



A Newsletter for Community Planning in the Berkshire Region

Invite others to read Common Ground! Share [this link](#).

Accolades & Employment Opportunities

We are proud that [Colin Sykes](#), BRPC Environmental Health Inspector, is being honored as a [40 Under Forty](#) 2024 award recipient! From Colin's statement:

"I have worked in Public Health for over a decade. I provide inspectional services for municipalities and assist Boards of Health in regulatory compliance. As a licensed soil evaluator, I work with hundreds of homeowners, sellers, and buyers on Title 5 and septic requirements. I worked on the early COVID-19 vaccine collaboration and managed volunteer training for the large-scale clinics hosted by BCC. It's important to me that we up-end the stigma of health inspectors being intimidating. I take pride in my approachable demeanor as a health inspector and as an educational resource for municipalities county-wide."



40 Under Forty celebrates talented people who improve our quality of life. Berkshire Community College, with partners 1Berkshire and Mill Town Foundation, will honor the winners on Thursday, March 28, at BCC's Robert Boland Theater.



Hoosic River Watershed Association Honors [Alison Dixon](#) with The Irving Jack Tanzman Friend of the Hoosic Award

Excerpt from [HooRWA!](#): This award honors a citizen who exemplifies the service and commitment of Irving Tanzman to the Hoosic River and its watershed. With a Master's in Education, Alison's career has focused on educating people of all ages about a variety of environmental topics. For New Hampshire Audubon, she led many live animal programs. Alison came to the Berkshires in 2010, where her watershed

work with the [Housatonic Valley Association](#) (HVA) developed a passion for mitigating polluted stormwater. Recently, she shifted to BRPC as a part-time Project Specialist supporting stormwater management projects to improve the water quality of our rivers and lakes. Alison trained HooRWA! staff and volunteers in proper sampling techniques, troubleshoot equipment issues, met us at halfway points to get samples and helped us through last summer's monitoring work even after she left HVA. Thank you, Alison!

Positions currently listed at [Employment & Internships Opportunities](#):

- [Public Health Nurse Educator](#)
- [Public Health Community Social Worker](#)
- [Arts & Culture Internship](#)
- [Digital Equity Internship](#)

Grants, Opportunities & Announcements

[Round 30 of the Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund \(MPPF\) Grant Program](#)

The MPPF is a state-funded 50% reimbursable matching grant program to support the

preservation of properties, landscapes, and sites in the State Register of Historic Places. Questions: 617-727-8470. Deadline: **March 15, 2024**; Grant awards: June 12, 2024.

Citizen Planner Training Collaborative - Registration is Open!

Annual Conference, Saturday, **March 16, 2024**, Holy Cross College, Worcester
18 workshops on core and current topics in Massachusetts municipal planning as well as a continental breakfast and buffet lunch. This is a great opportunity to learn and network with municipal planners from around the state.



The Municipal Fiber Grant Program assists municipalities with the construction of municipal fiber broadband infrastructure; match required. The application period is **March 11 to April 12, 2024**. Contact Sean Cronin, Senior Deputy Commissioner of Local Services, with questions.

Massachusetts Municipal Association Western and Rural Mass Conference

Please save Saturday morning **April 27, 2024** for the MMA Western and Rural Mass Conference at Hotel Northampton. This is an annual opportunity for local officials to network and learn current information about important matters impacting their communities. Select Board Association Western and Rural Massachusetts Conference - Massachusetts Municipal Association (MMA)

May is Bay State Bike Month

Resources are available to help plan bike-friendly events: www.massbike.org/bike-month

- Wednesday, May 1: Massachusetts Walk, Bike, and Roll to School Day
- Sunday, May 5: National Ride A Bike Day
- May 13-19: Bike to Work Week
- Friday, May 17: Bike to Work Day

Community One Stop for Growth FY25 Round

The One Stop will begin accepting applications on May 6, 2024. The submission deadline is **June 5, 2024** at 11:59 p.m. Log in at: IGX system. For more information visit www.mass.gov/onestop. Questions: onestop@mass.gov. BRPC staff are available to assist with applications.



