

Pittsfield: Planning for Excellence

Earlier this year, the City of Pittsfield began the process of updating their Master Plan. The Master Plan will be a comprehensive strategy to combine every aspect of planning, including transportation, design guidelines, zoning, natural resources, economic development, and housing. This strategy will culminate in a Master Plan, which identifies the community's goals and recommends specific actions.

The Master Plan will help city officials set policies that will shape the growth and quality of life for residents and businesses. The plan will be drafted over a period of eighteen months with *maximum* public input. BRPC is currently working with the City of Pittsfield Department of Community Development to facilitate this process. In addition, the City has established a Master Plan Advisory Committee and has hired Saratoga Associates of Saratoga Springs NY as a consultant to the planning process.



Pittsfield Residents participate in a recent master plan meeting

The Master Plan Advisory Committee held an initial series of neighborhood workshops in July and August. Recently, more than 1,600 community surveys were mailed to a random sample of city households in order to gauge public opinion about important issues in the county. Forums on public safety, economic and cultural development, and housing and neighborhood development are planned for October and November. These forums lead up to a half-day Community Visioning session scheduled for January 20, 2007.

BRPC contact: *Melissa Jette*

2007 Regional Transportation Plan Update

The BRPC is undertaking an update of the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). The RTP is the long-range, comprehensive transportation planning document for the Berkshire Region MPO. The RTP defines an overarching vision of the future for transportation, establishes principles and policies that will lead to the achievement of that vision, and allocates projected revenue to transportation programs and projects. The MPO is required to develop a new RTP every four years.

The MPO began developing the 2007 RTP in December of 2005 and work will continue through 2006 with MPO adoption in March 2007 to allow for federal approval by July 1, 2007. An ongoing public participation process is being conducted to involve the general public throughout its development. Three open public meetings were held in February of this year in each part of the county, and four future meetings are tentatively scheduled for early January 2007.

BRPC Contact: *Michael Hoffman*

Farewell to Andrew Lenton

Andrew Lenton has left us for the Big Apple! Andrew served as Transportation Program Manager for slightly over three years. During his tenure, both the Downtown Pittsfield Circulation Study and the South Street Alternatives Study were completed. His contributions to "getting beyond the bypass" have been valuable and we wish him all the luck in his new position with the NYC Transportation Department.

Clearinghouse Reviews

Berkshire School Master Plan ENF (Sheffield)
Radcliffe/Hope Street Remediation ENF (Pittsfield)

TIP and UPWP updates

Annual updates to the Transportation Improvement Plan and the Unified Planning Work Program for the region have been completed. Both the TIP and UPWP are available at <http://berkshireplanning.org>, and hard copies are available at the BRPC offices.

High Demand For Berkshire Brownfield Assessment Funding

Due to a high number of requests, the BRPC will be seeking additional assessment funds from the U.S. EPA to investigate petroleum and hazardous waste sites throughout Berkshire County. BRPC had previously been awarded \$300,000 from the EPA for assessment in 2003. As of August 2006, BRPC's Brownfield Committee had appropriated all funds from the Berkshire Brownfield Program, and at least ten additional sites have been submitted by land owners and municipal officials for consideration. BRPC has contracted with TRC Environmental Solutions to assess ten sites. Those communities with sites in the program are the towns of Adams, Becket, Dalton, Williamstown and the city of Pittsfield. In addition to assessment funds, BRPC will pursue clean up funds to assist the clean up efforts for priority redevelopment sites funded under the current assessment program. Grants are due to the U.S. EPA by December 8, 2006, so there is still time for inclusion of new sites! Anyone interested in more information, or to find out how a site can be included in the consideration program should contact *Joellyn Warren*



Transportation Advisory Committee

On behalf of the Berkshire MPO, the BRPC is organizing a Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) of municipal representatives and interested organizations to serve as an advisory committee to the MPO.

