

## Greenfield, Massachusetts: A Good Old-Fashioned Home Town

By Devon Magoon

Visitors to Western Massachusetts generally find their way to Northampton, one of the coolest small arts towns in America, to Amherst, a college town famous for its poets, Emily Dickinson and Robert Frost, and to

**Ten Best Stories of 2010** historic Deerfield, but just a hop, skip and a jump away is one the area's lesser-known treasures.

The charms and community appeal of Greenfield, Massachusetts, are just beginning to be discovered as the town embarks on a wave of renovations and community development. With a growing number of new music venues, shops and restaurants, a touch of historical allure and lots of friendly and enterprising people, Greenfield is thrumming with activity.

Settled in 1686 and a longtime transportation center, the City of Greenfield affords hiking, biking, dining, shopping, relaxing, and lots of other activities that draw visitors from all over New England.

Located at the intersection of Interstate 91 and the the Mohawk Trail (Route 2), Greenfield is a frequent stop for 'leaf peepers' in the Fall, and will soon be linked to Boston, New York and Montreal by passenger rail service.

Wandering the streets of downtown Greenfield, be sure to drop in at the [Franklin County Chamber of Commerce](#) and get updated on all the recent events in the area.

"I like to call myself the Happiness Facilitator" says Becky George, a Greenfield citizen of five years. Becky is a busy lady. She's a manager within the Franklin Chamber of Commerce, runs activities within the [Greenfield Business Association](#) and has the scoop on all the happenings in this up and coming little city.

"Greenfield feels so genuine to me," she says. "You don't have the college infiltration that changes the whole makeup of the town here." Growing up in Amherst, and spending a good deal of time living in Northampton, Becky finally found her niche in the heart of Greenfield.

She found the little city to be a solid medium



The entrance to Greenfield Energy Park, where you can often find live music and other local events any time of the week. Photos by Devon Magoon. Click on photo to enlarge.

between the nearby college town of Amherst and the chic bustle of Northampton.

"You can move here and get involved right away," she says. "You don't feel like an outsider for long. And for some communities it's just harder to get connected." But as any visitor to the area soon learns, this is not the case for Greenfield.

#### A Taste of Greenfield

There are several little bed & breakfasts that cater to out-of-towners in Greenfield. Consider staying the night at the **Brandt House** or the **House on the Hill**.

It's only a five minute drive to Greenfield center where the **Brass Buckle** on Main street offers a delicious, organic, and healthy breakfast or brunch. Try the corn cakes with kale and poached eggs. Or mingle with the locals and grab a more traditional breakfast meal at the veteran establishment **Brad's Place** that has weathered the decades in Greenfield for more than 40 years.

Enjoy a tasty burger and sweet potato fries at the **Brick Wall Burger** with Chef Seth's own homemade ketchup. After April 16th, customers can choose from various handpicked beers and a wine list. A hot fudge sundae with Bart's ice cream or a cup of Pierce Brothers coffee is a great way to finish off the meal.

Besides popular breakfast pitstops conveniently located right in downtown Greenfield, there are lots of other eaterie, be it Thai or Mexican, pubs or pizza.



One of Greenfield's many colorful murals beside the Vietnam Veterans War Memorial on Main Street. [Click on photo to enlarge.](#)

If it happens to be a Saturday, troop on down to the Farmer's Market in the center of town and pick up some fresh produce or visit the craft stands. Locally made pottery and other artisan specialties are offered every week. And often live music (a recurring theme in Greenfield) will draw in the passerby.

There are numerous farms nearby and even an orchard or two. "If you don't pick up some peaches from Clarkdale, you haven't tasted everything the Franklin County has to offer," adds Becky.

For dinner there are a number of tasty options. There's **Mesa Verde**, a Mexican joint above the **Easy Street Night Club** where you often find customers enjoying their food street-side on wrought iron tables right outside the inviting double doors.

Be prepared to hear the words **Hope and Olive** if you're asking for a dinner recommendation. The locally owned restaurant glimmering with low lights, a warm atmosphere and a full bar is a huge hit with both the locals and those visiting from out of town. Hope and Olive was one of seven eateries in Franklin County named "Best of New England" by Yankee Magazine.

**The Magpie** specializes in exquisite wood-fired pizza. With ten pizza restaurants to contend with in the area,

you know they're doing something right. Evelyn Wulfkuhle and brother-sister duo Jim and Maggie Zaccara run both the Hope and Olive and the Magpie; two popular restaurants situated within walking distance of the very center of town.

