



A Newsletter for Community Planning in the Berkshire Region

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Employment Opportunities

Energy & Environment Paid Summer Internships (more information below)

- [Graduate Internship Stormwater System Mapping](#)
- [Undergraduate Internship Stormwater System Mapping Intern](#)

Public Health Program Positions

- Senior Planner or Planner Substance Use Disorders with a focus on youth
- Associate Planner Community and Equity Projects

Grants & Opportunities

[Western Massachusetts Municipal Conference](#), Saturday, April 9, 2022, 8:30 am - 12:00 pm, Easthampton High School. This conference will bring together regional stakeholders, including municipal officials, planning agencies and legislators from Berkshire, Franklin, Hampden and Hampshire counties, to address challenges facing the region. The goals are to promote sustainable cross-governmental partnerships across western Massachusetts, share best practices for adaptation to and mitigation of challenges facing the four counties, and to advocate more effectively for the region. \$35; click green link above for details. [Registration link](#).

State Grant Opportunities Workshops

Please save the dates and register [here](#), or use the link in the box below. Registering once will sign you up for all future sessions. The first session, **April 12**, will focus on the [One Stop for Growth](#) suite of grants because the program has a pending deadline, and is likely already familiar to municipal leaders.

In future sessions, state officials will talk about municipal cybersecurity grants, the influx of federal broadband money, climate resiliency opportunities, water and sewer infrastructure funding, new federal discretionary programs to fund transportation infrastructure improvements, etc. If there are specific topics you would like addressed, please contact [Tom Matuszko](#).

Date	Time	Topic(s)
Tuesday, April 12	3-6 p.m.	Community One Stop for Growth, with presentations from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development; • Department of Housing and Community Development; • MassDevelopment
Tuesday, April 26	3-6 p.m.	TBD
Tuesday, May 10	3-6 p.m.	TBD
Tuesday, May 24	3-6 p.m.	TBD
Tuesday, June 7	3-6 p.m.	TBD

Register once for all 5 sessions at:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZUtd--spzoqHtW1GeGR6z0iyrmhqzIQCNSO>

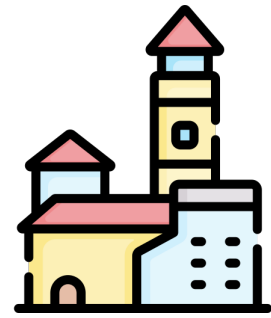
All sessions will be recorded.

Western Massachusetts Historical Commission Coalition virtual meeting, Thursday, April 14, 10 am. Topic: **Massachusetts Cultural Districts**: how they may be structured, and be a tool for historic preservation, economic development, and building local partnerships. The meeting will include an

overview on state-sponsored local cultural districts by the Massachusetts Cultural Council plus several case studies of cultural districts in our region. [Register here](#). This meeting will be recorded and available in the WMHCC Presentation Archive on the Preservation Massachusetts [website](#).

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; with the RECORDING ticket you will only receive the recording.



[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.

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Long Island Sound Futures Fund - this program is eager to fund projects within the Long Island Sound Watershed ([see map here](#)). The focus is nutrient reduction. The match is usually 60%, but they reduced it to 25% this year. These are federal funds that can match with state MVP grant funds. Applications are due **May 19, 2022**. Want more details? [Check out the RFP](#) and contact [Courteny Morehouse](#) with any questions: 413.442.1521 x26.

Commonwealth cultural heritage institutions (broadly defined below) are invited to create a listing via the [Cultural Heritage Facilities Survey](#). Ensure your organization is in your community's Hazard Mitigation and Response plans. More information is at COSTEP MA's [website](#):

- Municipal institutions responsible for historic, artistic, and other cultural resources including libraries, historical commissions, town archives
- Public and private museums and historical societies with properties and/or collections
- Cultural institutions with "living collections" such as zoos, aquariums, arboretums
- Arts organizations

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](#).

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.

