



Berkshire Clean, Cold & Connected,  
Beaver Mill Dam Removal, North Adams

# Annual Report

FY 2023

*October 2023*



Berkshire Busk Great Barrington - Economic Development

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"I carry naloxone."

"I do TOO!"

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Preventive Health

# Annual Report

**FY 2023**



## *Comments from the Executive Director*

In many ways, FY 23 was a refreshing relief from the preceding two years when the COVID-19 crisis was a dominating factor. We were somewhat able to return to normal in that staff could work in the office without worrying about getting sick. In-person meetings and gatherings were occurring more and more frequently, although most meetings were still virtual or hybrid. We were able to get fully integrated into our expanded office space, which generally functioned well. There is a small sense of separation between the program areas located in the "old" space and those in the "new" space; however, the flexibility to have additional space more than counterbalances the separation. The agency is adjusting to having a significant number of staff only working in-office the required two days a week. We are getting into a routine of knowing when to connect with staff and when to hold various program meetings. One benefit to this working arrangement is that because some staff are in-office and some working remotely, they are paying closer attention to using the Outlook calendar and other digital communications. Over the year, the number of staff working in-office more than the required two days per week seemed to increase.

We have many strong program areas, which I believe we have mostly maintained or strengthened. We had some staff turnover, with newly hired and some long-term staff leaving for enhanced career opportunities. We were able to bring in new staff with new skills and fresh perspectives. However, we had a hard time filling some positions, notably a Transportation Planner position. I believe, overall staff performed very well.

The Community Planning Program was strengthened significantly with the hiring of an experienced Program Manager familiar with Berkshire County. Housing continued to be a priority, and we conducted several housing related planning projects and continued to implement the Housing Vision for the Berkshires, working with 1Berkshire and Berkshire Housing. The Community Planning Program also continued working on comprehensive planning activities, with Master Plans being developed for Monterey and Lee. We also continued to retain existing housing stock and improve its condition through our Community Development Block Grant housing rehabilitation program. This program is a challenging program to administer. Contributing factors include the overly burdensome bureaucratic requirements, shortage of contractors willing to do the work, the increasing costs of building, and the challenging nature of some of the clients being served. A new BRPC program in FY 23 to provide grant funds to construct accessibility measures for disabled property owners got off to a solid start.

Data and data analysis has always been a strong program. Berkshire Benchmarks continued to be a strong asset for Berkshire County, with new data being added, including census results, and a State of the County update released. We received a large grant to update the online Building and Board of Health Permit software.

The Berkshire Public Health Alliance (managed by BRPC) continued to grow with the addition of more staff. It is now the largest program at BRPC. The Berkshire Public Health Alliance Coordinator position brought much needed stability to the inspectional services component. The statewide

effort to implement performance standards and create regionwide districts was slowly unrolled by the state. The Berkshire Overdose Addiction Prevention Collaborative (also managed by BRPC) continued to be a strong program and expanded efforts to prevent the misuse of opioids and other addictive substances.

The Berkshire Flyer passenger rail service had a successful, if shortened, summer season of weekend rail service between New York City and Pittsfield in FY 23. Two other important passenger rail initiatives made limited progress in FY 23. The West-East passenger rail service continues to receive support from the Governor and key legislators, but tangible results have been slow. Improvements are being made to the intermodal center in Springfield, which should help the Pittsfield – Boston route. The Special Commission to study governance and operation of the West-East rail got off to a slow start and has not met the June 30, 2023 deadline to release its recommendations. The Northern Tier Passenger Rail study has only made limited progress over the year. The Transportation Program did receive funding from the Safe Streets for All program to do a comprehensive safety study for Berkshire County and prepared the required Regional Transportation Plan.

We continued our efforts to deal with climate change by fostering adaptation planning, promoting energy efficiency, and working on emissions reduction measures. The Environmental and Energy Program worked with several communities on Municipal Vulnerability and Hazard Mitigation Plans and project implementation. The Environmental Program also worked with several communities to implement the Green Communities Program to promote energy efficiency, thereby reducing emissions. We hired a staff person mostly dedicated to energy planning and implementation and expanded that program's energy-related component. The Brownfields Program was strong with the receipt of a large award for the revolving loan fund.

BRPC's Economic Development Program continued to assist businesses, nonprofits, and municipalities through training, educational material, and one-on-one support. The Economic Development Program was also instrumental in developing and promoting the Berkshire Funding Focus, with the primary goal of assisting municipalities, schools, businesses, and non-profits to secure COVID-related recovery funds. The Economic Development Program also supported cultural districts and quickly engaged in digital equity planning.

The agency is in a solid fiscal condition. Our budget increased, and we added an administrative staff position to assist with HR-related items. It appears we will end the year with a small surplus. We have continued to put funds into the Other Postemployment Benefits (OPEB) Trust. The Administrative staff successfully managed an increasing number of complicated and complex projects.

BRPC had a very busy and successful year in FY 2023. Part of that success has been the commitment of the BRPC leadership to BRPC's Mission. I want to thank John Duval, the BRPC Chair, for the past two years for his steady guidance. I also want to recognize the numerous contributions made by Rene Wood, who has been a long-standing member of the Executive Committee for many years.

Thomas Matuszko  
Executive Director

## In Memory

BRPC wants to honor and remember former Richmond resident and civic volunteer, **Peter Cohen**, who passed away on December 8, 2022. From his obituary: *He loved the Berkshires and volunteered as a member of the Richmond Board of Health, the Assessors, the Council on Aging, and the Richmond Library and produced a video for the [Town of Richmond](#) which extolls the virtues of life in his adopted town.* He was a retired New York advertising executive and also chaired the Municipal Building Committee. The new Town Hall and Library building opened in September 2023.

# Programs of BRPC

## Community Development and Housing

BRPC supports strategies, programs, and projects that strengthen our region through housing planning, housing rehabilitation and development, infrastructure improvements, and promoting efficient use of municipal resources.