The mission of the TAC is:

- To advise the Berkshire MPO on all matters of policy affecting the region's transportation planning and programming process.
- To make recommendations to the MPO on transportation activities, plans, studies, project priorities and financial constraints
- To provide public participation in the transportation planning process by bringing together local officials, public agencies, transportation providers, interest groups and residents for the exchange of views on current transportation issues.

BRPC contact: *Michael Hoffman*



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What is a Sense of Place?

A sense of place is created by anything which helps to distinguish a place and make it unique. A region's people, history, culture, and landscape can all contribute to its sense of place. What contributes to the Berkshire's sense of place? To some, the "Berkshires" bring to mind historical authors and artists, to others, abundant outdoor activities, and to others, the region's people, in particular those characters who are the most unique and memorable. One person who certainly contributed to many people's Berkshire sense of place is O Be Joyful. Born Albert Franklin Tyler, O Be, who was also known as the "Hermit of Lanesborough," was a unique Berkshire personality during the first half of the 20th century. At 70, he was the first in Lanesborough to register for the draft in 1944. A vegetarian before it was popular, he also did not drink milk, claiming that it "savors too much of the bovine." O Be never wore a hat, rarely wore shoes, and ceased getting haircuts or trimming his beard in the 1920's. He drove a Model T stripped nearly to its frame, with a sidecar for storage. He would drive through Pittsfield, offering fresh fish for sale, homegrown peanuts and ice cream for children, and fresh vegetables for anyone whom he determined needed a lecture about the virtues of natural foods. Although O Be passed away in 1961, he is part of the regions collective memory.

What contributes to your Berkshire sense of place? If you have an outstanding person, location, event, or cultural item that you would like featured in *Common Ground's* new sense of place series, please contact: Sarah Izatt

Regional Mutual Aid Agreement Covers DPWs and Boards of Health

Berkshire municipalities have historically responded to requests for aid from other towns -- after all, it is the neighborly thing to

do! DPW's often help reopen roads after floods, wind or snow storms, and Boards of Health also lend aid in times of crisis. This aid is currently done on an informal basis, which can unfortunately become a liability concern. Berkshire County police and fire departments have had formal Mutual Aid Agreements (MAA's) in place for several years, and it is now time to bring all departments under the same protective realm.

<i>Upcoming Events</i>			
November 1	Executive Committee Meeting	3:30 p.m.	BRPC
November 3	MACC Fall Conference- Stormwater Management	8:00 a.m.	Crowne Plaza Pittsfield
November 8	CPTC Course, "How to Read a Subdivision Plan"	7:00 p.m.	BRPC
November 16	Full Commission Meeting	7:30 p.m.	BRPC
December 1	Massachusetts Smart Growth Conference	8:00 a.m.	DCU Center Worcester
December 6	Executive Committee Meeting	3:30 p.m.	BRPC
December 9	Western MA Agricultural Commission Gathering & Trainings	8:30 a.m.	Hancock Shaker Village
December 19	Berkshire MPO Meeting	2:00 p.m.	BRPC

The Western Region Homeland Security Advisory Council has developed a region-wide MAA for all 101 communities in Western Mass. The MAA describes the provisions under which assistance may be deployed within the region. To adopt the MAA, a community must vote to allow the chief

electd official to enter into the agreement. Communities are being asked to consider placing a warrant article before their legislative bodies at their next special town or city council meeting. Then the municipality can, after town counsel review, adopt the MAA.

The Homeland Security MAA will supersede a Board of Health MAA that was signed by some towns. If a BOH MAA is re-signed after the general MAA adoption, both will be valid. The BOH MAA allows BOH the flexibility needed for some health-related situations. Having a MAA in place will also allow towns to receive federal and state emergency funds in the event of a declared disaster. Without a pre-disaster mutual aid agreement, a community may not be able to receive FEMA reimbursement, so FEMA strongly recommends that all communities have a MAA in place as soon as possible.

BRPC Contact: *Lauren Gaherty*