

# COMMON GROUND

A NEWSLETTER FOR COMMUNITY PLANNING IN THE BERKSHIRE REGION

## IN THIS ISSUE

### PAGE 1

- *Age Friendly Berkshires Publishes Action Plan*

### PAGE 2

- *USDA Awards Farmers Market Promotion Program Grant to BRPC and Project Partners - Berkshire Farm & Table and Alchemy Initiative*
- *New Public Health Nurse—Elizabeth Maschmeyer*
- *New Transportation Planner—Justin Gilmore*
- *New Planner—Wil Sikula*

### PAGE 3

- *Disaster Vulnerability Preparedness*
- *DHCD Undersecretary Chrystal Kornegay*
- *New Planner—Peg McDonough*

### PAGE 4

- *New Senior Planner—Chris Gruba*
- *New Community Development Program Associate—Rebecca Haight*
- *Calendar*

## Age Friendly Berkshires Publishes Action Plan

Making the Berkshires a great place to grow up...and a great place to grow old

Age Friendly Berkshires will release their Action Plan on November 1, 2017! The Action Plan is a template for the region's municipalities, community groups, businesses and governments to guide their focus to the diverse needs of an aging population and to make Berkshire county more "livable."

The Action Planning process—a two-year effort, involving many private and public partner organizations, political leaders and government officials—was informed by a series of public surveys, expert interviews and study groups held across the region. Altogether, over 2500 residents participated.

During the outreach sessions, people described their experience with and barriers to, aging in their current homes and communities in the following issue-areas: Communications, Housing, Community and Health Services, Transportation, Respect and Social Inclusion, Outdoor Spaces and Buildings, Employment and Civic Participation.

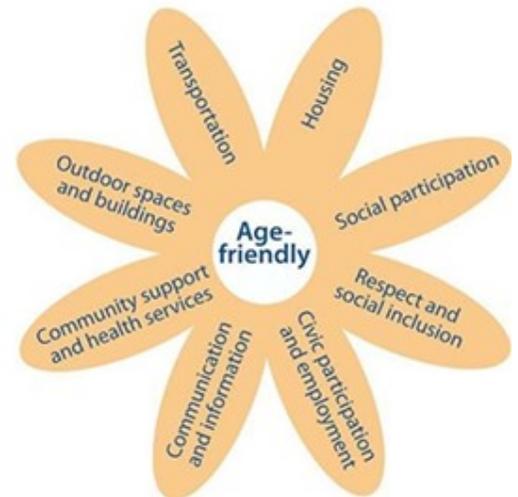
The Action Plan that resulted from the outreach consists of detailed Steps and Strategies for each issue area that will help encourage healthy, active aging in our region. Over the next 3 or more years, the AFB working committees will promote the Plan's recommendations throughout the region, to encourage voluntary adoption and implementation by city/town governments, non-profit organizations and businesses that work on the issues identified.

Age Friendly Berkshires committee members accept that effectuating region-wide improvement in service delivery will require innovation and fundamental change in the way our governments, institutions and businesses operate. The upside to those adjustments is a region that works better for all Berkshire County residents.

The public is invited to review the Age Friendly Action Plan and to get involved in its adoption in their own communities, by contacting us via our website:

[www.agefriendlyberkshires.com](http://www.agefriendlyberkshires.com)

For more information contact Peg McDonough, Planner/AFB Coordinator at [agefriendlyberkshires@gmail.com](mailto:agefriendlyberkshires@gmail.com)



## USDA Awards Farmers Market Promotion Program Grant to BRPC and Project Partners - Berkshire Farm & Table and Alchemy Initiative

BRPC, in partnership with Berkshire Farm & Table, and Alchemy Initiative, has been awarded a three-year capacity-building U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP) grant in the amount of \$238,595 for the Berkshire Market Collective project.