## Community Planning

BRPC assists in the development of master and comprehensive plans, zoning bylaws, open space and recreation plans, and other land use projects, including review of site-specific development projects.

## Data and Information Services

BRPC's Data and Information Services Program serves as a data, analysis, and mapping resource for our municipalities, the community, and other BRPC programs. The program can create customized maps and modeling using various neighborhood, municipal, and county-level digital resources. The program often conducts in-depth analyses showing current data trends and projections for the future and publishes the Berkshire Benchmarks data library and indicators.

## Emergency Preparedness Planning

BRPC guides emergency preparedness through multi-agency coordination for improved regional resiliency in two areas: public health, including public health emergency preparedness, and the natural environment, including hazard mitigation plans and municipal vulnerability assessments.

## Economic Development

BRPC coordinates with federal, state, regional, and local partners to pursue economic development strategies, programs, and projects that encourage investment in our region, including oversight of the federally designated Economic Development District of Berkshire County.

## Environmental and Energy Planning

BRPC supports strategies, programs, and projects that strengthen and protect the natural and built environment through local and regional initiatives, including Brownfields assessments and cleanups, stormwater management, climate adaptation and resiliency, clean and efficient energy, and Green Communities.

## Public Health

BRPC delivers public health services and planning by coordinating regional partnerships such as the Berkshire Public Health Alliance, Berkshire County Boards of Health Association (BCBOHA), Age Friendly Berkshires, the Berkshire Overdose Addiction Prevention Collaborative (BOAPC), the County Health Initiative (CHI) and many other programs.

## Regional Initiatives and Services

BRPC participates in regional initiatives related to public education, outdoor recreation, and broadband access and operates a regional Group Purchasing Program.



### **Transportation Planning**

BRPC's Transportation Planning Program is designated as the region's Metropolitan Planning Organization per federal transportation law. It is responsible for the planning and programming all modes of transportation, including highways, public transit, rail, freight, bicycles and pedestrians. This program also provides technical assistance to our communities on transportation matters.

### **Administration**

BRPC's Administration staff provides financial management, support to Programs and Initiatives, and support to the Commission's policy body.

### **General Services and Operations**

BRPC's Local Assessments from our Communities allowed BPRC to provide services to our communities not covered by funding sources from Federal, State, Local, Organizations, or Nonprofits. Educational Training, Environmental Reviews, Grant Writing, Maps, and Local Technical Assistance are provided.

### **Berkshires Tomorrow, Inc.**

Our nonprofit received funding for the Berkshire Remote Learning Initiative, Vaccine Clinics, Berkshire County Substance Recovery Support, Cybersecurity Arts Building Community Initiative, Berkshire Fund Focus, and efforts related to implementing the Berkshire County Outdoor Recreation Plan.

# Summary of Project Activities for FY 2023

## Community Development and Housing

### → Americans with Disabilities Act

Through a combination of funding sources, ADA Self-Evaluation and Transition Plans were completed by BRPC staff for Dalton (using CDBG planning grant funds) and Cheshire and Lanesborough (using MOD grant funds). This enabled the towns to identify and document accessibility barriers in their respective municipal facilities and to shape plans for barrier removal implementation projects.

### → Community Development Block Grant

BRPC staff continued to administer several CDBG grants for Berkshire communities. CDBG Housing Rehabilitation Programs were completed in FY 23 for the Towns of Cheshire, New Marlborough, Otis, and Sheffield, completing thirty-four projects. The Program continues to work on rehabilitating homes in Dalton and Becket, with eighteen projects at an approximate cost of \$895,000 either completed or under construction.

The CDBG Housing Rehabilitation Program provides new roofs and window replacements, electrical and plumbing upgrades, heating and septic systems, and de-leading properties built before 1978. The average individual CDBG Housing Rehab project budget is \$40,000 per unit.



### → CEDAC Home Modification Loan Program (HMLP)

Beginning in FY 23, BRPC has served as the CEDAC Home Modification Loan (HMLP) Program Provider for Berkshire County. This state-funded program can fund the construction of 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.

Thus far, BRPC has closed two loans from the CEDAC Home Modification Loan Program.

## Community Planning

### → Comprehensive (Master) Planning

The Community Planning Program provided comprehensive planning services to several municipalities. These services included the adoption of a Master Plan in the Town of Windsor and working through Master Plans for the Town of Monterey and the Town of Lee (both anticipated to be adopted in FY 24).



Monterey Master Plan Public Forum

### → District Local Technical Assistance

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission staff provided technical assistance to member municipalities through the District Local Technical Assistance program (or "DLTA"). This assistance focused on advancing municipal partnerships, planning for housing and economic development, and developing land use regulations. It also encouraged and enabled municipalities to work together to achieve and/or enhance cost-effective service delivery or to create and sustain ongoing collaboration and consultation on issues affecting the municipalities. Projects and activities resulted in a measurable change in the municipalities, whether in law, regulation, program management, or practice. It allowed BRPC to work on important regional initiatives such as support to the Berkshire Education Resources K-12 (formerly the Berkshire Education Task Force), support to the Rest of River Municipal Committee for the clean-up of the Housatonic River, the completion of a comprehensive housing strategy for the region, and the realization of Economic Development District designation for Berkshire County.

### → District Local Technical Assistance - Augmentation

In addition to the typical DLTA activities, additional "augmentation" funding was provided to RPAs to provide opportunities for staff to assist communities in identifying funding opportunities



for projects and preparing grant applications. This funding program has allowed staff to assist with projects in multiple programs, including Community Planning, Community Development, Economic Development, and Environmental and Energy.

## → Housing Planning

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission assisted the towns of Williamstown, Great Barrington, and Dalton in developing Housing Needs Assessments and assisted the Town of Sheffield in preparing a Housing Production Plan. The Commission initiated efforts in Sheffield to provide localized education on the ongoing housing crisis and implement land use regulations that will assist the Town in creating new housing opportunities. Lastly, the Commission has continued regional efforts to implement *A Housing Vision for the Berkshires* with 1Berkshire and Berkshire Housing to address housing shortages and efforts by communities to create a diversity of housing choices for persons of all income levels.

