

**U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
FY24 Pathways to Removing Obstacles to Housing (PRO Housing)
Berkshire Regional Planning Commission
Proposal Public Review Draft**

Narrative Exhibits

Exhibit A Executive Summary

The priority geographies to be served by activities funded through the FY24 Pathways to Removing Obstacles to Housing (PRO Housing) grant identified by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development include:

- Berkshire County
- City of Pittsfield
- Town of Great Barrington
- Town of Lee
- Town of Williamstown

Further, HUD is prioritizing applications that demonstrate:

- 1) progress and a commitment to overcoming local barriers to facilitate the increase in affordable housing production and preservation, primarily by having enacted improved laws and regulations to preserve or produce new housing units; and
- 2) acute need for housing affordable to households with incomes below 100 percent of the area median income.

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) proposes to work with cities and towns county-wide and locally on:

- In depth housing focused update to *Sustainable Berkshires*, BRPC's regional comprehensive plan
 - Regional housing needs assessment
 - Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing
- City and Town Housing Needs Assessments, Housing Action Plans, and Housing Production Plans
 - Technical assistance to municipalities to develop zoning code updates or other regulatory tools that address barriers to housing development
 - Technical assistance to municipalities to create Affordable Housing Trusts from the inception of localized bylaws, establishment of Boards of Trustees, and onboarding and education
- Updates consistent with the Massachusetts Affordable Homes Act, signed into law by Governor Healey on August 6, 2024, particularly measures allowing Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) by right and Seasonal Communities designations

- Subgrant program to:
 - Support on the ground walking surveys of housing conditions to identify vacant, underutilized, and potential rental properties that could be targeted for preservation (repair and rehabilitation) to bring them back into the market
 - Acquire vacant properties in receivership by nonprofits for the fair market value of the property “as is” if the entity will rehabilitate and sell affordably to an income-eligible first-time homebuyer, per the Massachusetts Affordable Homes Act

As Williamstown, Pittsfield, and Great Barrington have enacted improved laws and regulations to preserve or produce new housing units, such as the Community Preservation Act and Affordable Housing Trusts, among many others, they will continue to address acute needs for affordable housing through the following activities:

- Weatherization and energy-efficiency improvements to reduce the whole cost of ownership for cost burdened owners and renters
- Housing rehabilitation and repair to improve conditions and eliminate disparities in access to opportunity between residents
- Acquiring preservation restrictions on at-risk housing as an anti-displacement strategy

Exhibit B Threshold Requirements and Other Submission Requirements

Threshold Requirements

Neither the applicant, Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, nor project partners Williamstown, Pittsfield, and Great Barrington, have any unresolved civil rights matters. Specifically, there are no charges, charges, cause determinations, lawsuits, or letters of findings referenced in subparagraphs (1) – (5) as described in Section III.D.1. of the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO).

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) is an eligible applicant in accordance with Section III.A of the NOFO. Specifically, BRPC is a Multijurisdictional Entity. BRPC was established in 1966 pursuant to Chapter 40B of the Massachusetts General Laws (MGL) as the planning authority for its regional planning district. According to MGL Chapter 40B, a planning district is a “public body corporate” comprised of member cities and towns. MGL Chapter 40B explicitly authorizes regional planning districts to submit “applications for federal, state and local aid” (Section 4A) and receive “grants, bequests, gifts or contributions made by the federal, state or municipal governments” (Section 7).

Other Program-specific Requirements

BRPC ensured that information regarding this application was available to Limited English Proficiency Populations. As the predominant language spoken in Berkshire County aside from English is Spanish, notice of the public hearing and comment period was made available in both languages. Written translation of the application was available upon request.

BRPC held the public hearing in a hybrid format, at our office location, which is physically accessible, and via Zoom. This aligns with the Massachusetts Office on Disability’s recommendations for hosting accessible meetings and events. During the public hearing, multiple options for participation were available in-person and virtually. Similar approaches for ensuring equal access to information about the planning and implementation process will be employed throughout the project performance period.

Regarding environmental review, BRPC, Williamstown, Pittsfield, and Great Barrington are considered Responsible Entities as defined by 24CFR part 58.2(a)(7).

The following proposed activities fall under the U.S. Housing and Urban Development’s Categorical Exclusion categories under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA):

- Special projects directed toward the removal of material and architectural barriers that restrict the mobility of and accessibility to the elderly and handicapped persons.
- Rehabilitation of buildings for residential use (with one to four units) where the density is not increased beyond four units and the land use is not changed.
- Acquisition of an existing structure or vacant land provided that the structure or land acquired will be retained for the same use
- Combinations of the above activities

Regarding “Other Requirements” as delineated in 24 CFR 58.6, the Responsible Entities will determine if the proposed activities are located within:

- Areas having special flood hazards
- Community participating in the National Insurance Program
- 2,500 feet of a civil airport
 - Civil airports are located in North Adams, Pittsfield, and Great Barrington
- FAA-designated civilian airport Runway Clear Zone (RCA) or Runway Protection Zone, or within the military Airfield Clear Zone (CZ) or Accident Potential Zone/Approach Protection Zone (APZ)

Additionally, none of the proposed activities are located within the Massachusetts Coastal Zone, within the bounds of a Sole Source Aquifer, or along federally designated Wild and Scenic Rivers. The Responsible Entities will comply, as applicable, with federal and state Historic Preservation, Floodplain Management, Wetland Protection, Endangered Species, Clean Air, Farmland Protection, and Environmental Justice provisions.

BRPC and its partners understand that, pursuant to Section E.1.b. of the NOFO “Non-entitlement units of general local government, multijurisdictional entities, and metropolitan planning organizations will be subject to CDBG regulations applicable to entitlement communities, unless otherwise noted.” We certify that the housing activities to be undertaken with PRO Housing funds are consistent with the following consolidated plans and their objectives:

- *The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Annual Consolidated Plan Federal Fiscal Year 2024 (DRAFT)*

- Promote strong, sustainable communities throughout the Commonwealth and address local priorities
- Preserve and create affordable rental housing options for low- and moderate-income residents
- Ensure full and fair access to housing for all residents of the Commonwealth
- *City of Pittsfield Community Development Block Grant Annual Action Plan: HUD Program Year 2024, Fiscal Year 2025*
 - Home Improvements – Rental Housing
 - Home Improvements – Owner Housing

Exhibit C Need

Progress and Commitment to Overcoming Local Barriers

Improved Laws, Regulations or Local Land Use Policies

On August 6, 2024, Massachusetts Governor Maura Healy signed the Affordable Homes Act into law. Among other improvements, it permits ADUs (<900 SF) to be built by-right in single-family zoning districts in all communities; amends the state’s receivership statute to permit courts to expeditiously approve the sale of vacant properties in receivership to a nonprofit for the fair market value of the property “as is” if the entity will rehabilitate and sell affordably to an income-eligible first-time homebuyer, and creates a framework for designating communities with substantial seasonal variations in employment and housing needs.

Throughout Berkshire County, BRPC leads regional and local efforts to address barriers to affordable housing. Funded by a HUD Sustainable Communities Planning Grant, *Sustainable Berkshires*, a comprehensive plan authored by BRPC in 2014, identified a regional housing affordability crisis.

Among the key issues identified:

- Growing pattern of economic segregation
 - Siting new affordable housing within already low-income neighborhoods
 - Aging homeowners in aging housing stock leading to several decades of deferred maintenance and lower property values
- Cost burdens for renters and homeowners
 - Especially for young workers, families, seniors, and physically disabled populations
- Poor quality of existing housing stock
 - Code violations and lead paint increase repair and rehabilitation costs

Barriers to affordable housing included:

- Few communities with professional staff that can focus on affordable housing planning and development

- Communities had not gone through a process to discuss the scope and type of housing needs, and few had conducted housing needs assessments or production plans

Recommendations to improve laws, regulations, or land use local policies included the items listed below. Steps toward implementing them are described in detail further in this section.

