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### A Newsletter for Community Planning in the Berkshire Region

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#### Staff Announcements

**John Roughley, Jr.** has joined the BRPC Community Development & Housing CDGB Housing Rehabilitation Program as Housing Specialist. We are grateful to have his extensive HVAC, plumbing and general contractor experience supporting these projects.

Many thanks to **William (Bill) Thornton, Jr.** for his attentive work with the CDGB Housing Rehabilitation Program assisting numerous homeowners with rehab projects! May he enjoy some real retirement.

All the best to **Christine Ector, Public Health Planner**, who is leaving the area mid-September. Christine was an essential member of the team that ran the three public vaccination clinics (almost 90,000 vaccines in 5 months!). She also supported the Gray to Green program in Pittsfield, BCBOHA, emergency preparedness and county-wide substance misuse programs.

The Public Health Program and Berkshire County Boards of Health Alliance will soon post several full time benefited positions with flexible hours and remote work options, see the [Employment web page](#) for details. Public Health Alliance Coordinator, Food Inspector, Public Health Planner, Community Health Workers and Epidemiologist.

#### Grants & Opportunities

##### Mass Humanities Seeks Host Communities for 2022-2023 Smithsonian Exhibit

Through a partnership with the nation's largest museum, Mass Humanities will select six local institutions to host "Crossroads: Changes in Rural America," a traveling exhibit produced by the Smithsonian Institution's Museum on Main Street program. Applications opened on August 30 for museums, libraries, and other cultural centers interested in welcoming the Smithsonian to their communities. Organizations must be located in a town with a population of 12,000 or less to be eligible to host the exhibit. In October, Mass Humanities will select six sites for the "Crossroads" tour, which arrives in Massachusetts in September 2022. host sites will receive trainings from the Smithsonian along with a \$10,000 grant from Mass Humanities to host programs during the exhibit, which will be on display for six weeks in each community. Learn more at:

<https://masshumanities.org/programs/museum-on-main-street/> For further information, contact Jen Atwood, [jatwood@masshumanities.org](mailto:jatwood@masshumanities.org).

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**September 30, 2021:** *virtual BRPC and Berkshire County Selectmen's Association Annual Meeting* and Kusik Award presentation. 6:30 p.m. Ashley Stolba, Undersecretary of Community Development, Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development, will speak about the administration's plans for a strong economic recovery from the COVID crisis. Zoom webinar link will be on BRPC's Event calendar and emailed to relevant BRPC contacts.

**October 1, 2021:** **Air Sensors Grant Opportunity** (see Energy & Environment section below for details) for municipalities to measure fine particulate matter levels (PM2.5) in their communities for at least 1 year.

**Recreation Economy at USDA Economic Development Resources for Rural Communities**  
[https://www.rd.usda.gov/sites/default/files/RD\\_Recreation\\_Economy\\_USDA.pdf](https://www.rd.usda.gov/sites/default/files/RD_Recreation_Economy_USDA.pdf)

## NTIA Launches Updated [BroadbandUSA Federal Funding Guide](#)

Visitors can search by agency, program purpose, and eligible recipients. The information is also available as a [downloadable spreadsheet](#).

## FEMA COVID19 Disaster Economic Recovery Roadmap

This Roadmap was developed to assist state, local, tribal, and territorial (SLTT) leaders with navigating some of the challenges and resources, associated with the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. <https://www.fema.gov/pdf>

Rolling applications: [Community Development Block Grant Microenterprise Assistance](#) for income-qualifying small businesses. More information at above link or via Christie Lewis 413-442-1521 x23, [clewis@berkshireplanning.org](mailto:clewis@berkshireplanning.org).

Coronavirus Local Fiscal Recovery Fund (CLFRF) for local governments. Massachusetts Executive Office for Administration & Finance Federal Funds Office [memorandum](#) outlines eligible uses. Additional information is at [Executive Office for Administration & Finance Federal Funds Office webpage](#) and [DLS COVID-19 Resources and Guidance for Municipal Officials page](#). Please contact Tom Matuszko, [tmatuszko@berkshireplanning.org](mailto:tmatuszko@berkshireplanning.org) if your community is interested.

