



A Newsletter for Community Planning in the Berkshire Region

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Berkshire Regional Planning Commission and Berkshire County Selectmen's Association Annual Meeting Reception

Thursday, October 5, 2023, 4:00 - 6:00 pm
Berkshire Hills Country Club, Pittsfield

Guest Speaker: Anne Gobi, Director of Rural Affairs, Commonwealth of Massachusetts

\$25 per person registration @ [Eventbrite](#)
by Friday, September 15

Employment Opportunities

Community Engagement Specialist - Digital Equity

The Economic Development Program seeks a part-time temporary Community Engagement Specialist to speak with Pittsfield community organizations and the individuals they serve about their needs regarding internet access and the barriers preventing them from using it to its full potential. The Specialist will participate in activities to build awareness about [Massachusetts Internet for All](#) and programs that support digital equity, such as the [Affordable Connectivity Program](#).

Public Health Food Specialist

This is a full-time, offsite position for a food protection subject matter expert to enforce the food code and local food-related regulations, conduct environmental health inspections, support the inspectional services program, help develop a new local Public Health Excellence Training Hub, and contribute to a broad scope of dynamic and complex public health inspection and training programs in Berkshire County. Part-time applicants will be considered.

Public Health Housing Specialist Seeking a housing subject matter expert with building code or housing inspection experience, to enforce the housing code and local housing regulations, conduct environmental health inspections, support inspectional services program, and help develop a new local Public Health Excellence Training Hub. Offsite, full-time with benefits preferred, part-time possible.

Staff Announcements



Robert Ireland will serve as a Digital Equity Fellow with the Economic Development Program. The fellowship is a temporary, one-year, full-time position serving Berkshire County through the American Connection Corps, Lead for America program with funding provided by the Massachusetts Broadband Institute. Robert will work with BRPC staff and municipalities to create digital equity plans and implement activities to help bridge the digital divide in Berkshire County. He is a Pittsfield native and former Peace Corps volunteer. Robert served in Ukraine, primarily working on

Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) and with local NGOs on green tourism initiatives. He attended the University of New Hampshire's Carsey School of Public Policy as a Peace Corps

Coverdell Fellow earning a M.A. in Community Development Policy and Practice. He is passionate about community and creating positive change locally, especially in Berkshire County.

[Ryan Griffis](#) starts September 11 as a Transportation Planner. We will share more about him and Matthew Bryan in the October Common Ground.

[Matthew Bryan](#) is the Public Health Program's new Emergency Preparedness Senior Planner starting September 25.

We are pleased to welcome back [Terra Lim](#), a Taconic High School student, as a paid intern working on digital asset mapping for the Economic Development Program's Municipal Digital Equity Planning Program. Terra did an unpaid internship in January assisting with development of a social media campaign for the [2023-2027 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy](#) report.

Grants & Opportunities

[Community Compact Program](#)

[Best Practices Program](#) applications can be submitted by municipalities *who did not apply in FY23 for a Compact*. **Applications are accepted on a rolling basis** and will be reviewed within one month of submission. Eligible applicants can choose up to two best practices. Click [HERE](#) for the complete set of best practices. New subject areas include veteran services and mental health. Housing and transportation are priority areas to the Healy-Driscoll Administration.

The [Community Compact IT Grant Program](#) is a competitive program focused on driving innovation and transformation at the local level via investments in technology. Using the transformative powers of IT, we can drive innovation, make government more efficient, save taxpayer money, and make it easier for residents to interact and transact with their local government. The application period runs **September 11 to noon on October 13, 2023**. *Cities and towns that were awarded an IT Grant Program grant in FY23 are not eligible in FY24.*

The purpose of the [Efficiency and Regionalization](#) (E&R) competitive grant program is to provide financial support for governmental entities interested in implementing regionalization and other efficiency initiatives that allow for long-term sustainability. These grants will provide funds for one-time or transition costs for municipalities, regional school districts, school districts considering forming a regional school district or regionalizing services, regional planning agencies and councils of governments interested in such projects. The application period is from **January 8 to noon on February 9, 2024**. You may access the application page [HERE](#). Applications cannot be saved once they are started and should be completed all at once.

