



### A Newsletter for Community Planning in the Berkshire Region

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

#### SAVE THE DATE & REGISTER [HERE](#)

##### BRPC's Annual Meeting & Reception Presentation of the 2024 [Kusik Award](#)

Wednesday, September 25th, 5:00 - 7:00 pm  
Balderdash Cellars, 81 State Rd., Richmond



#### Staff Announcements & Employment Opportunities



[Robert Ireland](#), Lead for America/American Connection Corps Digital Equity Fellow, has completed his 1-year fellowship with BRPC's Economic Development Program. Bob has crisscrossed the county, connecting with residents, sharing information, collecting data, and advocating for access to technology for all. We are grateful for his efforts to improve residents' access to the internet and other technology tools. Bob's passion, commitment, concern, and positivity have been a great asset. We wish this former Peace Corps Volunteer all the best and are certain he will continue contributing to Berkshire County's quality of life.

#### BRPC also gives thanks and bids farewell to Summer Interns!

Their reliability, communication skills, willingness to walk trails, and enhance their understanding of Planning are much appreciated!



Arts & Culture: Pittsfield's Cultural Plan + ArtWeek Berkshires

• Liana Rice, UMass Amherst; Sustainable Community Development & Studio Art

Outdoor Recreation: Berkshires Outside website

• Luke Peplowski, Hamilton College; Environmental Studies & Public Policy

• Peter LaRochelle, Haverford College; Growth & Structure of Cities and Mathematics

#### [BRPC Employment Opportunities:](#)

- [Public Health Community Social Worker](#)
- [Bi-lingual Northern Berkshire Community Outreach Specialists](#)

#### Grants, Opportunities & Announcements

##### Inspiring Climate Action: Funding for EVs

Massachusetts Municipal Association

Wednesday, August 7, 2024, from Noon - 1:15 pm, register [HERE](#) for this online event

Learn about state and utility incentives for purchasing EVs and installing charging stations for municipal fleets and public use.

##### Farmland Protection Tools for the Berkshires

Massachusetts is losing farmland faster than we can save it, and land trusts and towns can play a

part in ensuring land remains available for future generations of farmers. There are many programs (and lots of funding) available to help protect farmland. This webinar will focus on farmland protection tools and funding sources for land trusts and municipalities in the Berkshires. Hosted by American Farmland Trust.

**Wednesday, August 7, 2024, 6:30 - 8:00 pm**

Click [HERE](#) to register.

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### Technical Assistance for Water Sector Utilities

EPA's Creating Resilient Water Utilities (CRWU) has opened a "Call for Utilities" encouraging those interested in no-cost climate change risk assessment technical assistance to apply by **August 16, 2024**, by emailing [Aliza Furneaux](#).

Through EPA's CRWU initiative, drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater (water sector) utility owners and operators can receive one-on-one risk assessment support. Over the course of two to four months, water sector utilities will be guided through a process to:

- Better understand their potential risk to climate change threats;
- Identify potential adaptive measures to become more resilient to those threats; and
- Identify potential funding sources for implementation of those potential adaptive measures.

To learn more about the technical assistance or other tools available, visit [EPA's CRWU site](#).

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### Compassion Fatigue: The Truth About Addiction

This complimentary workshop offers an opportunity to learn about addiction, brain changes that fuel the addictive process, and common misconceptions about addiction and recovery. Multiple treatment options exist, and a harm reduction approach will be discussed at length, including current harm reduction efforts in our community. The emotional toll of addiction in the home, workplace, and community will be explored, along with offering participants strategies that address both the suffering related to addiction and the many reasons for hope.

Lunch will be provided. Zoom options are also available. Register [HERE](#).

**Monday, August 19, 9:00 am - 1:00 pm**, Berkshire Innovation Center, Pittsfield

**Tuesday, August 20, 12:00 - 4:00 pm**, St. James Place, Great Barrington

Questions? Contact Berkshire Community College at: [workforce@berkshirecc.edu](mailto:workforce@berkshirecc.edu)

*See the Public Health section below for more events to raise awareness about addiction stigma.*

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### MassDEP Technical Assistance Grant (TAG) Program: FY25-26 Opportunity and Application

This grant opportunity provides \$200,000 in funding, with up to \$20,000 per community or municipal applicant group selected for an award, to enhance public involvement and promote a better understanding of the cleanup of contaminated sites in their communities. The application deadline is **Friday, September 6, 2024**.

The TAG application and information about this grant opportunity, including eligibility criteria and examples of past TAG projects, is available on [MassDEP's TAG Program webpage](#).