Also included in this work is the additional buildout of BRPC's Planning Toolkit. Staff increased the catalog of toolkit items to include various housing-related activities, from basic activities communities can take on to understand housing needs, regulatory changes, and funding mechanisms.

## → Open Space Planning

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission developed an Open Space and Recreation Plan for the Town of Becket, which is awaiting final approval from the Commonwealth. Efforts in the Town of Williamstown and Town of Lee are anticipated for completion in FY 24.

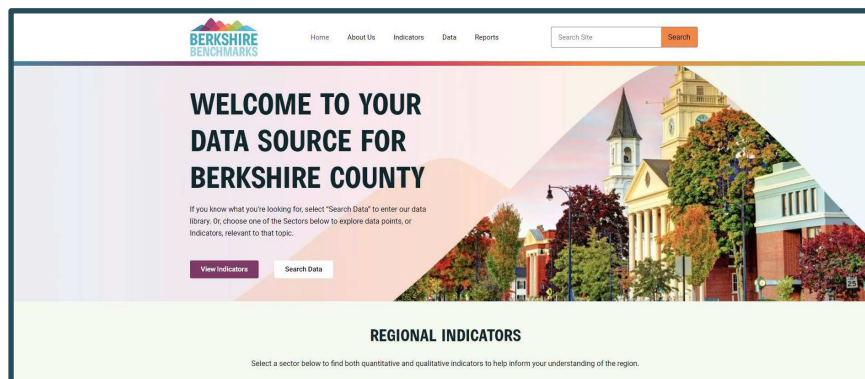
## → Zoning

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission assisted municipalities with a range of zoning-related projects, including, but not limited to, housing provisions in Adams, energy storage regulations in Hinsdale, accessory dwelling units and short-term rentals in Washington, and non-conformities in Cheshire.

# Data and Information Services

## → Data Services

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission worked on updating Berkshire Benchmarks, including an update to the State of the County Report. BRPC staff also provided data assistance to our municipalities, local organizations, and the public.



### → Mapping Services

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission provides maps to our communities and the public as requested through our Local Technical Assistance or on a fee basis. Also, BRPC staff provided planning services for creating and promoting mountain biking trails in Western Massachusetts.

### → IT Services

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission provided technical assistance to our municipalities in reviewing their IT cyber security posture and working to provide the planning tools needed to ensure their system's security.

## Economic Development

### → Arts & Culture Economic Development

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission supported the third annual "ArtWeek Berkshires," a collaborative effort of all five MCC-designated Cultural Districts in the county along with 1Berkshire. BRPC staff provides planning group meetings and marketing plan coordination for ArtWeek Berkshires.

### → Berkshire Funding Focus

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission hosted a new regional initiative entitled Berkshire Funding Focus (BFF), which supports schools, small businesses, municipalities, and non-profits seeking government grant funding. BFF's website, [berkshirerefundingfocus.org](https://berkshirerefundingfocus.org), contains curated grant opportunities and extensive resources to help connect grant seekers with opportunities and training.

### → Digital Equity Planning

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission was selected by the Mass Broadband Institute as a pre-qualified consultant to develop Digital Equity Plans and Charettes for Berkshire County municipalities. Several communities have enlisted in this program, including Pittsfield, Dalton, Clarksburg, New Marlborough, and two sub-regional collaborations of multiple towns. BRPC also works directly with MBI to support their outreach regarding the pending statewide Digital Equity Plan, coordinating focus groups and asset mapping for the region.

### → Economic Development Planning Services

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission provided Economic Development Planning services to assist the Towns of Adams, Great Barrington, Lanesborough, Lenox, and Richmond in advancing economic development activities in these towns. BRPC also completed a business and permitting guidebook for the City of North Adams and conducted an initial phase of economic conditions assessment for the Town of Cheshire.

### → Economic Recovery Support

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission completed a wide range of recovery and resiliency work under a multi-year EDA CARES Act project, including improvements to the Berkshire Benchmarks website, extensive economic resiliency research, planning for incorporation into the next regional CEDS, and technical assistance for the county's small business and non-profit community in partnership with 1Berkshire.

### → **Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy**

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission completed the 2023-2027 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for Berkshire County.

## **Environmental and Energy Planning**

### → **Brownfields Environmental Assessments**

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission received an EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant totaling \$500,000. The Brownfields Committee meets as needed and approves sites across the county, with most sites located in the most industrial corridors. BRPC has contracted with a licensed site professional to conduct assessments under this program at no cost to municipalities, site owners, developers, and prospective purchasers. BRPC also worked with the Town of Adams to secure an additional \$500,000 in assessment funds specific to sites within the Town of Adams.

### → **Brownfields Environmental Cleanup**

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission serves as grant manager for an EPA Brownfields Cleanup Grant awarded to the Town of Great Barrington to remediate the Ried Cleaners site, which underwent a soil removal action conducted by EPA Emergency Response. Cleanup activities are anticipated to begin in 2024 upon completion of additional assessments being undertaken by EPA.

### → **Brownfields Cleanup Revolving Loan Fund**

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission has established a Revolving Loan Fund to provide flexible loans (and sub-grants) to municipalities and other entities to help pay for contamination removal. The purpose of this program is to promote the reuse and redevelopment of contaminated, vacant, or underutilized properties. Loans have been awarded to Greylock WORKS for remediation activities at Greylock Mill in North Adams and the Eagle Mill in Lee. BRPC received \$2.5M to recapitalize the revolving loan fund in FY 22 and was awarded an additional \$2.35M in supplemental funds in FY 23.

