



A Newsletter for Community Planning in the Berkshire Region

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Staff Announcements

Welcome to **Chris Brown**, Community Planner. A passionate and experienced community developer, urban planner and non-profit administrator, his planning activities will focus on housing, local and regional land use, open space and recreation. cbrown@berkshireplanning.org, 413-442-1521, x27

June Axt, RN, BS has formally joined the Public Health team as an off-site part-time Public Health Nurse. In addition to flu clinics she will work on the COVID-19 vaccination campaign for ages 5-11.

Paula Downer is a new Berkshire Public Health Alliance (BPHA) Project Specialist providing administrative support to the flu and COVID-19 vaccination clinics.

Williams College Economics major and Public Health Concentrator, **Vanessa Oeien**, has returned as an intern with the BPHA analyzing Berkshire county deaths since 2015.

The **Berkshire Public Health Alliance** is still accepting applications for a full time off-site **Coordinator**. Soon to be posted: Epidemiologist and Public Health Planner. See [Employment web page](#) for details.

We wish **Phil Arnold**, Community Planner, the best as he has left BRPC and the region to explore other opportunities. His attentive deliberative work assisting Berkshire municipalities with master plans, housing needs assessments, zoning bylaws, and more is much appreciated.

Grants & Opportunities

November 4, 2021, 10 am Western Massachusetts Historical Commission Coalition

Topic: Introduction to Historic Preservation Planning for Small Towns Presentations will include an overview of Historic Preservation Planning and three case studies which will consider preplanning, preservations plans, and plan implementation in communities when budgets are small and town staff support is not available. [Zoom details](#).

November 9, 2021, 10 am Cybersecurity Workshop

Cybersecurity concerns and solutions for municipalities. Details below.

November 9, 2021, 1-2 pm Climate Resiliency for Cultural Heritage Webinar

First of two-part program co-hosted by COSTEP MA and the Boston Green Ribbon Commission. Part 2 in 2022. Topics: How climate change can impact cultural institutions; insights and observations on meeting those challenges; efforts to understand the cultural heritage landscape in Massachusetts through a statewide mapping project; and introduction to climate action planning. Learn more and register at: <https://mblc.state.ma.us/costepma/index.php/about/events/>

Mass Save Community First Partnership applications due November 12, 2021, 5 pm. Details [here](#). Through this program, local utility companies partner with municipalities or community-based organizations on outreach initiatives in Environmental Justice communities to help residents and small businesses save money and energy and reach climate/sustainability goals.

Fall Round 319 Request for Responses due December 15, 2021

[Grant details can be found in the Pre-RFR on the Mass DEP website](#). Section 319 of the Clean Water Act is a federal program aimed at controlling nonpoint sources of pollution such as stormwater runoff from impervious areas, agriculture, and other sources. The program is a great

source of funds to mitigate water quality issues and help address impairments to water bodies listed in the Massachusetts Integrated List of Waters. Contact [Courteny Morehouse](#) for grant proposal assistance.

Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Grants accepted on a rolling basis until **January 7, 2022**. The MVP Program helps communities build resiliency and prepare for climate change impacts. Once complete, MVP-certified communities are eligible for Action Grant Funds. Contact [Courteny Morehouse](#) for more information.

USDA Rural Economic Development Loans and Grants FY22

USDA provides zero-interest loans to local utilities, passed through to local businesses to create and retain employment in rural areas. Details at: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/business-programs/rural-economic-development-loan-grant-program>

Quarterly deadlines are:

- Quarter 2: December 31, 2021
- Quarter 3: March 31, 2022
- Quarter 4: June 30, 2022

FEMA Fiscal Year 2021 Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC)

The BRIC program gives funds to states, U.S territories, federally recognized tribal governments, and local communities for hazard mitigation activities. Activities include acute extreme weather events and chronic stressors which have been observed and are expected to increase in the future. <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppld=335226>

[Massachusetts Cyber Center Municipal Cyber Security Summit October 7th Summary](#)

Follow the above link for a Summit summary. It highlighted the importance of local cybersecurity resiliency. Experts discussed cyber threats, evolving federal policy and state programs, and provided valuable information on resources to support local initiatives.