The [Municipal Fiber Grant Program](#) is a competitive, matching grant program to assist municipalities with the construction of municipal fiber broadband infrastructure and related projects and expenditures. The application period is from **March 11 to noon on April 12, 2024**. If you have any questions, contact [Sean Cronin](#), Senior Deputy Commissioner of Local Services.

Massachusetts Historical Commission Fall Virtual Workshops

MHC's fall 2023 virtual workshop details and registration: [HERE](#). Two ticket options are offered: "Live" tickets provide Zoom information to attend in real time and a recording of the workshop. "Recording" tickets will only provide a recording after the workshop ends. You do not need to register for both tickets to receive the recording.

- **Introduction to Historic Preservation**, Monday, September 11, 2023 at 1 pm
- **Introduction to MACRIS and MACRIS Maps**, Thursday, September 28, 2023 at 10 am
- **Historic Resources Survey**, Tuesday, October 10, 2023 at 7 pm
- **The National Register of Historic Places**, Wednesday, October 25, 2023 at 1 pm
- **Architectural Styles, Forms, and Building Technologies of Massachusetts**, Friday, November 10, 2023 at 10 am
- **State and Federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits**, Monday, November 20, 2023 at 7

- pm
- **Understanding the Secretary of the Interior's Standards**, Thursday, December 7, 2023 at 10 am

The Municipal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Improvement Grant Program is open through **September 15, 2023**. This grant program is designed to provide planning and/or implementation funding for projects improving access to community facilities for persons with disabilities. The application form can be found [here](#). For assistance, contact Senior Community Planner [Seth Jenkins](#).

Funding to replace diesel vehicles and equipment

Through the [VW settlement](#), MassDEP is allocating \$7.5 million for zero-emission technologies. As part of the initiative in the [2030 Solid Waste Master Plan](#), funded by the [Climate Protection and Mitigation Expendable Trust](#) (CMT), MassDEP is allocating \$4 million to replace municipal waste-serving refuse trucks with more efficient options. This competitive Solicitation is due **September 26, 2023, 5 pm**. Details at [guidance document](#).

Funding to get "shovel ready"

The U.S. Department of Transportation is accepting applications to fund feasibility studies, preliminary engineering and design work, environmental review, economic assessments, and cost-benefit analyses.



Through the Rural and Tribal Assistance Pilot Program, awards are between \$150,000 and \$360,000 to help communities evaluate and develop projects that qualify for federal funding and financing programs. **Applications accepted until September 27**, awards made on a first-come, first-served basis. No local match required. More information [here](#).

Regionalization Conference, Tuesday October 10, 2023

The Division of Local Services(DLS) and Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies (MARPA) Regionalization Conference. Save the date, details to follow.

One Free Designee Public Procurement Training

The Office of the Inspector General is offering public procurement training at no cost to every municipality in the Commonwealth. The chief municipal officer (Mayor, Town Manager/Administrator or Select Board Chair) must complete an [online form](#) indicating the employee to receive the training.

Massachusetts Broadband Institute [Municipal Digital Equity Planning Program](#)

BRPC is a pre-qualified consultant to provide services to municipalities participating in MBI's Municipal Digital Equity Planning Program. Full program details and application [HERE](#).

BERKSHIRE Funding Focus

Berkshire Funding Focus (BFF)

BFF is a regional initiative that supports municipalities, small businesses, nonprofits, and schools seeking government grants. Learn more at [berkshirefundingfocus.org](#). Sign up for the BFF weekly e-blast [HERE](#).

Community Development & Housing

Accessory Dwelling Units & CEDAC's Home Loan Modification Program

The current housing crisis in Massachusetts reaches every city and town in every corner of the state and certainly impacts many Berkshire County individuals. Along with seniors, low to moderate-income households, individuals and families, persons with disabilities are severely impacted by this shortage of accessible, safe, and healthy homes.

Many communities now have by-laws that allow [ADUs \(Accessory Dwelling Units\)](#) to be built on properties alongside pre-existing homes. Still, property owners find that funding the construction of such units can be challenging to acquire and very expensive.