### → **Climate Adaptation and Resiliency**

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission provided technical and planning services to assist Cheshire, Clarksburg, Hancock, Lee, Lenox, and Mount Washington in preparing Hazard Mitigation Plans to meet the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) requirements. BRPC is also aiding the Towns of Cheshire, Clarksburg, Hancock, Lee, and Mount Washington in completing the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) planning process. BRPC provided grant administration, project leadership, and community outreach services for a regional partnership between Lenox, New Marlborough, Pittsfield, and Stockbridge as we complete a comprehensive study of culvert infrastructure under threat of failure due to climate change. As a follow-up to the previous culvert study, BRPC provided project management and outreach to Monterey as it completes the final engineering and permitting for a culvert replacement on Route 23.

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission was part of the formation of the Berkshire Clean, Cold, and Connected partnership. This is one of the first three regional partnerships supported by DER to address stream and wetland restoration. The partnership includes community groups, nonprofits, and state and local governments.

## → Energy

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission worked with municipalities to increase knowledge of clean energy technologies and programs and expand access to clean energy technology for the Commonwealth's low-income residents. BRPC assists communities seeking or having received designation as a Green Community. BRPC also provided Berkshire County municipalities with clean energy planning and program management, including Adams, Becket, Cheshire, Clarksburg, Great Barrington, Lanesborough, North Adams, Peru, and West Stockbridge.

## → Environmental Municipal Services

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission served as the agent for the five Rest of River municipalities: Lenox, Lee, Great Barrington, Sheffield, and Stockbridge.

## → Stormwater

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission provided professional planning assistance to the Towns of Adams, Cheshire, Dalton, and Lanesborough to maintain compliance with the NPDES Phase II MS4 General Permit. BRPC also provided regional assistance that furthers the goals of the Nonpoint Source Program, especially objectives and milestones identified in the 2020-2024 Massachusetts Nonpoint Source Management Program Plan. This past year, BRPC worked with Dalton, Lanesborough, Monterey, and Pittsfield in completing innovative stormwater controls to address flooding and water quality issues through green infrastructure, including Green Infrastructure designs along Hupi Road in Monterey, Francis Avenue in Pittsfield and a Green Infrastructure plan in Dalton and Lanesborough.



MVP Funds Flood Resilience: Regional Culvert Assessments MVP Action Grant partners from Lenox, New Marlborough, Pittsfield, and Stockbridge and community partners Greenagers and Housatonic Valley Association.



## General Services and Operations

### → Local Assistance

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission provided local assistance through the funds received from Community assessments. BRPC prepared advisory comments for the Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs and local permitting boards/commissions on projects subject to the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) review. Technical assistance was provided to local municipalities, nonprofit organizations, and institutions to prepare, write, and administer grant applications to a wide range of public or private funding sources. Additional technical assistance was provided to the region's municipalities on a host of planning topics, ranging from zoning procedural issues, review of development projects, requests for demographic and land use information, and requests for GIS and other maps.

## Public Health

### → Shared Public Health Services & Berkshire Public Health Alliance

The Berkshire Public Health Alliance was formed in 2011 to allow, but not require, local Boards of Health to share public health services such as inspections/environmental health and public health nursing and allow the Alliance to apply for grants to benefit member municipalities. The Alliance consists of 22 Member Municipalities. Two public health nurses and several inspectors serve Member Municipalities that contract with the Alliance for comprehensive inspectional/environmental and public health nursing services.

A recent Public Health Excellence Grant (PHE) from the state Department of Public Health has allowed the Alliance to offer additional services, such as housing inspection assistance. BRPC is also a PHE Training Hub, providing field training to inspectors throughout Berkshire and Hampden Counties. Several federal grants related to food safety allow the Alliance to offer training and assistance in food protection. Finally, a vaccine promotion grant from the National Councils on Aging (NCOA) allowed the Alliance to expand vaccination efforts for flu and COVID-19, including offering vaccines in homes (including group homes) and businesses for those that need it and additional promotion and education about vaccines.

### → Public Health Food Protection Services

Two Federal FDA Grants will allow Berkshire Regional Planning Commission staff and Berkshire Public Health Alliance inspectors to continue improving food safety and inspectors' training. BRPC has also implemented online permitting in several additional communities this year.

### → Public Health Inspectional Services

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission served as the fiduciary agent to the Berkshire Public Health Alliance to implement a regional Public Health Inspectional Program. The Alliance also received a Public Health Excellence grant from the state DPH at the end of FY 2021, encouraging municipalities to share public health services and build toward a more comprehensive set of shared public health services. This allowed the Alliance to hire a coordinator and additional inspector. Additional funding received for FY 24 will allow the Alliance to hire a full-time Housing Specialist Inspector available to Alliance PHE members. The municipalities served in fiscal year 2023 were Becket, Dalton, Egremont, Lanesborough, Middlefield, Peru, Richmond, Savoy, Washington, Williamstown, and Windsor.



### → Field Training Hub

BRPC was selected as one of ten PHE Training Hubs across the state. Training Hubs will provide field training to local health inspectors in PHE municipalities and shared services arrangements. BRPC's Training Hub will cover PHE municipalities in Berkshire and Hampden County.

### → Public Health Nursing Services

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission was the fiduciary agent to the Berkshire Public Health Alliance to implement a regional Public Health Nursing Program. The municipalities served in fiscal year 2023 were Adams, Becket, Cheshire, Clarksburg, Dalton, Egremont, Florida, Hancock, Hinsdale, Lanesborough, New Ashford, North Adams, Otis, Peru, Pittsfield, Richmond, Savoy, Washington, West Stockbridge, and Williamstown. In addition to checking and following up on infectious disease reports seven days per week, providing wellness activities such as blood pressure clinics and Matter of Balance fall prevention classes, providing case management services for any TB cases in these municipalities, and answering questions from businesses, schools, Boards of Health and the general public, the nurses provide extensive vaccine clinics for both flu and COVID. See [www.getvaccinatedberkshires.org](http://www.getvaccinatedberkshires.org) for more information on vaccine clinics or to register for your vaccine!

