



A Newsletter for Community Planning in the Berkshire Region

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Staff Acknowledgement

Congratulations to [Laura Brennan](#), BRPC Economic Development Program Manager, on recognition by Berkshire Magazine as one of the [Berkshire 25 in 2022!](#)

"THE BERKSHIRES brings to mind different things to different people, none of which would be possible without good people working hard every day... it's the strength of its human foundation that makes it real. These individuals have all made extraordinary contributions to our way of life."

Read more about Berkshire 25 Honorees, past and present, [HERE](#).



Employment Opportunities

[Washington & Middlefield Shared Town Administrator](#)

Salaried full-time position with full benefits. The ideal candidate should have excellent financial, communication, management & labor relations skills and a public-service orientation. Requirements include a bachelor's degree in public administration or a related discipline and three years of progressively responsible experience or any equivalent combination of education and experience. The salary is negotiable to a maximum of \$60,000 annually. See berkshireplanning.org/employment for a full job description and application instructions.

[Public Health Training Inspector](#)

Berkshire Public Health Alliance, coordinated by BRPC, is seeking an off-site Project Specialist to act as environmental health inspector/trainer to establish a local Public Health Training Hub, provide field training and mentorship, and contribute to a broad scope of dynamic and complex public health inspection and training programs in Berkshire and Hampden Counties. Full or part-time to be confirmed, based on funding. Click the job title for a full description.

Grants & Opportunities

MassDEP will hold a public hearing on **Tuesday, October 4th, 2022** on a proposed new regulation for certain owners of medium- and heavy-duty (MHD) vehicle fleets: [Large Entity Reporting Requirements](#). See article in Transportation section below.

Citizen Planner Training Collaborative is offering a webinar on the **Roles & Responsibilities of Planning Boards and Zoning Boards of Appeals, Thursday, October 20, 2022, 6:00 pm** designed for new board members; Brian Currie, AICP, presenting. BRPC Community Planner, [Cara Farrell](#), will provide technical support. \$25 fee is payable by check or credit card. [Register here](#).

Berkshire Black Economic Council (BBEC) invites you to their second annual **Speed Networking Expo** on **Saturday, October 22, 1-5 pm**, at Bousquet Mountain for an evening of networking, food, and entertainment with a special after-hours celebration. This event is intended to highlight Black businesses, facilitate new relationships, inspire new local contracting, and boost economic development by creating an introductory space for Berkshire Black entrepreneurs to connect with the Berkshire business & nonprofit community. [Pre-Registration required](#).

Massachusetts Historical Commission's [online survey](#) is designed to gather feedback to inform updates to the 2023-2028 preservation plan for the Commonwealth. It is available through October. They seek input from a wide variety of Commonwealth residents and workers, not just those involved in preservation efforts. Questions or direct feedback:

Jennifer.Doherty@sec.state.ma.us

[2022 Moving Together Conference](#)

November 1, 2022, Boston Park Plaza Hotel, Boston, with a virtual attendance option.

Highlights include:

- Keynote from the League of American Bicyclists
- Long range planning session including MassDOT's 2050 Statewide Long Range Transportation Plan, Beyond Mobility
- 9th Annual High School Video Competition
- MassDOT's Route 128/I-95 Land Use and Transportation Study

Healthy Equity Funds Available

The New England Rural Health Association (NERHA) has started an initiative to address health equity issues in Berkshire County's rural towns by providing funding for local programs. These funds are meant to address common but serious concerns people have in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic such as: paying for transportation to doctor's visits, affording healthy food, finding/paying for childcare, and more.

If your organization serves any of the following towns (Becket, Dalton, Hancock, Hinsdale, Lanesborough, Peru, Richmond, Windsor, Washington) we want to hear from you about your needs and how we might be able to use this grant money to help. Please contact [Jaymie Zapata](#), Public Health Planner.