- Adopt accessory dwelling unit (ADU) by-laws in each community
- Implement inclusionary zoning to allow multi-unit family housing by right
- Adopt Smart Growth Zoning Overlay Districts
- Expand Community Land Trust activity
- Create Affordable Housing Trusts
- Promote local adoption of the Community Preservation Act

Furthermore, *Sustainable Berkshires* recommended establishing a regional housing rehabilitation program to preserve existing affordable housing – a priority that all Berkshire County municipalities continue to share.

Over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Metropolitan Statistical Areas that include Berkshire and Barnstable Counties were the only two in Massachusetts where the median price of housing increased while median income decreased. For the Pittsfield MSA, between Quarter 1 of 2020, to Quarter 2 of 2022, the median price of housing went from \$170,000 to \$265,000, a 56% increase. In contrast, the median income went from \$90,900 to \$87,300, a 3% decrease. *A Housing Vision for the Berkshires*, a 2022 regional housing strategy led by BRPC and 1Berkshire, recognized a rapidly growing level of housing insecurity across the region, which has only increased due to the COVID 19 epidemic and resulting increased economic insecurity for many households.

According to *A Housing Vision for the Berkshires*, ensuring that all residents of the region have access to safe, affordable and accessible housing requires increased focus on:

- Inventory existing structures and determine if all units are actively being offered for rent, or if small potential landlords are leaving units vacant. Work with those who have vacant units to overcome obstacles to offering them for rent.
- Continue to expand the Regional Housing Rehabilitation Program to improve housing for low-to moderate income residents across the Berkshires and increase the number of participating contractors; regionalize delivery of housing rehabilitation programs to the extent necessary given the small size of many towns.
- Expand the use of financing tools already available to and controlled by communities, such as establishing Affordable Housing Trusts and adopting the Community Preservation Act.

At a local level, BRPC is a driving force in providing consulting services to cities and towns throughout Berkshire County. In the past several years, BRPC has worked with local communities to develop a wide range of planning and policy focused documents throughout the region. BRPC assisted nine communities prepare housing needs assessments, including the three partner municipalities. Housing production plans were recently completed by BPRC in the towns

of Egremont and Sheffield. Housing action plans have been completed in the towns of New Marlborough and Monterey. Recent comprehensive planning work has included an enhanced focus on housing, which is present in Master Plans developed for Lee, Windsor, and West Stockbridge.

Related to zoning, BRPC has assisted three communities create ADU bylaws, with several more in development. Large scale zoning revisions are underway in the towns of Washington and Peru, and in both cases the communities wish to eliminate potential barriers to the diversity of housing choices in the community. Overall, the breadth of work illustrates the agency's role in servicing the wide needs of 32 communities with competing needs and at various stages of the process in understanding their local needs.

BRPC's partner municipalities Williamstown, Pittsfield, and Great Barrington have improved laws, regulations, and local land use policies leading to increased housing production. Williamstown's Town Meeting approved zoning provisions to expand housing in mixed use and business districts in 2017, ADUs in 2019, and duplexes town wide in 2022. In 2023, Town Meeting approved a reduction of frontage from 100 to 66 feet and allowance for 3 and 4 family units in the entire General Residence zone. This zone represents the area of the town's residential neighborhoods serviced by public water and sewer. In 2024, Town Meeting approved a bylaw allowing cottage court developments also in the General Residence zone.

Pittsfield has taken several steps to attract housing development and reverse the effects of 50 years of land use regulations that encouraged sprawl and segregation of uses throughout the city. In 2019, the city implemented a downtown form-based code to remove regulatory barriers and encourage streamlined, by-right mixed-use and multi-family housing development, which includes inclusionary zoning. The city adopted a M.G.L. Chapter 40R Smart Growth District to remove regulatory barriers to mixed-use and multi-family residential development and the downtown is an Urban Center Housing Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Zone. In 2024, the city has begun the process of bringing inclusionary /form-based code zoning into residential neighborhoods, beginning with the Westside neighborhood.

Many of the housing production goals and strategies of the Great Barrington *Community Master Plan* (2013) have been achieved in the last 11 years, including important strides in the areas of organizational capacity, financial assistance, zoning and regulation, and housing production. Despite these efforts, market pressures continue to drive home prices and rents upward, and materials and labor costs are making it more costly to renovate and make safe old homes and build new homes.

Within the last decade Great Barrington has approved a number of zoning amendments to implement its housing and redevelopment goals.

These have included:

- A new mill overlay district in 2010 to encourage redevelopment of the historic Monument Mills complex to including housing, historic preservation, and river access;
- Permitting two-family dwellings and ADUs by right in all districts Town-wide;
- Replacing the commercial B-2 regulations in Housatonic Village with a Housatonic

Village Center district; and rezoning the residential areas of the village to R3.

- Replacing the commercial B-2 regulations south of town with a new Mixed Use district;
- Replacing the commercial B-2 regulations on State Road with new mixed use regulations;
- Creating a special permit process for existing multifamily dwellings, an important source of lower cost rental housing, to come into conformance with zoning;
- Adopting a new Smart Growth Overlay District bylaw, per M.G.L. Ch. 40R, for the Monument Mills, the Rising Mill, and South Main Street;
- Amending requirements to add flexibility to development and redevelopment of small lots, including contextual setbacks and buildable area;
- Refining the locational and dimensional requirements governing ADUs, and allowing tiny houses to be considered as ADUs;
- Refining the allowable densities and the regulations of Planned Unit Residential Development (PURD);
- Permitting three-family dwellings by right in all districts Town-wide;
- Creating a new bylaw section to promote the redevelopment of former nursing home sites into multifamily housing.

Market rate housing supply has also increased in recent years, all of which were made possible by Town Meeting approved zoning amendments. New construction in the last decade includes 44 units at Barrington Brook, 3 units on Humphrey Street, 17 units at 47 Railroad Street, and 22 units at 32 Bridge Street.

County-wide, at least 14 communities in the Berkshires have adopted zoning to allow ADUs in different formats, with others in progress.

Other Recent Actions Taken to Overcome Barriers to Facilitate the Increase of Affordable Housing Production and Preservation

BRPC has operated Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Housing Rehabilitation programs in local communities for over a decade, managing projects that have rehabilitated scores of residential units in rural communities. Since 2011, BRPC has managed the rehabilitation of 112 residential units in the towns of Great Barrington, Becket, Cheshire, Dalton, Monterey, New Marlborough, Otis, Sheffield, and Stockbridge.

Pittsfield has a long-standing commitment to housing rehabilitation. Since 1975, they have managed an active housing rehabilitation program primarily funded with CDBG funds and have completed projects at 707 properties. Their rehabilitation program focuses on code issues, de-leading, and emergency housing repairs (such as heating systems or sewer lines). Pittsfield currently has a waiting list for properties that need housing rehabilitation.

Great Barrington has received four Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) awards for housing rehabilitation for low- and moderate-income homeowners and to support redevelopment of the Housatonic Mills. The Town continues to partner with other municipalities in grant efforts for housing rehabilitation. With these funds, homes in town benefitted from grants that, for

example, abated lead paint, corrected code and life safety deficiencies, replaced old roofs and windows, and decreased homeowner costs by increasing insulation and energy efficiency. Keeping existing homes safe, healthy and efficient is a critical component of their housing strategy.

Two additional mechanisms in Massachusetts that, when adopted locally, can finance affordable housing development in municipalities: Community Preservation Act (CPA) and Affordable Housing Trusts (AHT). Seven communities to date have created AHTs, four in addition to the project partners – the towns of Egremont, Lenox, Stockbridge, Tyringham, and West Stockbridge. Of these seven, all but Egremont has adopted the CPA. Williamstown adopted the CPA earliest of the three partner municipalities in 2002, followed by Great Barrington in 2012, and Pittsfield in 2016. The towns of Lee and Becket have also adopted the CPA, making them candidates to adopt affordable housing trusts as well.

