous about trusting loggers and aren't sure what to do in terms of forest management. She emphasized the breadth of knowledge that experienced loggers have and

reinforced the idea that both loggers and foresters have different ways of approaching the same job or plot of land, but that so long as they are reputable, they aren't "wrong."

6.2.19. New England Forestry Foundation Representative (12/2)

We spoke with the landowner outreach coordinator for the New England Forestry Foundation, which is the administrative agent for the MTWP. We discussed understanding 'sustainable forestry,' which the MTWP has not yet explicitly defined beyond a desire to maintain woodlands in the eligibility area and sustain a natural resource-based economy at the same time. She explained that sustainable forestry has many different meanings and scopes; it can refer to a whole region or a specific woodland lot. Incorporating climate change adaptation and resiliency into traditional forestry practices is one way of thinking about sustainable forestry; there are also best management practices regarding the timescale of harvesting trees, protecting resources such as wetlands, or encouraging habitat for certain species. There are also existing 'gold' standards for harvested wood, such as the FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) or the SFI (Sustainable Forestry Initiative) certifications. She said that the center should provide support to landowners for the legacy of their land, encourage peer-to-peer support between landowners, and meet social service needs as well, such as food banks or vaccination clinics. She added that the center could host walks on properties, engage in physical and online campaigns, and put together workshops for landowners. The interviewee suggested that we recommend that the MTWP develop a definition of sustainable forestry, or align themselves with an existing definition such as NEFF's, which calls for "forest management that ensures forests contribute maximally to mitigating and adapting to climate change during the next 30 years as seen

through a systems lens that includes in-forest carbon, forest product carbon storage, and substitution benefits, while also maintaining the ability of forests to help current and future generations to meet their social, economic, ecological, cultural, and spiritual needs.”⁴¹

6.2.20. Western Massachusetts-based Regional Ecologist (12/7)

We interviewed a regional ecologist for The Trustees of Reservations, a statewide (MA) non-profit historic preservation organization and land trust. She works on natural resource inventory and management for properties owned or managed by The Trustees in western Massachusetts, covering 9,000 acres. She works with nonnative and invasive species issues and looks at grasslands and invasive plant control and looks at our forest management and thinks about the resiliency of our forests to climate change. Our conversation with her helped inform our vision for the natural resource protection exhibit and reinforce our rationale for promoting sustainable forestry practices. She talked about the value of our forests in addressing climate change and the need to manage our forests in the short and long term. She also discussed the importance of sustainable forestry for producing wood products, saying, “We need these products in our everyday lives, and if we do not produce them in New England, we are encouraging other companies to develop them in another environment that may not be as sustainable.”

⁴¹ “Forests Sub-Group Final Report.” Working and Natural Lands Working Group, November 6, 2020, p. 62, https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DEEP/climatechange/GC3/GC3-working-group-reports/GC3_WNL_Forests_Final_Report_110620.pdf

6.2.21. Franklin County Area DCR Service Forester (12/9)

We also spoke with the DCR service forester who works primarily in the northwestern area of Franklin County as far east as Greenfield. She told us that she would like to see logging practices improve in this region of Massachusetts, and suggested that the Forest Center focus its efforts on reaching out to landowners who are hesitant or resistant to practicing responsible forestry. She encouraged us to involve loggers in Forest Center social events and activities since they are landowner-facing and might be able to connect to landowners who don't work with private foresters and wouldn't seek assistance from the Forest Center. The center might provide financial incentives, a certification, or new machinery for exceptional and sustainable logging practices in order to get loggers involved in the Forest Center. In this way, landowners prone to forest exploitation might "buy into" the mission of the center through the advice or recommendations of their loggers. Like the other DCR service forester, she was concerned that having a forester on-site would not be successful since landowners likely wouldn't travel to the center to speak with a forester. She also felt that the Forest Center needs to have a local appeal to residents to keep them interested in the center and visiting again. Our discussion with her was extremely helpful in developing a vision for forestry assistance that included loggers in order to support them, landowners, and woodlands.

7. Defined Uses and Programming

7.1. Public Education

7.1.1. Overview

The Forest Center should be a public education center and field trip destination for students across the MTWP eligibility area, state, and New England region, as well as Massachusetts residents and visitors across the country. Its main goals would be to:

- increase public appreciation for woodlands and sustainable forest management
- advance knowledge on the region's history, landscape, communities, and future
- provide year-round programming and "pop-up" events that help build community

The Forest Center should provide year-round programming and permanent and temporary exhibits that focus on the region's history, landscape, places, and communities. It should have specific programming in place for field trips, including educational programs on sustainable forest management and guided tours through the forest's conservation area. The center might have the capacity to host the entire school with multiple activities planned for the students for an organized flow. The educational component of the center should require a qualified staff member from either the forestry industry or state forest service to help run our programming and teach the students about the importance of forest land conservation. It should also involve other volunteers or staff members to help coordinate the various activities. Locals and visitors alike might learn about local indigenous communities and climate change from the exhibits as well as the importance of sustainable forest management through a walk in the demonstration forest portion of the conservation area. The educational component would require large indoor rooms for learning

activities and may potentially require computers or projectors to run videos; it might also call for additional staff to curate the exhibits and organize the programming.

7.1.2. Components

As part of the educational component of the center, there will be permanent and temporary exhibits that focus on local history, indigenous communities, climate change adaptation, and natural resource protection. Examples of possible exhibits include:

7.1.2.1. History of the Mohawk Trail exhibit

One of the most popular National Scenic Byways in the U.S., the Mohawk Trail runs through the Northern Berkshire Mountains connecting the towns of Williamstown and Athol. It originated as a Native American trade route connecting Atlantic tribes with tribes in upstate New York and beyond, its name emanating from the Indigenous path that it follows.⁴² In his senior thesis, *Mohawks, Model Ts, and Monuments*, Robert I. Quay argues that the highway over the Hoosac Mountains became the Mohawk Trail because it was developed during a unique historical moment.⁴³ As a result of a North Adams City Engineer, Franklin B. Locke, advocating for a state highway, the governor passed legislation between 1911 and 1914 allocating the appropriate funds for its construction. The widespread use of the name came with the completion of the highway in 1914. To celebrate, a prominent businessman and hotelier in North Adams, Clinton Q. Richmond, advocated for a historical pageant to raise money and cement the connection between the original Indigenous trail with the

⁴² Aiken, John Adams. "The Mohawk Trail." *History and Proceedings of the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association* 5 (1912): 333-50.

⁴³ Quay, Robert I. "Mohawks, Model Ts, and Monuments." *Williams College*, Williams College, 2004, pp. 3.

new state highway that now follows it. The city of North Adams held *The Pageant of the Mohawk Trail* as the first medium through which the notion of the Mohawk Trail as Western Frontier was codified and popularly disseminated.⁴⁴ All of the businesses along the Trail picked up the theme of the pageant along with its name. In 1914, North Adams residents were fascinated by the “mythic” Native American communities that existed on the other side of the Western frontier; to the extent that North Adams could claim the history of the Mohawks, the city wanted to assert its stake in the process of American Westward expansion. The name related to the Trail’s romantic traits, most notably its natural beauty and its connection to the romantic frontier, and was preserved in large part because it sustained the lucrative tourist trade along the highway. The southern Mohawks used the trail during warfare with the Pocumtucks and other Connecticut Valley tribes. Archives suggest that early settlers felt indebted to the Mohawks in a sense for their previous conquering of the Pocumtuck people, since the land had been largely “cleared” of permanent Indigenous communities. However, it is very important to note that the Mohawk Trail runs along Mohican territory, and that the Mohawks inhabited the land over in the Mohawk River on the other side of the Hudson River in New York State. “The Local History of the Mohawk Trail Exhibit” should emphasize authenticity and historical accuracy when portraying the chronicle of events that led to the creation and popularity of the Mohawk Trail.