Berkshire United Way wants to hear from YOU

Berkshire United Way values building relationships, collaboration, results-driven decision-making, recognition of success, ongoing innovation, and equity. They want to understand the challenges and opportunities people are facing, and to ensure their priorities and investments are aligned with proven strategies that have measurable impact. Please complete a brief survey at <https://www.berkshireunitedway.org/survey>.

For every survey completed, \$10 will be donated to [Berkshire Bounty](#), a local organization that fights food insecurity.



FREE Workshops for Nonprofits to Increase Capacity and Resilience

Webinars and in-person workshops are open to all Berkshire nonprofits through December. Take advantage of this [free series](#) aimed at strengthening organizations in areas such as grants, fundraising, marketing, and board development.

Offered by the Nonprofit Center of the Berkshires, in partnership with BRPC.

Berkshire Regional Transit Authority (BRTA) and Teamsters' Local Union 404 are excited to partner to raise breast cancer awareness in Berkshire County. Throughout the month of October, BRTA Union Bus Operators and other employees will be wearing pink safety vests to draw attention to this disease and the ongoing struggle to find a cure.



They are encouraging everyone to schedule their annual breast exam, conduct self-examinations, and engage in positive behaviors demonstrated to dramatically increase the likelihood of prevention or early detection; such as limiting alcohol consumption, regular daily exercise,

knowing your personal family history of cancers or other diseases, and regularly discussing any health concerns with your physician. More information at: [Breast Cancer Research Foundation](#) * [American Cancer Society](#) * [Living Beyond Breast Cancer](#)

Community

Land Use Planning Assistance Grant Program

The Baker-Polito Administration recently announced a slate of 26 projects receiving funds through the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) Land Use Planning Assistance Grant Program. BRPC submitted a grant application on behalf of Sheffield, which has been fully funded at \$25,000.

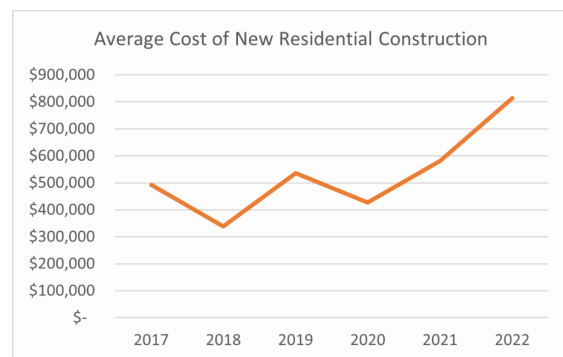
The Planning Assistance Grant is intended to promote better land use development practices and to help communities comply with state sustainable development goals. These funds are available annually and may be used for various planning purposes, including conservation, preservation, and affordable housing.

Sheffield has been working closely with BRPC staff as town residents and leaders confront the affordable housing crisis in the southern Berkshires. In 2021, BRPC drafted a Housing Needs Assessment for Sheffield, providing a snapshot of current housing and population trends and issues. Next, Sheffield embarked on a Housing Production Plan, a set of strategies to make housing more available and attainable. The Land Use Planning Assistance Grant represents the third step in this process and will support Sheffield's committed focus on addressing the town's housing issues. Funds will be used to implement the Housing Production Plan strategies, and exploration of affordable housing solutions. For more information, please contact Community Planner [Chris Brown](#).

