

COMMON GROUND

A NEWSLETTER FOR COMMUNITY PLANNING IN THE BERKSHIRE REGION

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Every Ride Counts! Community Conversations on Transportation

Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation's Central Berkshire Fund awarded Berkshire Regional Planning Commission's Age Friendly Berkshires coalition a small grant to facilitate **Every Ride Counts! Community Conversations on Transportation** in six communities—**Dalton, Hinsdale, Windsor, Peru, Washington and Becket**—this spring.

Every Ride Counts, a national transportation awareness campaign developed by the National Aging and Disability Transportation Center, highlights publicly-available rides programs for older adults, those living with disabilities—or anyone who cannot drive themselves. The Community Conversations will focus attention on what transportation options already exist to serve east-central Berkshire communities, what ride services to regional destinations are desirable and what cross-border solutions are suggested to fill existing gaps in transportation provision. The 3-page **Berkshires Without Barriers Transportation Guide** will be distributed and reviewed, with an eye toward improving its format.



Scheduling for the Community Conversations on Transportation to be announced in the Age Friendly Berkshires Newsletter, available by scanning the QR code.

To assist with the Community Conversation series in Dalton, Hinsdale, Peru, Windsor, Washington or Becket, call Age Friendly Berkshires at 413 442 1521 x16

2019 Berkshire County Survey Report Release

BRPC has released the 2019 Berkshire County Survey report. This report, which is an updated and expanded version of the 2015 Young Adult Survey report, was conducted in partnership with IBerkshire. The survey examined the attitudes, preferences, and needs of adults and was expanded to include adults of all ages as well as a section on the needs of the workforce in Berkshire County. The key finding is that people overwhelmingly enjoy living in the Berkshires. People continue to reside in the county because of family, jobs and the scenic beauty of the region. The report has also found that overall attitudes of young adults are mostly similar to the 2015 Young Adult Survey.

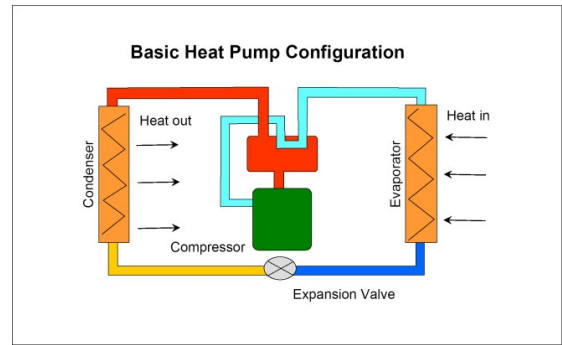
The full report can be accessed online at <http://berkshireplanning.org/events/announcements/berkshire-county-survey-2019-results>

For more information, contact GIS, Data and IT Manager Mark Maloy (MMaloy@berkshireplanning.org or x29) or Senior Planner Laura Brennan (lbrennan@berkshireplanning.org or x14)

Heat Pump Workshop at UMass Amherst

UMass Clean Energy Extension and the UMass Center for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy will be having a heat pump workshop at UMass Amherst on May 20th. This workshop will focus on an in depth introduction to heat pumps, variant flow systems, and municipal applications for towns/cities in Massachusetts.

There will also be a session led by Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources on other topics of interest to municipalities like an update to the Solar Massachusetts Renewable Target (SMART) program. Advance registration is required and is free for municipal representatives and other government employees.



See additional details (including dates and locations of other sessions if you can't make this one) and register at <http://heatpumpmay20.eventbrite.com>

Berkshire Cities Receive Transportation Planning Grants

The City of Pittsfield, was awarded a \$60,000 grant from the MassDOT Workforce Transportation Grant Program. The City, along with the Towns of Great Barrington, Lenox, and West Stockbridge, contributed another \$15,000 in local match to fund a regionwide study of a potential bike share system. Bike share systems are increasingly popular alternative to transportation services. The funding will allow a consultant to examine the costs and feasibility of implementing a system of shared electric bicycles across the county. Potential locations to host bikeshare docking stations will be determined, as well as the type of bicycle to be used. Most newer bike share systems use electric-powered "e-bikes", which help to greatly increase the appeal to riders. This potential new service could help to provide better connections to the public transit system for workers (especially those with low incomes), assist with short commutes, as well as bolster the regional tourist economy. First and last mile connections will also be emphasized in the study. First and last mile refers to the beginning and end of public transit usage, namely how transit riders get to transit stops and then from transit stops to their final destination. Ultimately, if the plan shows that a bike share system in the Berkshires is feasible, a pilot scale service could be implemented within a few years.