7.1.2.2. Local indigenous communities exhibit

The MTWP eligibility area encompasses the ancestral homelands of the Stockbridge-Munsee Mohicans, the indigenous peoples of northwestern Massachusetts. There is a current lack of public

⁴⁴ Browne, William Bradford. *The Mohawk Trail: Its History and Course, with Map and Illustrations, Together with an Account of Fort Massachusetts and of the Early Turnpikes over Hoosac Mountain*, 1920. A facsimile of the first edition with an addendum by Paul Marino. [Williamstown, Mass.]: Elder, 1998. Page references are to the 1998 edition.

understanding that we are on indigenous homelands and most current perceptions often come from biased and inaccurate sources that are anti-Indigenous. In this exhibit, we want to pay honor and respect to their ancestors, past and present. The Stockbridge-Munsee Mohicans have a rich and illustrious history that has been retained through oral tradition and the written word.⁴⁵ Following tremendous hardship after being forced from their valued homelands, the Stockbridge-Munsee Mohicans continue as a sovereign tribal nation in Wisconsin. The tribe's original territory spans the Hudson, Housatonic, and Delaware River Valleys, and the namesake of the tribe are the Muhheacannituck, "the waters that are never still," also known as the Hudson River. There are currently 1,500 enrolled tribal members, and a third live on the Wisconsin Reservation. However, many Mohican individuals continue to return to and protect their ancestral cultural practices in their northeastern homelands. In 2011, the tribe purchased 63 acres of land along the Hudson River to protect a culturally sensitive site, and, in 2015, a satellite Historic Preservation office was formally established on the campus of Russell Sage College in downtown Troy, N.Y. Additionally, in Williamstown, the Stockbridge-Munsee Community's Historic Preservation Extension Office opened in the fall of 2020 thanks to a historical partnership with Williams College. In 2021, the Stockbridge-Munsee community regained its ancestral "ownership" of Papscanee Island in New York with the assistance of a local institute partner. Over the past couple of decades, the Stockbridge-Munsee community has not only survived, but grown in many ways. "The Local Indigenous Communities Exhibit" should highlight the past and present history of the Stockbridge-Munsee Mohicans, as well as other Indigenous nations with ancestral connections with

⁴⁵ "Stockbridge-Munsee Band of Mohican Indians," Stockbridge-Munsee Band of Mohican Indians, 2021, <https://www.mohican.com/>.

established tribal nations in other states. It is essential to review this content with these communities to correctly present their history and highlight their stewardship of these lands.

7.1.2.3. Climate change adaptation exhibit

Climate change is a prominent 21st-century environmental challenge; however, it is also one of the most complex issues facing us today involving many dimensions from science, economics, and politics. It is a global problem felt on local scales that will be around for centuries to come. Since we are all “committed” to experiencing some level of climate change, our center will present an exhibit on the best approaches for responding to this environmental threat. Climate change adaptation is the adjustment of our lifestyle to actual or expected future climates. With adaptation, we can reduce our vulnerability to the harmful effects of climate change and make the most of any potentially beneficial opportunities. Adaptation strategies involve building flood defenses, planning for heatwaves and higher temperatures, installing water-permeable pavements to better deal with floods, and improving water storage and use.⁴⁶ Climate change should be factored into our development plans, such as how to manage extreme weather events, how to best manage land and forests, and how to deal with reduced water availability. “The Climate Change Adaptation Exhibit” should focus on the different ways our government and municipalities can help the people of the region prepare for our climate problems. This exhibit would help us tailor our modern life choices to our new climate and extremes.

⁴⁶ “Climate Change: Vital Signs of the Planet.” NASA, 2021, <https://climate.nasa.gov/>.

7.1.2.4. Natural resource protection exhibit

Our center will help locals and visitors learn about the region's woodlands and their sustainable management. "The Natural Resource Protection Exhibit" will focus on the value of our forests in addressing climate change, the past and current state of research on carbon sequestration research, and why good forest management practices on private and public lands benefit everyone. Preserved forest land helps regulate ecosystems, protect biodiversity, and drive sustainable growth. They play an integral part in the carbon cycle by sequestering CO₂ from the atmosphere and depositing it back into terrestrial ecosystems upon the death and decay of natural organic matter. Our exhibit will present the statistics for why forests are an essential solution to mitigating the effects of climate change. For example, forests absorb 2.6 billion tons of carbon dioxide, a third of the CO₂ released from burning fossil fuels, on an annual basis.⁴⁷ The exhibit should provide information about the current state of research on carbon sequestration by forests and how it relates to the region. Scientists are constantly producing new data on the sequestration rates of different species of trees, and our exhibit will consult and combine this research to present an accurate picture of the carbon sequestration and storage abilities of our region's forests. Maintaining healthy forests produces numerous benefits for the natural environment and rural communities. Our exhibit will highlight these benefits, featuring how trees clean the air by intercepting airborne particles and absorbing ground-level pollutants; they also clean our water and provide wildlife habitat and diversity to the region. Overall, the Natural Resource Protection Exhibit should emphasize the unique geology and diverse ecosystems of Northwestern Massachusetts, including our rich northern forests. This

⁴⁷ "Forests and Climate Change." *IUCN*, 2021, <https://www.iucn.org/resources/issues-briefs/forests-and-climate-change>

exhibit will encourage the study of preserved forest lands in order to mimic what nature produces on our conserved lands. It will facilitate the sustainable use of the region's natural resource landscape by conserving our land and enhancing public knowledge about its benefits.

7.1.3. Programming

The center should also offer year-round programming events to attract visitors. We want to emphasize the importance of our winter programming as an element of our center that is unique in this region. We believe the visitor center will attract all demographics and the programming should reflect the clientele. The partnership should focus on weekend "pop-up" events relevant to the season that work to bring people together. Some examples of successful programming include guided hikes and backpacking trips (spring, summer, and fall), animal tracking tours (winter), karaoke and trivia (year-round), land-mark scavenger hunt (year-round), and outdoor safety workshops (year-round).

7.1.4. Recommendations

- The MTWP should reach out to the local history expert we interviewed and consult Robert Quay's senior thesis, *Mohawks, Models Ts, and Monument*, for a history of the Mohawk Trail. They should continue to research other sources, such as John Adam Aiken's book, *The Mohawk Trail*, and William Brown's *The Mohawk Trail: Its History and Course with Maps and Illustration*, to fact-check the accuracy of each account in the creation of the local history exhibits.
- The MTWP must coordinate with Monique Tyndall, the Cultural Affairs Director of the Stockbridge-Munsee Community, Abenaki anthropologist and museum consultant Margaret

Bruchac at the University of Pennsylvania, as well as Christine Delucia, Associate Professor of History at Williams College, to shape this exhibit. We also recommend reaching out to Indigenous land conservation groups knowledgeable about the traditional ecological knowledge within this region. The MTWP should consult the “In the News” and “Resources” tabs on the Williams-Stockbridge Munsee website⁴⁸ and the Stockbridge-Munsee website for Mohican history. The MTWP should also take care to build relationships with those indigenous communities with ancestral and contemporary presence in Berkshire and Franklin counties.

- The MTWP should consider reaching out to and working with a local ecologist, the current DCR foresters for the Berkshire and Franklin county areas, and a representative of the Reserves Science Advisory Committee to design the Climate Change Adaptation and Natural Resource Protection Exhibits.

