



Common Ground

Volume 8, Issue 4

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Berkshire
Regional
Planning
Commission

Feature : *The Pursuit of Smart Growth Practices in the Berkshires*

Smart Growth Model Active in Lenox



While much of the Berkshires remains in a natural and scenic state, the threat of sprawling and consumptive development patterns remains a significant problem for the region. Subdivisions and commercial strip developments along major roads have blurred the boundaries between town centers and outlying rural areas; jeopardizing both our local natural

resources and municipal fiscal conditions while compromising the natural landscape and community quality of life that make the Berkshires a desirable place to live and visit.

Informed by the guiding principles of the *Regional Plan for Berkshires* (2000), the BRPC is working with state agencies, municipal leaders, developers and land owners to uncover ways to promote smart growth and decrease unmanaged growth in the Berkshires. BRPC's goal is to develop ways to encourage the preservation of land and natural resources by encouraging compact development patterns & building forms, infill development, protection of open space and moderation in street and parking standards.

SUSTAINABLE GROWTH MANAGEMENT GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

- Spatial efficiency in land use development and management
- Preservation of sensitive environments and open space
- Social equity and character of life
- Economic development and fiscal responsibility

Since the completion of the Regional Plan, BRPC has sought to advance smart growth or anti-sprawl planning. In the fall of 2001, BRPC and the Town of Lenox entered into an agreement to plan for the redevelopment of a privately-owned vacant 64 acre site (formerly known as the Lenox Shops) prominently located on Routes 7/20 at the gateway to the Lenox Village. The intent of this project is to develop performance standards that will inform the proper reuse of the site.

The redevelopment of this site is motivated by the recently completed Lenox Master Plan and the Town's desire to take a proactive role in deciding how large, significant land is to be developed in keeping with the historic, cultural, rural, and artistic character of the Town. This project is dependent on

BRPC to Host Second Annual Smart Growth Workshops in April & May

In the Spring, BRPC will hold two workshops to assist and educate municipal officials and other interested persons on the tools needed to achieve smart growth. BRPC's **Smart Growth 2002 - Spotlight on the Berkshires** will highlight smart growth planning efforts and implementation practices throughout the Berkshire communities while mirroring the state-wide preservation program—the Community Development Plan.

Workshops will be held on **April 24, 2002** at the Porches Inn in North Adams and **May 1, 2002** at the Red Lion Inn in Stockbridge. Each workshop will begin at 5:30 PM and end at 9:30 PM. The keynote will be given by the consultant team working on the redevelopment of the Lenox Shops, a regional smart growth model. Break out session will be designed to highlight housing, economic development, environmental and transportation projects/techniques at work around the Berkshires.

For more information on smart growth or to register for the workshops please contact Joellyn at BRPC. Space is limited so early registration is recommended.

sustainability through the provision of quality services, affordable housing, a robust local economy, and preservation of its natural assets.

Currently, BRPC is seeking to engage a team of professionals to create a redevelopment vision and development criteria for the reuse of the site. In addition, BRPC staff will coordinate activities and findings with the local Conservation Commission, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Historical Commission, Select Board and others to fashion a formal development plan. The plan will show areas of concern (i.e. habitat and wetland areas), buildable land, preservation and conservation areas. Ultimately, the plan will outline development performance standards for new construction. This information will act as a guide during negotiations with the owner/developer as part of the regulatory process. *Contact: Joellyn Gregory*

Programs, Projects and Grants

Shared Berkshire Conservation Agent Update

Over 50 interested participants attended an introductory meeting on January 30, 2002 at the Red Lion Inn to indicate their community's interest in and discuss how best to craft a Berkshire Conservation Agent program. This program might "share" an agent between several communities. Ten communities indicated possible interest in participating. The demand that was most commonly expressed was for "on-call" help to respond to specific items on a fairly limited basis, 4-8 hours per month. A few communities indicated a desire for more regular service, 1 - 2 days week. The greatest need was for technical services related to resource identification, crafting Orders of Conditions and assisting with enforcement actions, etc. Another need was for services to comply with procedural requirements. Compiling a program to meet communities' needs will be a puzzle. The overwhelming sense of the participants was to forge forward and accomplish something that has been talked about for over 15 years. We anticipate advertising for this position as soon as possible. Thanks again to the Berkshire Environmental Endowment within the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation for providing funding to initiate this effort. If you have not already done so let us know if your community is interested. Let us know if you might have a candidate for the Agent. *Contact: Tom Matuszko.*



GIS Update



Work has begun on a project that will demonstrate the role of GIS in complying with EPA Storm Water Phase II requirements. Using a section of Dalton as our test area, we are mapping existing storm drains and will combine them with streams and roads to create a flow direction model. This will allow the town to trace pollutants in the streams back to the potential sources of pollution. Work has also been progressing on Community Development Plan maps. We have recently developed examples for the majority of the maps that will be produced. We will soon start visiting the towns to establish their priorities for environmental, economic, housing, and infrastructure development, which will guide us in producing several of the final maps. *Contact: Mark Maloy.*

BRPC News

BRPC Seeks Nominations for Planning Award

BRPC is accepting nominations for the Charles Kusik Award. This annual award goes to groups or individuals who have made outstanding contributions to land use planning in the Berkshires. Individuals with nominations should contact BRPC.