## Community Planning

### Accessory Dwelling Units

According to data from Banker & Tradesman, there were a total of 2,893 home sales in Berkshire county in 2020. This is a 21% increase from the number of home sales the previous year. Beyond the increase in number of sales, the median sale prices have increased 14% when comparing 2020 to 2019. The increase in these rates has further strained the demand on housing in the County which is very limited to begin with. Most of the housing stock is comprised of single-family, detached dwellings which does not provide much opportunity or diversity of housing options. One strategy to increasing diversity of the housing stock is utilizing accessory dwelling units. An accessory dwelling unit (ADU) is a self-contained housing unit including of sleeping, cooking, and sanitary facilities on the same lot as a principal dwelling. ADU's are also referred to as in-law units, secondary dwelling units, or carriage houses. ADU's come in many forms; detached from the principal dwelling, attached, above a garage, interior/basement ADU, converted garage, or upper floors of a principal dwelling, but are always subordinate to the principal dwelling.

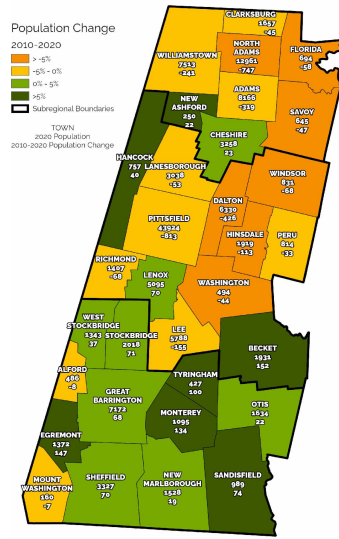
ADU's help to increase a municipality's supply of affordable housing and enhance the social stability and mix of neighborhoods with little or no negative impact on the physical character of the neighborhood. They effectively improve the affordability of housing for both homeowners and renters at all stages in their lives. Aside from creating more housing options in the County, ADU's also help promote rehabilitation of housing and increase the supply of rental housing for a wider range of physical abilities, stages in life, and income levels.

## Data & Information Services

### Census 2020

The Census Bureau has released the initial results from the 2020 Census. The official population for Berkshire County in 2020 was 129,026. This population represents a loss of 2,193 people since 2010 or -1.7%. The Census Bureau had estimated that the county's population would drop to below 125,000, so the region did substantially better than estimated. Within the county, not all communities gained or lost equally. The town of Becket grew the most by adding 152 people, while Tyringham had the highest percentage growth at 30.6%. Pittsfield lost the most people at 810, while Washington had the highest percentage loss of -8.2%. An impressive 15 of our 32 communities added population over the last ten years.

[Click here for larger versions of the map and table.](#)



Municipality	40,269	43,922	Change	Percent Change
Adams	8,485	8,166	(319)	-3.8%
Alford	494	486	(8)	-1.6%
Becket	1,779	1,931	152	8.5%
Cheshire	3,235	3,258	23	0.7%
Clarksburg	1,702	1,657	(45)	-2.6%
Dalton	6,756	6,330	(426)	-6.3%
Egremont	1,225	1,372	147	12.0%
Florida	752	694	(58)	-7.7%
Great Barrington	7,104	7,172	68	1.0%
Hancock	717	757	40	5.6%
Hinsdale	2,032	1,919	(113)	-5.6%
Lanesborough	3,091	3,038	(53)	-1.7%
Lee	5,943	5,788	(155)	-2.6%
Lenox	5,025	5,095	70	1.4%
Monterey	961	1,095	134	13.9%
Mount Washington	167	160	(7)	-4.2%
New Ashford	228	250	22	9.6%
New Marlborough	1,509	1,528	19	1.3%
North Adams	13,708	12,961	(747)	-5.4%
Otis	1,612	1,634	22	1.4%
Peru	847	814	(33)	-3.9%
Pittsfield	44,737	43,927	(810)	-1.8%
Richmond	1,475	1,407	(68)	-4.6%
Sandisfield	915	989	74	8.1%
Savoy	692	645	(47)	-6.8%
Sheffield	3,257	3,327	70	2.1%
Stockbridge	1,947	2,018	71	3.6%
Tyringham	327	427	100	30.6%
Washington	538	494	(44)	-8.2%
West Stockbridge	1,306	1,343	37	2.8%
Williamstown	7,754	7,513	(241)	-3.1%
Windsor	899	831	(68)	-7.6%
<b>Berkshire County</b>	<b>131,219</b>	<b>129,026</b>	<b>(2193)</b>	<b>-1.7%</b>
Massachusetts	6,547,629	7,029,917	482,288	7.4%

