



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

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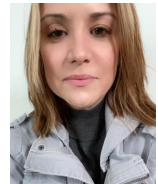
#### Staff Announcements

##### Welcome to new Public Health Program staff!



The Berkshire Public Health Alliance is pleased to welcome its first Coordinator, [Lydia Shulman](#). Lydia has a wide variety of administrative experience, from running cinemas to, most recently, recruiting at Williams College. She brings a plethora of experience in figuring out how to do things and looks forward to utilizing her skills for the Alliance. In her spare time, you might find her shoveling or exploring new areas, hiking, or DIY-ing, from building keyboards to plumbing to studying to be the next celebrity dog trainer.

As our first full-time Epidemiologist, [Jennifer Scott](#) supports the Public Health program's response to COVID-19 and other diseases by providing disease surveillance, data collection, analytics, and reporting. She joins us from Berkshire Health Systems, where she was the Regulatory Compliance Specialist and worked as a Medical Laboratory Scientist for many years. Jennifer is excited to use her graduate degrees in Health Informatics to analyze Berkshire County's population data. When she isn't pursuing and analyzing data, you may find her improving her boxing skills, enjoying lakes and trails in the area kayaking, hiking or mountain biking, and keeping up with her two children.



[Andy Ottoson](#) is a substance use disorder (SUD) Planner working on the Berkshire Opioid Addiction Prevention Collaborative (BOAPC). Before this, Andy worked with the OLLI program at Berkshire Community College and worked as Systems Manager for the Substance Use Centralized Assessment Program at NADAP in New York city. He spent many years in theater and opera as a director, producer, and stage manager in NYC and regionally. Andy holds a BA from Webster University, St Louis and an MBA from UM- Amherst. He lives in Pittsfield with his husband, Branden, and their stubborn dog, Tara.

#### [Employment & Internship Opportunities - Berkshire Regional Planning Commission:](#)

- Planner or Senior Planner - Berkshire Opioid Addiction Prevention Collaborative (BOAPC)
- Planner and/or Associate Planner - to support Community and Equity Projects

#### Grants & Opportunities

##### [Efficiency & Regionalization Grant Program](#) closes February 10, 2022

Offered by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' Community Compact / Division of Local Services, this program provides one-time funding for governmental entities interested in implementing regionalization and other efficiency initiatives that allow for long-term sustainability. Single government entities up to \$100,000; multi-jurisdictional up to \$200,000

##### MA Farmland Action Plan

The Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources seeks input to develop a MA Farmland Action Plan. Listening sessions will collect recommendations for increasing farmland protection and access, food security, and farms' long-term economic and environmental viability across Massachusetts. Register for a Zoom session by **February 14** [HERE](#).

- Tuesday, February 15, 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm, or
- Wednesday, February 16, 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm

Unable to participate? Send suggestions via email to [Sonia Bouvier](#), Project Manager, UMass Donahue Institute.

### [USDA Rural eConnectivity Program](#), deadline **February 22, 2022**

The Rural eConnectivity Program (ReConnect) Program provides loans, grants, and loan/grant combinations to facilitate broadband deployment in rural areas. Expansion of broadband services and infrastructure will fuel long-term economic development and opportunities.

### [Enhanced Air Quality Monitoring Funding](#), deadline **February 25, 2022**

The EPA is offering funding to conduct ambient air monitoring of pollutants in communities with environmental and health outcome disparities related to pollution and/or the COVID-19 pandemic.

[Click here for more information.](#) Eligible applicants are local governments, non-profits, and community organizations. Grants may range from \$25,000-\$500,000. Contact [Emily Lange](#), especially if you are interested in a Berkshire County regional application.

### [Rural Business Development Grant \(RBDG\)](#), deadline **February 28, 2022**

Grants for rural businesses with fewer than 50 workers and less than \$1 million in gross revenue. Towns, communities, not-for-profits, and more are eligible.

### [American Rescue Plan Act \(ARPA\) Training](#)

The Massachusetts Inspector General's Office will present an important no-cost webinar training on the use of ARPA funds on Thursday, **March 3, 2022** at 2:00-3:30 pm. This training will be of interest to all municipal leaders and procurement staff, and anyone involved in planning for ARPA-funded activities. This free training will give an overview of eligibility rules for fiscal recovery funds, limits on the use of ARPA funds, and reporting requirements. Participants will also learn about applying Chapter 30B to ARPA funds; using collaborative and cooperative contracts, and complying with federal single audit requirements. Other dates may be added to the schedule. [Click here to register.](#)

[National Fund for Sacred Places](#) is a collaboration between the National Trust and Partners for Sacred Places. They offer grants from \$50,000 to \$250,000 for urgent repairs, life safety needs, and other projects that will open buildings to new populations. Buildings do not need to be listed on or eligible for the National Register, but those designations can support an application. Letters of Intent are due **March 7, 2022**, with final applications due in July and notification in October.