7.2. Tourism and Visitor Center

7.2.1. Overview

The Forest Center should be an informational and booking center for regional ecotourism and natural resource-based economic development. Its main goals would be to:

- serve as a multi-purpose rest stop for visitors with public restrooms and free WiFi
- promote patronage of restaurants focusing on local foods and outdoor recreation
- encourage ecotourism and engagement across New England states
- support the Partnership’s mission to improve municipal financial stability

⁴⁸ “The Stockbridge-Munsee Community.” *Institutional Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion*, Williams College, 2021, <https://diversity.williams.edu/the-stockbridge-munsee-community/>

We want our center to encourage low-impact tourism that directly benefits the local communities. It should support responsible travel to natural areas that safeguard the integrity of ecosystems and produce economic benefits for the Berkshire and Franklin counties. The center will provide brochures and flyers that promote outdoor recreational activities and locally sourced restaurants. There will also be a staff member stationed at the center to help residents and tourists make reservations for the local restaurants and attractions, such as skydiving, skiing, ziplining, or whitewater rafting. In addition to an informational and booking center, the center should function as a place for people to stop on their travels through northwestern Massachusetts. The Forest Center should work to draw visitors from central and eastern Massachusetts, eastern New York, and southern Vermont and New Hampshire. Already, many visitors make an arts and culture-oriented trip to see the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, The Clark Art Institute, and the Williams Museum College of Art; the Forest Center should be added to their itinerary as a potential resting point for visitors. The facility should provide clean, public bathrooms and freely available Wifi, as well as a potential snack and refreshment area to attract visitors, especially those on the road.

7.2.2. Components

Since many residents want the Forest Center to be an informational and booking center for regional tourism and economic development, we asked stakeholders to provide local attractions that they would want to be advertised at the center. There was an emphasis on the hiking/biking trails and recreational activities, with many recommended attractions in the Charlemont area. We compiled the results along with additional research and created the list displayed below:

Locally Sourced Restaurants	Parks and Trails	Outdoor Recreational Businesses
<p>Deli/Café at McCusker’s Market of the Franklin Community Co-op Shelburne Local farm-to-table restaurant</p>	<p>Mohawk Trail State Forest* Charlemont 7,700 acres of publicly owned forest with recreational features, mountain ridges, gorges, and old-growth forests</p>	<p>Berkshire East Mountain Resort* Charlemont Four season resort with zipline tours, rafting trips, and one of the longest mountain coasters in the world</p>
<p>Mezze Bistro and Bar Williamstown Local farm-to-table restaurant</p>	<p>High Ledges Wildlife Sanctuary* Shelburne Falls Part of Mass. Audubon, 5 miles of trails with excellent views of the Deerfield River Valley and Mount Greylock</p>	<p>Zoar Outdoor* Charlemont Outdoor recreation company that offers white water rafting trips, kayaking clinics, zip line canopy tours, and rock climbing classes</p>
<p>Public North Adams Local farm-to-table restaurant</p>	<p>Mt. Greylock State Reservation* Public recreation and nature preservation area covering 12,000 acres across several towns</p>	<p>Berkshire Skydiving North Adams Local business specializing in tandem skydiving</p>
<p>Hearty Eats Shelburne Re-connects people with local, seasonal food systems that support sustainable practices</p>	<p>Tannery Falls* Savoy 4.8 mile moderately trafficked hiking loop featuring a pristine waterfall</p>	<p>Hicks Family Farm Corn Maze Charlemont Local corn maze with a scavenger hunt game and mini-golf course Open in Sept. and Oct.</p>
<p>West End Pub Shelburne Offers burgers made with locally raised grass-fed black Angus beef from farms in Shelburne</p>	<p>Mt. Negus* Rowe 1.0 mile hike featuring views of Mt. Greylock and the Bear Swamp Mountain Top Reservoir at summit</p>	<p>Bridge of Flowers Shelburne Falls Former trolley bridge that is now a flower garden</p>
		<p>Glacial Potholes Shelburne Falls Natural water-created carvings in the rocks that eroded from as a result of the Deerfield River</p>

* Stakeholder recommendation

7.2.3. Recommendations

- The Forest Center should also consult the popular locally sourced restaurants and outdoor recreational activities within the area and consider a small discount for visitors who book their tickets or make their reservations through the center.
- The MTWP should review the Recreation Tourism Inventory and Mapping Project by the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission and Franklin Regional Council of Governments.⁴⁹ This project inventories the recreational assets in the region and offers recommendations for the tourism facilities and services needed in the region; it is currently being completed.

7.3. Forestry Assistance

7.3.1. Overview

This use aligns with the MTWP's mission to increase natural resource-based economic development, and support forest conservation on private lands and sustainable forestry practices.

The Forest Center should provide forestry assistance and resources to landowners to:

- foster meaningful relationships and connections between forests and people
- encourage responsible stewardship and care of the land
- support conservation to help mitigate climate change
- facilitate sustainable, small-scale timber harvesting on family forests if desired

Since major forest clearing beginning with colonial agriculture decimated the state's forests in the 1800s, many woodlands have grown back with the support of stringent environmental

⁴⁹ "Recreational Tourism Inventory and Mapping." *Berkshire Regional Planning Commission*, 7 Oct. 2020, <https://berkshireplanning.org/projects/recreational-tourism-inventory-and-mapping/>.

regulations passed in the 1970s.⁵⁰ Yet, the health of some of these forests remains degraded by their careless exploitation, with many woodlands suffering from even species, age, and class compositions. Other forests are cut for timber at an unsustainable rate, with only the less hardy trees left behind. A lack of diversity in these factors reduces the overall vitality of the forest and makes woodlands more vulnerable to disease and severe weather events since they all respond the same way and provide wildlife habitat for only specific ecosystem-inhabiting species. Especially in our current climate crisis era, forests must continue serving as major carbon sinks and biodiverse-rich ecosystems.

With 79% of Massachusetts' forested land owned privately by individuals and families, it is crucial to provide small landowners support, tools, and resources to responsibly maintain and manage their woodlands, or "family forests."⁵¹ Landowners that feel overwhelmed by the responsibility of their forest, are not sufficiently knowledgeable about their options, or find themselves in a difficult financial position tend to sell development rights of their property, or allow their woodlands to be badly harvested for timber without the assistance of a forester. There are also landowners, foresters, and loggers who practice irresponsible forestry and utilize woodlands exclusively to make a profit without considering the longevity, health, and value of the woodlands.⁵² These individuals, especially, are the demographic that the Forest Center should try to target, in order to bring them into the fold. The Forest Center's ultimate goal should be to encourage and support small landowners to ensure that their forests remain undeveloped for conservation purposes and that, if used for timber, are harvested in a way that maintains the health and integrity of the woods.

⁵⁰ "Our History." *New England Forestry Foundation*, 2021, <https://newenglandforestry.org/about/our-history/>

⁵¹ "Massachusetts Forests." *MassWoods*, 2021, <https://masswoods.org/massachusetts-forests>

⁵² Interviews with DCR Service Foresters, 2021

Forestry is not in opposition to land conservation but a crucial component of it. Whether family forests are left for preservation in perpetuity, actively managed for conservation, or harvested for timber sustainably, they should yield the same ecological benefits. While preservation, or leaving forests completely alone and unmanaged, is also an essential part of protecting woodlands, actively managed forestry helps landowners correct negative historical and ongoing impacts and contribute to a more environmentally resilient present. Based on survey responses, interviewee feedback, and background research, our envisioned Forest Center's forestry assistance might offer the following:

7.3.2. Components

7.3.2.1. Informational, resource-based website

A navigable, resource-rich website is the first step toward effective forestry assistance. This website should contain original content, written, created, and curated by a forester, communications expert, and website designer to ensure it is factual, attractive, and accessible. It should connect landowners to existing information and programming found on the websites of MassWoods, the Massachusetts Woodlands Institute, and the Massachusetts state forestry website, as well as land trusts, service and private foresters, legal counsel, conservation agencies, certified public accountants, appraisers, and financial planners. A body of research, programming, and toolkits that focus on forestry already exists, so the Forest Center website should take advantage of that fact and serve as an additional database for these materials. The website should imbed visual maps and quizzes, incorporate downloadable materials, and add links to additional resources. It should summarize relevant scientific research articles in regular blog posts to ensure its findings are accessible to a broader audience.