We want to share the news that, in addition to conventional ways to finance ADUs construction, the Massachusetts CEDAC (Community Economic Development Assistance Corporation) can be a source of assistance to households with individuals with disabilities.

The [CEDAC Home Modification Loan Program \(HMLP\)](#) is a state-funded program that can fund similar additions and adaptations to help family members with physical and cognitive limitations live more independently at home. The HMLP helps Massachusetts households finance home accessibility improvements - making it possible for individuals with disabilities and older adults to remain in their own homes and communities.

HMLP offers zero percent interest loans, up to \$50,000, to assist homeowners and up to \$30,000 to owners of manufactured or mobile homes with projects such as accessory dwelling units, ramps and lifts, kitchen and bathroom modifications, sensory spaces, and fencing. Landlords with fewer than ten units may be eligible for a 3% loan for a tenant.

While the HMLP is not a 'home repair program,' it can provide valuable assistance to eligible households with one or more individuals with disabilities residing in the home. BRPC is the Berkshire County Provider for the [CEDAC Home Modification Loan Program \(HMLP\)](#). For more information, please get in touch with [Christie Lewis](#) at 413-442-1521 x 23.



Data & Information Services

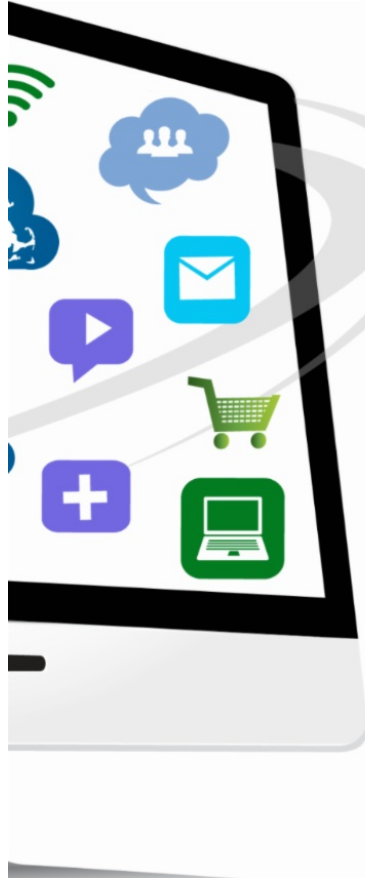
2020 Census Results

Berkshire Benchmarks has released a summary of the 2020 US Census. You can access it online at berkshirebenchmarks.org. Find out the latest population numbers for the county and your municipality. Data includes total population, median age, population age < 18 and 65 +, race and ethnicity, households, people per household, types of households, housing units, owners, renters, and second homes. For more information, contact [Mark Maloy](#), GIS, Data & IT Manager.



Economic Development

Massachusetts Broadband Institute 'Internet for All' Listening Session for Berkshire County



Join Us

We want to hear from you!

Share your experiences accessing the internet.
Your input will help Massachusetts ensure that everyone
can have access to high-quality and affordable
internet service and the resources to enjoy it.

Together we can achieve INTERNET FOR ALL!

Berkshires Listening Session

Wednesday, September 13, 2023, 3:00 - 5:00 p.m.
The Common Room at Zion Lutheran Church
74 First Street, Pittsfield, MA 01201



broadband.masstech.org/internetforall

Register for the Berkshires listening session on September 13th:

[http://events.r20.constantcontact.com/register/event?
oeidk=a07ejxf8vx959e382de&llr=acc9v9iab](http://events.r20.constantcontact.com/register/event?oeidk=a07ejxf8vx959e382de&llr=acc9v9iab)

For more information about Digital Equity Planning in the Berkshires, contact Economic Development Senior Planner [Wylie Goodman](#).



October 14-22, 2023

ArtWeek Berkshires

BRPC is providing staff support to a collaborative effort of the five Berkshire County Cultural Districts. Now in its third year, [ArtWeek Berkshires](#) is a county-wide, crowd-sourced, celebration of creativity. Artists and cultural organizations are invited to participate by offering an interactive, hands-on, or participatory event between October 14th and 22nd, 2023. Promotion of ArtWeek is coordinated by 1Berkshire.