### → Public Health Substance Misuse Prevention and Harm Reduction & Public Health Youth Prevention Projects



The Public Health Program has expanded into substance misuse prevention activities through the MassCall3 initiative, which addresses substance use prevention in high school-aged youth in Central Berkshire County, and SOR-PEC, which is specifically about building resilience and avoiding future substance use in young girls of color living in Pittsfield. In FY 23, BRPC was awarded a MassCall3 part B grant, which allowed the implementation and expansion of the project, and an increased grant for SOR-PEC. BRPC also works with the Berkshire Youth Development Project (BYDP) to conduct the

Prevention Needs Assessments (PNA) in area schools every other year and on other youth initiatives.

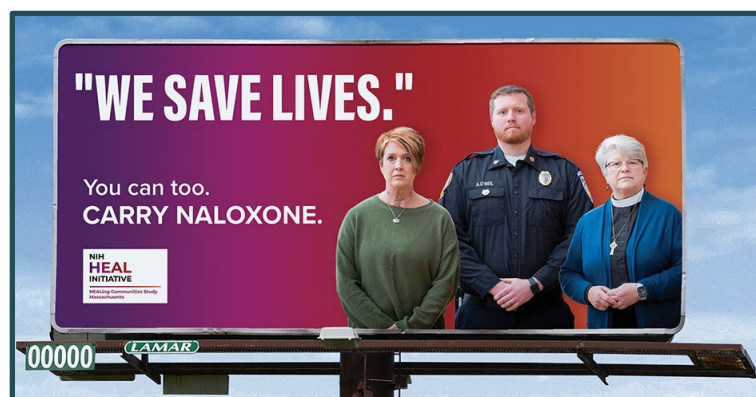
### → Public Health Hepatitis C Program

With funding from the New England Aids Education Training Center (NEATC), BRPC's Public Health Program has worked with clinical partners to engage more physicians/clinical partners in treating hepatitis C, connecting providers to Berkshire Harm Reduction and providing training and educational programs. In FY 23, several more primary care providers underwent training and agreed to treat hepatitis C patients and work with Berkshire Harm Reduction. A Community of Practice (COP) was formed and had its first meeting. A larger provider training and a Grand Rounds for residents are planned for Fall 2023. A monthly newsletter is also produced.

### → Berkshire Post-Overdose Program (B-POP)

A Mass DPH Overdose to Action (OD2A) grant, as well as assistance from the Northampton Health Department under their federal COSSAP grant, allowed the BRPC Public Health Program staff to work with local Emergency Medical Services (EMS) agencies to begin planning around Mobile Integrated Health. Under MIH, EMS can provide referrals and resources to those who have experienced an overdose and/or provide non-emergency care at the time of the call or at another time. These grants also allowed public health staff to provide education and naloxone supplies to Berkshire police departments and to set up data management and collection systems.

## → Public Health Mass HEAL Study



BRPC, via the Berkshire Overdose Addiction Prevention Collaborative, is one of the 16 organizations across the state funded by Boston Medical Center to provide facilitation and act as fiscal host for one of the sites (Pittsfield in our case) in a large five-state research study on reducing opioid deaths. This work, funded through December 31, 2023, is designed to reduce opioid overdose deaths by 30%. The coalition, with BRPC facilitating, has implemented several interventions designed to reduce overdoses, including providing naloxone (Narcan) via mail, several communications campaigns designed to reduce stigma and raise awareness, the provision of Naloxboxes, and the implementation of several projects around community outreach and engagement of those at risk.

## → Berkshire Overdose Addiction Prevention Collaborative (BOAPC)

The Berkshire Regional Planning Commission coordinates the Berkshire Overdose Addiction Prevention Collaborative (BOAPC), a countywide coalition dedicated to preventing and reducing unintentional deaths and non-fatal overdoses associated with opioid poisonings. The Berkshire County Sheriff's Office administers a legislative line item and funding from other sources that support this work. BOAPC supports a website and a Facebook page that provide information and resources, including the ability to order naloxone through the mail. In FY 23, BOAPC began a strategic planning process that will continue in FY 24 to map out the next few years.

## → Public Health Emergency Preparedness

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission was the fiduciary agent for the Berkshire County Boards of Health Association (BCBOHA), acting as the Berkshire Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP) Coalition, which assists local Boards of Health in Berkshire County in preparing for and responding to emergencies and disasters. BRPC supports the Berkshire and Franklin Medical Reserve Corps (MRC), which provides thousands of volunteer hours annually. BRPC also attended regional meetings and coordinated with regional partners such as the Western Region Homeland Security Advisory Council (WRHSAC), the Public Health Western Advisory Group (WAG), the MRC Advisory Group (MAG), the Health and Medical Coordinating Coalition (HMCC) and the Local/State Advisory Committee (L/SAC). BRPC also makes sure regional plans, such as Emergency Dispensing Site (EDS) Plans, Regional Shelter Plans, Family Reunification Plans, and many others, are created or updated. In FY 23, BRPC began an ongoing project around equity in emergencies, ensuring everyone has access to the services they need in a disaster or emergency. BRPC is also working on plans around heat emergencies as the weather becomes more extreme and the summers hotter.

## → Public Health Community Health Improvement Planning

BRPC acted as the backbone agency for the County Health Initiative (CHI), which consists of decision-makers from Northern Berkshire Community Coalition, Berkshire Health Systems, the City of Pittsfield Health Department, Tri-Town Health Department, the Southern Berkshire Rural Health Network, and Volunteers in Medicine. The CHI worked on developing a Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) for Berkshire County. FY 23 was year three of a now six-year project, including implementing the plan once completed.

## → Public Health Grey to Green

The Pittsfield Grey to Green Project is a five-year effort to engage the community and prioritize green planning in a social and racial justice context to remove barriers to health. Partners included Habitat for Humanity and Working Cities, 18 Degrees, and the City of Pittsfield. In FY 23, Grey to Green engaged local residents in walking audits to help gather information on community needs and wants. In addition, G2G was leveraged for several other projects, such as the Francis Avenue Parklet and the revitalization of the yard and playground at Wilson Park Housing.