Depending on where a community is in the county, they grew or shrank at different rates. Ten of the 12 towns in the Southern Berkshires grew; however, only five of 20 central and northern communities grew. Southern communities grew by 708 people or 3.7%; central shrank by 1,508 people or 2.0%; and northern lost 1,393 people or 3.7%.

Berkshire county also saw an increase in diversity. The county now is 84.7% Non-Hispanic White Alone, a decrease from 90.6% in 2010, or a reduction of 7,470 whites. The county continues to fall further behind the state in diversity, now at 67.6% non-white.

Being the largest community in the county, Pittsfield had the largest non-white population at 9,741 people or 22.2% of its population. The rural hilltowns throughout the county have a lower percentage of non-white than the more urban communities.

Over the coming months, additional data will be released by the Census Bureau, including age and seasonal housing unit count.

## Economic Development

**Community Compact Best Practices Program**  
 MA Division of Local Services  
 Rolling Applications opened August 15th

Under a Community Compact Best Practices agreement, a municipality implements at least one best practice they select from a variety of [eligible areas](#). Applications for Year 7 of the program can be submitted by municipalities who did not apply in FY21. Passcodes were emailed on August 9th. ALL Berkshire County communities are eligible in FY22. To view instructions and apply, please [click here](#). Note that typical awards fall in the \$15,000 to \$20,000 range, and do NOT require a local match. Sample past projects are available [here](#). For assistance in estimating a project budget, please contact us as soon as possible: Laura Brennan, [lbrennan@berkshireplanning.org](mailto:lbrennan@berkshireplanning.org).

**Preparing for the Future of Work in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts**, a July 2021 study commissioned by the Baker-Polito administration, seeks to help town leaders understand how workplace shifts begun during COVID-19 could impact their communities in years to come. Conducted by McKinsey & Company, the report explores near- (2025) and long- (2030) term trends and suggests how towns can prepare for them to support residents' and economies' success. [Click here for excerpt and links to full report.](#)

## Environmental & Energy

**Municipal Energy Technical Assistance Grants**

The Department of Energy Resources (DOER) is accepting applications for the Municipal Energy Technical Assistance (META) grant program. META grants provide funding to aid municipalities,

regional school districts, and water/wastewater districts in the study, negotiation, development, and management of clean energy projects.

**Applications are due September 24, 2021, at 5 p.m.** The program is open to all municipalities regardless of Green Communities designation status. For more details, click [HERE](#) for the Program Opportunity Notice (PON). Reach out to Emily Lange, [elange@berkshireplanning.org](mailto:elange@berkshireplanning.org) with any questions, application assistance, or to discuss project ideas.

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### Air Sensors Grant Opportunity

Mass DEP announced a new grant opportunity for municipalities to receive 5-10 air sensors to measure fine particulate matter levels (PM2.5) in their communities for at least 1 year. Breathing PM2.5 can exacerbate asthma and other respiratory and cardio-pulmonary illnesses. Sensors will be set to "public mode" so that their data will be publicly accessible in real time on both the PurpleAir Map and EPA AirNow Fire & Smoke Map websites.

Participants will be able to:

- Increase public awareness of air quality and PM2.5 pollution.
- Identify community sources of pollutions to inform emissions reductions and mitigation strategies.