The City of North Adams was also awarded a \$75,000 Urban Agenda Grant. The grant will be used to complete a Circulation and Distribution Plan for the North Adams Downtown area. The plan will focus on linking neighborhoods and points of attraction, such as Mass. MoCA and MCLA. Long term transportation needs for the downtown area will also be addressed, including identifying ways to enhance traffic safety and increase facilities for biking and walking. The plan will also examine the future Berkshire Bike Path, which is expected to someday pass through the North Adams downtown. Project work will include significant outreach to downtown businesses and the public to help guide plan development.

For more information, contact Senior Transportation Planner Eammon Coughlin (ECoughlin@berkshireplanning.org, or x19)

The Census is coming...The Census is coming...The Census is coming!

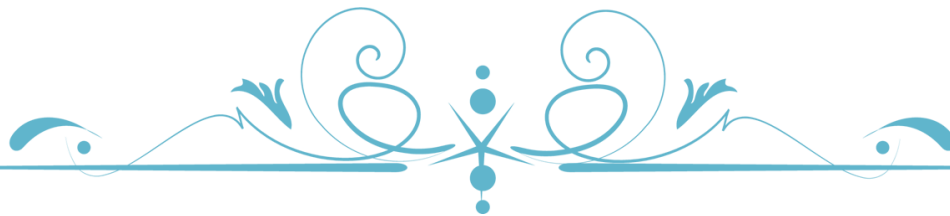


If you own a home in Berkshire County, be on the lookout for a letter in early March from the Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau in your home mailbox, inviting you to fill out the short **2020 Census**—the every-ten-year national count, mandated by Article I of the Constitution of the United States. This year for the first time in history, you will be able to respond to the Census online—via computer, tablet or cell phone—or by dialing into an 800# at your convenience, in many different languages! Each household will be assigned a unique identifying number, which you will key in, when responding. If you do not self-respond using the online or telephone methods, eventually your household will receive the traditional paper form, or as a last resort, a visit from a Census Bureau employee.

The short Census survey asks very basic information of each respondent living in a household—name, address, age, ethnicity. It's important to remember that **U.S. Census data is collected for statistical purposes only and is not shared with any other government agency or department, per Title 13 of the U.S. Code!** The information is used for allocating monies from state and federal programs to our region AND determines how many representatives we will have in the U.S. House of Representatives and the Massachusetts State Legislature.

Each community in Berkshire County has established one or more **Census Access Points (CAPs)**, typically located in Town Hall, Libraries and/or Senior Centers. Municipal staff and volunteers at each CAP are ready to help you or your friends/neighbors to respond to the Census, if you do not have access to a computer, or any other reason. A full list of Census community access points may be found at <http://berkshireplanning.org/>.

If you would like more information about what to expect with the 2020 Census, please contact Mark Maloy at mmaloy@berkshireplanning.org or 413-442-1521 x29 or go online to <https://2020census.gov>



Shared Economic Planner Program

The Shared Economic Planner program, which allows each participating town to access economic development assistance that fits their specific needs and budget, will soon enter its 4th year. Current participating towns include Adams, Great Barrington, Lanesborough, Lenox, and Richmond.

Many participating towns have requested assistance with creating a more supportive and welcoming environment for businesses and residents. This can range from increasing access to important information and forms online through the town's website to promoting the town as a good place to live and work through a variety of channels. At other times, grant applications and collaborations with neighboring towns are the focus.

All municipalities in Berkshire County are invited to contact BRPC to learn more about the Shared Planner program.

For more information on the Shared Planner Program contact Senior Planner, Community & Economic Development, Laura Brennan (lbrennan@berkshireplanning.org or x14)



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Save the date!

The next 5th Thursday dinner is scheduled for April 30, 2020. The venue will be at the Wahconah Country Club in Dalton, MA.



Shared Conservation Agent

Is your town having a hard time securing the services of a qualified Conservation Agent, especially if you are from a smaller town and this is a part-time position? We know of at least one town that is having a hard time and would like to explore sharing with other towns. If there is interest, BRPC is willing to convene community representatives to determine if a viable shared arrangement can be worked out.

Contact Tom Matuszko at tmatuszko@berkshireplanning.org

CALENDAR

Be sure to check out our online calendar for updates, cancellations, recently posted events and agendas. berkshireplanning.org/events/calendar

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March 5 - Executive Committee Meeting, 4:00 pm
March 19 - BRPC Full Commission Meeting, 7:00 pm

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April 2 - BRPC Executive Committee, 4:00 pm

Remember to check our inclement weather hotline to learn the status of a meeting at (413) 442-1521 X 5



Please consider receiving an e-newsletter—saving trees and energy costs in our region and beyond. E-mail officeassistant@berkshireplanning.org today to subscribe!