Recreation Economy at USDA Economic Development Resources for Rural Communities

https://www.rd.usda.gov/sites/default/files/RD_Recreation_Economy_USDA.pdf

NTIA Launches Updated [BroadbandUSA Federal Funding Guide](#) searchable by agency, program purpose, and eligible recipients. The information is also available as a [downloadable spreadsheet](#).

FEMA COVID19 Disaster Economic Recovery Roadmap

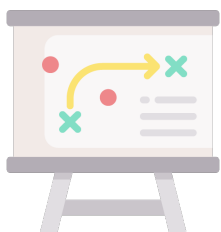
Developed to assist state, local, tribal, and territorial (SLTT) leaders with navigating some of the challenges and resources, associated with the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

<https://www.fema.gov/.pdf>

Rolling applications: [Community Development Block Grant Microenterprise Assistance](#) for income-qualifying small businesses. Contact [Christie Lewis](#), 413-442-1521 x23.

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](#) if your community wants to pursue this.

Community Planning



Citizen Planner Training Collaborative's Trainings

The Citizen Planner Training Collaborative's Webinar Series 2021, designed for citizen and professional planners in Massachusetts, will run from **Nov. 10 through Dec. 16**. The workshops run for approximately 2 hours, including Q&A.

[Registration](#) is open for all 10 workshops, Each workshop is sponsored by a regional planning agency. Anyone may attend.

The schedule is as follows:

- Fair Housing Laws: Nov. 10

- Fair, Defensible Land Use Decisions: Nov. 15
- Adopting and Revising Rules and Regulations: Nov. 17
- Drafting Zoning Amendments: Nov. 18
- Adopting and Revising Rules and Regulations: Nov. 23
- Introduction to Subdivision Control Law/ANR: Nov. 29
- Fair, Defensible Land Use Decisions: Dec. 2
- Roles and Responsibilities of Planning and Zoning Boards: Dec. 7
- Special Permits and Variances: Dec. 15
- Use of Design Review: Dec. 16

The \$20 per workshop fee may be paid online (preferred) or by check. Workshops include a PDF handout and slides. Registration closes two days prior to each workshop. [Read more.](#)

Massachusetts Historical Commission Preservation Workshops

Workshops will be via Zoom and limited to 25 attendees. Topics will be repeated in the new year. Click links below to register. Registration will close when space is filled or 24 hours before each workshop. Questions: Jennifer.Doherty@sec.state.ma.us

Tuesday, November 2, 1 pm

[Historic Resources Survey and the National Register of Historic Places](#)

Tuesday, November 16, 10 am

[Architectural Styles, Forms, and Building Technologies of Massachusetts](#)

Wednesday, December 1, 7 pm, [The Basics of Running a Good Commission](#)

Thursday, December 16, 10 am, [Establishing Local Historic Districts](#)

Data & Information Services

Online Burn Permit Program

The 2022 Online Burn Permit Program sign-up has started. Outreach to the fire chiefs has started to gauge their interest. Please work with your fire chief to ensure that your community participates. The annual cost for the system usually is less than \$100/community, depending on how many communities sign up. For more information, contact [Mark Maloy](#).

Economic Development

Community One Stop for Growth

The Baker-Polito Administration has announced \$66 million in MassWorks awards through this year's Community One Stop program. Congratulations to the many successful applicants in Berkshire County. Read more about MassWorks awards [here](#). This was the first in a series of grant awards made through the Community One Stop for Growth program, which total a combined \$88.7 million for projects in 122 communities across the Commonwealth, including the MassWorks awards.

Expressions of Interest for FY23 programs are scheduled to open in December. Through January 31st, 2022, municipalities may submit expressions of interest for up to 5 projects. Please contact BRPC for assistance as you prepare to submit Expressions of Interest in the next round.