"Almost everything is made right here," says Evelyn explaining the nuances of The Magpie. "We're all about fresh, high quality ingredients and having fun," she says, "and pizza should be fun." After living in the area for 14 years, Evelyn seems to like what she's gotten herself into.

"It's the longest I've ever lived anywhere in my entire life. It's a great town," she says. "It's easy to live here. I like that you can have a pretty high quality of life here while still keeping things simple," she says.

Other popular favorites like the **People's Pint**



**Restaurant and Brewery** and **Greenfield Grille**, both on Federal Street, are also terrific places to sit down and sample the local flavors, and both offer local music in the evenings.

"Everyone seems to be getting in on the buy-local and eat-local scene these days," Becky explains. "I support the local independent businessman, too, and there are definitely more of those here. I know the farmers I buy my meat from."



Wall art brightens the corner at Antonio's Pizza.

Restaurants aside, if you're in a hurry, the **Green Fields Market** natural food cooperative on Main Street also offers fresh and easy options. You can grab a hot boxed and healthy dinner to take outside and people-watch as you eat on the street or head home for the evening.

For coffee, there's always the chic **Greenfield Coffee**, right next to **Raven Used Books**, resplendent with wooden counters and wide street-side windows at which to enjoy a steaming mug of freshly brewed coffee.

Brad, Tamarra and their black lab mix Ketenbe are three locals who enjoy the benefits of Greenfield living every day. "I've been here for two years," says Brad, "It's a cool town. It's definitely on the way up."



A steady flow of bookworms pass through the Greenfield Public Library on Main Street.

"I love Greenfield, but Ketenbe really loves Greenfield," Brad laughs, "Especially the farmer's market."

#### Entertainment, Attractions and Events

For those of you interested in the shopping scene look no further than Greenfield Center. There are several woman's clothing stores, four jewelry stores, a record store and a number of other specialty stores. For instance, if you're looking to buy a gift or if junior wants a new game, **Greenfield Games** will fulfill all of those gaming needs.

"I wouldn't leave without visiting **Wilson's Department Store**. It's one of the last independently owned department stores left in the country," says Becky, "and make sure to take a peek at the kitchen goods."

If you're feeling the need for a little bit of brainfood after all that shopping and dining,

Greenfield has got you covered yet again. There are three local and privately owned bookstores quite literally right around the corner: **World Eye Bookshop**, **Raven Used Books**, and **Federal Street Books**.

Meandering along Main Street, a visitor will find a little store called **All About Beads** specializing in beading, jewelry making and just having a good old time. The owner, Chrsi Bartos holds monthly beading classes for anyone who is quick to sign up.

The **Green River Festival** is a summertime music fest that combines music on multiple stages, delicious local food, crafts, dancing, a wide array of kids' activities, balloon illuminations and even hot air balloon launches.

The **Brick and Mortar Video Festival** in October transforms downtown Greenfield into a temporary arts district with a selection of contemporary video art exhibitions displayed in a variety of nearby historic buildings.

The festive **Ragshag Parade**, also in October, offers an opportunity for all Halloween enthusiasts and their kids.

Weekly events like local live music every Wednesday afternoon in Greenfield at the Unitarian Church, and the Tuesday night open mic at the Greenfield Grille offer one more way to get involved in the local community.



Beaders wrap sea glass pendants in copper wire during a class held by Chrsi Bartos at All About Beads.

**Old Greenfield Village** by the Mohawk Trail has among it's well-preserved buildings, an old museum chock full of artifacts from historic Greenfield.

A little exercise can be achieved on the hike to Poet's Seat Tower which is just a brisk 30-minute climb with an incredible view.



Each year the city holds a Fiddlers Reunion to honor John Putnam a barber, a fiddler and a conductor on the Underground Railroad.

For kids and adults alike, there's the **Energy Park**, a former train station converted into a green little park featuring renewable energy exhibits, concerts and a little replica train for the kids.

There are even weekly events held there like the **Dance of the Hoop**, a small gathering of people who share the love of Hula Hooping as exercise and expression every Tuesday evening.

The Energy Park is also the site of the annual **John Putnam Fiddler's Reunion**, commemorating a local musician who helped hundreds of people to freedom on the Underground Railroad.