[DER's Culvert Replacement Municipal Assistance Grant](#) helps communities replace culverts with a structure that meets the Massachusetts Road Stream Crossing Standards. Towns can apply for up to three crossings in the same stream system, focusing on streams with high ecological value. There is no match requirement, but funding typically won't cover full replacement costs. It's a great program if a culvert replacement is already budgeted and additional funds are needed to make it comply with stream crossing standards. RFR is scheduled for release on February 14. Submit questions to DER by February 11. Applications are due **March 14**.

[Community One Stop for Growth](#) - Expressions of Interest and Applications are open for FY23. This single application portal and collaborative review process streamlines the experience for applicants and better coordinates economic development programs based on a [Development Continuum](#). Expressions of Interest are now limited to two projects and are due **March 18, 2022**. Please contact BRPC for assistance.

### **Preservation Projects Fund Round 28**, deadline **March 18, 2022**

Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund (MPPF) \$800,000 grant program is a state-funded 50% matching grant reimbursement to support the preservation of properties, landscapes, and sites listed in the State Register of Historic Places. Applicants must be a municipality or nonprofit. Download the [MPPF Application](#) and [MPPF Application Instructions](#) from the [MHC website](#).

### **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. Quarterly deadlines are **March 31, 2022; June 30, 2022**.

The Massachusetts Clean Energy Center's Clean Energy and Resiliency ([CLEAR](#)) Program supports community efforts to **integrate renewable energy to make electrical grids more resilient** during outages. As part of the CLEAR program, they developed a free [Resiliency Toolkit](#) that communities and facilities can use to conduct a preliminary analysis of the cost and resources required to undertake such a project before hiring a consultant. For more information, contact Program

Manager, [Rees Sweeney-Taylor](#).

### [Tips for Writing Federal Grant Applications - Grants.gov Blog Series](#)

Learn tips and advice through the Grant Writing Basics Blog Series, including:

- How to Start Working on Future Funding Opportunities
- Demystifying Funding Opportunity Announcements
- Tips to Avoid Last Minute Problems
- Making Sure You Are Eligible before Writing

### [Green Infrastructure Federal Collaborative](#) (recorded webinar)

The Federal Collaborative on Green Infrastructure held a webinar on Navigating Federal Funding for Green Infrastructure and Nature-Based Solutions. Download a recording of the November 2, 2021 webcast, which featured resources available through EDA, NOAA, Army Corps of Engineers & EPA.

### Recreation Economy at USDA Economic Development Resources for Rural Communities

[www.rd.usda.gov/sites/default/files/RD\\_Recreation\\_Economy\\_USDA.pdf](http://www.rd.usda.gov/sites/default/files/RD_Recreation_Economy_USDA.pdf)

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](#) and [DLS COVID-19 Resources and Guidance for Municipal Officials](#). Please contact [Tom Matuszko](#) if your community wants to pursue this.

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### Massachusetts Historical Commission Workshops Spring 2022

Click workshop titles to register.

There are two ticket options: the LIVE ticket will allow you to attend the Zoom “in person” and receive a recording after the workshop ends; with the RECORDING ticket you will not receive the Zoom link but will receive a recording of the workshop. The LIVE ticket will provide you with a recording in case you can’t make the workshop.



#### [Introduction to Historic Preservation](#) - Tuesday, February 8, 10 am

This workshop will cover the basics to help you be an educated commissioner familiar with the terminology and programs of the historic preservation field.

#### [Administering Local Historic Districts and Design Review](#) - Thursday, February 24, 1 pm

This workshop will go in-depth on how to administer a local historic district, how to handle the application and review process, and will provide some guidance on design review.

#### [Architectural Styles, Forms, and Building Technologies](#) - Wednesday, March 9, 7 pm

This workshop will provide a very high-level overview of residential house forms, architectural styles, and changes in building technology found in Massachusetts.

#### [Developing an Historic Preservation Plan](#) - Monday, March 21, 1 pm

Developing an historic preservation plan for your community can help you understand your historic resources better and discover preservation tools you might be missing.

#### [State and Federal Historic Resources Project Review & Compliance](#) - Thursday, April 7, 10 am

Learn more about triggers for state and federal reviews, the process, and how your local commission might be involved.

#### [Historic Resources Survey & National Register of Historic Places](#) - Wednesday, April 20, 10 am

Learn more about the survey process and National Register designation in this workshop, and especially how the two work hand-in-hand.

## Data & Information Services

Have you filled out the “What is living in the Berkshires like for you?” survey yet? You still have time. Berkshire Benchmarks is conducting a survey to understand better the issues affecting county residents. Participants will be entered into a drawing for one of 10



\$50 gift cards. The survey closes on **February 15, 2022**. Learn more and participate at [www.surveymonkey.com/r/Berkshire22](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Berkshire22).