April 2023 Arbor Day, Durant Park, Pittsfield Tree Planting

## → Public Health Assistance to Communities Hardest Hit by COVID

Funding was provided by the MA Department of Public Health to expand contact tracing efforts, hire an epidemiologist and at least one Community Health Worker (CHW). With contact tracing now mostly handled through Public Health Nursing contracts, BRPC has been able to use this funding to provide services to those most impacted by COVID. Instead of hiring a CHW, funding was provided to establish CHW/community outreach programs at Volunteers in Medicine and Central Berkshire Habitat for Humanity. Epidemiological work was done setting up a dashboard for flu cases and tick and foodborne illnesses. This funding has been expanded for a third year.

## → Public Health Rural Health Equity Funding

BRPC has been awarded three years of funding through the New England Rural Health Association to assist rural communities affected by COVID in central Berkshire County. The funding to date has supported afterschool programming by the Dalton CRA, food and fuel assistance through the Becket Federated Church, fresh milk provision through Berkshire Bounty, school programming, school nurse office and other supplies in Lanesborough, Richmond, and Central Berkshire school districts, among other projects. In addition, NERHA provided root causes funding, which allowed BRPC to work on a housing toolkit for municipalities.

## → Public Health Mobile Farmer's Market

BRPC is acting as the grant manager and fiduciary for a large, three-year USDA grant that will allow organizations such as Berkshire Grown, Berkshire Bounty, Southern Berkshire Rural Health Network, and CHP to provide a mobile farmer's market to populations that are either unable to get to a farmer's market or who lack the resources to purchase fresh produce and

other local food. A sliding scale makes the market affordable for all, and its mobility makes it accessible to those who cannot travel far.

### → **Public Health Age Friendly Berkshires**

BRPC has been awarded a grant through AgeSpan to work with Councils on Aging and other organizations that serve older adults on a project of interest. The project emphasizes equity and ensuring that all are served. The Public Health Program sees this as an opportunity to revitalize Age Friendly Berkshires.

## **Regional Initiatives and Services**

### → **Municipal Services (General Government)**

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission continued to manage the online burn-permitting program with 27 communities' Fire Departments participating. BRPC staff also assisted with upgrading the online building and Board of Health permitting software.

The Berkshire Regional Group Purchasing Program (BRGPP) assisted member communities and school districts in procuring 20 individual road, energy, and winter materials and services, resulting in 31 vendor contracts. BRGPP staff executes and manages these supplier contracts for the 28 BRGPP members, following state procurement requirements.

BRPC also assisted the towns of Washington and Middlefield to obtain shared services of a Town Administrator.

### → **Municipal Services**

BRPC staff assisted the Town of Florida in managing the Massachusetts MGL c 30-39M and Chapter 90 requirements to prepare and conduct the solicitation process for a construction contractor for the Town's Tilda Hill, Black Stone Road, and Town Fire Station paving project.

BRPC also assisted the Town of Washington in preparing and conducting procurement of a construction contractor, including MassDOT pre-qualifications and prevailing wage determinations, for the Town's \$300,000 New Lenox Road – Whitney Place Road Bridge Preservation Project.

### → **Municipal Services (Education - Berkshire Education Resources K12)**

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission supported the Berkshire Education Resources K12 in developing solutions for improvement across the board in the Berkshire communities. Funds were provided to help Berkshire County school districts plan for the future through Berkshire Resources for Learning and Innovation (BRLI).

### → **Outdoor Recreation Planning and Implementation**

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission supported the second annual "Mountain Day" at Bousquet in Pittsfield, which included a conference with multiple presentations, demonstrations of outdoor recreation equipment, and opportunities for participation in outdoor recreation at the site. BRPC continued to refine its inventory of recreational assets in the region in preparation for the launch of an outdoor recreation website for the region and is working with



a team of regional advisors on the content and layout of that site, anticipated to launch in late 2023.

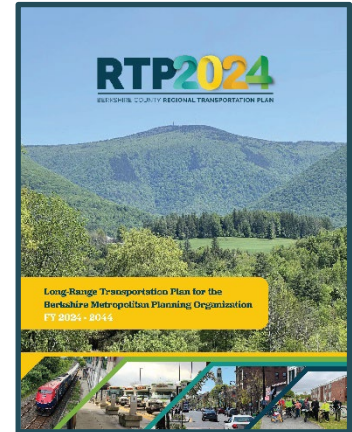




## Transportation

### → Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organization

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission provided staff support to the Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organization, which developed and endorsed the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), the Unified Planning Work Program, and the 2024 Regional Transportation Plan. Over this past year, transportation staff continued with efforts to implement the Electric Vehicle and Charging Infrastructure plan, shepherding bicycle and pedestrian planning efforts in North Adams and Pittsfield and conducting community wide pavement assessments. Staff has also updated Berkshire County's Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan and has been actively involved with the Tri-Town Connector micro-transit service in southern Berkshire County.



### → Bicycles and Pedestrians



May 2023 Bike Month  
Downtown Pittsfield Ride from The Common

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission served as the fiduciary agent for the Berkshire Bike Path Council in promoting the development of bicycle facilities in Berkshire County. Efforts continue on the engineering and designing of bike path segments in Northern Berkshire County, between Adams, North Adams, and Williamstown. Construction of the Ashuwillitcook Trail extension from Lanesborough to Pittsfield was completed. As part of Baystate Bike Month, BRPC staff held ten bicycle events during May to promote increased bicycle use in the region.

### → Complete Streets

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission completed a Complete Streets Prioritization Plan for the Town of West Stockbridge.

### → Pavement Conditions

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission completed work on pavement condition assessments for the Town of Egremont and the Town of Williamstown.

### → Traffic Safety

The Berkshire Regional Planning Commission's Transportation Team was selected to receive funding in the nationally competitive Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) grant program. This funding provided by the US Department of Transportation will be used to develop a comprehensive safety action plan for Berkshire County.

### → Passenger Rail

The Berkshire Regional Planning Commission's staff continues their involvement in statewide passenger rail efforts, including the East/West Rail initiative and the Northern Tier Passenger rail study. BRPC staff is also involved with overseeing the second year of the Berkshire Flyer rail service that runs from May through October.