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The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) summer classes opened for enrollment on July 1st. The Fall schedule will be announced in August. Click the logo for details. Direct questions to [MA-IGO-Training@mass.gov](mailto:MA-IGO-Training@mass.gov).



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**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](http://www.berkshirefundingfocus.org).

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[Berkshire Mobile Farmers Markets](#) continue through October 18.

For more information contact Senior Planner [Seth Jenkins](#).

- Monterey: Tuesdays, Monterey Community Center, 12:30 - 3 pm
- Pittsfield :
  - Weds., 2<sup>nd</sup> Street 2<sup>nd</sup> Chances, 264 Second St., 3-5 pm
  - Thurs., 18 Degrees, 480 West St., 3 - 5 pm
- North Adams: Thursdays, The Armory, 206 Ashland St., 12 - 2 pm
- Adams: Fridays, 19 Depot St., 11 am- 1 pm
- Becket: Fridays, Town Hall, 3:30 - 6 pm



## Data & Information Services

### What does a new home cost?

BRPC has access to the online building permit program for 20 communities in the county and can view high-level data on these permits. The price of new home construction has increased significantly over the years and has become unattainable for many county residents. The current average price for new home construction in the 18 months from January 2023 to June 2024 is \$647,669, approximately \$200,000 more than from 2017-2020. This covers 164 buildings permitted.

These prices do not tell the whole story of new homes, however. The homes can be broken into four categories - affordable housing through agencies like Habitat for Humanity, owner-built, modular, and traditional stick-built by a contractor. In the last 18 months, 26 residential buildings built by affordable housing agencies have been permitted with an average price of \$217,089 per unit (\$217,000 median). This price is mostly for materials, as these agencies often rely heavily on volunteers for construction.

Owner-built new housing, where the owner serves as the contractor, of which there have been 45 permitted, has an average price of \$392,197 (\$310,000 median). These homes, which tend to be larger than the affordable homes, are also subsidized by the owner volunteering their labor for the construction. Modular homes, which are pre-assembled and transported to the building site, of which 29 have been permitted, have an average price of \$410,577 (\$309,165 median). Modular homes are built in a factory and tend to be more efficient in material use and time due to the controlled conditions. The final category of homes is traditional stick-built homes built by a contractor for an owner. There have been 78 permitted homes with an average price of \$975,704 (\$724,334 median).

Looking at all new homes during the last 18 months, 24 have been permitted for over \$1,000,000, 46 homes have been permitted that range from \$500,000 to \$999,999, and 94 are below \$500,000, with the majority of these lower-priced homes built by owners or affordable housing agencies.

For more information, contact GIS, Data & IT Manager, [Mark Maloy](#).

## Economic Development



### The City of Pittsfield is creating a Cultural Plan!

As part of the project, a diverse group of Pittsfield-based arts and cultural leaders, with BRPC's help, created a brief survey to help us learn what the city and its partners can do to ensure the arts are welcoming and inclusive to all.

Residents and visitors to Pittsfield's cultural scene are invited to complete this survey by August 31st.

**SURVEY:** <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Pittarts>

Por favor utilice este enlace para realizar la encuesta en Espanol: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Plancultura>



Help us spread the word!  
Download this poster [HERE](#).

Berkshires Outside website helps residents explore and helps protect natural resources from overuse

BRPC launched [www.berkshiresoutside.org](http://www.berkshiresoutside.org) in early 2024 to help residents and visitors discover more of the outdoors. Since its launch, the site has hosted nearly 50,000 sessions.

We invite you to help us spread the word by sharing the link on your website, putting an announcement in your town's e-news, or posting on social media. To make it easy, we've updated the [Berkshires Outside TOOLKIT](#) with pre-made graphics and suggested wording.

Read more about this project and how it's helping reduce harmful impacts on our most-visited outdoor recreation sites in [this article from the Berkshire Eagle](#).

*"Thanks for reaching out, this resource is AMAZING - and much needed!!!" - Berkshire County realtor*

## Public Health



## International Overdose Awareness Day

### International Overdose Awareness Day and Recovery Month

Important events will take place in August and September across Berkshire County to raise awareness around the significant public health crisis of overdose, share resources, and reduce the stigma associated with addiction.