Given the extent of information included in this website, it should be a separate but connected website to the main Forest Center website, which will contain information about tourism resources.

7.3.2.2. Brochures, videos, pamphlets, and books

The Forest Center should create its own place-based series of forestry materials, including brochures, videos, pamphlets, and books, while elevating and promoting existing content produced by regional organizations that address components relevant to the northwestern Massachusetts area. These materials could be organized by complexity, with a beginning 'Forestry '101' type series of definitions, players, basic regulations and programming, and tips for new landowners - an increasingly significant demographic in the region, given recent COVID-19 trends that are seeing city dwellers purchase rural woodlands as primary or secondary homes. More complex materials for knowledgeable landowners are necessary and should be included but would benefit from being separated considering the complexity of forestry and how easily the field of study becomes overwhelming and unfamiliar. Based on repeated feedback that landowners find forestry and forestry-related interactions "overwhelming" or "scary," the Forest Center should emphasize clarity, attractiveness, and accessibility in its materials so that landowners have a reliable and digestible local resource to turn to as they become more familiar and comfortable with managing their lands.

7.3.2.3. Consulting foresters and forestry experts

The Forest Center should seek to connect every landowner with a reputable consulting forester by funding and providing offices for at least two licensed foresters, who can offer assistance at the Forest Center, via video conferencing or, more likely, on the actual site of the woodlands

property. These foresters might include the DCR service foresters for Berkshire and Franklin counties and would require further coordination and discussion with the state DCR and the foresters themselves. The foresters at the Forest Center should also participate in educational programs and social events at the demonstration forest on-site, and prioritize forming relationships with loggers in the region who have regular contact with timber-harvesting landowners. We received mixed responses on whether having a forester at the physical center would be utilized by landowners, so we recommend determining the feasibility of “drop-in” hours by permitting a testing period alongside significant community outreach to see whether it would be successful. Foresters are the most critical component in encouraging responsible land management and should thus be a focal point at the Forest Center. Their one-on-one communication with landowners is equally crucial since foresters can explain precise, complicated forestry details in a targeted way.

7.3.2.4. Workshops, classes, safety courses, and webinars

The Forest Center should develop regular educational programming for landowners through in-person workshops and classes and live and recorded webinar series. These events should clarify and expand upon information found on the Forest Center’s website and through direct communications with the center’s consulting foresters. Given that forestry is a distinctly place-based field, effective and long-term learning is better absorbed hands-on and outdoors. While the center should make such materials accessible in both a material and learning sense, they are not a substitute for workshops or classes. Safety courses, in particular, require hands-on learning, as landowners are dealing with potentially dangerous or deadly tools such as chainsaws. These events encourage networking and among landowners, foresters, forestry experts, and even logging and sawmill

operators and should encourage and instill responsible stewardship and care for the land. Loggers and sawmill operators should be hired or encouraged to partake in these sessions to promote working with the Forest Center. In general, the center should recruit a diverse rotation of program leaders, speakers, and lecturers that represent as many components of forestry as possible and reflect many perspectives. The individuals in charge of running the classes should be compensated by the Forest Center or may work on a volunteer basis. The center must actively promote these events and prioritize relationship-building to encourage participation and reoccurrence.

7.3.2.5. Social events and programming

The Forest Center should organize and promote social events and programming for landowners that emphasize outdoor interactions and peer relationship networking, including “woodlands and wetlands walks,” “wildlife watch,” and mixers at the Forest Center with appropriate COVID-19 precautions. The woodland walks and wildlife watcher outings, which would take place on different owned properties, are an opportunity for landowners and interested individuals to exercise, enjoy the region’s land, build knowledge, and form relationships with one another. The events could be themed to attract more participants beyond landowners; for example, woodlands walks to identify invasive species, or wildlife watches to look for certain species compatible with the forest’s makeup. These events can connect more knowledgeable, active landowners less likely to attend workshops with new inexperienced landowners who may feel overwhelmed by everything a forester knows and communicates. Their informal nature contrasts the formal seminars and classes hosted by the Forest Center, but they should highlight and complement one another – the social events could potentially

incorporate elements of the most recent workshop, for example. Events held at the Forest Center should also take advantage of the existing conservation area.

7.3.2.6. Supporter/facilitator of Indigenous land return

Land return to Indigenous nations is a crucial component of environmental, land, and social justice work and one that the Forest Center should take an active role in supporting. The Forest Center should explore the potential of supporting the region's local Native communities by contributing financial, managerial, and logistical support of land purchases or donations if such Indigenous nations are interested in having that land returned to them. The function of the Forest Center will vary depending on the land parcel and the nation in question; for example, the Stockbridge-Munsee Community is primarily based out of Wisconsin and requires a local partner to help facilitate and maintain land returns.⁵³ The Forest Center may work alongside land trusts involved in purchasing or holding the property, provide technical, legal, or managerial support to the Indigenous nation or the land parcel, or take a more active role by serving as the direct partner through which the land could be purchased or donated. The Forest Center could encourage landowners to offer to donate or sell their land to appropriate Indigenous nations as a viable forestry legacy option and support regional land trusts in establishing land access policies for Indigenous communities. This element of forestry assistance requires relationship-building, extensive research, unlearning and relearning, and listening and communication with local Native nations.⁵⁴ Land repatriation is a complex and long-term process that must be done with care, and since our project

⁵³ "Papscaanee Island Nature Preserve Returned to the Stockbridge-Munsee Community." *Open Space Institute*, 9 May 2021, www.openspaceinstitute.org/news/papscaanee-island-nature-preserve-returned-to-the-stockbridge-munsee-community.

⁵⁴ "About First Light." *First Light Learning Journey*, <https://firstlightlearningjourney.net/about/>

does not focus on the details of this potential component of forestry assistance, it may demonstrate shortcomings or misunderstandings. However, we feel strongly that the Forest Center should support land return efforts and make landowners aware that their parcel of land, regardless of location, makes up part of an Indigenous community's deeply important ancestral homeland.

7.3.3. Programming

The components mentioned above should cover the following programming ideas as a starting point. The expertise and experience of landowners, foresters, loggers, sawmill operators, and academic forestry experts is absolutely necessary to develop these essential topics further.