Community Planning

A Housing Vision for the Berkshires

BRPC and 1Berkshire, with the support of a broad working group of housing practitioners from throughout Berkshire County, have launched [A Housing Vision for the Berkshires](#), a regional strategy to lead more intentional efforts to address the current housing crisis.

Housing was identified as a key cross-cutting theme in 2019's [Berkshire Blueprint 2.0](#), with large supply gaps identified for quality, affordable, and proximal housing for those seeking to live and work in the region. The impacts of the pandemic have accelerated the demand for housing and significantly driven up housing costs for both renters and homebuyers. The working group started in 2020, including dozens of regional partners and housing practitioners to capture data, identify challenges and opportunities, and provide outreach to additional community stakeholders throughout Berkshire County.

Data & Information Services

Median Household Income

According to the recently released 2016-2020 American Community Survey, the Median Household Income (MHI) in Berkshire County has increased to \$62,166, or 27% since 2010. Comparatively, the nation has an MHI of \$64,994 and saw an increase of 25%, so Berkshire County is in line with the rest of the country. However, Massachusetts now has an MHI of \$84,385 and has seen a 31% increase since 2010. Massachusetts residents now make 35% more than Berkshire County residents.

The data is quite revealing when examining MHI in Berkshire County by race and ethnicity. The White population has an MHI of \$63,651 and has seen an increase of 27% since 2010. Meanwhile, the Black population has an MHI of \$27,683, a decrease of 12% since 2010. All other races and ethnicities have seen increases similar to the White population and have MHIs that exceed the Black population's.

When examining the data by age, the population under 25 years has the lowest MHI of \$30,152. The 25-44 year-olds and the 45-64 year-olds have MHIs over \$70,000. Meanwhile, the senior population has an MHI of \$48,185, an increase of almost 50% since 2010.

Another stark difference in MHI is between owners and renters. Owners have an MHI of \$76,934, a 24% increase since 2010. Renters have an MHI of \$33,976, a 36% increase.

For more information, contact [Mark Maloy](#).

Economic Development

BRPC comes to you! Add us to your next Select Board agenda

Economic Development Senior Planner Wylie Goodman has been making the rounds - to Select Boards that is - presenting on the upcoming 2023-27 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) report, specifically the resiliency chapter. Wylie has spoken to 10 boards in the last month with another 11 presentations scheduled through mid-April. These brief conversations introduce communities to the topic of economic resilience and reflect BRPC's efforts to hear directly from municipalities about resiliency concerns. Even in towns that are primarily residential, economic resiliency is important so that when another economic shock happens, people can mobilize quickly to withstand the impact and bounce back quickly.

Contact [Wylie Goodman](#) to book a short presentation.

The [Shared Economic Development Planning](#) program allows each participating town to access services and assistance that fit their specific needs and budget. Participating towns receive assistance with a wide range of projects, including downtown revitalization, grant writing, marketing/communications, business community outreach, and project-specific planning assistance.

All municipalities are invited to contact us to learn more or to register for FY23. Please contact [Laura Brennan](#).

Environmental & Energy

Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Grants are Open

Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) grants are open for submission. This is a state program with a focus on climate change preparedness. For many of our towns, this means flood mitigation, but it can also include wildfire & drought preparedness, the impact of warmer winter storms (i.e., heavier snow and ice, longer mud season, ice jams, etc.), getting ready for hotter summers, and more. If you haven't considered MVP planning, now's a good time. **Governor Baker just allocated an additional \$150 million toward climate change preparedness, mostly through the MVP**

program. Planning grants can be used to supplement hazard mitigation planning or can fund both MVP and Hazard Mitigation funding completely without match. [Check out the Planning Grant RFR here.](#) Planning grant applications are due **June 7, 2022.**

