

CURRENT PROJECTS OF THE BERKSHIRE REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

November 2008

COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

REGIONAL - EXPEDITED DEVELOPMENT PERMITTING

BRPC is working countywide to ensure that the local permitting process occurs efficiently and expeditiously. Technical assistance is being provided to promote and establish Priority Development Sites (PDS) under MGL 43d (currently Pittsfield, Adams, Lee and Dalton have PDS sites). In addition, BRPC staff is promoting examples of best development practices for use by all communities.

REGIONAL - BROWNFIELDS PROGRAM

The Berkshire Brownfields Program consists of Phase I and II assessments for sites across the region contaminated by petroleum and hazardous materials. In addition, BRPC has established a Revolving Loan Fund to lend funds for clean up activities. The Berkshire Brownfield Revolving Loan Fund will provide subordinated loans and subgrants to enhance the credit worthiness of conventional or other traditional loans and funds and may fill funding gaps in the financial mix of a project.

ADAMS- PRIORITY DEVELOPMENT SITE ASSISTANCE

BRPC is working with the Town of Adam to assist in the development of the town's Priority Development Site, the Greylock Glen. BRPC will develop a website, recommend changes to the Planned Unit Resort District bylaw, assist with the conservation restriction for the site and assist with efficient permitting of the site.

DALTON – PRIORITY DEVELOPMENT SITE ASSISTANCE

BRPC has provided assistance to the Town of Dalton to develop a town economic development plan, and assess potential sites for a business/industrial park, Ashuelot Park. BRPC recently assisted the town in developing a zoning bylaw for a Planned Industrial Development District. BRPC is currently working on a traffic study.

GREAT BARRINGTON - HOUSATONIC IMPROVEMENTS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT

BRPC is administering a Community Development Block Grant from the Department of Housing and Community Development for the Town of Great Barrington for planning and improvements in the village of Housatonic. The grant will will develop full architectural plans and specifications for achieving Americans with Disability Act compliance for the Ramsdell Library; and design and construct various infrastructure improvements in the village.

LEE – PRIORITY DEVELOPMENT SITE ASSISTANCE

BRPC is assisting the Town of Lee, primarily through the Lee Community Development Corporation, with efforts to re-vitalize the recently closed mills. These efforts will be integrated into downtown planning efforts.

PITTSFIELD – URBAN CENTER HOUSING TAX INCREMENT FINANCING

BRPC is assisting Pittsfield Community Development staff with preparation of Urban Center Housing Tax Increment Financing (TIF) application to DHCD.

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COMMUNITY LAND USE PLANNING

REGIONAL - MUNICIPAL PLANNING SUPPORT: ADAMS

BRPC staff is available to work in town / city halls under contracts with the local governments ½ -3 days a week, acting as staff for town – so-called “Outsource Planner”. Services vary by needs of each town. Currently BRPC provide Outsource Planner services to the Town of Adams for Geographic Information System administration.

ADAMS – DOWNTOWN ZONING

BRPC is providing technical assistance to the Town of Adams to re-write sections of the towns zoning bylaws to assist in revitalizing, preserving, and expanding the downtown character of Adams’ traditional town center.

BECKET – SMART GROWTH PROJECT

BRPC staff is providing technical assistance to the Town of Becket to develop “Smart Growth” zoning measures including bylaws allowing small-scale wind energy systems and bylaws to allow flexible residential development.

GREAT BARRINGTON - OPEN SPACE ZONING

BRPC is working with the Great Barrington Planning Board to develop zoning language for an Open Space Residential Development Bylaw for the town.

NEW MARLBOROUGH – COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

BRPC staff is assisting the New Marlborough Planning Board prepare a Comprehensive Plan. Attention will be given to allowing the village centers to thrive and possibly expand.

PITTSFIELD - MASTER PLAN SUPPORT

BRPC is providing the logistical support for the various committees and subcommittees who are preparing a new master plan for the City, its first in 14 years. BRPC staff coordinates the committees and the public outreach efforts.

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EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS PLANNING

REGIONAL - PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS PLANNING

BRPC acts as the fiduciary agent for the Berkshire County Boards of Health Association as they conduct emergency preparedness planning for bioterrorism and pandemic flu. Work is actually conducted by various consultants hired by the Association but which are under contract to BRPC.