Tuesday, November 9th Cybersecurity Workshop

A free online workshop will address cybersecurity concerns and solutions for municipalities on **November 9th** at 10am. Space is limited and participation includes up to two hours of free one-on-one consultation specific to your community with the presenter, [Renatus Solutions](#), following completion of the workshop.



Space is limited, please use this link to register:
<https://forms.gle/1LfVvk4Y9z3yLc7ye9>

Environmental & Energy

Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness is looking for Berkshire Projects!

Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) is a program run by the Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs. Its main purpose is to build resilience and prepare towns for the impacts of climate change. Many of us are aware that our infrastructure is outdated and underequipped for extreme weather. Public buildings, storm sewer systems, roads, and public spaces were built to expect a stable climate. Rising temperatures in our region mean warmer summers, shorter winters, heavier snow and ice storms, and more rain from bigger, worse storms. The MVP program funds adaptation projects to adjust to this new climate reality.

The program has two grant opportunities for municipalities. MVP **Planning Grants** provide no match funding starting at \$15,000 to complete an MVP Plan. This is often done in conjunction with Hazard Mitigation planning as both programs cover similar topics and concerns.

The MVP Plan outlines actions developed by a community to address climate change issues as that community experiences them. With a complete MVP Plan, a city or town becomes an MVP Certified Community and is eligible for MVP Action Grant funding. *Applications for MVP Planning Grants are being accepted on a rolling basis until Friday, January 7, 2022.* For more information on the application and **Planning Grants**, [check out this webpage](#).

MVP Action Grants are implementation funds available to further the actions identified in the MVP Plan. Action grants require a 25% match but can be used for a wide variety of solutions such as infrastructure improvements, forestry management, policy development, or something else entirely. Action grants can apply to further scope and design a project, study a particular issue and develop solutions, or get shovels in the ground on implementation construction.

The MVP Program is eager to see more projects happening in the Berkshires! As such, the grant officer for our region, *Carrienne Petrik*, has open office hours *Tuesdays and Thursdays from now until Christmas to talk through project ideas and strengthen possible proposals.* For more information about **Action Grants**, [check out this webpage](#).

If you're interested in either of these grant opportunities, BRPC would be happy to be a resource. We can talk through program priorities, challenges and successes, or help with applications. Let us know by contacting [Courteny Morehouse](#).

Public Health

Berkshire Overdose Addiction Prevention Collaborative Works with Community Partners to Expand Comprehensive Drug User Health Services Reduce Spread of HCV, HIV

Berkshire County has a total of 3 approved fixed-site comprehensive drug user health services programs. Also known as syringe access programs, they are in North Adams, Pittsfield, and Great Barrington. However, many people in Berkshire County face significant transportation barriers when trying to access these fixed-site services. Through a CDC Overdose Data to Action grant awarded via the Massachusetts Department of Public Health/Bureau of Substance Addiction Services, the Berkshire Overdose Addiction Prevention Collaborative (BOAPC), in partnership with Berkshire Harm Reduction (a program of Berkshire Health Systems) are working to reduce the barriers for those who wish to access these services. Services include disease testing, Narcan,

reproductive health, counseling, syringe access, referrals to recovery, and other clinical supports.

In Massachusetts, syringe access is under the governance of the Local Boards of Health (LBOH). As part of this grant, BOAPC will connect with the remaining 29 LBOH in Berkshire County who have not signed a local control letter allowing state-funded syringe access/harm reduction services within their municipality. BOAPC will encourage them to do so, as well as provide training and information about harm reduction. BOAPC will also work with other regional EMS and Berkshire Harm Reduction to ensure that they can provide needed services to this larger service area via mobile integrated health/mobile health units and other emerging innovative models. In addition to the life-saving work of reducing overdose, these efforts will improve overall health outcomes, reducing the spread of HCV, HIV, and other diseases related to drug use. For more information, contact [Jennifer Kimball](#).

