



A Newsletter for Community Planning in the Berkshire Region

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Staff Announcements

BRPC is pleased to welcome two staff members to the Public Health Program team.

[Erin Jones](#), M.P.A., starts in March as a Public Health Planner, focusing on wellness and equity. For [Pittsfield Gray to Green](#), Erin will design community engagement, research and analyze best practices, and support community involvement. She will work with local Boards of Health on Emergency Preparedness and provide administrative and planning support to public health efforts throughout Berkshire County. She hails from Georgia, where she has worked on municipal sustainability and resilience, urban food deserts, emergency management, and building community by engaging diverse voices. She received her BS in Political Science and her MPA from Savannah State University. In her free time, Erin likes to travel the world, read new books, and polish up her photography skills.



[Morgan Ovitsky](#) is a part-time Project Specialist coordinating the Rural Health Equity Grant funded by the New England Rural Health Association and working on the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). Morgan brings years of experience developing and coordinating coalitions, gathering data, and implementing food access, prevention, and wellness programs in Berkshire County. Morgan is a trained chef and spends her free time hiking, kickboxing, and playing with her six and three year old kids.

[Employment 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

Central Massachusetts Historical Commission Coalition meeting **March 10, 2022, 10:00 am**. Topic: **Updating Your Community's Historic Resources Inventory**. This meeting will be recorded and available in the [WMHCC Presentation Archive](#) on the Preservation Massachusetts website: [Click here to register](#) and receive the ZOOM link or contact [Stacia Caplanson](#).

[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**.

Funding for Children and Youth in the American Rescue Plan

A [new online database](#) highlights funding available to all 50 states and more than 27,000 counties, cities, and towns; nearly 17,000 school districts; and 3,500 higher education institutions in key areas:

- State and local funding
- Local public school districts
- Public and nonprofit postsecondary institutions

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. A free [Resiliency Toolkit](#) is available 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

Recreation Economy at USDA Economic Development Resources for Rural Communities

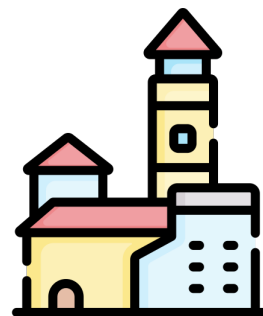
www.rd.usda.gov/sites/default/files/RD_Recreation_Economy_USDA.pdf

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.

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.



[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.

Community Planning

Community Development Block Grants

On March 2, 2022, the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) announced the most recent recipients of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds. Nine Berkshire County communities received over \$3.5 million in funding to spur projects from street improvements in North Adams to the rehabilitation of 29 housing units in Egremont, Great Barrington, and Sandisfield.

The CDBG program is overseen by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). In Berkshire County, communities have access to these funds through a competitive application process. CDBG funds may be used for a wide variety of local programs, such as improving housing conditions, updating infrastructure, and expanding social services.

Additional information on the Community Development Block Grant program can be found at this [link](#). For more information contact Community Planner, [Chris Brown](#).

Data & Information Services

New ACS Data to be released!

The US Census Bureau will be releasing the 2020 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year data on March 17th. The data will be accessible at <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>, along with data from previous years. This 2020 data will give us the first look into how the pandemic has affected the county regarding income, employment, education, poverty, and many other topics. It is a five-year average (2016-2020), so pre-pandemic times heavily influence the data, but some insight into what has changed can be obtained. For more information, contact [Mark Maloy](#).

Economic Development



As part of the technical assistance provided to municipalities through BRPC's CARES Act funding, we are developing 2-page tip sheets summarizing key economic development-related strategies available to your community. These range from housing strategies such as Adaptive Reuse Zoning and 40R, to commercial district approaches such as the implementation of BIDs (Business Improvement Districts) or the establishment of Cultural Districts designated by MCC. These concise guides to getting familiar with the tools available will be posted to BRPC's website soon, and we'll keep adding to the toolbox over time. Let us know if there's a topic you'd like us to cover! E-mail ideas to lbrennan@berkshireplanning.org.

Just Announced - Share With Your Business Community:

[MGCC Inclusive Grant Program](#) - The Commonwealth has made \$50,000,000 available to support small businesses negatively impacted by COVID-19. This program targets businesses that focus on reaching markets predominantly made up of socially and economically disadvantaged and historically underrepresented groups, underserved markets, and those owned by minorities, women, veterans, disabled individuals, or those that identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community. MGCC will administer grants up to \$75,000 for eligible small businesses. These funds were appropriated through the state's share of the American Rescue Plan Act.

Applications opened Feb. 23 and close April 4, 2022 [Learn more, view eligibility & apply HERE](#)

[MGCC New Applicant Grant Program](#) - The Commonwealth has also made \$25,000,000 available to

support small businesses negatively impacted by COVID-19 that have not previously received financial relief from MGCC's COVID-19 Relief Grant Programs. MGCC will administer grants up to \$75,000 for eligible small businesses. These funds were appropriated through the state's share of the American Rescue Plan Act.

Applications opened Feb. 23 and close April 4, 2022 [Learn more and apply HERE.](#)

Environmental & Energy

Grants for Culverts

Two grants are out this month that can be used to address culvert-related issues. The first is Department of Ecological Restoration's Culvert Replacement Municipal Assistance grant. This program has funds to help towns meet the Massachusetts Stream Crossing standards in their culvert replacement projects. The grant prioritizes areas of high ecological value, cold stream habitat, and locations where culverts are the barrier to habitat connectivity. Applications are due **March 15** and can be submitted [here](#).

In addition, the state Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Program has a Pre-RFR out. This program funds municipal climate change resilience. This can include culverts studies and replacements that cause flooding given our region's increased precipitation projections. If you haven't considered MVP planning or action grant funding, now is the time to do so! Governor Baker just [announced a spending bill that includes \\$150 million for the MVP program](#). That's a significant increase from last year. MVP has two webinars in the next week to present the Pre-RFR. Registration below:

- Monday, March 7, 2022, 11am-12pm - [Register here](#)
- Tuesday, March 8, 2022, 2pm-3pm - [Register here](#)

If you have questions about either of these grant programs or other funding solutions. Let us know! Contact [Courteny Morehouse](#).

Transportation

The Municipal Small Bridge Program

The Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) has relaunched the Municipal Small Bridge Program. This competitive grant program provides assistance to municipalities for the replacement, preservation, and rehabilitation of eligible municipally owned bridges. Every municipality in the Commonwealth is eligible. To be considered for funding, small bridges must be on a local public way, on the [State Bridge Inventory](#), and have a span between 10 and 20 feet. Selection is based on need and merit. More information on eligibility can be found at [Project Eligibility](#).

New in 2022, the program provides grants in two phases for the design and construction of bridge projects. A Phase 1 grant is designated for the costs of bridge design and permitting up to \$100,000. Phase 2 grants provide funding for construction costs up to \$500,000. These phased grants are intended to ensure that funds are spent efficiently between design and construction tasks.

Applications are currently accepted once per fiscal year for both Phase 1 and Phase 2 grants. A municipality may submit applications for multiple small bridges for either grant phase (design or construction) during a single application round. However, to apply for a Phase 2 construction grant, the municipality must demonstrate a final design completed by a MassDOT [prequalified engineering firm](#) (through a Phase 1 grant or other funding source) and undergo a successful Chapter 85 Review. More information can be found on the [Program Overview](#) webpage. The Fiscal Year 2023 application deadline is **April 1, 2022**. For more information, please contact Transportation Planner [Justin Gilmore](#).