Image (above):  
Alchemy Initiative



Image (above):  
Berkshire Farm & Table

BRPC, Berkshire Farm & Table, and Alchemy Initiative will together create the Berkshire Market Collective to address the growing needs of 20 independent markets currently operating in the Berkshires. The project will build capacity, address market challenges, provide an ongoing support network to farmers market managers, increase customer volume and sales, and ultimately contribute to economic development in the region.

The USDA was able to fund 11 percent of the applications received this year and the Berkshire Market Collective was one of two applications selected to support projects in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. This is the first full capacity-building grant the Berkshire region has been awarded through the USDA Farmers Market Promotion Program.



Image (above):  
USDA

The Berkshire Market Collective's work will begin with outreach to market managers, development of a strategic plan and three-year timeline, and a search for marketing design and data collection vendors. The Collective will create a support network of local, regional and national organizations and other stakeholders to collaborate in making the project a success. Information-gathering sessions will take place before the end of the year to begin the development of a resource-sharing network.

For additional information, contact Environmental & Energy Program Manager, Melissa Provencher ([mprovencher@berkshireplanning.org](mailto:mprovencher@berkshireplanning.org) or x22)

### New Public Health Nurse—Elizabeth Maschmeyer

Elizabeth was hired as the lead Berkshire Public Health Alliance Public Health Nurse in September. Elizabeth will be working with the nine municipalities that contract with the Alliance for public health nursing services, doing infectious disease surveillance, investigation and follow-up using the MAVEN system, conducting flu vaccination clinics and providing education and wellness programs.

Elizabeth has an ADN in Nursing from the Maureen Church Coburn School of Nursing in Monterey, CA and has been working in Long Term Care since 2009 in the Berkshires. She is involved in gardening and food preservation, and volunteers at the residential psychiatric facility at Gould Farm in Monterey.

### New Transportation Planner—Justin Gilmore

Originally from Amherst, Justin recently graduated from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst and is thrilled to join the BRPC team. While at UMass, Justin earned a master's degree in sustainability science and a master's degree in regional planning. He is passionate about climate change adaptation and resilience based planning and strives to ensure that Berkshire communities have access to sustainable transportation options.

As a transportation planner, Justin is involved in a variety of transportation planning initiatives including pavement management, corridor planning, bicycle and pedestrian and highway safety projects.

Contact Justin at [JGilmore@berkshireplanning.org](mailto:JGilmore@berkshireplanning.org) or x28

### New Planner—Wil Sikula

Wil graduated with his master's in regional planning from UAlbany in May, 2017. He was hired by Laberge Group while still in school to help write new zoning regulations and form based code stemming from his planning studio project. Wil also worked on writing various grants and assisted with environmental review and grant administration projects.

At BRPC, his main priority will be assisting with Environmental Review and CDBG Grant Administration for projects in Sheffield, Great Barrington, Housatonic, Becket, and Monterey. He will also be assisting with other various planning projects and grant writing.

Contact Wil at [wsikula@berkshireplanning.org](mailto:wsikula@berkshireplanning.org) or x30

## Disaster Vulnerability Preparedness

BRPC, with the support of two grant programs, is working with several Berkshire communities to evaluate their vulnerability to natural disasters and to identify measures they can take to reduce that vulnerability.

The towns of Adams, Dalton, Hinsdale, Lanesborough, Sheffield and Williamstown have received pre-disaster planning grants from the FEMA to update their Natural Hazard Mitigation Plans. Pre-disaster hazard mitigation planning identifies actions that can eliminate or reduce the risk to life and property in the event that a natural disaster occurs; it is the work done up front to reduce the impacts of the disaster. Pre-disaster mitigation actions for municipalities could include:

- Replacing an undersized culvert with a larger one to reduce the risk of flooding or road washout
- Upgrading road storm drain systems to handle higher volumes of water
- Moving or elevating critical municipal infrastructure out of flood-prone areas
- Retrofitting shelters and cooling centers with generators securing additional water supply sources in the event of drought conditions
- Protecting, and where necessary restoring, wetlands and floodplains to provide buffering and storage capacity during severe precipitation and flooding events

The goal is to have draft hazard mitigation plans from all Berkshire towns ready to submit to FEMA in March of 2018. Several additional Berkshire communities submitted grant applications in October to update their hazard mitigation plans in 2018-19.