Williamstown has made a significant commitment to creating additional pathways to housing growth over the last decade plus through numerous initiatives. On the housing production side we have pursued the use of CPA funding to create both market rate and subsidized multi and single family housing throughout town. First through their CPA Committee's direct work and later through the use of CPA funding via the Town's Affordable Housing Trust. Recent projects include two homes built by Habitat for Humanity, 61 Units and 13 moderate income units at Cable Mills an historic 1880s wire mill, 46 units subsidized to a broad mix of incomes from very low to moderate at 330 Cole Avenue, and 40 units of senior subsidized housing at Highland Woods near the Williams College campus. The Trust is also currently partnering with Traggorth Companies on a Phase 3 of Cable Mills expected to break ground this year, and a 4 home subdivision with Habitat for Humanity.

Pittsfield adoption of the CPA allows the city to allocate additional funds to assist in the development of affordable housing projects. The city's CPA funds assisted in creating nine new housing units in the first three years. The city utilizes the state's Housing Development Incentive Program (HDIP) to provide developers incentives to develop market-rate housing. The city approved its first HDIP project in 2012 and utilized the program to assist in the development of 140 new housing units. Seven of the eight HDIP projects the city approved included tax increment exemption agreements for periods of at least 10 years.

Great Barrington has appropriated \$3.4 million in CPA funds to affordable housing projects, supporting the creation of nearly 160 new units of affordable housing, and providing rental assistance to hundreds of local households during the economic crisis caused by the pandemic. Since 2013, with CPA funding, over 170 new units of housing have been built, with most of those being affordable rental housing have been funded partially with Town support: 11 apartments completed 314 State Road at Forest Springs; 31 apartments completed on Brookside Road at an expanded Bostwick Gardens; 45 apartments completed on Bentley Avenue at the a former Brownfields site; and 49 apartments at Windrush Commons at 910 Main Street.

In 2012, Williamstown created an AHT to advance the goal of making housing in Williamstown affordable to lower income residents. Among their accomplishments are two homes created in partnership with Northern Berkshire Habitat for Humanity, 61 Units and 13 moderate income

units in a historic 1880s wire mill, 46 units subsidized to a broad mix of incomes from very low to moderate at 330 Cole Avenue, and 40 units of senior subsidized housing at Highland Woods near the Williams College campus. The Trust is also currently partnering with Traggorth Companies on a Phase 3 of Cable Mills expected to break ground this year, and a 4-home subdivision with Habitat for Humanity.

In October of 2022, Pittsfield enacted an AHT. Their AHT recently began the process of soliciting funding proposals for projects that incorporate residential units restricted to 80% of area median income or less.

Great Barrington's AHT provides down payment assistance grants, rental assistance grants, and has purchased land on which it will develop affordable housing. To achieve its mission, the AHT works closely with local nonprofit housing providers/ developers. The AHT purchased a 7-acre site with Town funds and 20 units are permitted and will soon be underway – Habitat for Humanity is the Developer. The AHT has made 8 down payment assistance loans to first time homebuyers. The AHT has funded a rental assistance program, critical during and even after the pandemic. This year the AHT is launching an affordable ADU program, with the goal of incentivizing existing property owners to build long-term affordable ADUs with AHT assistance.

While communities across the region work towards addressing the barriers to creating new housing, all would benefit from varying degrees of policy and regulatory changes to ensure the equitable creation of affordable housing. The majority of communities operate almost entirely based on volunteer support. These communities require the support of BRPC to ensure timely progress on adequately addressing goals for creating affordable housing.

Acute Need for Affordable Housing

The proposed activities will serve all 32 municipalities that comprise Berkshire County, which meets HUD criteria as a priority geography. Additionally, all of Pittsfield, and areas within Williamstown, Great Barrington, and Lee qualify as priority geographies and will be the focus of specific activities to address their housing needs.

Compared to the United States as a whole, Berkshire County households are more cost-burdened overall, as renters, and as homeowners with and without a mortgage. The county's median household income is lower than the U.S. and Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and the median income for Black and Hispanic or Latino households is lower still.

Metric	U.S.	Massachusetts	Berkshire County
Cost-burdened Overall	31.4%	35%	32.8%
Cost-burdened Rent	49.9%	50.2%	51.6%
Cost-burdened With Mortgage	27.3%	29.8%	29.4%
Cost-burdened Without Mortgage	13.6%	19.1%	18.6%
Median HH Income	\$75,149	\$96,505	\$69,744
Median HH Income White			\$71,309
Median HH Income Black			\$41,042
Median HH Income Latino or Hispanic			\$65,139

All but three of the county’s 32 cities and towns have incomes below 100% of the HUD Area Median Family Income and 14 of them are cost-burdened overall compared to the United States. In 17 municipalities, 50% or more of renter households are cost-burdened and, in four of these, 70% or more of renter households are cost-burdened. In 3 municipalities, 50% or more of homeowners with a mortgage are cost burdened.

The burden of housing disparity in Berkshire County is carried more heavily by the Black or African American and Hispanic or Latino community. Approximately 3.3% of the county's population self-identified as Black alone for race when responding to the 2020 U.S. Census but only 1% of Black residents live in owner-occupied units. HUD’s Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) data reveals that 22.75% of white owner-occupied units are cost burdened compared to 44.84% Black and 41.44% Hispanic or Latino. The CHAS data estimates that 62.45% of Black renters and 43.85% of people with a Hispanic ethnicity are cost burdened compared to 29.87% of White renters.

In Pittsfield, Black or African American and Hispanic or Latino families are disproportionately represented among those with low to very low incomes. While only 25% of all people in Pittsfield live in the central city neighborhoods, 53% of African American and 37% Hispanic origin households live in those neighborhoods where the AMI is \$23,504 - 54% of the AMI of the City as a whole.

City or Town	Cost-burdened Overall	Cost-burdened Rent	Cost-burdened With Mortgage	Cost-burdened Without Mortgage	100% of HAMFI	Median HH Income
Adams	35.2%	49.8%	23.9%	29.3%	\$100,900	\$54,677
Alford	36.8%	0%	58.6%	14.1%	\$105,700	\$94,375
Becket	38.2%	25.6%	36%	42.5%	\$105,700	\$76,875
Cheshire	21.9%	0%	27.1%	20.1%	\$100,900	\$72,485
Clarksburg	22.6%	45.1%	21.8%	14.7%	\$105,700	\$72,872
Dalton	28.4%	45.3%	23.5%	23%	\$100,900	\$76,198
Egremont	24.6%	45.3%	28.4%	6.4%	\$105,700	\$90,139
Florida	16.6%	7%	23%	9.8%	\$107,500	\$83,125
Great Barrington	37.1%	52.9%	33%	29%	\$105,700	\$74,205
Hancock	31.5%	62%	30.1%	20%	\$105,700	\$88,889
Hinsdale	26.4%	56.2%	19.4%	13%	\$100,900	\$70,234
Lanesborough	26.4%	42.1%	39.5%	2.3%	\$100,900	\$87,159
Lee	29.7%	56%	29%	14.2%	\$100,900	\$74,074
Lenox	36.5%	52.1%	35.7%	16.8%	\$100,900	\$76,571
Monterey	24.4%	0%	51%	8.2%	\$105,700	\$127,159
Mount Washington	35.1%	0%	31.8%	39.4%	\$105,700	\$117,917
New Ashford	29.4%	34.6%	28.6%	26%	\$105,700	\$78,750
New Marlborough	41.6%	49.1%	57.4%	17.8%	\$105,700	\$75,156
North Adams	38%	54.4%	30.6%	18.7%	\$105,700	\$49,525
Otis	20.7%	100%	24.6%	9%	\$105,700	\$100,955
Peru	32.6%	50%	47.4%	9%	\$105,700	\$78,500
Pittsfield	33%	51.6%	24.2%	16.8%	\$100,900	\$66,859
Richmond	26.2%	52.9%	36.2%	11.7%	\$100,900	\$91,875
Sandisfield	28.60%	70%	36.7%	12.8%	\$105,700	\$75,625
Savoy	20.3%	50%	24.6%	12.5%	\$105,700	\$54,219
Sheffield	41.9%	53.7%	47.6%	16.7%	\$105,700	\$87,604
Stockbridge	41.5%	73%	48%	15.4%	\$100,900	\$74,333
Tyringham	15%	74%	9.4%	7.2%	\$105,700	\$142,813
Washington	28.2%	0%	39.8%	11.1%	\$105,700	\$87,250
West Stockbridge	31.3%	71.2%	31.1%	20.4%	\$105,700	\$90,875
Williamstown	32.4%	52.8%	26.7%	24.9%	\$105,700	\$102,545
Windsor	30.3%	0%	42.2%	3.3%	\$105,700	\$102,639

The current median listing price of homes in Berkshire County is \$542,000¹. The difference between the market and median household income means a significant number of residents will not have the debt-to-income ratio required to obtain financing for homeownership, which puts a further burden on the county's rental stock.

