

COMMON GROUND

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A NEWSLETTER FOR COMMUNITY PLANNING IN THE BERKSHIRE REGION

THE RESULTS ARE IN: THE ON-LINE BURN PERMIT PROGRAM IS A SUCCESS!

The Burn Permitting season ended May 1, 2011 revealing that 2,261 permits were issued over the four month period, using an on-line permitting system. It allowed residents to go on-line and obtain a brush burning permit. Six municipalities including Richmond, Pittsfield, Peru, Lenox, Lanesborough and Great Barrington participated. The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive from the fire chiefs and participating residents. The hope is to expand the system to include more municipalities next year! Funding for this project was provided through the District Local Technical Assistance funds from the Commonwealth.

For more information, contact Sara Lafayette at slafayette@berkshireplanning.org or (413) 442-1521 ext. 19.

ADDRESSING BACTERIAL CONTAMINATION OF THE HOOSIC WATERSHED

The BRPC, in partnership with the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts (MCLA) Environmental Studies Program, has recently been awarded a grant to identify sources of bacterial contamination in the Hoosic River Watershed and to develop strategies to mitigate major sources that are found. MCLA will take the lead in identifying bacterial sources, collecting and analyzing water samples. After an intensive sampling program, the MCLA team will conduct a public presentation that summarizes the sampling results. BRPC will work with the municipalities and/or landowners determined to be the sources of the contamination to help them develop strategies to address the problems found. The project is being funded under the Clean Water Act, administered by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection.

For more information contact Lauren Gaherty at lgaherty@berkshireplanning.org or (413) 442-1521 ext. 35.

ENJOY SUMMER!



WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS SCENIC BYWAYS MARKETING CAMPAIGN

The BRPC will soon embark upon a long-awaited project to produce a coordinated and cohesive marketing campaign strategy that will brand and promote the Scenic Byways of Western Massachusetts as a travel destination. These largely unheralded roadways offer an off-the-beaten-path traveling experience that complements the standard or more recognized tourist amenities that the region is known for. A Byways Marketing Advisory Committee comprised of municipal and state officials, regional tourism councils, regional planning agencies and chambers of commerce, will provide input throughout the project. Funding for this project is being provided by the National Scenic Byways Grant Program and the Massachusetts Department of Transportation.

For more information contact Lauren Gaherty at lgaherty@berkshireplanning.org or (413) 442-1521 ext. 35.

CENSUS 2010: BERKSHIRE AGE DISTRIBUTION

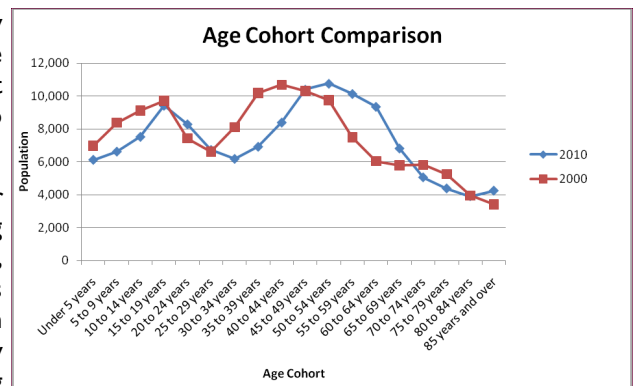
The U.S. Census Bureau has recently released additional data from the 2010 Census. Upcoming editions of Common Ground will review the findings from the various data items. This issue describes the age distribution of the county.

MEDIAN AGE

Berkshire County continued to have an older population than the rest of the state. The county median age in 2010 is 44.7 while the state median age is 39.1. These median ages have increased by about 4 years. Williamstown and North Adams are the youngest communities with median ages under 40, mostly due to MCLA and Williams College. Monterey, Mount Washington, Lenox, Richmond, West Stockbridge, Egremont, Stockbridge, Alford and Tyringham all have median ages over 50, with Tyringham having the highest median age of just over 57 years.