- History of forestry in this region and its continuing impacts
- Traditional ecological knowledge and regional Indigenous histories
- Ecological and biological importance and the value of forests
- State and federal grants, awards, programs, and incentives for land ownership
 - MassWildlife Habitat Management Grant Program
 - Chapter 61, 61A, 61B
 - Forest Stewardship Program
 - Foresters for the Birds
 - Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
 - Landowner Incentive Program (LIP)
- Regulations, laws, rules, deeds, and restrictions regarding woodlands
- Carbon sequestration initiatives for small landowners

- Family Forest Carbon Program
- Climate change impacts, adaptations, and resiliency
 - Invasive species
 - Shifting ecological gradients
 - Carbon sequestration potential
- Importance of choosing a reputable forester
- Responsible timber harvesting and logging
- Local tree species and wildlife species identification
- Planning for the future of the forest
 - Estate planning
 - Landback opportunities
- Additional resources and organizations for landowner assistance

7.3.4. Recommendations

- The Forest Center must invest in educational campaigns and materials that emphasize the importance of forestry in mitigating climate change, increasing forest health, and working towards sustainable lifestyles. From our experience putting together this project, forestry is strongly associated with non-regenerative logging and is seen mainly as another negative, managerial, intrusive anthropocentric and colonial action.
- The MTWP, and the Forest Center, by extension, must develop organization-specific guidelines for 'sustainable forestry' and what that means in this region. The lack of definition regarding

'sustainable forestry' is a common criticism of the MTWP's mission and one that is not necessarily misguided. The New England Forestry Foundation offers its 'exemplary forestry standards,' which the MTWP could implement or look to as a guide in creating its definition.⁵⁵

- The Forest Center should collaborate with the MassWoods out of the University of Massachusetts Amherst and the Massachusetts Woodlands Institute. These organizations already have extensive infrastructure, calculators, resources, and experience that should dissuade the Forest Center from reinventing the wheel. Together, they could form a loose consortium of supporting organizations that foster a distinctly place-based presence and network in Western Massachusetts for landowners, foresters, loggers, and sawmill operators.
- The Forest Center should connect and promote the research at neighboring institutions, including the Hopkins Memorial Forest at Williams College, the Harvard Forest, and the University of Vermont Jericho Research Forest, to landowners in the MTWP eligibility area. It should also offer financing and resource support to scientists interested in carrying out climate-change-related research in this region, especially within the Mount Greylock State Reservation, which has a unique elevation gradient that will likely demonstrate upslope species shifts in coming years.
- The Forest Center should work alongside or under the guidance of Indigenous-led land conservation organizations, as well as regional Native nations, including the Nipmuc Nation, the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe, the Nulhegan Abenaki Tribe, and the Stockbridge-Munsee Community, to highlight regional traditional ecological knowledge (TEK), support or facilitate

⁵⁵ "Forests Sub-Group Final Report." *Working and Natural Lands Working Group*, 2020, p. 62
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DEEP/climatechange/GC3/GC3-working-group-reports/GC3_WNL_Forests_Final_Report_110620.pdf

land repatriation efforts, and provide financial assistance or grants for Indigenous youth interested in entering the forestry sector. While our report did not sufficiently address these topics, we feel that land justice work merits establishing ongoing relationships with local tribes, even if it doesn't fit neatly into the 'forestry assistance' component.

- The Forest Center should commit to a multi-pronged outreach approach that includes hosting informational tents and booths at regional festivals, fairs, and other events, as well as engaging in conventional mailing materials, publishing online newsletters, and maintaining an active and welcoming social media presence. These outreach methods should help foster a regional perception of the Forest Center as a resource-rich, community-oriented, and financially accessible hub and nexus that connects landowners to the field of forestry, especially as it relates to northwestern Massachusetts. This will require an experienced and dedicated communications expert to plan, manage, and communicate the Forest Center's mission. Since the success of the Forest Center, in part, hinges on its outreach approach, it should be a priority of the MTWP to hire a seasoned communications director.

7.4. Conservation Area

7.4.1. Overview

As part of its operations and attractions, the Forest Center should maintain a woodlands conservation area adjacent to the building itself within walking distance. Its main goals are to:

- define and showcase sustainable and responsible forestry practices
- encourage landowners to conserve and take care of their woodlands

- provide recreational and educational opportunities for residents and visitors
- promote wildlife biodiversity, carbon sequestration, and ecosystem services

Given that there is no set location for the Forest Center, we do not provide extensive details about the conservation area. The woodlands ecosystems in Franklin and Berkshire counties are ecologically diverse, and the forest makeup and composition, as well as the demonstrative forestry activities that may occur there, will depend on the ecosystem in that particular area.

7.4.2. Components

7.4.2.1. Preservation area

The conservation area should dedicate a portion of its land to preservation, wherein the woodlands are “left alone” to grow and change without management by foresters. In many instances, preservation is just as important as conservation, and many woodlands should be cultivated and shaped by natural events alone. Hosting a preservation area is also an educational and research opportunity, which would allow for foresters and Forest Center visitors to see the differences between managed and unmanaged forest of the same ecosystem type in the same vicinity.

7.4.2.2. Demonstrative area

The conservation area ought to showcase its sustainable and responsible forestry practices in its conservation area, which would be actively assessed and managed by foresters with a series of variable goals in mind. The demonstrative area of the forest should show different forestry

techniques as necessary to the forest and its existing makeup, including clearcutting, selective cutting, shelterwood cutting, plantation areas, etc.

7.4.2.3. Maintained trails

The Forest Center's conservation area, particularly its demonstration component, should have maintained trails for visitors to walk around, focusing on the most interesting or relevant areas of the forest. The trail area should be decided by a forester knowledgeable about the woodlands and the potential impact of a regularly-walked area. Depending on the terrain and layout of the conservation area, and taking into account environmental impacts, the Forest Center should also consider making part of the maintained trail ADA-accessible, with semi-permeable decomposed granite pathways.

7.4.2.4. Signage and storytelling

Both the preservation and demonstrative components of the conservation area should be accompanied by extensive signage since it is difficult for inexperienced eyes to see changes in the forest, especially when the impacts are on a multi-year time scale. The signage should discuss the geography and topography of the area, Indigenous and colonial histories related to its place, tree and plant species, types of tree cuttings, and the value and importance of forests. The signage found within the conservation area should be immediately relevant to the forest but can also repeat or reinforce the information found inside the Forest Center's educational exhibits.

7.4.3. Programming

7.4.3.1. Seasonal or regular festivals

The Forest Center should host outdoor festivals at the base of the conservation area, next to the building itself. These events have the potential for great success and community-building, and encourage residents and visitors to take a walk or hike around the conservation area, read the signage along the trails, and engage with conservation and forestry experts. Hosting a festival at the conservation area might include log sawing or chopping, species identification competitions, educational stations, apple pressing and sugar maple tapping, and other age-appropriate events.

7.4.3.2. Demonstrative events

Given that a large section of the Forest Center's conservation area will be actively managed for tree health, species makeup, invasive species, and wildlife habitat, these small logging events should be promoted to the public in conjunction with outdoor festivals to expose residents and visitors to responsible forestry practices and the reasoning for managing woodlands. They should be an educational event run by a forester or forestry expert, open to landowners and the public. One exciting option would be to showcase a horse logging demonstrative event, as done in Plainfield through Hilltown Hose Logging. These events could also serve to bring attention to local woodworking artisans, who could opt to take home the wood of cut trees.

7.4.3.3. Workshops and safety courses

See 7.3.2.4. under "Forestry Assistance."

7.4.3.4. Social events and outdoor programming

See 7.3.2.5. under “Forestry Assistance.”

7.4.3.5. Educational opportunities for students

See 7.1.1. under “Public Education.”