Key Barriers that Still Exist and Need to be Addressed to Produce and Preserve More Affordable Housing

Whether to rent or to buy, Berkshire County's housing stock is older and generally in below average condition. Compared to the U.S. and Massachusetts, in Berkshire County all but three towns have a higher percentage of housing stock built prior to 1939 and all but two prior to 1970².

HUD uses four qualifications to identify a housing problem – the unit lacks a kitchen, lacks proper plumbing, there is more than one person living per room, and the tenant or owner spends greater than 30% of their income on housing. In September 2024, HUD released its latest CHAS dataset, showing that 32.2% of the households in Berkshire County have at least one of the four housing problems. The housing problems are more heavily among renters, of which 49.2% have at least one housing problem compared to 25% of owner-occupied units.

“Naturally occurring” affordable housing in Berkshire County often appears as affordable due to substandard conditions. Many of the region's densest residential neighborhoods have suffered due to deferred maintenance of an aging housing stock. In Pittsfield, while less than 1% of households (169) have substandard housing issues such as incomplete plumbing or kitchen facilities, 53% of these are very low-income renter households. Also, 27.55% of owner-occupied units have one or two selected conditions and 50.78% of renter-occupied have one, two, or three selected conditions – either substandard or substandard but eligible for rehabilitation.

¹ Realtor.com, Housing Inventory: Median Listing Price in Berkshire County, MA [MEDLISPRI25003], retrieved from FRED, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis; <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/MEDLISPRI25003>, September 24, 2024.

² U.S. Census Bureau. "Selected Housing Characteristics." American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles, Table DP04, 2022, [https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDP5Y2022.DP04?g=040XX00US25_050XX00US25003,25003\\$0600000](https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDP5Y2022.DP04?g=040XX00US25_050XX00US25003,25003$0600000). Accessed on September 20, 2024.

Geography	% Housing Built 1939 or earlier	% Housing Built 1970 or earlier
United States	12%	51.3%
Massachusetts	31.1%	68.8%
Berkshire County	36.7%	76.5%
Adams	61.4%	92.5%
Alford	19.8%	47.2%
Becket	14.6%	59.3%
Cheshire	33.9%	72.9%
Clarksburg	35.3%	70.7%
Dalton	25.8%	78.3%
Egremont	31.3%	64.9%
Florida	6.3%	63.1%
Great Barrington	38.9%	65.7%
Hancock	9.9%	40.2%
Hinsdale	19.2%	58.9%
Lanesborough	16.2%	65.7%
Lee	29.9%	73.6%
Lenox	29.2%	69.6%
Monterey	27.4%	56.3%
Mount Washington	38.5%	70.5%
New Ashford	16.9%	68.3%
New Marlborough	33.3%	55.7%
North Adams	53.9%	88.4%
Otis	17.6%	56.9%
Peru	9.3%	54.3%
Pittsfield	40.1%	85.1%
Richmond	21.8%	78.6%
Sandisfield	27.5%	55.7%
Savoy	14.1%	53.5%
Sheffield	33.1%	67.2%
Stockbridge	42.4%	79.7%
Tyringham	29.7%	55%
Washington	13.9%	62.2%
West Stockbridge	38.8%	62.3%
Williamstown	36.7%	77.5%
Windsor	20.6%	63.6%

Regulatory reforms as described in the prior section have not spurred the development market as aggressively as needed in Berkshire County. Great Barrington, Pittsfield, and Williamstown all have housing projects with interest and potential but do not have the financial capacity, even with an Affordable Housing Trust model in place, to complete the financial stack a developer requires to proceed with a large project that includes an affordability component. Market conditions

themselves do not resolve the issues of housing creation. There need to be incentives and resources to help close the gap between appraised value, allowable rents, and construction cost.

Berkshire County is uniquely challenged with financing affordable housing projects because of a larger disparity between the cost to create a unit, the size and scale of projects in a primarily rural region, and the incomes of county residents. Further, many property owners are avoiding taking on capital costs due to high building costs to keep the rental prices low, which is leading to deferred maintenance at the cost of resident's health, safety, and comfort. Conversely, Berkshire County attracts tourism, and investors are purchasing properties and converting them into short-term rentals, which is further eliminating housing options.

Exhibit D Soundness of Approach

Vision

BRPC and project partners propose to conduct the following policy and planning, infrastructure, and preservation activities:

Planning and Policy Activities Supporting Affordable Housing

Regional Planning - In depth housing focused update to *Sustainable Berkshires*, BRPC's regional comprehensive plan. This includes an update to a regional housing needs assessment development by BRPC in 2020, as well as the region's first Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing. This step is imperative to having a deeper understanding and foundation for the agency's goal to expand its housing related efforts in the region, as well as continuing a campaign to raise awareness and provide education related to housing.

Local Planning – This work includes housing focused planning work, such as Housing Needs Assessments, Housing Action Plans, and Housing Production Plans. From a regulatory perspective, BRPC will provide technical assistance to municipalities to develop zoning code updates that address barriers to housing development or other regulatory tools available to communities. BRPC will also assist communities in the creation of Affordable Housing Trusts from the inception of localized bylaws, establishment of Boards of Trustees, through onboarding and education. Lastly, BRPC will support communities as they comply with the Massachusetts Affordable Homes Act, signed into law by Governor Healey on August 6, 2024, particularly measures allowing Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) by right and Seasonal Communities designations.

Infrastructure Activities

Reducing Energy Cost Burdens - In Williamstown, Pittsfield, and Great Barrington, weatherization and energy-efficiency improvements will reduce the whole cost of ownership for cost burdened owners and renters. This may also involve removing or mitigating barriers common in older housing stock such as knob & tube wiring and interior and exterior lead paint. Energy-inefficient homes due to a lack of insulation in older homes or older appliances can contribute to higher energy cost burdens.

According to the U.S. Department of Energy’s Low-Income Energy and Affordability Data (LEAD) Tool³, lower income households bear higher energy cost burdens as a percentage of income. For all homes up to 4 units in Berkshire County, Williamstown, Pittsfield, and Great Barrington built prior to 1980 (all heating fuel types):

Owner-occupied

Geography	Energy Burden up to 80% AMI	Energy Burden 80 - 100% AMI	Energy Burden 100 – 150% AMI
Berkshire County	12%	6%	4%
Williamstown	14%	7%	4%
Pittsfield	10%	6%	4%
Great Barrington	16%	7%	5%

Renter-occupied

Geography	Energy Burden up to 80% AMI	Energy Burden 80 - 100% AMI	Energy Burden 100 – 150% AMI
Berkshire County	9%	6%	4%
Williamstown	10%	6%	4%
Pittsfield	8%	5%	3%
Great Barrington	10%	6%	5%

For all homes up to 4 units in Berkshire County, Williamstown, Pittsfield, and Great Barrington built prior to 1940 (all heating fuel types):

Owner-occupied

Geography	Energy Burden up to 80% AMI	Energy Burden 80 - 100% AMI	Energy Burden 100 – 150% AMI
Berkshire County	13%	6%	5%
Williamstown	14%	7%	4%
Pittsfield	11%	6%	4%
Great Barrington	15%	7%	5%

Renter-occupied

Geography	Energy Burden up to 80% AMI	Energy Burden 80 - 100% AMI	Energy Burden 100 – 150% AMI
Berkshire County	8%	5%	4%
Williamstown	8%	5%	3%
Pittsfield	8%	5%	4%

³ <https://www.energy.gov/scep/slsc/lead-tool> Accessed on 9/25/24.