REGIONAL - HOMELAND SECURITY PLANNING

Working under the direction of the Western Massachusetts Homeland Security Council, BRPC, along with Franklin Regional Council of Governments and the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, is carrying out various Homeland Security planning activities. These include identifying critical infrastructure and facilities, establishing continuance of operations plans, developing interlocal memorandums of understanding/mutual aid agreements (MAA) for a broad set of functions that go beyond the traditional fire and police MAAs, evaluating regional evacuation plans and development of a Resource Directory for use in disaster situations.

LANESBOROUGH – MULTI-HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN

BRPC is providing technical assistance to the Town of Lanesborough to develop a Multi-Hazard mitigation plan

SCENIC BYWAYS

REGIONAL - JACOBS LADDER TRAIL CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE

Jacobs Ladder Trail (Rte. 20) in Lee, Becket, Chester, Huntington and Russell is one of the first national scenic byways. The original corridor management plan is over ten years old and BRPC, working as a subcontractor for the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, is updating the corridor management plan. The National Scenic Byways program provides funding for a wide variety of projects intended to enhance the experience of tourists driving along scenic byways.

REGIONAL - MOHAWK TRAIL FACILITIES IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

The Mohawk Trail (Rte. 2) in Williamstown, North Adams, Clarksburg, Florida, Savoy, Charlemont, Buckland, Shelburne Falls, and Greenfield is a national scenic byway. BRPC is designing, permitting and installing a canoe launch in Charlemont, trailhead improvements in North Adams, a tourist information kiosk in Florida and historic signs in a number of locations. Overlook improvements, such as vista clearing, is also being done in two locations. In addition, preliminary designs are being prepared to improve the safety and appearance either of the Colonial Plaza/Adams Road area (Williamstown) or around the Price Chopper (North Adams).

ENERGY PLANNING

REGIONAL – COUNTY ENERGY STRATEGY

BRPC is preparing a county energy strategy that will contain information about current energy usage and a strategy for conservation and renewable energy sources.

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ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING

REGIONAL - BERKSHIRE CONSERVATION AGENT PROGRAM (BCAP): NINETEEN BERKSHIRE TOWNS

BRPC established and administers a program where a professional conservation agent, working as a consultant to BRPC, can be retained for a very favorable rate by any local conservation commission to assist them in reviewing and permitting projects. The project developer pays the town for the service and BRPC is reimbursed by the town.

REGIONAL – LOW IMPACT DEVELOPMENT

The project promotes Low Impact Development design techniques in Berkshire County. Low impact development techniques are intended to reduce the water quality and quantity impacts of new development. Demonstration projects and community outreach are being conducted.

ADAMS - FLOOD CONTROL RESTORATION

BRPC is working with the Town of Adams, US Army Corps of Engineers, Mass RiverWays Program and the Hoosic River Watershed Association to make the human made flood control structure (part of which is concrete) more fish-friendly and accessible for recreational users.

DALTON - NPDES (NATIONAL POLLUTION DISCHARGE ELIMINATION SYSTEM) PHASE 2 ASSISTANCE

BRPC is assisting the Town of Dalton in meeting its NPDES stormwater management requirements. This involves establishing a work program each year that deals with the most significant issues that the Town's NPDES stormwater permit identified.

DALTON - WINDSOR RESERVOIR RESTORATION PROJECT

The Windsor Reservoir was severely impacted by a major storm a few years ago that destroyed its capacity to be used as a drinking water source. Working with the Dalton Fire District, BRPC obtained grant funds and is administering a program to prevent sedimentation from entering the reservoir.

PITTSFIELD - OAK HILL TRIBUTARY IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

BRPC will aid the City of Pittsfield in its efforts to install Best Management Practices throughout the Oak Hill tributary of the Unkamet Brook watershed to mitigate the impacts of stormwater runoff.

PITTSFIELD – ONOTA LAKE PRESERVATION PROGRAM

BRPC is working with the City of Pittsfield and the Lake Onota Preservation association to target the growth of invasive aquatic plants, stormwater runoff, and erosion. Through this project, a combination of structural and non-structural BMPs will be implemented to address these high priority impairments. Specifically, this project will: improve the effectiveness of annual drawdowns for aquatic plant management, design and install shoreline stabilization measures, install stormwater management BMPs, monitor project effectiveness, and provide outreach and education materials to lake watershed residents and boaters.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND TRAINING

REGIONAL - LOCAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

BRPC provides technical assistance to the region's municipalities about a host of planning related topics, ranging from procedural issues related to zoning, review of development project, requests for demographic and land use information, and request for GIS and other maps.