BRPC Welcomes the BCREB



BRPC is pleased to welcome the Berkshire County Regional Employment Board to share our Office Suite. BCREB is a locally led alliance that works to foster a high-quality workforce in the Berkshire region.

BRPC Seeks New Officers

The Commission is seeking officers for FY 2003 (July 2002-June 2003). Interested delegates or alternates should contact Mary Ellen Ausman, Chair of the Nomination Committee.

Congratulations! to those board members who recently completed the core land use curriculum under UMass Extension's statewide Citizen Planner Training Collaborative program! The participants were:



Michael Britton, New Marlborough; Donald Goranson, Great Barrington; Carolyn Grogan, Great Barrington; Carolyn Ivory, Great Barrington; Connie Lincoln, Clarksburg; Sandra Martin, Egremont; John Mooney, Great Barrington; Robert Morris, Clarksburg; Patricia Ryan, Great Barrington; Paul Senecal, North Adams; Tim Shea, Clarksburg; Arthur Stavisky, Great Barrington; Cal Syms, Clarksburg;

Look for more information on CPTC's upcoming Spring curriculum on their Website at <http://www.umass.edu/masscptc/> or by calling (413) 577-3642.

Local Planning News

Great Barrington is working on a second draft of an Accessory Apartment Bylaw scheduled for the spring Town Meeting.

Lee is reviewing a draft Building Reuse Bylaw. A public hearing will be held to put the bylaw on the Town Meeting warrant this spring.

Lenox is considering changes to the subdivision bylaws to incorporate Smart Growth principles of conservation and open space.

Williamstown has prepared a draft bylaw allowing windmills in RR-1 and RR-2 zones by Special Permit. A public hearing was held February 12.

Regional Planning News

Community Development Plans Moving Forward

Since the last update, Becket and Williamstown have received approval for their Community Development Plan (CDP) Scopes of Services. This brings the total approved in Berkshire County to six, leaving about 16 more towns to be approved. Scopes for Florida, Monterey, Richmond and Sheffield were submitted in January 2002 and should receive approval by the end of February.

The towns of Clarksburg, Dalton, Hancock, and West Stockbridge submitted Scopes in mid-February and BRPC is working with the remaining participating towns to finalize their Scopes before this spring. The State group that reviews the Scopes is beginning to get backlogged, and has indicated that they have over 30 Scopes up for review from municipalities across the state. The turnaround time for getting approval is now about six (6) weeks from the time of submittal.

BRPC will need outside assistance to complete the plans by the June 2003 deadline. It is anticipated that a significant portion of the Transportation work will be out-sourced, while some outside assistance in performing the housing and economic development tasks will also be needed. Williamstown and Sheffield have hired private consultants to perform all of their CD Planning, which are being completed as part of larger Master Plans. BRPC is acting as the primary consultant for the CD pre-planning and planning work for the remaining 20 participating municipalities. *Contact Bryan Boeskin*

Transportation Update

There are transportation projects in a wide variety of stages, all open for your participation. These include:

- The completed Berkshire Corridor Access Management Guidelines will be distributed in the March/April period to all BRPC Delegates & Alternates to show to the boards they represent. BRPC staff is available to attend a meeting in your community to explain their local usefulness.
- The Corridor Access Management Guidelines are currently being applied as part of the Mohawk Trail Scenic Byway Project (see related article)
- The draft version of the Berkshire Bicycling & Walking Transportation Plan will be available for review shortly. The description of this analysis of all Berkshire County roads for their compatibility for bicycling (and related recommendations) is already winning praise in the field.
- The Environmental Justice Project is underway and an introductory brochure is available
- Now that local leadership has taken over implementing the Northern Berkshire Community Transit Study, a similar project is getting underway for twelve southern towns. The central area will be the focus next year.
- Staff have brought our Road Surface Management System (RSMS) up to date and are available to help you use your community's data if it has been gathered.
- The annual update of the Transportation Improvement Program, the multi-year prioritized list of transportation projects, will start shortly with a letter to select board chairs and DPW superintendents. There is extremely limited funding available for new projects, but all are welcome to participate.