Great Barrington	10%	5%	7%
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Preservation Activities

Preserving affordable housing – In Williamstown, Pittsfield, and Great Barrington, housing rehabilitation and repair to improve conditions and eliminate disparities in access to opportunity between residents. This funding will complement housing programs funded through CDBG, AHTs, and other local programs designed to serve low to moderate income individuals and families. This work can include activities such as removal of interior or exterior lead paint, interior or exterior asbestos, replacement of knob & tube wiring, and /or addressing substandard conditions caused by roof leaks and foundation deterioration. These activities can escalate the costs of housing rehabilitation projects, especially in aging housing stock, straining these programs’ ability to meet demand. Funds will be sub awarded to partner communities.

Additionally, BRPC will manage a subgrant program to support on the ground walking surveys of housing conditions to identify vacant, underutilized, and potential rental properties that could be targeted for preservation (repair and rehabilitation) to bring them back into the market.

Acquiring or subsidizing at-risk housing – To preserve affordability, Williamstown, Pittsfield, and Great Barrington will be sub awarded funds to their AHTs for the purpose of acquiring preservation restrictions on properties as an anti-displacement strategy.

BRPC will manage a subgrant program to preserve affordable units in rural communities with AHTs to acquire preservation restrictions. The agency will also administer a program to acquire vacant properties in receivership by nonprofits for the fair market value of the property “as is” if the entity will rehabilitate and sell affordably to an income-eligible first-time homebuyer, per the Massachusetts Affordable Homes Act.

Lessons learned from Similar Efforts

BRPC’s collaborative work in creating *A Housing Vision for the Berkshires* in 2022 and the *Berkshire Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)* in 2011, 2017, and 2023 raised awareness of the multi-faceted impacts the supply of affordable housing has on the region. Between the 2017 and 2024 *CEDS*, affordable housing went from a regional strength to a weakness. Employers chronically unfilled positions because of the inability of potential hires to find housing in the region and workers are unable to live in or near the communities where they work. This proposal aims to combine these discussions with an overarching update of the regional comprehensive plan, including an updated Housing Needs Assessment and Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing.

As referenced previously, many communities in the Berkshires are taking steps to remove regulatory barriers to create housing. However, even communities with planning or community development staff are taking piecemeal approaches due to demands on their time and fiscal capacity. Many communities have zoning codes that date back more than 50 years. Overcoming the barriers presented by 50+ year old Euclidean zoning for communities managed by volunteer boards without staffing remains a challenge, regardless of the local appetite for change.

Substantial work exists to assist communities create zoning that removes barriers to multi-unit housing, ADUs, and a general diversity of potential housing choices of all shapes and sizes.

The proposal complements efforts throughout the region to utilize AHTs to create and preserve affordable housing. Today, 25% of Berkshire communities have created municipal AHTs, including HUD's priority geography communities. The AHTs are similar in scope and mission but vary in access to a sustainable funding source. Many of the communities with AHTs have adopted the CPA. Outside of the CPA, sustainable funding sources remain a challenge, which diminishes capacity to leverage funding against other state and federal programs that would otherwise be accessible to communities to create more housing opportunities. BRPC has assisted some of these communities with creating and setting up AHTs and has worked with other communities who plan to move forward with similar actions in the future. A primary question that continues to be raised in these efforts is how to increase access to funding sources to create more housing in communities.

The proposal also aligns with housing rehabilitation programs operated countywide and in the city of Pittsfield to preserve existing units that have fallen into disrepair. BRPC works with rural communities to develop Housing Rehabilitation Programs through Community Development Block Grant funds administered by the state. The cost to conduct repairs limits the number of homes rehabilitated each year and is not sufficient to meet the demand, especially when factoring in issues related to the age of the region's housing stock.

BRPC is the regional administrator of the Massachusetts Home Modification Loan Program. This program provides zero interest loans to homeowners who are in need of accessibility upgrades. The Pittsfield Department of Community Development budgets Community Development Block Grant funds provide zero interest loans to property owners to make accessibility improvements to housing structures. City staff works closely with the Massachusetts Attorney General's Office to bring owners and lenders to court to clean up vacant properties and put them back on the market for prospective homebuyers. The city utilizes the Attorney General Office's receivership program to rehabilitate distressed homes. If the properties are good candidates for the receivership program, the Assistant Attorney General works to obtain a receivership appointed by the Housing Court to rehabilitate the property and resolve the code violations.

Affordable housing organizations and advocates throughout Berkshire County recognize the need to identify and quantify the unutilized housing potential that can be addressed through rehabilitating and retrofitting to meet the county's affordable housing goals. Housing partners throughout the county have adopted regulatory and financial assistance frameworks to encourage new development and prevent the loss of homes falling into disrepair but have not been able to quantify the impact transforming large homes constructed during the county's industrial heyday could have on the housing market without expanding the community's overall footprint.

Lastly, housing advocates and community leaders recognize challenges in community support. Multiple affordable housing developments are currently delayed due to litigation stemming from community members' opposition to specific projects. Many community members oppose affordable housing projects because of bias against low-to-moderate-income families and hold

incorrect assumptions about affordable housing development. Housing advocates and community leaders formed a coalition, which is educating the community more on housing and correcting inaccurate narratives.

Complementing existing planning initiatives, policies, services, and other community assets

This proposal complements and supports county-wide and local planning and programs focused on economic vitality. Berkshire County leaders recognized the urgency to address housing as part of growing our regional economic ecosystem during the development of the *Berkshire Blueprint* by 1Berkshire, the official Regional Economic Development Organization and Regional Tourism Council of Berkshire County. The *Blueprint* and its five-year benchmarking report identify housing as a cross-cutting determinant of not only economic but the health, safety, and social activity of our residents. The Berkshire Blueprint 2.0 Five Year Benchmark puts it plainly: “Housing has become a full-blown crisis in the Berkshires.”

In *Envisioning Williamstown 2035: A Comprehensive Plan for the Future*, one of six community priorities for a vibrant and sustainable town is “Addressing housing issues related to housing affordability and housing diversity through regulatory and non-regulatory methods.” Great Barrington’s *Community Master Plan* notes that “southern Berkshires are now primarily a visitor-oriented, service sector economy” but and that “activity is strongly seasonal and wages are not keeping pace with housing costs and costs of living.”

Roadblocks that Might Impede Implementation

The following are likely obstacles that BRPC and project partners may face in implementing this proposal:

Local Labor Force - Local technical high schools and Berkshire Community College promote and support students entering the construction trades, but the COVID-19 pandemic and retirement of long-time tradespeople has strained the local pool of contractors.

Local Support - Acceptance of the need for housing and appropriate solutions in communities varies. Many communities support the idea that right-sized solutions need to be implemented in order to address the creation of new housing. Removing barriers to housing, including the creation of by-right housing outside of traditional one-family residences will continue to be an adjustment for communities. With Massachusetts legislating that ADUs are to be allowable by-right in all communities, the coming months will force communities to come to terms on how to create reasonable regulations.

Local Financing - While the funding proposed as part of this application seeks to supplement local programs to support the full cost of creating and preserving housing units, the current marketplace will still provide difficulties in financing housing of all shapes and sizes. The 2023-2027 *Berkshire CEDS* authored by BRPC identifies limited access to capital as a regional weakness.

Geographic Scope

The geographic scope of this proposal are priority geographies to be served by activities funded through the FY24 Pathways to Removing Obstacles to Housing (PRO Housing) grant identified by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, including:

- Berkshire County
- City of Pittsfield
- Town of Great Barrington
- Town of Lee
- Town of Williamstown

Key Stakeholders and Engagement

The newly created cabinet-level Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Liveable Communities is developing the state's first five-year statewide housing plan. Fourteen listening sessions were held across the state from April – June 2024. The session held in Berkshire County was the most well-attended, with over 200 participants. These sessions were designed with breakout groups for attendees to discuss the top housing challenges and potential solutions for their region. This proposal reflects what emerged during the Berkshire Regional Listening Session:

- Homeowners and renters in Berkshire County struggle to afford housing
- Only 1.4% of homes in Berkshire County are available for sale or rent, just below the statewide average and well below a “healthy” vacancy rate that allows for people to find homes when they need to move

The City of Pittsfield recently completed a Fair Housing survey as part of its Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice. Of all those who responded, the majority are owners (55%), a smaller percentage is for those who rent (36%), 8% live with family and friends and 1% are homeless. Among the challenges that people reported facing the most are:

- Housing is too expensive (85%)
- Rent increase (41%)
- Want to buy a home, but prices increased over the last years (41%)
- People are afraid of being evicted or that can't pay rent (35%)
- Can't find housing (25%)

The most critical need among renters who responded was construction of new housing units and among homeowners who responded was home repair and rehabilitation.