International Overdose Awareness Day (IOAD) is held annually on **August 31<sup>st</sup>**. It is the world's largest annual campaign to end overdose, remember without stigma those who have been lost, and acknowledge the grief of loved ones left behind. In honor of this day, Berkshire Harm Reduction and the [Berkshire Overdose and Addiction Prevention Collaborative](#) (BOAPC) partners will hold a "standout" to increase awareness of the risk of overdose on August 29<sup>th</sup> in Pittsfield's Park Square. Educational information will be provided, along with naloxone, test strips, and related materials. Community events will also take place across the county on the evening of August 31<sup>st</sup> in North Adams, Pittsfield, and Great Barrington to show support for those who have been impacted by overdoses in our communities and around the world and to prevent these losses in the future.

National Recovery Month, observed every September, aims to promote understanding around addiction, celebrate individuals on their unique pathways of recovery, and advocate for better access to support services. During this month, more than ever, communities are encouraged to engage in discussions around mental health and addiction and foster a supportive environment for those seeking help. In alignment with the theme, "Every Person. Every Family. Every Community.", we can all show our support by coming together at one of Berkshire County's events hosted throughout the month, including:

- September 7, Revel in Recovery, Pittsfield
- September 14, Smash the Stigma, Great Barrington
- September 27, Fitness in Recovery 5K Run, Pittsfield
- September 28, Voices in Recovery, North Adams



To learn more about the BOAPC initiative and upcoming events, please visit the [BOAPC event page](#), or contact Public Health Senior Planners [Nikki Lewis](#) and [Andy Ottoson](#).

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## Heat Emergency Assistance Program - Summer 2024

To help address heat emergencies for older adults and other vulnerable people, BRPC is providing portable air conditioners and fans to the Boards of Health of Egremont, Sheffield and Williamstown and possibly one or two more communities to distribute to their high-risk, low-income residents at no cost. Funding for this program was provided by the New England Rural Health Association and the Berkshire County Boards of Health Association emergency preparedness coalition.

This program is intended to provide one cool room in a home where residents can retreat during the worst of the heat and humidity. Eligibility factors include age, disabilities, harder-to-cool homes, and household income.

Research shows that people over 65, small children, pregnant women, and those living with disabilities are more at risk during extended high heat and humidity days and nights. Our bodies become exhausted trying to cool down. Vulnerable, at-risk people need to cool down below 75F for at least four hours daily to mitigate the causes of heat illnesses.

Air conditioners and fans help the most vulnerable to safely stay in their homes and reduce the need to open special cooling centers. For more information, contact [Matthew Bryan](#), Senior Planner for Emergencies.

For more information on heat emergencies, check out these resources.

Please help prepare your residents who are sensitive to heat-related illness. To download the Massachusetts Extreme Heat Resource Guide, [click here](#).

If you have difficulty paying your monthly electric bill, [National Grid](#) offers a payment assistance program.

Are you interested in making your home more energy-efficient? [MassSave](#) offers many heating and cooling incentive programs.

## Transportation



Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) is excited to announce the release of a new online dashboard that provides visual and detailed information about the safety of our roads in Berkshire County. Throughout the year, BRPC has been working to develop a Comprehensive Safety Action Plan for the region. Funded by the Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) federal program, this project is named the [Safe Travel and Equity Plan for our Streets \(STEPS\) initiative](#).

The efforts have included meetings and opportunities for public input, with assistance from consultation partners, BETA Group, Inc., who have worked to develop our new Data Dashboard and Public Input Mapping Tool. This dashboard aims to provide an interactive tool for community leaders, stakeholders, and members of the public to see which areas of Berkshire County have the highest risks of serious and fatal crashes.

Visit the dashboard [HERE](#) to get started. You can switch between the Data Dashboard and Public Input Mapping Tool using the tabs at the top of the screen.

In the [Data Dashboard](#), users can view crash statistics for the county by default and individual communities by selecting from the menu in the top-right corner. This helpful tool provides the

exact locations of high crash and fatality areas, visualizes this information on the map, and provides charts and graphs with additional context and information about crash statistics.

The [Public Input Map Tool](#) allows users to submit their comments on the map where they would like to highlight a known or potential safety risk. Do so by placing a point in the map toolbox in the bottom-right corner and selecting the type of concern. Users can even submit photos to provide more context for their concerns.

By continuing our focus on a data-driven approach to collect qualitative and quantitative safety information, we strive to provide valuable data to inform local decision makers. BRPC is confident that this asset will provide a new opportunity for public participation, which can be used to implement roadway safety improvements in our region.

# August

## 2024

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

**Berkshire Regional Planning Commission**  
[www.berkshireplanning.org](http://www.berkshireplanning.org)



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

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