7.4.4. Recommendations

- We strongly recommend reaching out to licensed timber harvesters, such as Michael Madole of Hilltown Horse Logging⁵⁶ and Will Sloan Anderson, head land steward at Guyette Farm.⁵⁷ While our attempts to contact them were unsuccessful, they were recommended to us by interviewees and have extensive experience operating demonstrative forestry events.
- Though the conservation area is open to the public, the Forest Center should make an explicit land access and use agreement with Indigenous nations including the Nipmuc Nation, the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe, the Nulhegan Abenaki Tribe, and the Stockbridge-Munsee Community. The conversation area must be open to any Indigenous individuals for gathering plants and herbs for food, medicine, or other purposes. The Vermont Land Trust provides one example of a land use agreement with an Abenaki community.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ “Hilltown Horse Logging.” 2021, <https://www.hilltownhorselogging.com/>

⁵⁷ “Guyette Farm: Plainfield.” *Franklin Land Trust*, 2021, <https://www.franklinlandtrust.org/properties/guyette-farm/>

⁵⁸ “Vermont Land Trust - Abenaki Land Access Agreement.” Atowi, 2021, <https://www.atowi.org/blog/vermont-land-trust-abenaki-land-access-agreement>

7.5. Evaluation Matrix for Defined Uses

This evaluation matrix shows our ratings and rationale for the defined uses we assessed, where 3 is best and 1 is worst. We utilized this matrix to check stakeholder survey results about ‘defined uses’ against our interviews, research, and best judgment. In our evaluation matrix, we considered several variables to evaluate the defined uses for our center. We examined the following components of each defined use:

- 1. Environmental:** The use’s negative or positive impact on a broad range of environmental factors, where 3 is mostly environmentally positive and 1 is environmentally detrimental.
- 2. Social/Equity:** The availability of this use to visitors of all socioeconomic statuses and marginalized identities, where 3 is accessible and useful to most, and 1 is more exclusive.
- 3. Economic/Fiscal:** The amount of money needed to implement this defined use, where 3 means the defined use is not a financial burden, and 1 is an especially expensive venture.
- 4. Stakeholder Opinion:** Our perceived understanding of overall stakeholder opinion regarding this defined use, where 3 is a popular option and 1 is an unpopular option.
- 5. Feasibility:** The overall practicality of incorporating this use into the final vision for our center, where 3 means it can be easily done and 1 means it is more impractical.

Defined Use	Environmental	Social/Equity	Economic/Fiscal	Stakeholder Opinion	Feasibility	TOTAL
Tourism Center		1	2	3	3	3
Forestry Assistance		3	2	3	3	2
Conservation Area		3	2	1	3	2
Educational Center		2	3	2	3	1
Research Center		3	1	1	2	1
Market Place		2	1	2	1	2
MTWP Headquarters		1	3	2	1	3
<i>Rating, where 3 is best and 1 is worst</i>						
Defined Use	Environmental	Social/Equity	Economic/Fiscal	Stakeholder Opinion	Feasibility	TOTAL
Tourism Center	1. May require land use and clearing for a new building 2. Requires energy resources for building maintenance 3. May require land degradation and exploitation if new	1. Provides free resources for 'free' recreational outings 2. Tourist-catered facilities are targeted towards people with expendable income	1. Does not require significant resources or specific staffing to function 2. Should increase patronage to local restaurants, businesses, facilities	1. Consistently ranked as the 'most important' in the survey 2. Often cited as economically necessary during interviews	1. Does not require a lot of infrastructure or excessive resources in its development or implementation 2. Popular use that reflects the MTWP mission	
Forestry Assistance	1. Will foster and support healthy forests via biodiversity and mixed-structures 2. Will provide resources and support for landowners to keep their forest lands undeveloped 3. Will foster sustainable forestry methods for harvested woodlands	1. Targeted towards small landowners with family forests 2. Not applicable to most of the public, or low-income socioeconomic groups 3. Potential to promote land repatriation to regional Indigenous communities	1. Supports landowners in obtaining grants and tax benefits by maintaining healthy forests 2. Empowers small landowners to get a reasonable payout for timber harvesting 3. Potential to help compensate landowners via carbon credit markets	1. Consistently ranked as the 'most important' in the survey 2. All ecologists and forest experts interviewed emphasized the importance of forestry assistance	1. Does not require a lot of land infrastructure for its implementation 2. A substantial amount of resources needed to be successful 3. A significant part of the public opposes this use but it is misunderstood	
Conservation Area	1. Conserves and preserves forest land in perpetuity 2. Facilitates environmental consciousness 3. Actively sequesters carbon, provides wildlife habitat, promotes biodiversity, supports ecosystem services, etc.	1. Provides a free educational resource and experience 2. Public and private school field trips should cater to youth of all socioeconomic demographics 3. Land access/use agreement with Stockbridge-Munsee, St. Regis Mohawk, Nipmuc Nation, etc.	1. Will require land purchase or lease and upkeep without return profit 2. Unknown and incalculable ecosystem benefits (clean air, clean water, etc.)	1. Consistently ranked as the 'most important' in the survey 2. Demo forest and living preserve go hand-in-hand but demo forest is not popular with MTWP critics	1. The lot the Forest Center will be on should include woodlands already 2. Would likely not require excessive staffing beyond a forester	
Educational Center	1. Does not require any additional building space 2. Plan to have exhibits about the importance of natural resource conservation to help promote environmental consciousness	1. Exhibits and programs will be free to attend and accessible to all who can arrive 2. Will cover a wide range of topics relevant to every demographic 3. Should facilitate greater awareness and support of the region's Indigenous communities	1. Need to hire expert curators and purchase appropriate materials design the exhibits 2. Will require experienced staffing to handle and facilitate field trip/summer camp programs	1. Consistently ranked as the 'most important' in the survey 2. Supporters and critics of the MTWP agree that education is vital	1. Requires a significant amount of infrastructure, resources, and research to be implemented successfully 2. Will need to interview local experts and curators to appropriately design the exhibits	
Research Center	1. Will advance knowledge about sustainable forestry techniques, climate change impacts, sustainable wood products, etc. 2. Promotes environmental awareness in the region and connects NW Massachusetts to other research institutions	1. Only people with the appropriate background can conduct research 2. Social research (e.g. socioclimate crisis, regional traditional ecological knowledge) may pose better opportunities for equity	1. Research equipment costs a significant amount of money 2. May need to hire scientists and research assistants to conduct the research 3. Grants likely required for funding research efforts	1. Consistently ranked as 'somewhat important' in the survey 2. Many stakeholders feel there is already good research being done elsewhere 3. Foresters think there is always a need for place-based research	1. Will require a lot of extra work to implement, such as recruiting scientists and applying for research grants 2. Difficult to purchase research equipment and begin research projects without funding	
Market Place	1. If industrial, could encourage unsustainable wood production and purchase and environmental degradation 2. If artisanal, could encourage local, sustainable purchasing of wood products since they are largely constructed from by-products	1. Largely applies to people with expendable income to buy wood products 2. May help artisanal products become more affordable for local buyers	1. Would encourage the purchase of local wood products and put money in residents' pockets 2. Requires the hiring of a computer scientist/website designer for design and implementation 3. May require online upkeep/maintenance costs	1. Consistently ranked as 'not very important' in the survey 2. Current local artisanal culture is small, custom, and doesn't require an extensive marketplace	1. Actual use may be difficult to gauge/encourage 2. Online marketplace already exists via the Massachusetts Woodlands Institute	
MTWP Headquarters	1. May require addition building space for conference rooms 2. Similar to tourism, will also require additional energy resources for building maintenance	1. Conference rooms will be accessible to MTWP Board Members, public/private forums, research consortiums, etc. 2. Also accessible to anyone for a booking/meeting space with an application	1. May require additional infrastructure to be built 2. Beyond the building, no additional cost are expected	1. Consistently ranked as 'not very important' in the survey 2. However, MTWP Board Members consider this space important for staffing purposes	1. Easy to implement since all that is needed is a room with a table and chairs	