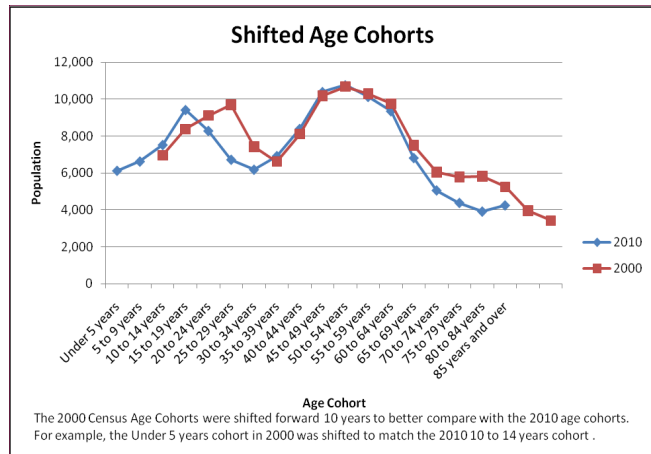
AGE COHORTS

When reviewing the age of the county through 5-year age cohorts, several trends emerge (See Age Cohort Comparison graph). The baby boom generation appears to have stayed in Berkshire County over the last decade, leading to an increase in population in the 45-75 year cohorts. With the shifting of this age group, we are experiencing a significant decline in population in the 30-44 year cohorts. These are the children of the baby boom, which tends to be a smaller population, but also exhibits the exodus from the county of youth after college. The county experienced a slight increase in the 20-24 year cohort, which is promising, but the entire age group from 20-44 is significantly lower than at the height of the baby boom generation. The 15-19 year cohort has remained stable over the last decade, most likely due to the influence of the colleges in the region. The children of the county show a significant decline from 2000, which is directly related to the decline in the 30-44 year cohorts. If the county is unable to attract significant numbers of young adults to the region, our population will continue to decline over the coming decades as the baby boom generation ages.



The county has seen an influx of population for the current 10-14 year old cohort, which indicates people are moving into the area with young children. A similar increase is shown in the current 15-19 year cohort, but that is due to the county having more people come in for Williams and MCLA, then leave for other colleges. The increases in population stops at that point. The cohorts 20-24, 25-29 and 30-34 all saw significant declines in population. This most likely is due to young adults moving away to college and not coming back, and those that move here for college are not staying. The county lost over 5,000 people in these cohorts over the decade. The 35-54 year cohorts saw a modest increase totaling about 900 people, or 225 people per 5 year cohort. This would indicate that we are seeing some people move into the county in these age groups, which corresponds with the slight increase in children mentioned above, but more significantly, we are not seeing an exodus of people due to job losses. For ages 55 and above, we are seeing another significant decline in population. Some of this may just be natural deaths, but it could also be people moving away to the sunbelt, high housing costs forcing people to move away or other factors. This decline may also be due to the Census miscounting the snowbird population.

When looking at the age cohort in areas throughout the county, a different picture emerges. A majority of the municipalities follow a similar trend as the entire county. The exception is that the 15-19 year cohort went up in the municipalities whereas it went down in the county. This most likely is due to the influence of Williams College. Municipalities also experience a larger percentage decrease in the 20-24 and 25-29 year cohorts. This is most likely due to the higher housing costs in the towns, as compared to the cities, preventing young adults from renting and owning housing. When the cities are examined, the picture is very different. Pittsfield saw a decrease in every age cohort, except for the 25-29 and 30-34 age cohorts, where a slight increase in population is found. This may be due to the city's efforts to attract young adults, as well as having



more affordable housing for this age group. In North Adams, the city saw a rise in the 15-19 and 20-24 age cohorts, most likely due to MCLA. The data indicates that once students graduate, they leave the city. Starting in the 35-39 age cohort, the city is losing 75-125 people per cohort. This number increases at age 70, but this is most likely due to the same reasons as the county's similar decline.

Visit Berkshire Benchmarks (<http://www.berkshirebenchmarks.org/data>) and American Fact Finder (<http://factfinder2.census.gov>) for more information. Contact Mark Maloy for more information at mmaloy@berkshireplanning.org or (413) 442-1521 ext. 29.