## Economic Development

### BRPC secures Economic Development District designation for Berkshire County

The U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) has approved Berkshire Regional Planning Commission's request for designation as an Economic Development District (EDD). District designation recognizes the region's demonstrated enthusiasm and competence in partnering with EDA to pursue the mutually held goals of *regionally collaborative* economic development work and *innovation-driven* economic growth. It also serves as the foundation for future economic successes that will benefit both families and businesses in the region.

Designations are reserved for regions with an EDA-approved Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). Berkshire Regional Planning Commission coordinates the development and updating of Berkshire County's CEDS on a five-year cycle, in partnership with a CEDS Strategy Committee. The current approved strategy spans 2017 through 2022, and the 2023-2027 CEDS will be developed this year. [Read More...](#)

## Environmental & Energy

### Healthy & Efficient Homes Pilot Project

Through grant funds awarded by the EPA, The Berkshire Regional Planning Commission is partnering with Central Berkshire Habitat for Humanity and the City of Pittsfield Health Department to conduct outreach and education to residents and daycare centers in Pittsfield's Morningside and Westside neighborhoods on how to improve indoor air and water quality and energy efficiency. Booklets will be distributed, containing information on how to identify, remediate, and prevent common indoor environmental hazards, non-toxic and natural cleaning products and pesticides alternatives, the basics of energy efficiency, and how to navigate State and City programs to address these issues.

Habitat for Humanity's Community Navigators will visit homes and daycares and community events in Morningside and Westside to give out booklets, answer questions, help people look for hazards in their homes, and refer them to the appropriate resources. The City of Pittsfield Health Department will incorporate materials into routine home inspections throughout Pittsfield. Program materials will be made available to other Berkshire communities. Contact [Emily Lange](#) with any questions or comments.

## Transportation

### Shared Streets and Spaces Program

The Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) is accepting applications from municipalities and Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs) for a new round of the Shared Streets and Spaces grant program. Applicants must demonstrate that proposed projects can be implemented by June 30, 2023. Applications are due **March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022**.

The program provides funding to assist in identifying, designing, and implementing improvements to sidewalks, curbs, streets, plazas, and parking areas in support of public health, safe mobility, and strengthened commerce. This round of funding will place particular emphasis on roadway projects that seek to manage vehicular speeds through design interventions. Eligible project types include:

- **Speed Management:** Safer streets for all users by reducing vehicle speeds. Up to \$200,000.
- **Bicycle and Pedestrian Infrastructure:** Making biking and walking a safe, comfortable, convenient option for everyday trips. Up to \$200,000.

- **Transit Supportive Infrastructure:** Establish new facilities for public buses, including but not limited to dedicated bus lanes, traffic signal equipment, and bus shelters. Up to \$500,000.
- **Main Streets:** Repurposing streets, plazas, sidewalks, curbs, and parking areas to facilitate outdoor activities adjacent to active vehicular traffic without a raised curb or other meaningful separation, barrier materials must be appropriate to the level and speed of the vehicular traffic. Up to \$100,000.
- **Equipment Only:** Applications requesting funds solely for the purchase of eligible equipment up to \$50,000. Municipalities are eligible to receive two Equipment Only grants in addition to to an award for another project type within the same grant round. The list of eligible project types along with examples can be found [here](#).

A municipality may submit up to two applications but may only be selected for one grant per funding round. Equipment Only applications do not count against application or award limit. Questions or inquiries about the program can be submitted to [sharedstreets@dot.state.ma.us](mailto:sharedstreets@dot.state.ma.us).

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## Strategies to Address Lane-Departure Crashes in the Berkshires

Making our roads safer is a battle that involves many strategies. Helping to plot a path toward fewer fatalities and injuries, the state Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP) identifies target safety Emphasis Areas for Massachusetts. The top Emphasis Area is **lane departure**, which is when a vehicle either crosses the road centerline or runs off the roadway. According to the SHSP, fatalities from lane departure crashes accounted for 50% of traffic deaths in Massachusetts leading up to the latest Plan publication in 2018. The next SHSP will be published in 2023.



### Conditions in the Berkshires

Of the 53 deaths on roads within Berkshire County since the SHSP was published (i.e., from 2018-2021), 19 involved a single vehicle colliding with a fixed object such as a tree or utility pole, or a ditch, which would imply a lane departure. Four double-vehicle crashes involved a "failure to keep in proper lane or running off the road" or "wrong side or wrong way." These **23** total crashes account for 43% of fatalities during this period. Additional cases may be added as open investigations are closed. **Thirty-four** non-fatal crashes with incapacitating injuries involved a single vehicle colliding with a fixed object or other obstacles. This number excludes crashes with contributing factors of physical impairment or illness or collisions with pedestrians, cyclists, or animals.

[Read the complete article here.](#)