Alignment with Requirements to Affirmatively Further Fair Housing

Berkshire County towns partner with Upside 413, formerly known as the Berkshire County Regional Housing Authority, and the Mass Fair Housing Center to uphold a resident's right to

fair housing. There are also many local organizations that offer public programs and services on related fair housing topics, such as first-time homebuyer workshops or financial literacy classes, all of which contribute to the county's goal to affirmatively further fair housing and creating equal opportunities in housing.

In 2022, Mass Fair Housing Center expanded its operations by partnering with three other fair housing organizations to increase enforcement of the state's anti-discrimination laws and provide everyone with greater access to fair housing services, regardless of their location. They are the oldest fair housing center in the state and serve Berkshire, Hampden, Hampshire, Franklin, and Worcester Counties, providing free legal services to individuals who have experienced housing discrimination, including by providing information, legal advice, and representation.

The City of Pittsfield's Department of Community Development, through a Fair Housing Officer, assists in the processing of housing discrimination complaints with the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination; distributes a fair housing guide for tenants and landlords; provides a telephone "hotline" service for landlords and tenants to answer questions about housing laws and issues; and refers the public to the appropriate agencies to address complicated housing challenge. The city's recent Fair Housing survey found that 34 of 161 respondents faced discrimination due to source of income, gender identity/sexual orientation, young children, age, size of family, voucher status, or disability.

BRPC, in consultation with the city of Pittsfield, established a collaborative project titled "Gray to Green" in 2020. Gray to Green is an environmentally focused initiative driven by an inclusive community process designed to amplify the vision and experience of residents of the city's two neighborhoods with the greatest racial and economic disparities. The work is centered on environmental justice and increase green planning and project implementation through the lens of racial and social justice and implement projects to increase access and quality of greenspaces and improve health outcomes.

Components of the project include conducting an environmental scan to understand what data has already been collected, what analyses have been done, and what plans already exist that affect the neighborhoods, forming a representative and robust Working Group made up of planners, residents, city officials, and community organizations, the development of a Community Academy, conducting video and photo based neighborhood audits, and formulating specific projects and policies to improve the built environment.

The project led to successful public space improvements and serves as a procedural blueprint for how this proposal will use walking surveys to identify housing challenges.

Williamstown remains steadfast in its efforts to upholding civil rights. The town formed a Diversity, Inclusion, and Racial Equity Committee which is dedicated to proactively addressing civil rights matters and retroactively seeks to right historic wrongs. The committee is in the process of developing a strategic plan to foster greater diversity and cultural awareness.

Additionally, the city of Pittsfield worked with the local branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People to explore the historic impact redlining and segregation had

among on today’s environment. The findings include recognized that the Census tracts the Homeowners Loan Corporation identified as “hazardous” still have greater populations of the Black community than elsewhere. Additionally, the annual County Health Rankings identified that those living in those neighborhoods today have a life expectancy 10-12 years fewer than those who living in the areas. The NAACP has been actively involved in efforts to eliminate segregation barriers.

Berkshire County does not have an Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing or a Fair Housing Plan. The funding requested as part of this application would allow for the creation of a regional plan. Locally, the only fair housing planning is conducted by the city of Pittsfield. BRPC prepared their Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing in 2023. The primary findings in this project are that the lack of housing choice affects access to affordable housing in the community.

Budget and Timeline

Planning and Policy Activities Supporting Affordable Housing

Regional Planning

- Housing focused update to *Sustainable Berkshires*, BRPC’s regional comprehensive plan, including Regional Housing Needs Assessment & Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing and Housing Needs Assessment - \$125,000 – these activities will commence upon execution of the contract and wrap up by the end of year 3.

Local Planning

- Technical assistance for City and Town Needs Assessments, Housing Action Plans, and Housing Production Plans (including updates necessary for AHTs, ADUs, and Seasonal Communities designations) - \$300,000 – these activities will commence upon execution of the contract and wrap up by the end of year 4.

Infrastructure Activities (program will expend resources through

Reducing Energy Cost Burdens - In Williamstown, Pittsfield, and Great Barrington
Weatherization and energy-efficiency improvements: \$1,500,000 – these activities will run for up to three years.

Preservation Activities

Preserving affordable housing – In Williamstown, Pittsfield, and Great Barrington
Housing repair and rehabilitation: \$1,500,000 - these activities will run for up to three years.

Acquiring preservation restrictions – In Williamstown, Pittsfield, and Great Barrington:
\$1,500,000 - these activities will run for up to three years.

Subgrant Program – county-wide: \$1,750,000 these activities will run for up to five years.

- Walking surveys of housing conditions to identify vacant, underutilized, and potential rental properties
- Acquire vacant properties in receivership by nonprofits for the fair market value of the property “as is” if the entity will rehabilitate and sell affordably to an income-eligible first-time homebuyer
- Offering activities related to preserving affordable housing and acquiring preservation restrictions to rural communities with Affordable Housing Trusts.

Meeting Requirements for federal grant management, oversight, and reporting

- BRPC - \$300,000

Overall project activities are anticipated to run through the end of calendar year 2029.

Exhibit E Capacity

Applicant and Partner Capacity and Staffing Plan

As indicated in the Organizational **Chart** (see Figure 1), BRPC’s team for this proposal’s activities includes Community Planning & Development Program Manager Cornelius Hoss and Economic Development Program Manager Laura Brennan, as well as several members of their departments: Senior Planner Brett Roberts, Planner Andrew McKeever, and an additional Planner position which is currently vacant, as well as Project Specialist Karen Pelto and Program Associate Jocelyn Latvalla. GIS, Data & IT Program Manager Mark Maloy will also support the team.

Key management in partner communities include Director of Community Development Justine Dodds, City Planner Kevin Rayner, and Community Development & Housing Program Manager (Pittsfield); Assistant Town Manager & Director of Planning Christopher Rembold (Great Barrington); and Community Development Director Andrew Groff (Williamstown).

