

Common Ground

Berkshire
Regional
Planning
Commission

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JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2004

BRPC Submits Comments on Pittsfield Airport

BRPC submitted lengthy comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Pittsfield Airport Improvement Project to the Secretary of Environmental Affairs on December 8th. These were developed after considerable review of the lengthy DEA/EIR document, consideration of BRPC's Clearinghouse Review Committee, and review by the full Commission. As is typical for an environmental document of this complexity, many comments sought technical clarifications or corrections in the document itself.

The most substantial findings of the BRPC review revolve around the overall purpose and need for the safety improvements called for and the most appropriate length for the runway, weighing the improvements for users of the airport against the environmental and community impacts. The Commission feels that various improvements appear to be supported by the DEA/EIR:

1. Creation of 1,000-foot Runway Safety Areas at each end of the runway by shifting the runway away from Barker Road and moving it toward/across South Mountain Road
2. At least maintain the 5,000 foot runway length, if not increase it to the maximum length that will fit within the existing environmental constraints on the east end of the proposed runway extension

(Continued on page 2)



BRPC Recommends EIR for Hoosac Wind Project; EOEA Secretary Declines EIR

In the June issue of *Common Ground*, we stated that wind energy facilities are likely to be controversial. This has proved true for the Hoosac Wind Project, a proposal to erect 20 commercial-scale wind turbines on two sites in Florida and Monroe. BRPC recently reviewed the Hoosac Wind proposal through the Environmental Notification Form (ENF) that is required under the Mass. Environmental Policy Act (MEPA). BRPC reviews and comments on several projects each year as part of the agency's regional planning responsibilities.

The Hoosac Wind Project is a complex project, and both the Clearinghouse Review Committee and the Executive Committee grappled with the ENF and the complexity of the project. The review process was difficult, as many important details about the project were not included in the ENF. In the end, BRPC's Executive Committee, the policy-making board that formed and ratified the final recommendations, felt that it was to the benefit of both the proponent and interested citizens that the public review process for Hoosac Wind be conducted in a fully informed and exemplary manner. The Hoosac Wind Project may be the first commercial wind farm installed in Massachusetts, and how it is developed may have far-reaching implications for the region. Therefore, BRPC recommended that a more detailed

Environmental Impact Report (EIR) be prepared for the project. This was being recommended for the following reasons:

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Multiple-Hazard Mitigation Plans Under Way

The Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA), the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and BRPC are pleased to announce that funding has been approved for a technical assistance project to assist Berkshire communities in developing *multiple-hazard mitigation plans*. Both regional and community plans will be developed to identify areas at risk of damages from natural hazards, evaluate existing protection measures and develop a multiple-hazard mitigation strategies designed to reduce future damages from natural haz-

(Continued on page 2)

Also Inside this Issue:

GIS Coordinator Mark Maloy is using GIS to help Lenox create abutter lists. *(See Projects, page 2)*

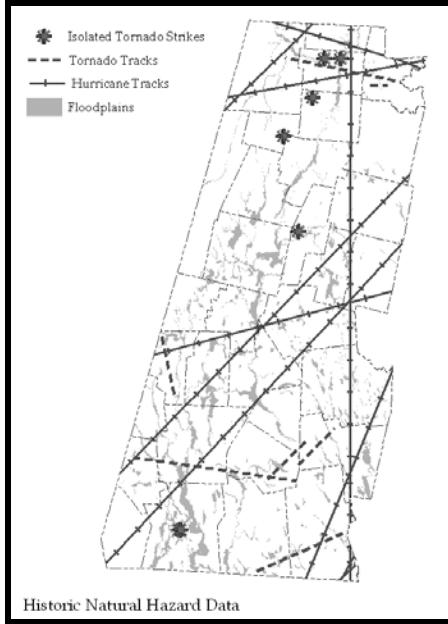
Berkshire Conservation Agent Terry Euker gets "kudos" for wetland planning at Snowy Owl Resort. *(See Berkshire Bits, page 3)*

Senior Planners Amy Pfeufer and Zoe Neaderland bid farewell to BRPC. *(See Farewell, page 3)*

Programs, Projects and Grants

Multiple-Hazard Mitigation Plans *(Continued from page 1)*

ards. Further, under new federal regulations, all cities and towns will be required to adopt multiple-hazard mitigation plans by November 2004 in order to remain eligible for federal Hazard Mitigation Grant programs from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The technical assistance under this grant will help communities in meeting this federal requirement. For information and to participate in the process, please contact Mark Maloy.