The four towns of Adams, Lanesborough, Monterey, and Williamstown have also received Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness grants to evaluate how climate change impacts could increase existing risks or create new, previously unconsidered risks. In the Berkshires climate change is expected to increase the number and severity of extreme storm events, increase the number of high heat stress days, increase the risk of pathogens and insect-borne disease, and possibly create cycles of drought.

BRPC is also hosting a Citizen Planner Training workshop on Municipal Vulnerability and Resilience on Nov. 9<sup>th</sup>, 6-8 pm. We recommend it for towns updating Hazard Mitigation Plans or Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Plans. To register go to: <http://masscptc.org/workshops/cptc-workshops.html>

For more information, contact Senior Planner Lauren Gaherty ([LGaherty@berkshireplanning.org](mailto:LGaherty@berkshireplanning.org) or x35)

## DHCD Undersecretary Chrystal Kornegay



BRPC hosted DHCD Undersecretary Chrystal Kornegay as she toured south Berkshire County with Senator Adam Hinds on August 31, 2017. She is seen here at the Forest Springs, an 11 unit-affordable rental housing community in Great Barrington, along with representatives from Construct, Inc., the Town of Great Barrington, Allegrone Construction, CEDAC, and Berkshire Housing Development Corp.

For more information, contact Community and Economic Development Program Manager Patricia Mullins ([pmullins@berkshireplanning.org](mailto:pmullins@berkshireplanning.org) or x17)

## New Planner—Peg McDonough

Peg joined BRPC in September, 2017 to work on Age Friendly Berkshires and Municipal Hazard Mitigation planning. She has a Master of Regional Planning from UMASS. Her career experience includes regional project management and real estate finance.

Contact Peg at [MMcDonough@berkshireplanning.org](mailto:MMcDonough@berkshireplanning.org) or x16



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## New Senior Planner—Chris Gruba

Originally from Detroit, Chris has worked as a land use planner for about 10 years in both the public and private sectors. He has lived in Michigan, South Florida and recently Las Vegas for a contract assignment.

As a Senior Planner, Chris will be assisting towns and cities in the Berkshires with all of their planning needs, including implementing master plans and drafting marijuana bylaws. In his free time, Chris likes to get suggestions on the best places to visit in New England.

Contact Chris at [CGruba@berkshireplanning.org](mailto:CGruba@berkshireplanning.org) or x12

## New Community Development Program Associate—Rebecca Haight

Rebecca has her B.S. in Business Administration with a concentration in Accounting from MCLA. She comes to BRPC with previous experience in accounting, customer service, and real estate management.

Rebecca will be working with the Community Development team, mostly on housing rehabilitation programs. She is excited to work with everyone here and looks forward to seeing the results of our work. She has been in the Berkshires for eleven years and currently lives in Adams.

Contact Rebecca at [rhaight@berkshireplanning.org](mailto:rhaight@berkshireplanning.org) or x27

# CALENDAR

Be sure to check out our online calendar for updates, cancellations, recently posted events and agendas. [berkshireplanning.org/events/calendar](http://berkshireplanning.org/events/calendar)

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**November 2 - Roles and Responsibilities of Planning & Zoning Boards, Part 2 - 6:00 pm**

**November 2 - BRPC Executive Meeting - 4:00 pm**

**November 9 - Municipal Vulnerability and Resilience Planning Workshop - 6:00 pm**

**November 16 - BRPC Commission Meeting - 7:00 pm**

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**December 7 - BRPC Executive Meeting - 4:00 pm**

Remember to check our inclement weather hotline to learn the status of a meeting at (413) 442-1521 X 15



Please consider receiving an e-newsletter—saving trees and energy costs in our region and beyond. E-mail [SZaleski@berkshireplanning.org](mailto:SZaleski@berkshireplanning.org) today to subscribe!