Data & Information Services

New Home Construction

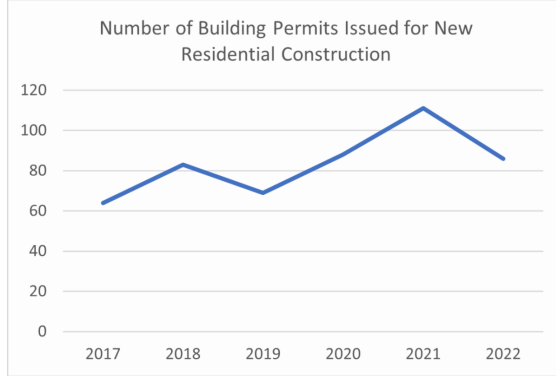
Berkshire County is fortunate that 20 municipalities utilize Full Circle's Permit Eyes for issuing building permits (Adams, Alford, Becket, Cheshire, Dalton, Egremont, Great Barrington, Hinsdale, Lanesborough, Lee, Lenox, Monterey, New Marlborough, Pittsfield, Richmond, Sandisfield, Sheffield, Stockbridge, West Stockbridge, and Windsor). These municipalities represent all regions of the county, ranging from large to small populations. They cover a range of household income levels and densities of second homes. By examining summary data from this program, BRPC can see how the average single-family home price has changed and the total number of permits for new residential construction.



When reviewing the average cost of building a new house in participating municipalities in Berkshire County, the price has increased dramatically over the last three years. From 2017 to 2020, the average price of a new house was \$448,500, ranging from \$339,000 in 2018 to \$536,500 in 2019. In 2021, the price increased to \$580,000; in 2022, the price rose to \$815,000, an increase of 40% in one year. Many of these homes are likely even higher in cost as the foundation, landscaping, electrical, and plumbing are

often separate permits and could come close to doubling the price.

The number of new single-family residential permits has also seen a similar increase. From 2017-2019, the participating municipalities in the county averaged 72 new houses a year. In 2020 the number increased to 88. In 2021, the number of permits increased to 111, an increase of 26%. In 2022, the participating municipalities currently have 84 new



residential building permits but are on target for a similar number as 2021.

In looking at the high-end houses, the number of new homes being constructed that cost over \$1,000,000 has tripled since 2017. In 2017, the participating municipalities had four new homes costing \$1,000,000. From 2018 to 2020, this number doubled to 9. In 2021 it increased again to 11 new homes, and in 2022 it has further increased to 14 new homes exceeding \$1,000,000.

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

Economic Development

Planning Toolkit Available Online

Two-page tip sheets to assist municipal leaders in learning more about planning, zoning, and available resources are available on the BRPC website at [Planning Toolkit](#). Email [Laura Brennan](#) with topic suggestions. Topics include:

- Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU)
- Business Improvement Districts
- Inclusionary Zoning
- Live Work Housing
- Master/Comprehensive Plans
- Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE)

Environmental & Energy

Release of Final Code language for Stretch Code update and New Specialized Stretch Code

On September 23rd, the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources (DOER) released final code language for its Stretch Energy Code and Specialized Municipal Opt-in Code:

- [Summary Document Explaining Stretch Energy Code and Specialized Opt-in Code Language](#)
- [Residential Low-Rise Stretch Energy Code and Specialized Opt-in Code Language](#) (red-line of applicable code sections) ([front-end amendment submitted to the TUE committee](#))
- [Commercial and Other Stretch Energy Code and Specialized Opt-in Code Language](#) (red-line of applicable code sections) ([front-end amendment submitted to the TUE committee](#))

DOER's Final Regulations 225 CMR 22.00 and 225 CMR 23.00 have been submitted to the Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities, and Energy in accordance with MGL Ch 25a Section 12. These regulations will be filed with the Secretary of State in December 2022. [More here.](#)

Public Health

COVID-19 News: The Public Health Nursing Team is working with municipalities to set up joint COVID booster and flu clinics during the fall. New covalent boosters targeting the Omicron variant are recommended for all persons aged 12 and up who are two months past their last COVID vaccine. Both vaccines may be received at the same time. [Berkshire Vaccine Locations.](#)

The [Gray to Green Project](#) is an urban climate resiliency project focusing on community-led innovations in Pittsfield. This initiative contains many facets. Here are some project updates:

Stride and Take Pride: This neighborhood auditing program outfits Pittsfield's Westside and Morningside residents with a digital tablet to record audio and photo footage of their neighborhood. These pictures and observations of urban spaces, as well as survey questions about walkability, safety,



and more, will be shared as recommendations to the city for neighborhood improvements. BRPC has partnered with 18 Degrees, Habitat for Humanity, and Westside Legends for wide outreach. If you're not following the initiative on Facebook and wish to do so, [please find us here!](#)

Francis Ave Parklet: Following concerns voiced by members of the Westside community about the safety of a vital public stairway on Francis Ave, BRPC has worked with consultants to draft a design to control and drain stormwater to prevent flooding. BRPC is working with Habitat for Humanity to meet with abutters about the proposed park area for their input.

Wilson Park: This is a new initiative involving Pittsfield Housing Authority and the City of Pittsfield to improve the recreational area of Wilson Park, starting with the basketball court and hoping to expand renovations with the guidance of community input. An application for community preservation act funds will be submitted during the next cycle in November.



Westside Legends: This neighborhood social group hosted a successful soapbox derby in the past month! We all hope to see this revival of a beloved neighborhood tradition take hold and grow. You can read a [Berkshire Eagle article about it here.](#) Their next event is a Halloween Party on October 31. Thank you to Westside Legends for sharing the derby photos!

Regional Services

[BRPC's 2022 Annual Report](#) is posted on the website.

Highlights from 2022 include:

- continued public health collaborations and services to remedy the COVID-19 pandemic
- release of [A Housing Vision for the Berkshires](#) regional strategy to address the housing crisis
- revised and expanded [Berkshire Benchmarks](#) data website
- implementation of Green Communities Programs, Open Space and Recreation Plans, and Municipal Vulnerability Plans

Transportation

Proposed New Regulation: 3.10 CMR 7.41 Large Entity Reporting Requirement

The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) proposes adopting a new regulation [310 CMR 7.41, Large Entity Reporting Requirement](#). It would require certain owners of medium- and heavy-duty (MHD) vehicle fleets to submit a one-time report to MassDEP six months after the regulation is finalized. This report would enable MassDEP to assess the best way to develop electric vehicle charging infrastructure and other programs to support and accelerate Massachusetts's MHD zero emission vehicle (ZEV) market.

The one-time Large Entity Reporting Requirement will apply to the following entities if in calendar year 2021:

- Massachusetts government agency, including all state agencies and *local municipalities* with one or more vehicles over 8,500 lbs. gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR), operated in MA
- *non-public schools* that operated one or more school buses over 8,500 lbs. GVWR
- *an entity with gross annual revenues greater than \$50 million* in the US for the 2021 tax year that operated a facility and had one or more vehicles over 8,500 lbs. operating in Massachusetts in 2021
- *fleet owner* with *40 or more vehicles* with GVWR greater than 8,500 lbs. under common ownership or control and operated in a facility in Massachusetts

- *broker or entity* that dispatched *40 or more vehicles* with GVWR greater than 8,500 lbs. into or throughout Massachusetts and operated a facility in Massachusetts

Military tactical vehicles, vehicles awaiting sale, and emergency vehicles would all be exempt from the reporting requirement. The following information would need to be reported:

- Number of vehicles
- General information about the vehicle home base where vehicles are domiciled or assigned to determine suitability for electrification
- Information about vehicle operating characteristics, such as:
 - Fuel
 - Vehicle type
 - Typical mileage per day and per year
 - Typical replacement cycle
 - Whether the vehicle has predictable usage patterns
 - Whether the vehicle returns to home base daily, remains near the base, remains parked for 8+ hours, or is used to support emergencies

Public Hearing and Comment:

MassDEP will hold a public hearing on the proposed regulations on October 4th, 2022. MassDEP will accept written comments 10 days after the public hearing until October 14th, 2022. The public hearing notice and proposed regulations are available on MassDEP's website at: [Proposed Amendments & Public Comment](#). For further information, please contact [Ngoc Hoang](#).

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission
www.berkshireplanning.org



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