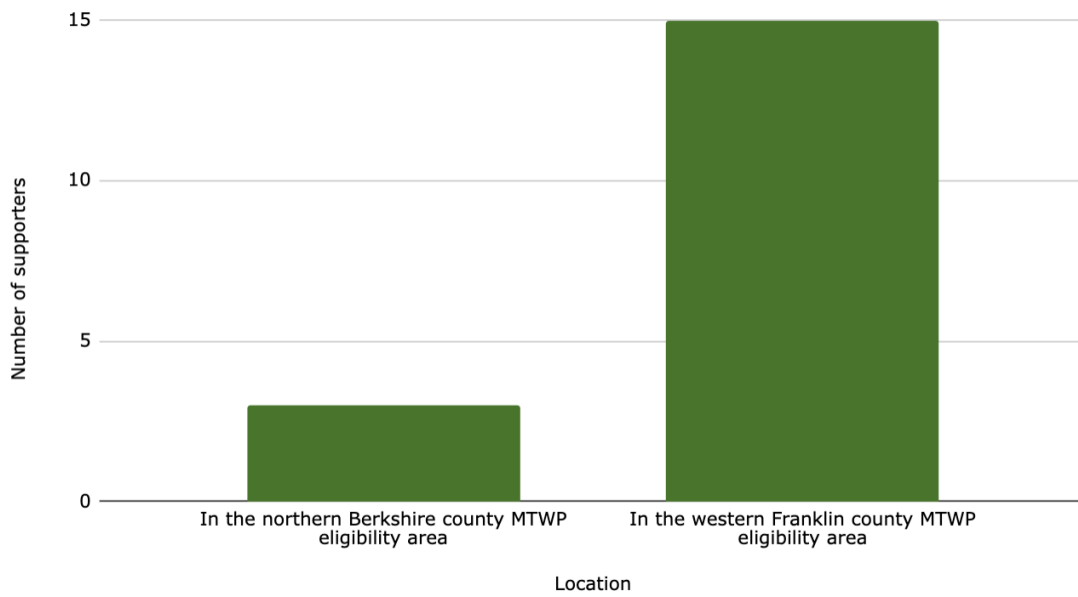
Forestry assistance received the highest ranking, meaning that within the scope of variables considered, it is the most advantageous use for our center. The tourism center had the second highest ranking, followed by the educational center and demo forest/living forest preserve (renamed “conservation area”). These are the four defined uses that we incorporated into the final vision for our center, and they largely reflect the feedback we received from the stakeholder survey and interviews. The MTWP headquarters use also ranked highly; however, due to its unpopularity among stakeholders, we did not include this use in our ultimate vision, though we believe that it has potential and should be explored again during the formal needs assessment process.

8. Potential Locations

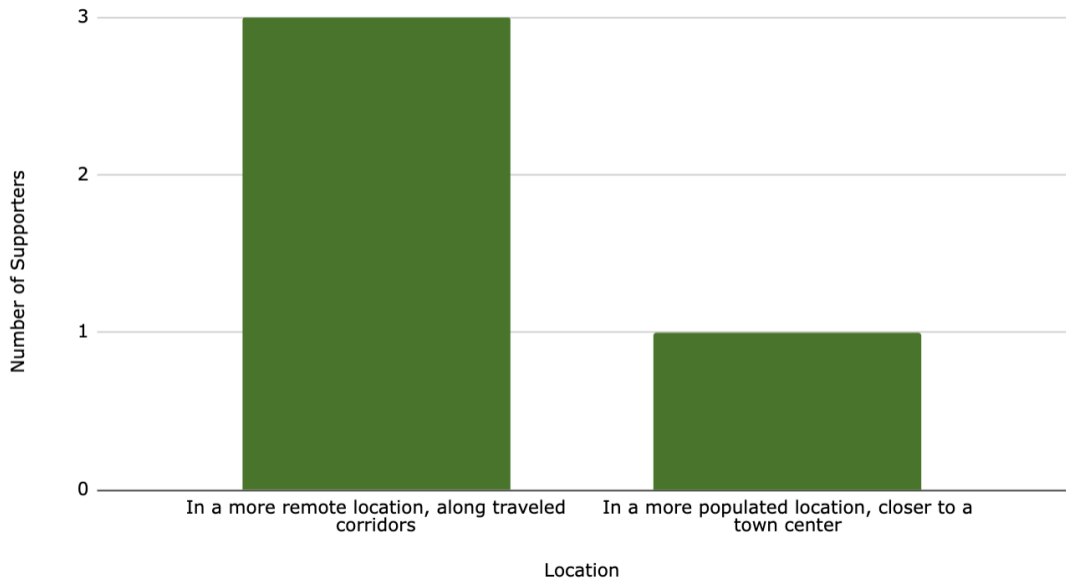
8.1. Survey Results

The second part of our stakeholder survey dealt with the potential location for the Forest Center. We asked if people preferred it to be located in northern Berkshire County or western Franklin County, and whether it was better to situate it in a more remote area on a well-traveled corridor or in a city center. From these results, and with the help of specific suggestions from respondents, we researched, curated, and ranked several location possibilities for the Forest Center. We review the advantages and disadvantages of each location, as well as their current negotiational status with the property’s owners or managers, below.

Potential Locations



Potential Locations



Figures 4-5: The analysis of the stakeholder survey responses for the location preference of our center. Our respondents displayed a strong preference for locating the center in western Franklin County along traveled corridors. These results informed our potential location recommendations for the Forest Center.

8.2. Spatial Analysis Map

In order to assess the advantages and disadvantages of potential locations for the Forest Center, we created an interactive map on Google Maps that labeled the sites we were looking at, as well as other important markers such as visitor centers, local schools, recreational infrastructure, logging and sawmill infrastructure, and hospitality infrastructure. We also considered their proximity to the Deerfield River, Route 2, and other roads, for accessibility and attractiveness. A good site location was relatively close (within 10 minutes driving distance) of businesses, schools, parks, and recreational facilities; we also prioritized locations that were directly on Route 2 and along the Deerfield River, since they have the greatest potential for drawing in visitors passing through the area who might not otherwise stop at the Forest Center. The spatial analysis map is not comprehensive and is meant to be added onto and developed to gain a better understanding of these locations