Berkshire Flyer arrives at the Joseph Scelsi Intermodal Transportation Center (ITC), Pittsfield

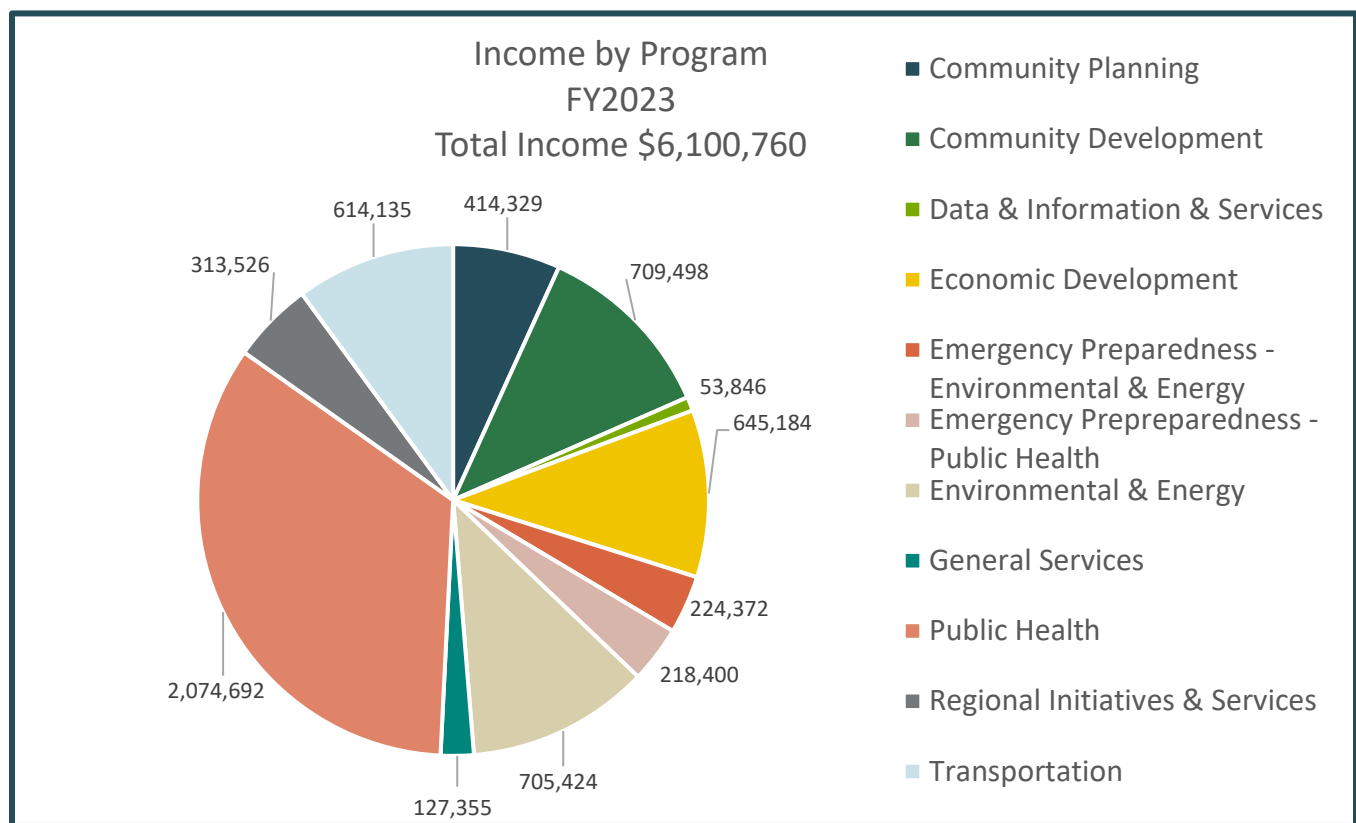
## Finance and Administration

BRPC closed FY 2023 with an increase in revenue of \$213,543 over FY 2022. FY 2023 revenue of \$6.1 million came from funding sources, including Federal and State grants, local organizations, and nonprofit agreements. BRPC managed a total of 142 contracts in FY 2023.

BRPC's funds supported a broad range of services and technical expertise under each of our programs. Our programs allowed BRPC to provide leadership and assistance to the County's municipalities, organizations, and citizens in achieving countywide inter-relationships, prosperity, opportunities, quality of life, strength, and vibrancy.

### → Independent Audit

Our FY 2023 independent Audit has yet to be completed. Our unaudited statements show BRPC's expenditures to be within budget with a surplus in the general operation fund.