BERKSHIRE Funding Focus

Overwhelmed? Reach out to your BFF (Berkshire Funding Focus) for help navigating grant applications! Take a look at additional grant opportunities and resources on our website: www.berkshirefundingfocus.org.

Community Development & Housing

March is National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month

Over six million Americans have developmental disabilities, with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reporting as many as one in six young people in the U.S. (17%) have a developmental delay. The Massachusetts Home Modification Loan Program (HMLP) is an important resource, providing funding for homeowners to make sure their family member has a home that suits their unique needs. Berkshire Regional Planning Commission is the Berkshire County Provider for the HMLP. Contact Christie Lewis to learn more. 413-442-1521 extension 23

Data & Information Services

Berkshire County Public School Enrollment Projections

Berkshire Benchmarks has released its updated Public School Enrollment Projections based on 2024 enrollment data. Based on births and grade-to-grade change for the last 5-10 years for each of our school districts, the projections reflect existing trends and project the trends forward for the next 10 years.



Since 2015, the county has lost 1,967 students, resulting in a K-12 enrollment of 13,944. The projections show a continued decline of our overall K-12 enrollment, with a K-12 enrollment of 11,397 in 2035 - a loss of 2,547 students since 2024. Most of our 17 school districts show a continued decline, but a few, such as Central Berkshire, Hoosac Valley, Lenox, Northern Berkshire Vocational, and Berkshire Arts and Technology Charter, have stable enrollment.

The report, with projections for each district, is available online at <https://berkshirebenchmarks.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/School-Enrollment-Projections-2024.pdf>. Contact [Mark Maloy](#) for more information.

Economic Development

**Get part-time Economic Development staff support - without having to hire a new employee!
Join BRPC's Shared Economic Development Planning program**

The [Shared Economic Development Planning program](#) allows your town to regularly access services that fit your needs and budget. Participating communities get assistance with creating a welcoming environment for businesses and residents through a range of tactics, as well as ongoing support on economic development-related grant applications or collaborations with neighboring towns. All municipalities in Berkshire County are invited to contact BRPC to learn more about enrolling in the Shared Economic Development Planner program for FY25. Typical annual contracts range from \$10,000 to \$25,000, depending on the average weekly hours of support your town needs. Email [Laura Brennan](#) or call 413.442.1521 x14.

May 17-27, 2024



A Countywide Celebration of the Arts

Join us! Be a part of ArtWeek by hosting an open studio, gallery talk, performance, workshop, or other interactive event to engage audiences with the creative energy of the Berkshires.

Register: berkshires.org/artweek-berkshires

Presented by the Cultural Districts of the Berkshires

BRPC is pleased to be working with the five Cultural Districts of Berkshire County (Williamstown, North Adams, Pittsfield, Lenox, and Great Barrington) and 1Berkshire to coordinate and promote ArtWeek Berkshires 2024. This county-wide, crowd-sourced, celebration of all things creative in our region will run from May 17-27th this year and is FREE for participating artists and creative organizations.

Please encourage your local arts-related residents and entities to learn more and sign up at <https://berkshires.org/artweek-berkshires/>

Environmental & Energy



Energy-efficient Planning Assistance Available

As clean energy incentives and development expand, effective planning becomes crucial. BRPC has secured a Planning Assistance Grant to help towns navigate challenges and seize opportunities in solar, battery storage, electric vehicles, and charging stations. Is your municipality interested in planning out an energy-efficient future? Are you encountering obstacles or challenges that make planning difficult? We want to hear from you to tailor our support to your needs. Email [Sherdyl Fernandez-Aubert](mailto:Sherdyl.Fernandez-Aubert@brpc.org) to share your insights, questions, or concerns.