Lenox Using Updated BRPC GIS to Create Abutters Lists

BRPC is working with the Town of Lenox to provide them with abutter's lists using GIS. Over the last several months BRPC has updated the Lenox's GIS parcel data and established a linkage between the GIS parcels and the Assessor's database. When Lenox has an application come into their office that requires abutter notification, they send a request to BRPC to create an abutter mailing list for the parcel that is the applicant. BRPC then selects the parcel and has the GIS quickly determine all abutting parcels that are within a set distance, 300 feet, of that selected parcel. The abutting parcels then have their owner and addresses exported to mailing labels. These labels are then sent to the town, reviewed for accuracy and given to the applicant to notify abutters. The Town of Lenox provided funding for updating their GIS parcels and linking the parcels to the Assessor's database. The mailing list creation is being funded by the applicant through the application fee. If a community is interested in learning more about having

BRPC create their mailing lists, please contact Mark Maloy.

Airport Comments Submitted *(Continued from page 1)*

3. Construct a parallel taxi-way on the south side of any runway relocation or extension
4. Create the required Runway Protection Zones off the ends of the runways and remove or mark intrusions into the RPZ
5. Install a precision landing system for the airport
6. Construct the new terminal area improvements, presuming that the fill from that area is needed for creation of the RSA and/or runway relocation or extension
7. Extend municipal utilities to serve the airport and adjoining properties projected to be developed
8. Develop non-aviation parcels at the airport for business use, addressing an important shortage of business-ready sites in the region.

The most significant problem with the draft EIR is that it does not provide adequate information to determine the ultimate runway length. Some options can be ruled out but how much beyond its existing 5,000 foot length it should be extended is still an open question, based on the draft report. Based on the information contained in the report, a runway length of over 5,500 feet and less than the requested 5,950 feet appears to be supportable. One key request made by the Commission in its comments is that the final EIR provide clearer information to assist in answering this question.

The second principal flaw in the draft EIR is that we do not believe that it adequately addresses the impacts of closure of South Mountain Road nor properly identifies feasible road location alternatives that would allow it to be relocated. Based on the information provided, it is the opinion of the BRPC that a relocation of South Mountain Road or reopening of Tamarack Road is desirable in order to reduce travel impacts on residents on South Mountain Road and to provide for a reasonable detour route when Rte. 7/20 (South Street) is temporarily closed. The Final DEA/EIR should include such a relocation, aligning it in a fashion to avoid additional wetlands impacts and takings of additional homes. *Contact: Nat Karns*

Hoosac Wind Recommendations *(Continued from page 1)*

- The impacts of 20 lighted towers along the ridgeline have not been discussed in the ENF. Offering photo simulations of the project at night would be helpful. Also, the proponent has not offered to fly balloons similar to those routinely flown during the permitting of cellular towers.
- BRPC felt that the ENF was lacking information in several areas. Impacts to streams, wetlands, and rare plants are expected, but the ENF does not sufficiently describe proposed measures to mitigate those impacts. The ENF is also lacking a discussion of alternatives. It is hoped that an EIR will include this additional information, as well as discuss the visual impacts of the project.
- The ENF states that the size of the project is "48±" acres, which is on the brink of the 50-acre threshold that requires the preparation of an EIR.
- At this time there are significant outstanding issues that have not been resolved. These include:
 1. The transportation route of the turbines and the impact on local roads
 2. A decision by the Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program's on whether the project will include a "taking" of rare plants
 3. The MEPA Administration's determination of whether a \$17 million price guarantee for the future purchase of energy constitutes public financial assistance
- BRPC is also concerned with the design of the storm water drainage system along the steeply sloped gravel roads. Of particular concern is the placement of several detention basins adjacent to or in close proximity to wetland resource areas.