If you already have an MVP Plan, this is a good time to move those actions from paper to implementation. Action grants can cover a variety of projects, from planning studies and engineering design work to construction. The match is typically 25%, **but this year the program is lowering that bar to 10% for “economically disadvantaged rural communities.”** In other words, if your town is small (under 3,000 people) and economically disadvantaged (per capita annual income is less than 80% of the state per capita income), you only need a 10% match. Moreover, that match can be in-kind hours and materials, cash, or a mix of both. The RFR includes a list of communities, quite a few of which are Berkshire towns. [You can check out the Action Grant RFR here.](#) Action grant applications are due **May 5, 2022.**

For questions or assistance on either grant application, contact [Courteny Morehouse.](#)

Stormwater Internship Position Opening

The Environmental & Energy Program is looking for an enthusiastic student interested in stormwater systems! Interns will be exploring and mapping the stormwater systems in three Berkshire towns, learning how storm sewer systems function and the regulations and solutions around stormwater pollution. This position is perfect for anyone who wants to learn more about GIS systems and data management at the municipal level, is curious about the field of environmental and infrastructure planning, and likes to be outside during the summer.

The position is open to both undergraduate and graduate students studying environmental science, civil engineering, GIS, municipal planning, or any related fields. Questions or think someone might be a good fit? Forward the [job description found on our website](#) or call or email [Courteny Morehouse](#) at 413.442.1521 x26. Thank you!

Public Health

Pittsfield's Gray to Green Stride and Take Pride Audit

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission's Public Health Program, under the Gray to Green initiative, is completing a pilot program for Stride and Take Pride, a neighborhood audit program to map two neighborhoods in Pittsfield through the eyes and perspective of the neighborhoods' residents. Stride and Take Pride is a program developed in partnership with Habitat for Humanity, the City of Pittsfield, 18 Degrees, and residents from Pittsfield's Westside and Morningside neighborhoods.



The program uses concepts from national walk audit models and major elements of a qualitative research process called digital storytelling. Residents under this program are trained to conduct walk audits of a designated area of their neighborhood and use an audit “kit” that includes a series of maps, scoring forms, open-ended narrative driven questions, and a tablet to record audio and visuals to capture data. The information collected over the next year will be used to create an interactive map of the neighborhoods using the video, audio, and written notes from residents.

Additionally, a comprehensive report will be developed with project partners to examine and establish a list of practical priority projects for the neighborhoods based on the information from residents. So far, ten residents have been trained to conduct the audits, and 12 audit routes have been completed. A full launch of this program will occur in later spring/early summer.

The overall goal of the Gray to Green project is to increase health equity in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, by establishing a set of priority projects focused on improving the green built environment and improving the quality of life for residents, among other things. To do this, Gray to Green centers the vision and experience of residents of the Westside and Morningside neighborhoods through community meetings, their Working Group, subcommittees, and by hosting and facilitating trainings and information collecting processes like Stride and Take Pride. For more information, contact [Allison Egan.](#)

Berkshire Regional Group Purchasing Program

Greetings from the [Berkshire Regional Group Purchasing Program](#) (BRGPP)! All Berkshire County municipalities are eligible to join the program for a flat rate of \$800 per season.



The BRGPP Products and Services Survey, issued on March 15, 2022, in advance of the FY23 Group Purchasing season, was due on **Friday, April 1, 2022**. Recent additions to the product offerings include updated guardrail products, delivered, and or installed, and a new paving category (see section 10A).

Please call or email us if you have any questions or need assistance completing the survey: [Rebecca Slick](#) x54, [Christie Lewis](#) x23, or [Patricia Mullins](#) x17.

Efficiency and Regionalization Awards

The Baker-Polito Administration announced awards of \$1.6 million in Community Compact Cabinet Efficiency and Regionalization (E&R) grants. Of the 60 municipalities impacted by this generous funding are 8 Berkshire communities.



The timing of this could not have been better for us in western Massachusetts, as town vacancies seem to be on the rise without a matching flood of applicants. With this substantial financial support, even the smallest, most rural, or least affluent towns are given a chance to attract the right candidates to help their constituents by leading ethically and professionally. The awarded municipalities are eager to begin their projects and pioneer shared services throughout our region.