Priority will be given to communities with Environmental Justice (EJ) populations. Find out if your community has an EJ population by visiting:

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/environmental-justice-populations-in-massachusetts>

**Applications due October 1, 2021.** For more information and to apply go to <https://www.mass.gov/how-to/apply-for-a-massdep-air-sensor-grant> or email your questions to [Air.Sensor@Mass.Gov](mailto:Air.Sensor@Mass.Gov). If you need assistance with an application, please contact Emily Lange [elange@berkshireplanning.org](mailto:elange@berkshireplanning.org) to discuss.

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### Fall Yard Waste and Water Quality

Fall is nearly upon us and with it the onslaught of leaves piling on our streets and filling our storm drains. While leaves are natural, too many concentrated in our waterways can increase nutrients such as phosphorous and nitrogen as they decompose. The same is true for yard waste of all kinds including grass clipping, eroded soil, and other yard debris. This is especially a problem where there are more streets, storm drains and catch basins. Leaves and other organic matter tend to wash off surfaces and fill catch basins. This can become a challenge for Highway Department and DPW staff as leaves clog storm drains and fill catch basins causing flooding and ice problems throughout the winter.

If you're an MS4 community September and October are the months to do outreach, reminding residents how to properly dispose of yard clippings and leaves. For other communities, this outreach can be a good reminder for residents to use leave cleanup systems in place in your municipality. **For this and other nonpoint source pollution tips - BRPC has NPS 319 Funding to help towns with outreach and advance projects that will improve water quality.** If you have a project in mind please contact Courteny Morehouse, [cmorehouse@berkshireplanning.org](mailto:cmorehouse@berkshireplanning.org).

[Thank you Freepik for free image.](#)

## Public Health

### Food Safety Collaboration

The Berkshire County Boards of Health Alliance (BCBOHA) has multi-year FDA grants to regionally improve food safety in the Berkshires. Seventeen of the twenty-four Alliance communities are working together to meet the nine FDA Voluntary Retail Food Program Standards. Individually it is virtually impossible for small health departments to meet FDA Program Standards but together communities can leverage staff, grants and resources to meet these Standards and improve food safety in Berkshire County.

In October the Alliance will again apply for FDA grants to improve Food Safety in Berkshire County and provide training and equipment to participating Boards of Health. For more information, contact Sandra Martin, [smartin@berkshireplanning.org](mailto:smartin@berkshireplanning.org)

## Regional Initiatives & Services

### Regional Issues

The Regional Issues Committee works with the Commission to identify and study regional issues facing Berkshire County, provides recommendations on proposed state or federal legislation or regulations, and makes recommendations to the Commission concerning requests from municipalities for policy or guidance. The primary topic in September will be the report regarding the **Impact of State-Owned Land PILOT and Solar Taxation Policies on Municipalities**, published in December of 2020 by the Office of the State Auditor, Division of Local Mandates. More information, including key findings, recommendations, and a downloadable copy of the report, can be found here: <https://www.mass.gov/report/the-impact-of-the-state-owned-land-pilot-and-solar-taxation-policies-on-municipalities>

The next Regional Issues Committee meeting will be held on **Wednesday, September 22<sup>nd</sup> at 4 p.m.** via Zoom. Please use the BRPC Events calendar on our website to access meeting materials and Zoom login information.

### Transportation



#### September is Bay State Bike Month

To coincide with Bike Month, Berkshire Streets for All is raising awareness about cycling and rights and responsibilities for residents. This campaign is spearheaded by a working committee comprised of representatives of the Berkshire Bike Path Council, BRPC, the City of Pittsfield, Massachusetts Bicycle Coalition ([MassBike](#)), MassDOT, Mass in Motion and Be Well Berkshires. They have prepared Guidelines for Cycling, a brochure that outlines the bicycle safety tips as well as the proper use of bike lanes. A copy of the brochure can be found [here](#) and at local bike shops.

Berkshire Streets for All and the Berkshire Bike Path Council are also sponsoring a **group bike ride** to support Bike Month. You are invited to join the ride; come out to Park Square on **Thursday, September 16, at 4:30 p.m.** At the ride you can check out the new bike lanes on North Street, meet members from these groups and learn more about Berkshire Bike Park Council activities.

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission  
[www.berkshireplanning.org](http://www.berkshireplanning.org)