Public Health

HEAL Recap and Next Steps

December 14th marked the conclusion of the HEALing Communities Study with the premier of Outpost Studio's *Blueprint For Recovery*, a new documentary featuring local stories of recovery from Opioid Use Disorder (OUD). The film premiered in the House of Corrections, at MCLA and the Colonial Theatre. It includes local experts highlighting the importance of harm reduction, Medication for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD), and why everyone should carry naloxone. The 30-minute film can be viewed anytime at: <https://youtu.be/fl93RIXvXCg>



BRPC is extending and expanding these efforts through two new grants to further support people who have recently experienced an overdose or are otherwise at risk for a substance use/behavioral health crisis. Funded by a three-year Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant and Substance Use Program (COSSUP) grant, the project includes post-crisis field care through collaborative partnerships with The Brien Center and EMS agencies, preventive outreach from Brien and Community Outreach Specialists through the George B. Crane Memorial Center, and expanded communications campaigns to encourage everyone to carry naloxone while Smashing The Stigma against the disease of addiction. The COSSUP grant is supplemented by a one-year Combating Overdose through Community-Level Intervention (COCLI) grant to further enhance the program. Resources at: <https://www.mass.gov/state-without-stigma>

Through twelve years of proactive cooperative efforts, BRPC's partners in the Berkshire Overdose and Addiction Prevention Collaborative ([BOAPC](#)) have established a strong infrastructure to address the ongoing opioid crisis, though that structure is in strong need of deeper and broader funding. The BOAPC partners are currently updating the strategic plan with an expanded focus on housing, workforce development, addressing Stimulant Use Disorder, and reducing the pervasive misuse of alcohol in the county. These continued collaborations are vital as we continue to reduce the harms from substance misuse and help make the Berkshires thrive!

Transportation

BRPC Retains BETA Group for Safe Streets and Roads for All Project

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission has hired BETA Group to provide technical services to its Transportation Planning Program to develop a Comprehensive Safety Action Plan for Berkshire County. Under the working title of the Berkshire STEPS Plan (Safe Travel and Equity Plan for our Streets), this Action Plan will be developed throughout 2024. Once the plan is developed, policy and project recommendations will be made with the goal of achieving ambitious reductions in road-related fatalities and serious injuries. Completion of the Action Plan opens the door for future Implementation Grant funding under the Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) program; this funding will be utilized to implement the plan's recommendations.

The Action Plan is funded by the SS4A program, a competitive grant administered by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), as a part of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), otherwise

known as the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). This grant program is a unique opportunity for communities to partner directly with the FHWA to tackle the growing number of deaths and serious injuries on roads in the USA.

According to the [U.S. Department of Transportation](#):

In 2021, 42,939 people were killed in motor vehicle crashes, of which 7,388 were people walking. Millions more are injured - sometimes permanently - each year. Roadway fatalities and the fatality rate declined consistently for 30 years, but progress has stalled over the last decade and went in the wrong direction in 2020 and 2021.

The Berkshire STEPS Plan will begin with data collection about the safety of our roads, such as historically known areas of crashes, locations where speeding is a persistent issue, and travel patterns and destinations of vulnerable road users, among other components, to generate a High-Injury Network (HIN) map of Berkshire County roads. This network will highlight the greatest opportunities for implementing safety enhancements to reduce future deaths and serious injuries and make travel by all modes of transportation a better experience.

A draft of the STEPS Plan is expected to be completed and available for comment by Fall 2024. More information will be shared as the project progresses. Please contact [Nick Russo](#), Senior Transportation Planner, for more information on this project.

March

2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7 Executive Committee 4:00 Commission Development Committee 5:00	8	9
10	11	12	13 CEDS 1:00	14	15	16
17	18	19 Transportation Advisory Committee 4:00	20	21 Commission 7:00	22	23
24	25	26 Municipal Planning Organization 4:00	27 Regional Issues Committee 3:30	28	29	30
31						

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission
www.berkshireplanning.org



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

Unsubscribe Ibrennan@berkshireplanning.org

[Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)

Sent by info@berkshireplanning.org powered by



Try email marketing for free today!