Schools, libraries, and community-based groups are especially encouraged to participate! To learn more and access the online registration form, click [HERE](#).

Environmental & Energy

Funds to Mitigate Climate Change

BRPC's Environmental & Energy team has successfully secured three grants totaling \$740,000 to assist communities in mitigating climate change impacts. These grants were awarded through the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs via the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Action Grants program. The MVP program offers support to cities and towns in Massachusetts as they initiate the process of planning for climate change resiliency and implementing crucial projects. The upcoming projects will center on the following areas:

- A walking safety study and stormwater retention design system for a community parklet in Pittsfield
- Floodplain restoration /retention in Clarksburg's Town Field

- Relocation and upgrade to the water storage system in Clarksburg

If any communities are interested in pursuing MVP-related projects, please reach out to Senior Planner [Courteny Morehouse](#).

Public Health

Age Friendly Berkshires: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Project for Older Adults

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) 's Public Health Program has received a \$25,000 grant from Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) 's Public Health Program has received a \$25,000 grant from [AgeSpan](#) and the Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA) to build on its Age Friendly Berkshires initiative.

BRPC will leverage its relationships with Berkshire organizations serving older adults to assess the needs and challenges of older residents and visitors using the Healthy Aging for All Planning Guide developed by the Massachusetts Healthy Aging Collaborative. Special emphasis will be placed on developing an understanding of the needs and challenges of traditionally underserved and marginalized groups of older adults in the county, such as those who identify as LGBTQ+, Spanish speaking, persons of color, lower income, living with physical or cognitive disabilities or with mental health or substance use disorders, and those who are socially isolated either as a result of living in a rural area or because of bias or stigma.

The initiative's goals are to identify needs and gaps, implement at least one doable, effective project to reduce disparities and improve health outcomes for all in Berkshire County, and suggest improvements to the Guide.

The Project will include stakeholder leadership meetings with county organizations that work with older adults to identify priority focus areas and groups that will be the emphasis of this project and doable ways to fill the identified gaps. In addition, targeted interviews and focus groups will be used to directly hear from underserved or marginalized individuals to learn what they experience and need. Finally, the Public Health Program will work with our partners to implement at least one project to improve the lives of older adults in Berkshire County.

Transportation

Complete Streets Funding Deadline Approaching

The Complete Streets project funding application deadline for FY 2024, Round 2, is **October 2, 2023**. The funding portal began accepting applications on September 1st. This is a great opportunity for communities to review their Complete Streets Prioritization Plans and select projects for MassDOT funding consideration.

Please download the application materials directly from the [program website](#) to be sure you are using the latest versions. The current maximum funding request is \$500,000 per four-year cycle. Communities may submit projects for any funding round, but the total awards for all projects in a four-year span, starting when the first project is awarded, may not exceed \$500,000.

MassDOT has also recently released the State Aid Reimbursable Programs Cost Estimating Tool ([SARPET](#)). This is an Excel workbook that allows communities to input their project scope and details and be provided with a project cost estimate that can be used for submission to MassDOT. Use of the tool is not required but can be



helpful in providing municipalities with a reasonable estimate to submit with a project application, whether it is for Complete Streets, Chapter 90, Safe Routes to Schools, or Shared Streets and Spaces.

If you have any questions or need assistance with Complete Streets matters or the SARPET tool, please contact [Nick Russo](#), Senior Transportation Planner.



Hinsdale's Complete Streets Project:
Church St. sidewalks and crosswalks part
of five 2018 projects totaling
\$400,000

September

2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
3					1	2
10	4 Labor Day Holiday Office closed	5	6	7 Brownsfields Roundtable 9:00 am - 12:30 pm Executive Committee 4:00 pm	8	9
17	11	12	13	14	15	16
24	18	19	20	21 BRPC Commission 6:00 pm	22	23
	25	26	27 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee 1:00 Regional Issues Committee 4:00 pm	28	29	30

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission
www.berkshireplanning.org



Berkshire Regional Planning Commission | 1 Fenn St., Suite 201, Pittsfield, MA 01201

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