BRPC received an award to assist in developing a shared town administrator, initially to be explored with the Town of Savoy. Lt. Governor Karyn Polito, Savoy Select Board Member Melanie Glynn, and BRPC Community Planner Cara Farrell are pictured.

The Efficiency and Regionalization Grant Program was started in Fiscal Year 2017 and provides funds for planning and implementation of regionalization initiatives - including shared services, intergovernmental agreements, consolidations, and other collaborative efforts - and for efficiency efforts to improve the delivery of local services.

More information about the recent projects and awards can be found here, [Baker-Polito Administration Awards \\$1.6 Million in Community Compact Grants | Mass.gov](#). For information about the Community Compact Cabinet, go to mass.gov/orgs/community-compact-cabinet.

Transportation



BRPC to Establish Electric Vehicle Charging Station Working Group

BRPC's Transportation Program recently completed the [Berkshire County Electric Vehicle Charging Station Plan](#). The Plan seeks to educate on the current state of electric vehicles (EVs) and charging station technology and to equip municipal stakeholders with the information needed to make strategic decisions concerning EV charging station investments. Coming on the heels of major commitments and initiatives to address climate change, the shift to electrify transportation represents a critical opportunity to decarbonize the transportation system.

As part of this work, the plan calls for establishing a charging station working group to ensure the region isn't left behind and is prepared for the transition ahead. BRPC Transportation staff will facilitate the creation of this group composed of municipal stakeholders. Ultimately, the goal of the group will be to work towards defining public charging station priorities and needs at the county level and to help identify suitable areas at the municipal level for network expansion.

The initial focus will be to bring stakeholders up to speed on the current state of EVs, charging stations, and existing funding programs that assist municipalities in offsetting the costs of charging station deployment. The working group will serve as a forum for information exchange and sharing as it relates to EVs and charging station acquisition, installation, maintenance, and operation. Involvement in these discussions will equip stakeholders with the information needed to benefit their community in making practical and reasoned decisions around charging station investments. Municipal stakeholders interested in participating in the working group can reach out to [Justin Gilmore](#) to express interest.

West Stockbridge Complete Streets Prioritization Plan

BRPC is excited to announce that West Stockbridge will be working with the Commission and Foresight Land Services to create a Complete Streets Prioritization plan. A Complete Streets Prioritization Plan utilizes MassDOT's template and identifies a 5-year prioritization plan with a minimum of 15 potential projects that focus on addressing the following needs:

- *Safety*: addresses high crash locations, reducing vehicular speeds, etc.
- *ADA accessibility*: wheelchair ramps added, etc.
- *Pedestrian safety or mobility*: New/improved crosswalks, sidewalks/paths, pedestrian signals, etc.
- *Bicycle safety or mobility*: New bike lanes, wider shoulders, signal accommodation, bicycle parking, etc.
- *Transit operations and access*: Enhanced stop amenities, queue jump lanes, stop consolidation, etc.
 - *Vehicular operations*
 - *Freight operations*

Complete Streets provide safety, comfort, mobility, and accessibility for all street network users, including pedestrians, cyclists, other non-motorists, transit riders, motorists, commercial and emergency vehicles, and people of all ages and abilities. The Town of West Stockbridge recognizes that all roadway projects, including new construction, maintenance, upgrades, and reconstruction, are opportunities to apply Complete Streets design principles. The latest design guidance, standards, best practices, and recommendations will be used, including but not limited to:

- MassDOT Project Development and Design Guide
- FHWA Manual on Uniform Traffic Design Controls
- National Complete Streets Coalition (a project of [Smart Growth America](#)) resources
- ITE Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach
- United States Access Board Streets and Sidewalks Guidelines
- NACTO Urban Street Design Guide and or Urban Bikeway Design Guide
- AASHTO Guide for Planning, Designing, and Operating Pedestrian Facilities

Public input and the needs of many users will lead to a flexible, innovative, and balanced approach that follows appropriate design standards. BRPC looks forward to initiating this work during the Spring of 2022. Contact [Nick Russo](#) for more information.