Being Greenfield centric, you can plan a really nice 15- to 20-mile bike ride anywhere in the surrounding area.

"One of the greatest things about these attractions is the fact that almost all of them are completely bike accessible," says Becky. Greenfield seems to be a town made for bicycle enthusiasts.

For a quiet night at the movies, the **Garden Cinemas** is just one more historical gem located in downtown Greenfield since 1929. There are plans to renovate four of the seven theaters into performing arts stages in conjunction with **Greenfield Community College**.

### Music and Nightlife

Greenfield's music scene has range and character. With live music and open mic nights at most venues and a host of other locations, music connoisseurs can find their cup of tea without ever having to worry about renting a car.

The **Winterland Country Club** at the end of Hope Street is a hidden gem of a bar with a rather shabby exterior but an adorable interior that sets the heart at ease as soon as you step inside.

Then there's **Easy Street** which is a similar little venue that caters more toward the soul of funk located underneath **Mesa Verde**, an affordable Mexican restaurant just off of Main Street.

**Taylor's Tavern** is another popular bar with occasional live music and **The Red Door** is an upscale little joint where one can find that fancy martini if you're looking for a little something special.

In downtown Greenfield the recently renovated **Arts Block** has been getting a lot of attention as it recently opened to the public with live music three nights a week, a full bar, friendly management and brand spanking new interior with gleaming wooden floors and art-lined windows.

Part of the Bank Row Urban Renewal Zone, The Arts Block is a multi-tiered building with a beautifully open atmosphere and great acoustics, full bars on both the first floor and basement level offering appetizers and drinks to go along with a night of local tunes.



Musicians practicing in the newly renovated Arts Block

"It's going to be a grab-bag of artists performing here," says sound man Simon on the eclectic collection of artists soon expected to be playing there. "We've had a jazz group and a europop singer. It was fun, it turned into a rave in here."

Converted from the former Clark's Sporting Goods, the building, right off of Bank Row, has been put to a new use. The basement and first floor will be a music venue, the next level will be office floors and the top two floors will soon be studio space. Dance or art, The Arts Block will be tailored to suit the needs of any artist who happens across the wide polished wooden floors upstairs.

"We're trying to promote local musicians from the bottom up and build a more community based

music scene," says Simon on staying true to the grassroots music movement.

The community feel is ever present in Greenfield, and it's no different at The Arts Block. "We're really trying to bring music back to the people," explains Simon, a musician himself. "Everybody who works here is a musician. We live and breathe music."

Rebecca Caplice, president of Greenfield Savings Bank, has lived in Greenfield for 25 years, enjoying every aspect of the city. "It's a real focal point for all the social activity in the region," she says, "You can probably find some kind of entertainment any night of the week."

And aside from fun and bustle, it is the history that never ceases to impress. "We have a lot of beautiful old brick buildings that are going through a huge transformation," she says. "We're able to preserve their beauty while improving their functionality."

### **New Trains**

Getting to Greenfield will soon be easier as Amtrak has been given the greenlight to restore passenger service to Northampton and Greenfield and to update the Vermonter to become a highspeed train. The \$73 million dollar bus, taxi and train depot project will open in 2012 and is expected to bring new economic opportunities to the Pioneer Valley.

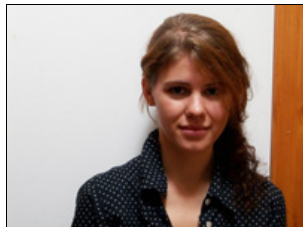
Greenfield has a lot to offer today. And it's clear that in the next few years, it will only continue to grow more popular.

### **Further Information:**

[Town of Greenfield](#)

[Greenfield Business Association](#)

[Franklin County Chamber of Commerce](#)



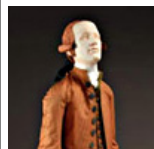
***Devon Magoon** is a student at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and an editorial assistant at GoNOMAD.*

*Thank you SO much for your excellent work at showing Greenfield in its best light! Devon is an excellent writer and I appreciate what she captured through this article. I will definitely be sharing it everywhere!*

*Becky George*

*I just saw your fabulous article on facebook. Thanks very much! I am a huge fan of our town, and believe your assessment is right. Having had the honor and opportunity to serve as director of the Greenfield Energy Park for 12 years, I was thrilled to see your photo of The Station (built entirely by volunteers!) and to read your fine compliments about our community. Many, many thanks!*

*Sandy Thomas*



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