CURRENT PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

2011 BERKSHIRE COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (CEDS) UPDATE

At the June 20th meeting, the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (full commission) voted to adopt the final 2011 Berkshire Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. The final report is available for download at: <http://www.berkshireplanning.org/>. Please be aware, the document is very large and may require a long time to download with slower internet connections.

The final report represents a culmination of an eight month long economic planning process involving input from citizens, communities, organizations and stakeholders from across the county. Through this process, it was identified that the catalysts necessary to foster collaboration and partnerships for developing economic prosperity were alive in the region. Ultimately, it is the goal of the CEDS to make certain regional conversations are initiated and maintained so that the most significant economic development activities move forward and to ensure benefits impact the greatest number of Berkshire residents possible. Given accessible pools of funding and more, proactive and sustained support efforts, the CEDS process can facilitate or be a roadmap for sustained, prosperous economic development in the Berkshires. This report and the commitment of its partners is one "big" step in the right direction. As it has in the recent past, the Berkshires will economically thrive in the future.

The BRPC staff and the CEDS Strategy Committee would like to thank all the communities, individuals and organizations that made this report possible. Since the CEDS is an ongoing process, please check back often for new updates.

If you have troubles downloading the document or questions on the final report, please contact Daniel Sexton at dsexton@berkshireplanning.org or (413) 442-1521 ext. 28.

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING: UPCOMING PUBLIC REVIEW AND COMMENT PERIODS

The Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is nearing completion of the 2011 Long Range Transportation Plan (RTP). The RTP is a comprehensive document that provides the basis for future transportation investment and planning in the region. The MPO's annual documents, the Unified Planning Work Plan that outlines the transportation planning studies to be undertaken in the upcoming federal fiscal year and the Transportation Improvement Program that lays out the projects and programs to be implemented in 2012 through 2015, are also being finalized.

The MPO will release these plans for public comment in July and the documents will be made available on the BRPC website. Everyone is encouraged provide comments. A public workshop is planned for July to provide more information. After the public comment period, the MPO will take action to adopt these planning documents. The dates for the workshop, the MPO meetings and public comment will be posted on the BRPC's website as soon as they are determined.

For more information, please contact Clete Kus at ckus@berkshireplanning.org or (413) 442-1521 ext. 20.

UPCOMING WORKSHOPS: SUSTAINABLE BERKSHIRES

Come participate in development of the regional sustainable plan. At these workshops you will hear more about the project, review existing conditions, identify key trends impacting the region and help define the regional vision for the future!

For more information, please contact Amy Kacala at akacala@berkshireplanning.org or (413) 442-1521 ext. 12.

OPEN SPACE * TRANSPORTATION * ENERGY * RECREATION * ECONOMY * HOUSING

Share your vision for
Berkshire County

Help Define It: Three Opportunities to Participate
Choose the date and location that works best for you!

1 July 6 North Adams All Saints Church Summer St 7-9 pm	2 July 12 Pittsfield Berkshire Athenaeum Auditorium 6:30-8:30 pm	3 July 13 Great Barrington Fire Station 37 State St/Rte 7 7-9 pm
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HISTORIC * EDUCATION * LOCAL FOOD * SERVICES * INFRASTRUCTURE * LAND USE

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED: ASHUWILLTICOOK RAIL TRAIL COUNTS

We need your help to document the increasing number of folks who use the Ashuwillticook. The BRPC is looking for volunteers for **two hour shifts on Saturday, July 9th from 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM, at three different locations along the trail: the Berkshire Mall, Farnum's Crossing in Cheshire and Russell Field in Adams.** The information gathered from these trail counts is of great value in demonstrating the continued interest in the Ashuwillticook of area residents and visitors alike. This data is also used to support requests for planning and funding from our state and local agencies and legislature for new facilities throughout the county. To volunteer please contact Ellen Downes at edownes@berkshireplanning.org or (413) 442-1521 ext. 23 as soon as possible.