Editor's Note: After this article was written, Mass. EOE Sec. Herzfelder decided that the information Hoosac Wind had provided to MEPA—including supplemental information—was satisfactory and that no EIR is required. The full text of BRPC's comments can be viewed on BRPC's website by visiting www.berkshireplanning.org/4/5. *Contact: Lauren Gaherty.*

TRANSPORTATION UPDATE

- By now many of you will have received the poster summarizing the Regional Transportation Plan (it was mailed to the 950 participants in the Berkshire Transportation Forum). If you wish to purchase a copy of this interesting and attractive summary, it is available from BRPC for \$3. The Plan and the lengthy Appendices are also available at BRPC and on www.BerkshirePlanning.org
- BRPC has made its first translated document available. The User-friendly Guide to Northern Berkshire Transportation Services is now available in Spanish as well as English. The Northern Berkshire Community Coalition and the Elizabeth Freeman Centers are assisting in distributing this document to people who find it useful.
- The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) listing of capital projects and the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) of staff tasks are now available from BRPC.
- You may recall the development of a draft Bicycling and Walking Plan from a year and a half ago. That project was refined in an iterative process with the Regional Transportation Plan and the final report is now available.

Zoe says goodbye and thanks for all the help and interesting discussions to the many people who have been involved in transportation projects over the years.

Major Overhaul of TIP Project Selection Criteria

Every year, BRPC produces the Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organization's *Transportation Improvement Program* (TIP), which lists federally funded highway, bridge and transit projects scheduled for implementation over a multi-year period. BRPC has begun work on a major overhaul of the criteria by which transportation projects are selected for inclusion on the TIP. Meanwhile, the State has launched a similar initiative statewide. BRPC will be working closely with the State, the BRTA and others on this important matter. Public comments are welcome.

Why are project selection criteria so important? There are two main reasons. The first is that the TIP should contain projects that best serve regional transportation needs and support agreed-upon goals and objectives. The second reason is that the total cost of projects in each year of the TIP must fit within the amount of transportation funding that is expected to be available to the region, whereas there is never enough funding to cover all the projects that are desired.

The current BRPC system applies only to highway and enhancements projects; bridges are prioritized by the Massachusetts Highway Department (MassHighway) and transit projects are prioritized by BRTA. BRPC calculates priorities for Highway projects based on a formula that combines traffic volume, project length, the expected useful life of the improvement, and cost. The resulting scores are intended to represent the relative benefits per dollar spent. Projects are also evaluated separately on the basis of readiness for implementation.

In refining this method, a major intent is to add regional goals and transportation objectives to the evaluation. For example, projects that are recommended in the just-released *Regional Transportation Plan* (see Transportation Update, above) may be given an advantage. Similarly, other projects will be rated based on the extent to which they support, or are compatible with, the goals and objectives of the *Regional Transportation Plan*. Other goals and objectives to be met include those specified in federal transportation legislation and the State's *Fix-It-First*, *Community-Friendly Solutions* and *Smart Growth* Policies.

Another intent is to allow for fair consideration of projects that are undervalued by the existing prioritization formula. For example, intersection improvements currently score low in terms of costs and benefits per road mile, because those projects have little or no length. Similarly, low-volume roads score low in terms of user benefits, even though they may provide important access. New measurements will be added to the evaluation to level the playing field for those types of projects.

Finally, more up-to-date information about the status of projects will be collected from MassHighway and Berkshire cities and towns, so that project readiness can be more accurately gauged. This can be used to remove or defer projects that are not progressing, and to advance projects that have a better chance of implementation. However, project readiness should not be the sole determinant of whether a project is selected or advanced; they should also rate well with respect to the goals and objectives criteria and the cost/benefit measurements.