Regional Initiatives & Services

Municipal Cyber Security

The MassCyberCenter at the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative has launched a suite of interactive, online modules designed to educate and train municipal officials on best practices and how to create a 'minimum baseline of cybersecurity' to protect their digital assets and critical information.

The new modules are available [on the MassCyberCenter's website](#) and are designed to improve the cybersecurity posture of Massachusetts municipalities. The 'minimum baseline' featured in the modules can be reached fairly inexpensively, but requires an investment of time from municipal employees.

The virtual modules are structured around four key goals:

- Trained and Cyber-Secure Employees
- Improved Threat Sharing
- Cyber Incident Response Planning
- Secure Technology Environment and Best Practices

Transportation

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Infrastructure Project Funding Program

Applications for SRTS Infrastructure Projects will be accepted up until **December 1, 2021**. Funding for bicycle and pedestrian improvements that benefit schools are eligible for funding. For more information download the application guidance document at the site below.

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/safe-routes-to-school-engineering#srts-infrastructure-project-funding-program>

Transportation Network Companies (TNC's): Ridesharing in the Berkshires

In Massachusetts, the Department of Public Utilities' Transportation Network Companies (TNC's) Division oversees rideshare companies, including their services and drivers. The TNC Division has been collecting data from TNC companies such as Uber and Lyft since 2017, when companies were required to share it. TNC operators pay an assessment fee of 20 cents per ride. Cities and towns receive half of this amount based on the number of rides started in their communities. The other half is distributed to [MassDevelopment](#) and the [Commonwealth's Transportation Fund](#). A list of how much municipalities received and how they used their 2019 allocations may be found [here](#).

In 2020, rideshare companies provided approximately 35 million rides in Massachusetts. Historically, TNCs provided 91.1 million rides in 2019, 81.3 million rides in 2018, and 64.8 million in 2017. In 2020, there were about 62% fewer TNC rides started in Massachusetts than in 2019. This decrease happened across nearly most of the state, with the biggest impacts in the Greater Boston area, the Cape and Islands, and smaller towns in western Massachusetts.

While the number of Transportation Network Companies (TNC's) providing rides in Berkshire County is a very small proportion of all rides provided throughout the state, within the Berkshires, TNC rides had been steadily increasing from 2017-2019. In 2017, TNCs providing rides in Berkshire

County accounted for 0.026% of all rides in the state (16,871 rides). In 2018, Berkshire TNCs accounted for 0.048% (39,103) of all rides, and in 2019, it was 0.06% (54,223) of all rides across the state. In 2020, Berkshire TNCs accounted for 0.04% (13,755) of all rides across the state. Countywide, the number of trips provided in 2020 was down 75% compared with 2019.

In the Berkshires, the communities with the highest number of ‘trips started’ from 2017-2020 are in central (Pittsfield, Dalton) and southern communities (Lenox, Lee, Stockbridge) with Lanesborough, North Adams, and Williamstown to the north. From 2018-2020, ‘destination trip’ data (rides ended) show mostly the same above municipalities receiving the greatest share of these trips. The only difference is that Great Barrington received more trips than Williamstown in 2018 and 2020 (but not in 2019). The collection of destination trip data began in 2018. For more information on categories of data collected and specific TNC data for your municipality, please contact Transportation Planner [Justin Gilmore](#).

Trips Started	2017	2018	2019	2020
Pittsfield	10,198	27,189	42,888	11,514
Dalton	486	1,095	1,605	492
Lenox	2,178	4,137	3,886	654
Lee	801	1,693	1,309	162
Stockbridge	708	1,143	952	112
Lanesborough	466	901	707	162
North Adams	431	710	799	155
Williamstown	428	594	550	124

Trips Ended	2018	2019	2020
Pittsfield	24,758	39,836	10,976
Dalton	1,234	1,838	454
Lenox	3,868	3,738	732
Lee	1,605	1,710	370
Stockbridge	1,366	1,206	173
Lanesborough	1,375	1,074	191
North Adams	912	996	300
Great Barrington	792	649	147