## Commission Delegates and Alternates

### Adams

Delegate—Michael Mach  
Alternate—John Duval

### Alford

Delegate—Alexandra Glover  
Alternate—Shirley Mueller

### Becket

Delegate—Robert Ronzio  
Alternate—James Levy

### Cheshire

Delegate—Peter Traub

### Clarksburg

Delegate—  
Alternate—

### Dalton

Delegate—Caleb Darby  
Alternate—John Boyle

### Egremont

Delegate— Mary McGurn  
Alternate—Stephen Kyle

### Florida

Delegate—  
Alternate—

### Great Barrington

Delegate—Pedro Pachano  
Alternate—Malcolm Fick

### Hancock

Delegate—Christie Moran

### Hinsdale

Delegate—Richard Roussin  
Alternate—Dan Brown

### Lanesborough

Delegate—Barb Davis-Hassan  
Alternate—Leanne Yinger

### Lee

Delegate—Buck Donovan  
Alternate—Peter Bluhm

### Lenox

Delegate— Pamela Kueber  
Alternate—Mark Smith

### Monterey

Delegate—Laura Mensi

### Mt Washington

Delegate—Keith Torrico  
Alternate—James Lovejoy

### New Ashford

Delegate—Mark Phelps  
Alternate—Kevin Flicker

### New Marlborough

Delegate—Jonathan James  
Alternate—Robert Hartt

### North Adams

Delegate—Kyle Hanlon  
Alternate—Lisa Blackmer

### Otis

Delegate—Mark Anthony  
Alternate—

### Peru

Delegate—Samuel Haupt

### Pittsfield

Delegate—Sheila Irvin  
Alternate—

### Richmond

Delegate—Peter Lopez

### Sandisfield

Delegate—Barbara Cormier  
Alternate—Lisa Leavenworth

### Savoy

Delegate—Sarah Satterthwaite  
Alternate—Bill Drosehn

### Sheffield

Delegate—Sari Hoy  
Alternate—René Wood

### Stockbridge

Delegate—Nancy Socha  
Alternate—Christine Rasmussen

### Tyringham

Delegate—Amanda Hamilton  
Alternate—Sarah Hudson

### Washington

Delegate—Don Gagnon  
Alternate—Kent Lew

### West Stockbridge

Delegate—Dana Bixby

### Williamstown

Delegate—Kenneth Kuttner  
Alternate—Roger Bolton

### Windsor

Delegate—Doug McNally

# BRPC Committee Membership

## Executive Committee

Staff: Thomas Matuszko, Executive Director

John Duval, Chair (Adams)  
Malcolm Fick, Vice Chair (Gt Barrington)  
Buck Donovan, Treasurer and Finance  
Committee Chair (Lee)  
Sheila Irvin, Clerk (Pittsfield)  
Roger Bolton, Environmental Review  
Committee Chair (Williamstown)

Rene Wood, Commission Development  
Committee Chair (Sheffield)  
Kyle Hanlon, At-Large (North Adams)  
CJ Hoss, Regional Issues Committee Chair  
(Pittsfield) until December 2022, then  
vacant  
Sam Haupt, At-Large Transportation  
Expert (Peru)

## Commission Development Committee

Staff: Marianne Snizek, Office Manager

Rene Wood, Chair (Sheffield)  
Sarah Hudson (Tyringham)  
John Duval, BRPC Chair (Adams)  
(Ex-Officio)

Doug McNally (Windsor)  
Pedro Pachano (Gt. Barrington)  
Buck Donovan (Lee)  
Kyle Hanlon (North Adams)

## Environmental Review Committee

Staff: Melissa Provencher, Program Manager

Roger Bolton, Chair (Williamstown)  
Malcolm Fick (Gt. Barrington)  
Edward Holub (Dalton)  
Kyle Hanlon (North Adams)  
Mark Smith (Lenox)

Eleanor Tillinghast (Mt. Washington),  
(Non-Commission member)  
John Duval, BRPC Chair (Adams) (Ex-  
Officio)

## Finance Committee

Staff: Marianne Snizek, Office Manager

Buck Donovan, Treasurer and Finance  
Committee Chair (Lee)  
John Duval, BRPC Chair (Adams) (Ex-  
Officio)

Sam Haupt (Peru)  
Sheila Irvin (Pittsfield)  
Malcolm Fick (Gt. Barrington)  
Kyle Hanlon (North Adams)

## Regional Issues Committee

Staff: Laura Brennan, Program Manager

CJ Hoss (Pittsfield), Chair until December  
2022, then vacant  
Andrew Groff (Williamstown) (Non-  
Commission member)  
Christine Rasmussen (Stockbridge)  
Sheila Irvin (Pittsfield)  
Amanda Hamilton (Tyringham)

Chris Rembold (Gt. Barrington) (Non-  
Commission member)  
Eleanor Tillinghast (Mt Washington) (Non-  
Commission member)  
Kyle Hanlon (North Adams)  
John Duval, BRPC Chair (Adams) (Ex-Officio)



**Berkshire Brownfields Committee**

Staff: Melissa Provencher, Program Manager

***Voting Members***

Sheila Irvin, Chair (Pittsfield)  
 Jim Byrne, EPA  
 Rebecca Ferguson (Adams)  
 Marilyn Hansen, Lee Community  
 Development Corporation  
 Nate Joyner (Pittsfield)  
 Ben Lamb or Kevin Pink, 1Berkshire

Tom Matuszko, BRPC  
 Mike Nuvalle (North Adams)  
 Chris Rembold (Gt Barrington)

***Non-voting Members***

Caprice Shaw, MA DEP  
 Rich Griffin, Mass Development

**Berkshire Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee**

Staff: Laura Brennan, Program Manager

Kyle Hanlon, Chair (North Adams)  
 Roger Bolton, Vice-Chair, BRPC Alternate  
 (Williamstown)  
 Laurie Mick, PERC  
*Vacant*, MassHire Berkshire Workforce Board;  
 Alternate Heather Boulger  
 Keith Girouard, Mass. Small Business  
 Development Center  
 Lesley Herzberg, Berkshire Historical Society  
 Ben Lamb, 1Berkshire; Alternate Kevin Pink  
 Jim Lovejoy, BRPC Alternate (Mt. Washington)  
 Mike Nuvalle (North Adams); Alternate  
 Zachary Feury  
 Shannon Smith, Berkshire Agricultural  
 Ventures; Alternate Ciana Barnaba

Ian Rasch, Alander Construction  
 Chris Rembold, Town Planner (Gt Barrington)  
 Michael Coakley, Business Development  
 Manager (Pittsfield); Alternate Justine  
 Dodds  
 Ben Sosne, Berkshire Innovation Center  
 Debra Sarlin, Berkshire Community  
 College; Alternate Peter Farkas  
 George Ambriz, Berkshire Community  
 College  
 AJ Enchill, Berkshire Black Economic  
 Council  
 Thomas Matuszko, BRPC  
 John Duval, BRPC Chair (Adams) (Ex-Officio)

## Commission Representatives to Related Groups

**Westfield River Wild and Scenic Advisory Committee**– Doug McNally (Windsor)

**Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organization**–Chair, John Duval (Adams); Alternate 1: Sam Haupt (Peru); Alternate 2: Kyle Hanlon (North Adams)

**Woodlands Partnership Project Advisory Committee**– Vacant