To comment on TIP project selection criteria, write to BRPC@berkshireplanning.org, or to the address shown on the front page of this newsletter. *Contact: Andrew Lenton*

Berkshire Bits...

Berkshire Conservation Agent Program Assists with Planned Snowy Owl Resort Project

Recently the Department of Environmental Protection gave "kudos" to those involved with wetland issues related to the proposed Snowy Owl Resort in New Ashford. The Snowy Owl project on the Brodie Mountain Ski area involves the construction of roads, infrastructure, amenities and buildings for over 300 time share condominium units. Assisting with that project was Terry Eucker, the Berkshire Conservation Agent. Terry assisted the New Ashford Conservation Commission by reviewing wetland resource area delineations on the site, reviewing the Notice of Intent and plans, and preparing the Orders of Conditions. This assistance was particularly helpful because of the complex nature of this project and the fact that the New Ashford Conservation Commission has limited experience due to the extremely low number of filings the Commission receives each year. The Berkshire Conservation Agent Program, administered through BRPC, is available to assist other municipalities, particularly when there are large or complex projects. *Contact: Tom Matuszko*

Term of the Month

Frontage Roads

Also known as service roads, these are usually short sections of road that connect multiple parcels of land, typically in proximity to a highway. By removing most turning traffic from the through traffic they protect capacity and improve safety.

Clearinghouse Reviews

The following comments were submitted under the direction of the Clearinghouse Review Committee between September 19 and December 11, 2003.

- Silver Maple Farm (Dalton). ENF comments submitted to MEPA 9-19-03.
- Snowy Owl Resort (New Ashford). Groundwater Discharge Permit comments submitted to DEP 10-1-03.
- Butternut Ski Basin (Great Barrington). Water Management Act Permit comments submitted to DEP 10-2-03.
- Mt. Greylock State Reservation (Cheshire). Land Acquisition comments submitted to DCR on 11-8-03.
- Stone Ledge Road (Lenox). Sewer Extension comments submitted to DEP 12-5-03.
- Hoosac Wind Project (Florida & Monroe). ENF comments submitted to MEPA 12-8-03.
- Pittsfield Airport Improvement Project (Pittsfield). DEA/EIR comments submitted to MEPA 12-11-03.

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Bookkeeper
Secretary
Office Administrator
Planning Interns

Leigh Anne Adams
Kate McNulty-Vaughan
Carolyn LeBlanc
Debbie Polito
Joyce McGuire
Sari Calame
Ben McCrary

Good Luck and Farewell Amy & Zoe!!!

We were very sorry to wish farewell to two Senior Planners in December. Senior Planner Amy Pfeufer has resigned to become a full-time mom, at least for a few years. Her always dependable, even-tempered and positive work on a number of environmental projects and initiatives will be very much missed. Amy came to us out of graduate school at the University of Delaware 6 ½ years ago as a Planner and was promoted several years ago to Senior Planner. We wish her the best in spending more time with her family.

Senior Planner Zoe Neaderland has also left us to move to the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission in Philadelphia. Zoe has been responsible as the project manager for a number of significant transportation planning projects during her 5 ½ year tenure, most recently managing the 2003 Regional Transportation Plan to a successful adoption. We will miss her good and enthusiastic work. Zoe started with BRPC out of graduate school at the University of Michigan. We also wish her the best of luck in her new position in the much larger and more complex Delaware Valley region.

Date

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Wed—January 7—Executive Committee meeting—BRPC offices— 3:30 PM

Thurs—January 15—Full Commission meeting—BRPC offices— 7:30 PM

Wed—February 5—Executive Committee meeting—BRPC offices—3:30 PM

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Berkshire County Population Migration

A look at the Berkshire region's population migration data provides insights into factors which contribute to its historical population decline. The Table below presents an overview of the mobility of Berkshire residents and a snapshot of community residential migration compared to overall Massachusetts and national patterns. The Census questionnaire in 2000 asked people where they had resided in 1995 in order to collect data on population redistribution and mobility (Box on right for details).