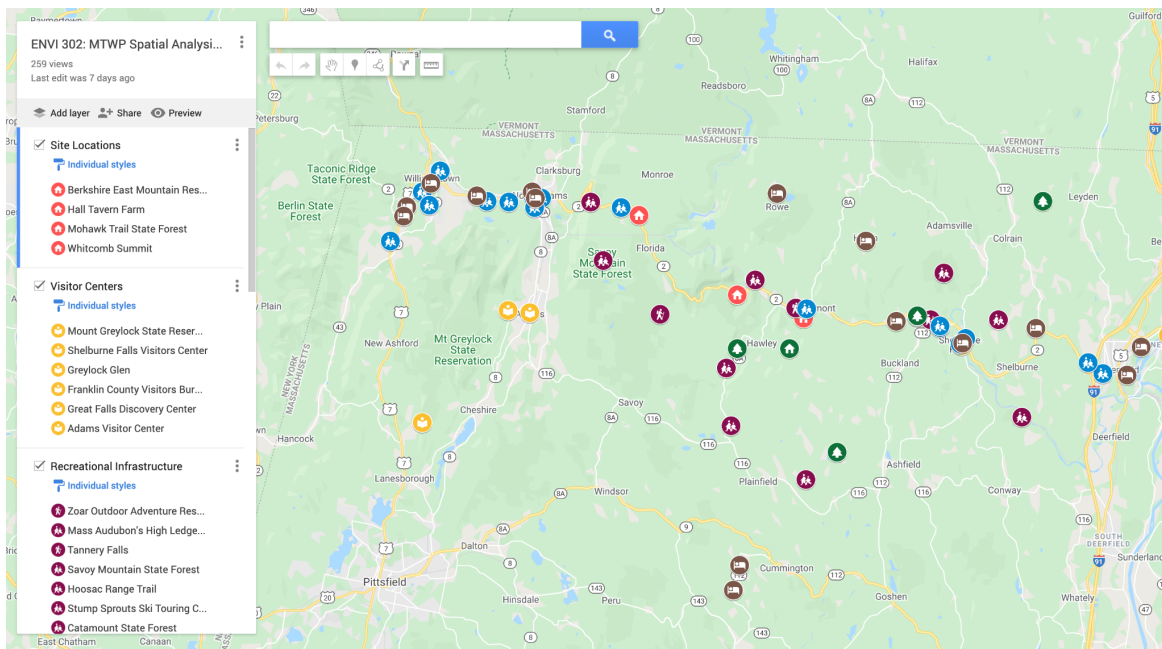


Figure 6: A screenshot of the Spatial Analysis Map, available for interactive viewing at <https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?mid=1dV4hTPk7puYLwhaXzyAjwhp1ZLUa03ax&usp=sharing>

8.3. Whitcomb Summit

The Whitcomb Summit is a 19-acre mountain-top property that currently houses a hotel, which is closed during the tourist off-season. It is located centrally in Florida, directly off of Route 2/Mohawk Trail with a good flow of potential customers through the area. It is closer to Williamstown and North Adams, two of the larger town centers in the MTWP eligibility area. It also offers ample space to build the center, with a large pre-cleared vista view and woodlands area nearby. While this center is centrally located and offers aesthetically pleasing birds-eye views of the mountain ranges, it is significantly far from any other businesses, recreational activities, and schools. It also does not have as large of an existing clientele as our other locations; furthermore, a substantial hurdle is that the town of Florida has not yet opted into the MTWP. The town would have to vote to become a member before this location could be a possibility. We contacted the owner of the property, Carl Guarco, who is open and eager to partner with the MTWP to place the forest center at this location. However, he is currently in the process of selling the land to a potential buyer, and asked to reconnect with him in early January about the final logistics to see if placing the Forest Center on the site is still a possibility.

8.4. Hall Tavern Farm

Hall Tavern Farm (HTF) is a sawmill located in east Charlemont that specializes in wide plank flooring and other wood products. They have 350 acres of land and want to become a site for interrelated small-scale commercial wood businesses to sell and promote their products throughout the region. They also wish to provide educational programs on forestry and local wood industries to one-time visitors and organized groups. HTF has existing logging infrastructure, including a

decommissioned sawmill, and is interested in turning it into an educational space where visitors could watch videos, pick up brochures, and safely observe tradespeople at work. There could also be scheduled guided tours and organized educational programs on the demo forest and woodworking area, and the space can also be used for workshops on forestry techniques. HTF is located directly on Route 2/Mohawk Trail and the Deerfield River, with a good flow of traffic and potential customers through the area. It is also close to the Charlemont business district, the Village of Shelburne Falls, and local schools in the Charlemont, Shelburne, and Buckland municipalities. While this space offers a straightforward collaboration between a forestry/logging business as well as a potential demo forest, the owners are not interested in having the site used for non-forestry purposes, which would encompass the public education use and tourism center use. We have been in contact with an HTF representative who is eager to partner to place the MTWP forestry component at this location.

8.5. Mohawk Trail State Forest

Mohawk Trail State Forest (MTSF) is a 6,000+ acre state forest located right along Route 2/Mohawk Trail in west Charlemont. Established in 1921, the forest is largely old-growth and steep, as its topography includes mountain ridges, gorges, and the Deerfield River and Cold River. The forest hosts a variety of recreational activities, including camping, fishing, grilling, swimming, canoeing, hunting, and skiing. It is one of the more significant recreational opportunities for residents and visitors in the region and attracts tourists from all over the country. There are also regular educational programs run at the forest by rangers and staff members. As a state forest, the MTSF welcomes thousands of visitors each year and has a pre-established clientele, both local and from out

of state. The placement of the Forest Center at the MTSF is ideal in terms of visitor clientele and experience and name recognition, and there is less far work necessary from a publicity standpoint. Visitors would get to enjoy both the beauty and recreational opportunities of the state forest, and enjoy a comprehensive educational experience on the sustainable forestry industry that supports rural life in this region. There are some significant concerns, however. Since the MTSP Visitor Center takes up most of the flat land in the area, placing the Forest Center at the park might be geologically difficult given the park's steep characteristics -- it would have to be placed right next to the state forest's other center, or much farther away from the entrance than is desirable. It is also a significant distance from any other forms of tourism infrastructure or schools, and an on-site forestry demo area would not be possible since the forest is protected and already managed. We attempted to schedule a meeting with Michael Rivers, the Forest & Park Supervisor, but he was unavailable and informed us that additional people would have to be involved in any preliminary discussions about putting a Forest Center there. However, we recommend continuing to reach out to the MTSP about the possibility once the MTWP has more concrete plans for the Forest Center's development.

8.6. Berkshire East

Berkshire East is a 150-acre four seasons resort located in Charlemont. It is the only ski area in the world to generate 100% of our electricity from on-site renewable energy and offers large potential for green building. Though only half a mile away from Route 2, it is distanced and forested enough that passerbys would not be able to make spontaneous visits. However, it does have a large, pre-existing clientele interested in the outdoors and recreational activities, as it features the most

skiable terrain in Massachusetts as well as popular recreational activities such as ziplines and whitewater rafting. We predict that the summer will be the busiest time for the Forest Center, but locating it at this site would ensure that it attracts visitors in the winter as well. The location is also near the Charlemont business district and local schools in the Charlemont, Shelburne, and Buckland municipalities. One major concern is that locating the Forest Center at Berkshire East would require an immense amount of resources and infrastructure to handle the amount of visitors that Berkshire East attracts. In addition, the name branding of the “Mohawk Trail Forest Center at Berkshire East” could go either way - by strengthening the center’s name recognition, or overshadowing it. Despite demonstrated interest from the owner of Berkshire East in our survey, our attempts to contact him about the possibility of placing the center on the property were unsuccessful. However, given the owner’s familiarity with and reception to the Forest Center, as well as its potential for a strong visitor base, we strongly recommend trying to reach out to the owner again.

8.7. Request for Information and Other Possibilities

We recommend that the Partnership put together a formal Request for Information (RFI) to be distributed through the New England Forestry Foundation, the administrative agent of the MTWP. This will allow them to set specific parameters for the site and receive responses from interested parties who have land that meets those needs. We also recommend scouting for available plots of land along Route 2/Mohawk Trail and the Deerfield River, and suggest looking for land specifically in the Charlemont and Shelburne municipalities immediately off the highway. In general, we suggest establishing the Forest Center as one facility with a neighboring conservation area, instead of

operating a satellite facility, in order to reduce carbon footprint, encourage interaction between landowners, visitors, and educational exhibits, and limit necessary land clearing and usage.

9. Mission Statement

The Forest Center works to connect residents and visitors to comprehensive and diverse educational materials that reflect the history, characteristics, and future of Northwestern Massachusetts; advance and improve the region's small-scale eco-tourism economy by serving as an active visitor resource hub; encourage and support landowners in the practice of sustainable and regenerative forestry that aids in climate change mitigation and biodiversity conservation; and protect and manage an on-site woodlands preserve for recreational and demonstrative purposes.

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