REGIONAL - TRAINING

Wednesday, December 10, 2008

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BRPC hosts, sponsors, coordinates, conducts and presents training sessions for municipal board members, including the Citizen Planner Training Collaborative on topics such as municipal planning and zoning, smart growth and environmental protection. Three or four times per year BRPC hosts a training dinner for Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals members, Building Inspectors and Planning staff.

REGIONAL - CLEARINGHOUSE REVIEWS

BRPC prepares advisory comments for the Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs and local permitting boards/commissions to projects subject to Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) review.

REGIONAL - PREPARATION OF 2010 U.S. CENSUS

BRPC is providing assistance to municipalities to ensure that the 2010 U.S. Census, which is critical for political representation and funding for the region, is a complete count in Berkshire County.

REGIONAL – GRANT WRITING AND ADMINISTRATION

BRPC provides technical assistance to local municipalities, nonprofit organization, and institutions to prepare, write, and administer grant applications to a wide range of public or private funding sources.

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

REGIONAL - BICYCLE-PEDESTRIAN PLANNING

BRPC is coordinating moving a range of bicycle-pedestrian planning and implementation projects forward in the region. Some of the projects BRPC staff is supporting are the Adams extension of the Ashuwillticook trail northward to North Adams, support to the City of Pittsfield in planning and designing a bicycle network in the City and support to Lee and Lenox in planning for bicycle facilities in those communities.

REGIONAL – BERKSHIRE BIKE PATH COUNCIL

BRPC serves as the fiduciary agent for the Berkshire Bike Path Council (BBPC) and administers BBPC funds in accordance with decisions made by the Council to promote the development of bicycle facilities in Berkshire County.

REGIONAL – BERKSHIRE REGIONAL TRANSIT ROUTE STUDY

BRPC is working with the Berkshire Regional Transit Authority to identify existing and projected development/growth centers in Berkshire County, evaluate the extent to which these centers are being served by transit, quantify the relationship between BRTA revenue and ridership and provide recommendations for optimizing BRTA's service. BRPC will finalize this compilation of data into a comprehensive report by March 2009.

REGIONAL - CORRIDOR ACCESS MANAGEMENT PROJECTS

Preserving the ability of existing major highways to safely and efficiently carry traffic is vital to the region. BRPC is working with the Congressman's office and MassHighway District 1 to assess several sites along Route 8 in North Adams, Adams and Cheshire for opportunity to implement principles of Corridor Access Management, is working on preliminary designs for an access management project in North Adams/Williamstown, is preparing a Corridor Management Plan for Route 8 in Adams and North Adams and will be conducting a Route 7/20 access management project in Lenox / Pittsfield once the funding becomes available.

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REGIONAL – COORDINATED TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

BRPC provides transportation planning services to the Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organization, including preparing the Transportation Improvement Program, maintaining the regional transportation model and preparing and updating the Regional Transportation Plan.

REGIONAL –CONTINUATION OF SAFETY STUDY

BRPC is continuing to work with local law enforcement agencies and the Executive Office of Transportation (EOT) in Boston to (1) improve reporting of crash data and (2) identify and progress projects that improve safety.

LEE AREA TRAFFIC STUDY

The impact of traffic heading to and from the MassPike on Lee and the regional traffic issues that our limited access to the MassPike create are the subject of this major study. This study will recommend solutions to the impact of traffic on downtown Lee and improvements for the flow of regional traffic in that area.

NORTH ADAMS / WILLIAMSTOWN – MOHAWK TRAIL -SHARED USE PATH FEASIBILITY STUDY

This project is to provide for planning and conceptual design of an off-road bike path between the City of North Adams and the Town of Williamstown, as recommended in the Mohawk Trail Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan. This path, will ultimately serve as an extension of the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail, recently completed as far as the Town of Adams, and currently in the conceptual design phase for the section from Adams to North Adams.

OTHER REGIONAL PROJECTS