While New Englanders generally are "non-movers" (by the higher percentage in the "same house" in both 1995 and year 2000) compared to other U.S. regions, Berkshire residents overall show less mobility than other Massachusetts residents. Higher percentages of Berkshire residents indicated either they were residing in the same house (61.5%) as in 1995, or had moved within the county (25.4%), as noted below. Some "within county" moves may be to different houses within a community as well as to other communities, but data are not available on that. Population redistribution within the county is

significant when considered against the smaller proportion of Berkshire "movers" overall: 68% of all "moves" were from house to house within the county – a full 8 to 10 percentage points above the Massachusetts and national figures, when counting only domestic (not international) moves.

In the 5 years prior to Census 2000 only 2.7% of Berkshire residents moved into Berkshire County from another Massachusetts county, far below the state average 7.8% or U.S. rate of 9.7% of population age 5 years and over (*Box below) in "inter-county" moves. While the Berkshires failed to attract much population inflow from other Massachusetts counties, the region presented a stronger attraction *Con't on p. 2*

***CENSUS 2000: MIGRATION & FOREIGN BORN**

All data in this insert on population migration are from Census 2000 (SF3), and were derived from answers to the *long form* questionnaire asked of a sample of the population.

- Data on *Residence in 1995* (or "5 years ago" at the time of the Census) are reported for the population, age 5 years and over. *Continued on p. 2*

Berkshire Migration: 1995 to 2000

RESIDENCE IN 1995											
Community of Residence: 2000	Population Age 5 years+	Same house	%	Diff. house Same county	%	Diff County Same state	%	Different state	%	Elsewhere (not U.S.)	%
Adams	8,367	5,488	65.6%	2,344	28.0%	83	1.0%	425	5.1%	27	0.3%
Alford	386	221	57.3%	103	26.7%	7	1.8%	55	14.2%	-	0.0%
Becket	1,661	1,137	68.5%	271	16.3%	77	4.6%	172	10.4%	4	0.2%
Cheshire	3,227	2,452	76.0%	650	20.1%	33	1.0%	92	2.9%	-	0.0%
Clarksburg	1,610	1,182	73.4%	362	22.5%	22	1.4%	36	2.2%	8	0.5%
Dalton	6,454	4,000	62.0%	1,830	28.4%	72	1.1%	543	8.4%	9	0.1%
Egremont	1,300	860	66.2%	231	17.8%	21	1.6%	168	12.9%	20	1.5%
Florida	639	437	68.4%	164	25.7%	8	1.3%	28	4.4%	2	0.3%
Great Barrington	7,227	3,809	52.7%	1,929	26.7%	248	3.4%	1,059	14.7%	182	2.5%
Hancock	684	445	65.1%	130	19.0%	7	1.0%	100	14.6%	2	0.3%
Hinsdale	1,763	1,117	63.4%	492	27.9%	24	1.4%	121	6.9%	9	0.5%
Lanesborough	2,828	2,028	71.7%	563	19.9%	24	0.8%	196	6.9%	17	0.6%
Lee	5,667	3,616	63.8%	1,387	24.5%	191	3.4%	461	8.1%	12	0.2%
Lenox	4,906	2,904	59.2%	1,084	22.1%	173	3.5%	649	13.2%	96	2.0%
Monterey	886	539	60.8%	171	19.3%	24	2.7%	144	16.3%	8	0.9%
Mount Washington	125	100	80.0%	10	8.0%	2	1.6%	13	10.4%	-	0.0%
New Ashford	220	129	58.6%	61	27.7%	-	0.0%	30	13.6%	-	0.0%
New Marlborough	1,419	942	66.4%	194	13.7%	44	3.1%	222	15.6%	17	1.2%
North Adams	13,912	7,895	56.7%	4,170	30.0%	723	5.2%	1,037	7.5%	87	0.6%
Otis	1,291	791	61.3%	236	18.3%	76	5.9%	186	14.4%	2	0.2%
Peru	777	622	80.1%	92	11.8%	17	2.2%	46	5.9%	-	0.0%
Pittsfield	43,057	26,257	61.0%	12,676	29.4%	1,028	2.4%	2,608	6.1%	488	1.1%
Richmond	1,540	1,198	77.8%	235	15.3%	41	2.7%	62	4.0%	4	0.3%
Sandisfield	791	586	74.1%	75	9.5%	8	1.0%	116	14.7%	6	0.8%
Savoy	666	492	73.9%	151	22.7%	12	1.8%	11	1.7%	-	0.0%
Sheffield	3,157	2,093	66.3%	536	17.0%	24	0.8%	474	15.0%	30	1.0%
Stockbridge	2,187	1,402	64.1%	317	14.5%	62	2.8%	310	14.2%	96	4.4%
Tyringham	341	229	67.2%	43	12.6%	14	4.1%	44	12.9%	11	3.2%
Washington	519	465	89.6%	46	8.9%	-	0.0%	8	1.5%	-	0.0%
West Stockbridge	1,359	936	68.9%	240	17.7%	45	3.3%	123	9.1%	15	1.1%
Williamstown	8,156	3,775	46.3%	1,494	18.3%	355	4.4%	2,231	27.4%	301	3.7%
Windsor	828	562	67.9%	190	22.9%	28	3.4%	48	5.8%	-	0.0%
Berkshire County	127,950	78,709	61.5%	32,477	25.4%	3,493	2.7%	11,818	9.2%	1,453	1.1%
Massachusetts	5,954,249	3,481,597	58.5%	1,356,297	22.8%	463,784	7.8%	446,849	7.5%	205,722	3.5%
United States	262,375,152	142,027,478	54.1%	65,435,013	24.9%	25,327,355	9.7%	22,089,460	8.4%	7,495,846	2.9%