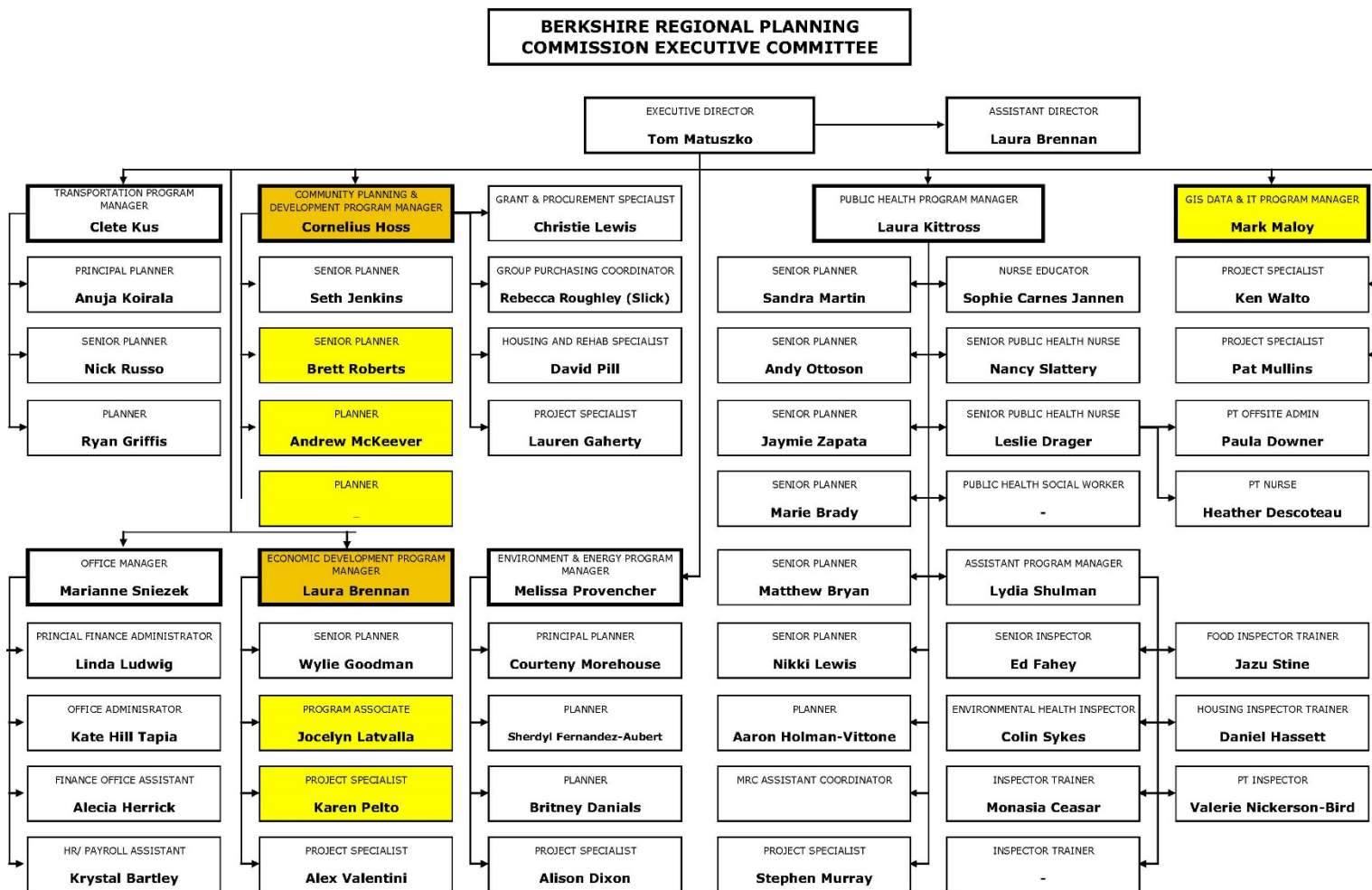
BRPC’s staff leadership team consists of the Executive Director, an Assistant Director, and six Program Managers. Each program area houses between two and twelve additional full-time staff. Agency staff have a breadth of experience in the fields of planning, zoning land use, affordable housing, municipal government, and/or development, as well as prior experience in the public and private sectors in guiding development and public policy.

BRPC’s Executive Committee is responsible for oversight of business affairs and formulates general programs for the Commission, in accordance with its specific needs, plans, and goals. Among the Executive Committee’s powers are the disbursement of Commission funds; borrowing funds in anticipation of revenue; hearing and resolving personnel grievances; establishing personnel policies; authorizing applications for federal, state, and local aid; entering into contracts; approving comments on proposals of a regional or inter-community nature; approving submittal of comments for projects undergoing state or federal agency review; and

approving submittal of comments on legislation or regulations which affect the region or member municipalities.

Management structures in partner communities are informed by their specific charters. In Williamstown, local government is managed by a select board that monitors the activities of the municipal government and town manager, reviews and approves warrant articles for Town Meetings, and performs a variety of statutory functions. The town manager oversees personnel through several department directors. In Great Barrington, a five-member select board is responsible for setting policy, issuing licenses, overseeing appointed committees, appointing authority to commissions and councils, and budgetary review. Through the town manager, the Selectboard exercises general supervision over town staff. In Pittsfield, the city charter

Figure 1 – BRPC Organizational Chart



7/29/2024



Figure 2 – Town of Great Barrington Organization Chart

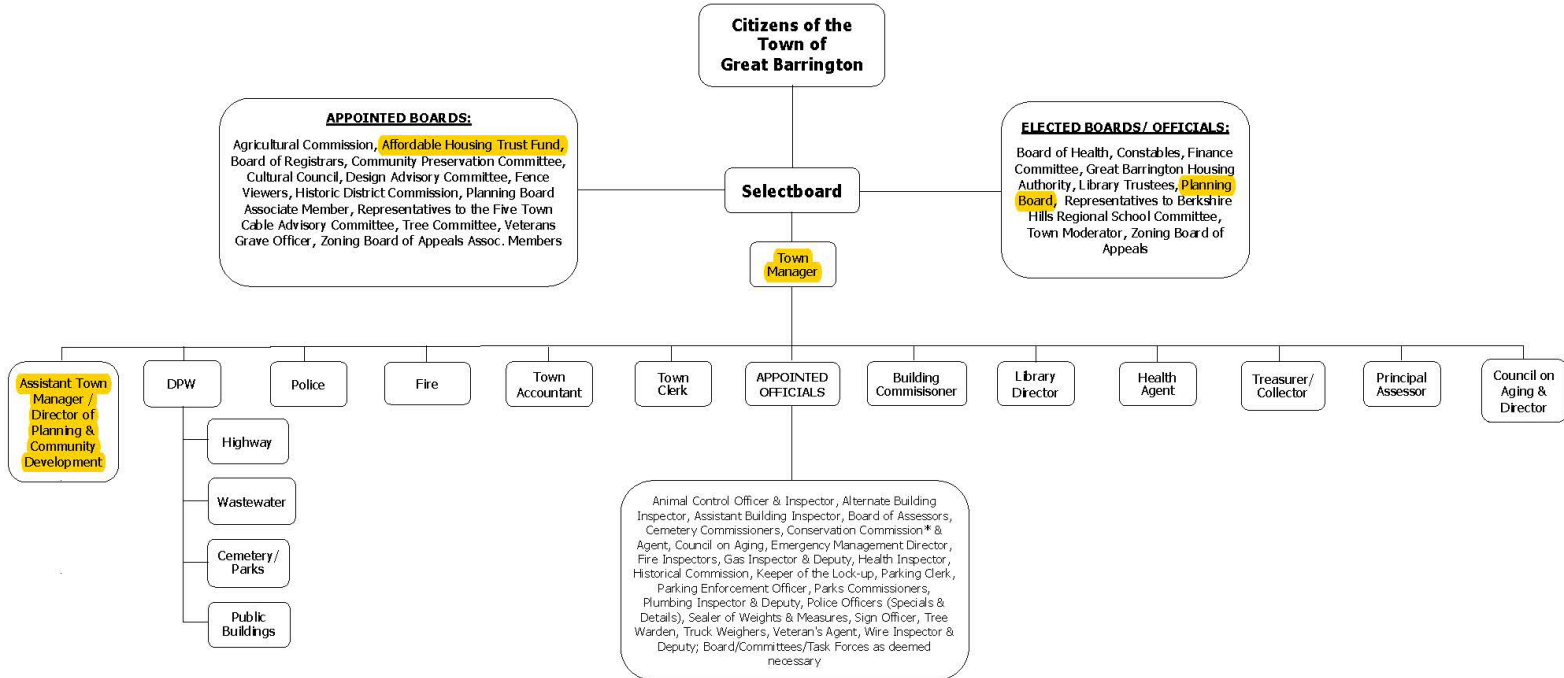
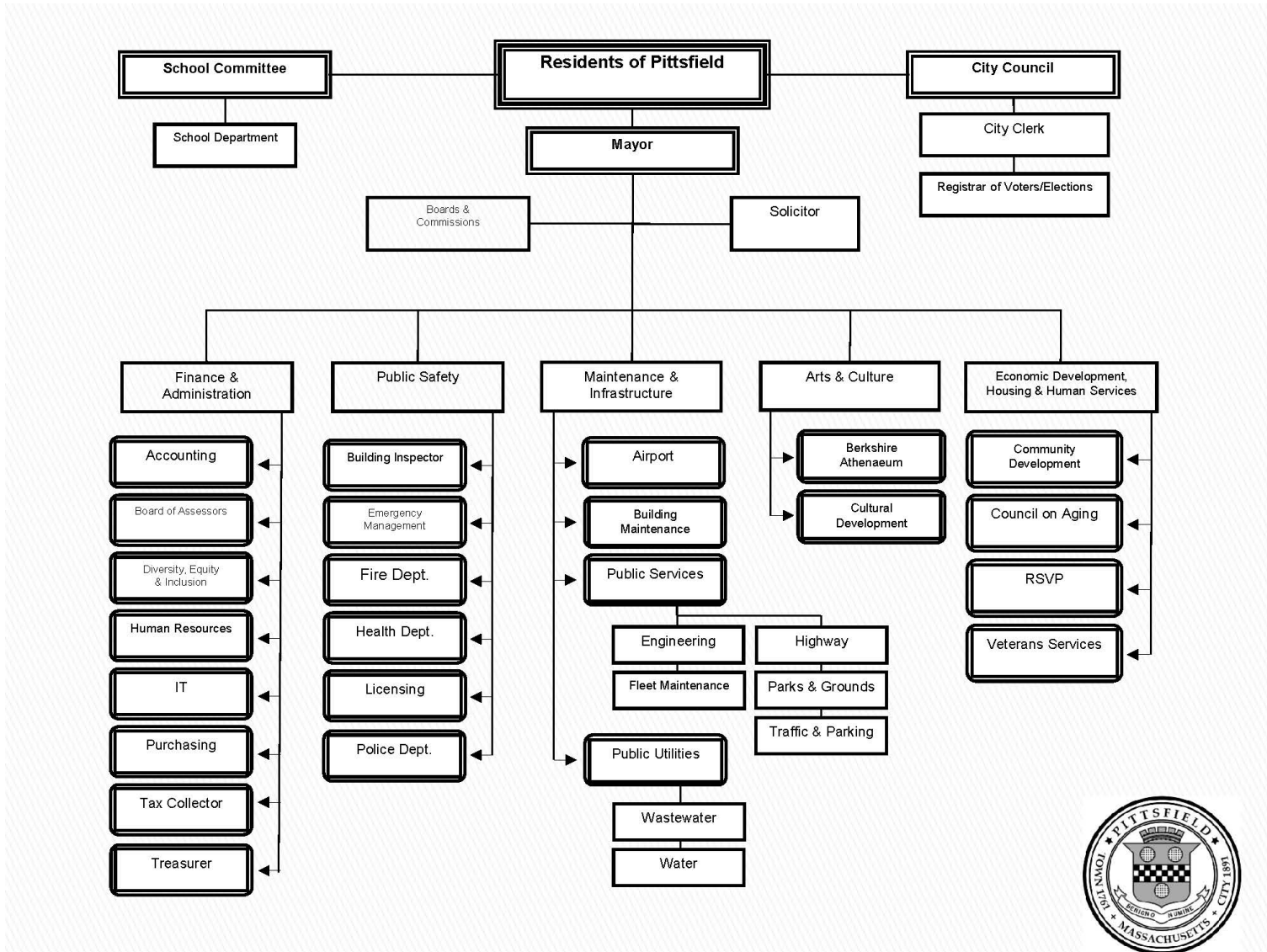