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UPCOMING EVENTS

NEW PLANNING BOARD & BOARD OF APPEALS MEMBER TRAINING

We encourage new and experienced members of Planning Boards and Zoning Board of Appeal members to attend the upcoming free training hosted by BRPC titled “The Roles & Responsibilities of Planning & Appeals Boards.” It will review the duties of Board members, the required administrative procedures for conducting business, as well as the relevant land use laws. The training will be held at the BRPC office in Pittsfield and will begin promptly at 6:00 PM. A light dinner will be provided. RSVP to Brian Domina at bdomina@berkshireplanning.org or (413) 442-1521 ext. 14.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED: FARNUM’S CHALLENGE SATURDAY JULY 24TH

This is a unique triathlon for athletes with and without disabilities, where teams are created to compete in a running, biking and rowing race on the Ashuwillticook Trail. This year’s race is a collaborative effort of United Cerebral Palsy the Berkshires, DCR and the Berkshire Bike Path Council. Teams interested in participating should call Dawn at UCP (413) 442-9555. To volunteer or participate in the event, please contact Marge Cohen at (413) 442-5223.

GRANT ANNOUNCEMENTS

MASSWORKS INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM GUIDELINES

This is the one-stop shop for municipalities and other public entities seeking public infrastructure improvements to support economic development. Applications must be submitted September 1-9, 2011. Visit at <http://www.mass.gov/eohed/infrastructure> for more information.

RIVERS, TRAILS & CONSERVATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The National Park Service provides assistance to communities for natural resource conservation and outdoor recreation projects. Applications are due August 1, 2011. Visit <http://www.nps.gov/ncrc/programs/rtca/index.htm> for more information.

FEMA 2012 HAZARD MITIGATION ASSISTANCE FUNDING AVAILABLE

The Federal Emergency Management Agency has issued guidance and applications for the 2012 Hazard Mitigation Assistance unified program. Focus areas include pre-disaster mitigation, flood mitigation assistance, severe repetitive loss and post-disaster hazard mitigation. Applications are due November 4, 2011. More information is available at <http://www.mass.gov/mema>.

MASSACHUSETTS RECREATIONAL TRAILS PROGRAM GRANTS AVAILABLE

This program provides grants for a variety of projects including trail construction, stewardship and trail protection. All state, regional and local agencies are eligible to apply. Keep in mind this is a grant that requires a 20% funding match. The application deadline is October 1, 2011. Visit <http://www.mass.gov/dcr/stewardship/greenway/regionalGrants.htm> for more information.

CALENDAR

All meetings held in BRPC office unless otherwise noted. Please check the BRPC website to confirm the meetings.

JULY

- 6 **Sustainable Berkshires Workshop**, 7:00 p.m. in North Adams (All Saints Church - Summer St.)
- 7 **BRPC Executive Committee Meeting**, 4:00 p.m.
- 9 **Ashuwillticook Rail Trail Counts**, 7:00 a.m.
- 12 **Ashuwillticook Rail Trail Counts**, 7:00 a.m. & 4:00 p.m.
- Sustainable Berkshires Workshop**, 6:30 p.m. in Pittsfield (Berkshire Athenaeum Auditorium)
- 13 **Sustainable Berkshires Workshop**, 7:00 p.m. in Great Barrington (Fire Station - 37State St.)
- 19 **TAC Meeting**, 4:00 p.m.
- 24 **Farnum’s Challenge**, 9:00 a.m.
- 26 **MPO Meeting**, 4:00 p.m.
- 28 **New Planning Board & Zoning Board of Appeals Training**, 5:30 p.m.

AUGUST

- 11 **BRPC Executive Committee**, 4:00 p.m. (tentative)
- 16 **TAC Meeting**, 4:00 p.m.
- 30 **MPO Meeting**, 4:00 p.m.

SEPTEMBER

- 1 **BRPC Executive Meeting**, 4:00 p.m.

CLEARINGHOUSE REVIEWS

None at this time.