to out-of-staters, who moved into this corner of Massachusetts at a rate exceeding both state and national levels. More than triple the number of out-of-staters (11,818) moved into the Berkshires than did other Massachusetts residents (3,493). State-to-state moves nationally occurred at the rate of 8.4% of population. In Massachusetts 7.5% of the population relocated from another state between 1995 and 2000; in the Berkshires 9.2% of the Census 2000 population moved in from another state. Between 1995 and 2000 half of all Berkshire communities gained 10 to 16% of their population in moves from other states. With the exception of Williamstown (27.4%) that in-migration was concentrated in the southern Berkshires.

From 1995 to 2000 the percent of the population migrating from “elsewhere” or outside the U.S. into Massachusetts and the U.S. was over 2.5 to 3.5 times greater than into the Berkshires. The Table and Chart on this page show the number and percent of the total population that is foreign born and includes data on immigration during the 1990’s.

Foreign Born: Total & 1990's Immigration			
	Berkshires	Massachusetts	United States
Total Foreign Born	4,946	772,983	31,107,889
% of Total Population	3.7%	12.2%	11.1%
Entered 1990-2000	1,646	312,288	13,178,276
% of Total Population	1.2%	4.9%	4.7%
% of Total Foreign Born	33.3%	40.4%	42.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, SF3