Figure 3 – Town of Williamstown Organization Chart

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Figure 4 – City of Pittsfield Organization Chart



establishes an executive branch headed by a mayor and a legislative branch consisting of a city council. City departments, including the Community Development Department involved in this project, are supervised by directors reporting to the mayor.

BRPC is a substate district, public body corporate as established by MGL c. 40B, the Regional Planning Law originally adopted in 1955. BRPC was established in 1966 and now consists of thirty-two municipalities in Berkshire County. BRPC is the official area-wide planning agency in Berkshire County and is required to study the problems, needs, and resources of the region and to make recommendations for physical, social, governmental, and economic improvements in the Berkshires. As a Regional Planning Agency, BRPC promotes regional collaboration among member communities and is the primary agency responsible for increasing communication, cooperation, and coordination among all levels of government as well as the private business and civic sectors to benefit their planning regions and to improve their residents' quality of life.

The Commission consists of one member of the Planning Board of each member city and town, known as the Delegate, elected annually by said planning board. Each municipality may also exercise the option of appointing an Alternate Delegate, who may be another member of the planning board, a member of the select board or city council, a member of the municipality's staff, or other representative at the community's discretion.

BRPC's mission is to provide leadership and assistance to the County's municipalities, organizations, and citizens in achieving County-wide inter-relationships, prosperity, opportunities, quality of life, strength, and vibrancy. BRPC's public-facing mission, vision, and values underline the agency's responsibility to provide planning services to the entire region. This often means working with municipalities in identifying creative and efficient approaches for completing projects that often have limited budgets. This positions BRPC as the go-to source for both planning and implementation of proposed improvements at the community level.

Throughout the agency, staff regularly work with local officials and volunteer bodies in relation to land use issues, community and economic development, environmental and energy concerns, transportation solutions, data and GIS, and public health-related decisions. Assistance can range from technical assistance requests on specific short-term issues to agency staff facilitating full-scale comprehensive community-wide master planning activities.

BRPC's work requires regular collaboration with partners and stakeholders regionally and across the state. A recent example of the depth of the collaboration was developing A Housing Vision for the Berkshires. This project entailed over two years of collaboration with experts in housing and other disciplines representing municipal, not-for-profit, and business leaders. This effort resulted in the working group identifying critical housing issues in the region and potential strategies to address them, as well as highlighting actions in the short term to alleviate the housing crisis.

Other examples include BRPC's role as the EDA-designated Economic Development District, through which the agency coordinates Berkshire County's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) on a five-year cycle overseen by a CEDS Strategy Committee and involving extensive outreach to community stakeholders; BRPC's long-time management of

the Berkshire Brownfields Program, which provides loans and grants related to contamination assessment and remediation, and multi-year, sub-regional CDBG Housing Rehabilitation programs, both of which require the engagement of subcontractors with specific expertise.

Exhibit F Leverage

Exhibit G Long-term Effect

Permanent Long-term Effects and Outcomes

From a planning and policy perspective, this project serves an immediate regional and local need. The funding requested as part of this application allows a thorough response to address the overall needs of the region and continues to raise awareness of the short- and long-term impacts of the local and regional housing crisis. As an organization, this grant provides BRPC with a long-term action plan with measurable goals to ensure an active role as the regional body in monitoring the housing health of the entire region beyond the completion of the outlined project.

Overall, the planning and policy activities proposed at the local level allow the right-sized long-term housing development in all shapes and sizes. While regulatory changes are needed, it is abundantly clear that the value of understanding state and federal programs and the ability to leverage local resources is lacking in many communities. The projects proposed within this application will provide communities with the necessary tools and information to make decisions and understand how to seek assistance.

At a local level, this work results in a variety of outcomes primarily based on steps communities have taken to address housing. Communities in the early stages of addressing housing that wish to participate in this project can complete needed housing planning work and begin the process of removing regulatory barriers, so by the end of this grant, they will be in a position to entertain new housing development and have understanding of potential solutions to incentivize housing development. For communities further along in addressing housing, physical changes will occur before the end of the grant with substantial additions to the quantity and quality of housing in the immediate years after the end of the grant.

As stated within this application, the region has suffered from the lack of development in the past 60 years of most residential forms except for traditional one-family residences. The grant proposal provides BRPC with the capacity to provide technical services to communities throughout the region to ensure a more diverse selection of housing opportunities. As the region comes to terms with the need to band together to address housing constraints, BRPC will also be able to create sustainable solutions to allow the agency to continue providing housing-related services desired by its 32 communities.

In relation to the development activities proposed in this application, there are immediate and long-term impacts on the partner communities and region. The funding requested will seed programs that allow the partner communities and BRPC to analyze their effectiveness, while also

understanding how programming could be brought to rural communities where administrative capacity does not exist. For BRPC and the region, the success of these programs provides a greater incentive for communities to understand to create and fund programs where there are currently none. This level of analysis also provides greater impetus for communities to adopt programs such as the Community Preservation Act, which provide reliable annual funding sources to seed development and preservation activities.

In the long term, this program creates a housing-friendly regulatory environment throughout the region, which results in the demand of current and future residents of housing units of all shapes, sizes, and affordability.