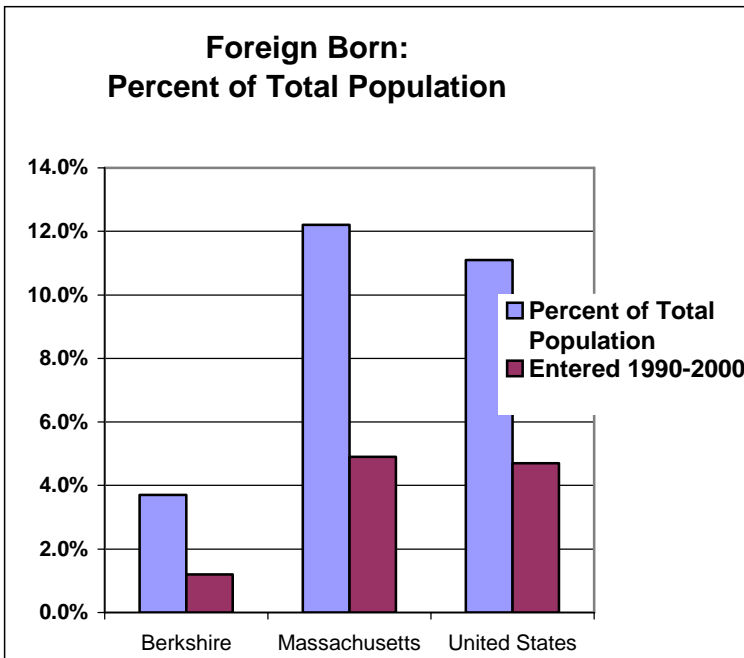
The foreign born population who have settled in the Berkshires is considerably less than the percent of the population in Massachusetts or the U.S. What this data show rather starkly is that foreign immigration to the Berkshires in the 1990’s did not keep pace with immigration occurring statewide. Over 40% of all the foreign born population arrived in Massachusetts during the 1990’s; a 68% increase. A smaller proportion (33%) found their way to the Berkshires, a 50% increase in foreign born. □

Regional Implications

A number of recent reports in local and regional newspapers and other media have focused on migration patterns of Massachusetts residents over the past decade. These reports have highlighted the effect of the increasing mobility of population and workers on work force availability and stability, as the Commonwealth vies to remain an economically competitive state. What’s described as “a new reality” of increasing worker mobility amid national regional competition for skilled workers has effects on overall population growth trends as well.

MASS.Migration, a study recently released by MassInc and authored by the UMass Donahue Institute, raises concerns about *out-migration* occurring statewide. According to this report, despite a “decade of extraordinary economic expansion,” Massachusetts experienced a net loss of 213,000 residents to other states. Only the influx of international immigrants to Massachusetts tipped the scale and kept Massachusetts in the overall population gain column.

The report also notes that leaving Massachusetts behind were retirement migrants heading to warmer climes and the more mobile, highly educated labor force seeking opportunity in



Census Migration & Foreign Born (Continued from page 1)

- Data on the *Foreign Born* and year of entry to the U.S. are compiled for total population of all ages.

Note that migration can be “in” or “out” of an area, and *migration* (here meaning “net migration”) is the difference between *immigration* and *outmigration* during a given time. Migration can also be differentiated as movement within the United States (*domestic*) or into and out of the U.S. (*international*).

The *foreign born* population includes immigrants (people not born in the U.S. or in U.S. Island Areas), legal nonimmigrants (refugees or those on a work or student visa), and persons illegally residing in the U.S.

The Census Bureau counts the total population without regard to legal status of people residing in the U.S.

surrounding states in the Northeast, as well as in so-called “economic competitor” states such as California, Colorado, and North Carolina.

While the Commonwealth apparently has been able to draw in more young, highly educated and skilled workers than it has lost, competition across the U.S. for these young and mobile workforce migrants makes retaining them a challenge. Berkshire leaders and economic development groups have grappled with the difficulties a shrinking region presents in attracting and retaining resident workers and additional employers.

As the Table on page 1 indicates, communities throughout the Berkshires experience differing migration patterns. Community population growth or decline has frequently been driven by factors different from those affecting the county overall. The loss of population in the region’s larger or core communities and movement to outer (hilltown) or suburban locations is typical of migration occurring elsewhere in the state and nation. What’s missing here in the Berkshires is the degree of *in-migration* of other Massachusetts residents and international or foreign born populations to offset that loss. □