Contact: Zoe Neaderland

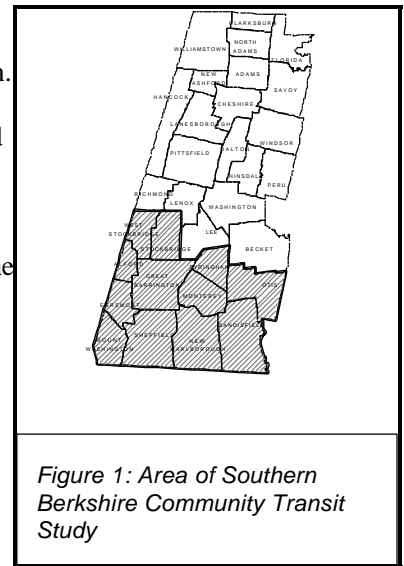


Figure 1: Area of Southern Berkshire Community Transit Study

Transportation Term of the Month: Road Inventory File (RIF)

The MassHighway RIF contains a wide array of information about the length, width, and classification of all roads and their associated shoulders and sidewalks in the Commonwealth. It is a valuable resource to be aware of, especially for use with Geographic Information System (GIS) software, but there is limited ability to keep it updated, so always double check results.

Mohawk Trail Scenic Byway - Public Forums

BRPC is working with the Franklin Regional Council of Governments to develop the Mohawk Trail Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan. The Mohawk Trail Scenic Byway corridor travels through the communities of Williamstown, North Adams, Clarksburg, Florida, Savoy, Charlemont, Buckland, Shelburne, and Greenfield. The study area includes Route 2 and a one-half mile buffer strip along each side of the road. The total length of the Byway is approximately 41 miles, with 22 miles in Franklin county and 19 miles in Berkshire County.

BRPC has been working with the Mohawk Scenic Byway Advisory Committee to identify the most important aspects of the Scenic Byway and to develop a plan of action to protect and improve the experience of traveling on it. We will soon hold a series of public forums to present our findings, discuss our recommendations for actions, and receive additional local input on our work. The public forums will be held in northern Berkshire County in April and May. Local officials will be invited, and interested citizens are encouraged to attend.. If you would like to be added to our mailing list, please contact BRPC staff member Lauren Gaherty at 413-442-1521.



CENSUS 2000: Getting the Information You Need

Whether for simple informational purposes, grant-writing or strategic planning, for starting up a new business or looking for new customers for an existing one, local public and private boards, organizations, and businesses can find a range of Census 2000 information available detailing the demographic, social, economic, and housing characteristics of this region.

**Who might be potential users of Census data?
And who might benefit from its use? Among others —**

- o **Community boards, non-profit social service and other agencies:**

Any community or regional groups whose mission is to provide services or outreach to "target" populations (pre-K children, the elderly, teenagers, minority groups, immigrants, the non-English-speaking, the disabled, low-income families, the workforce, etc.) can find Census data useful.

- o **Private organizations and individuals, businesses, and economic development interests:**

Regional industries and businesses from retailers to realtors, entrepreneurs looking for markets or locations, and economic or workforce development groups looking for indicators can use Census data as a valuable resource.

What Census 2000 data is available now?

- **Demographic Characteristics**

Population:

Basic data about people: age, sex, race and ethnicity

Households:

Relationships within households (presence of children and spouse) and types (family and non-family households, single parents, single person households), household size, and "group quarters" (nursing homes to dorms to halfway houses) and the age, sex, and race/ethnicity characteristics of those populations as well.

Housing:

Total number of housing units and occupancy status (vacant and seasonal) and a summary of housing tenure (owner or renter-occupied);

Available as:

- **1 page Profiles of General Demographic Characteristics (Table DP 1) — user chooses area: US down to community or tract;**
- **Summarized community tables in Berkshire County DATA-BOOK, 2001;**
- **Online tables: BRPC and Census websites (details —back)**

Census 2000 data described above (called "short form" or "100% data") answer many local or regional needs for population and household information, describing the characteristics and households of everyone who filled out a census form. Included are some limited data on housing units. This data set is also available for the Pittsfield MSA (Metropolitan Statistical Area) and Congressional District 1.

Widely available: on the internet, in libraries, on CD-ROM's and in publications released by the Census Bureau. (con't. on back)

Many "would-be data users" find that a lack of familiarity with Census terms creates an obstacle to getting their hands on the right data to answer questions they need answered:

“Has home ownership in the region grown or remained static over the last 10 years?”

“The Hispanic population is growing nationwide. Is there a market here for specialty products?”

“How do I know if tract or community level data is what I need – or even available? Or how to get it?”

Here's an introduction to some of the data available and tips for selecting the appropriate **Census geography or level** to make the best use of that data.

Do I want data describing:

- County?
 - Community?
 - Census tract?
 - Block Group?
 - Block?
- The region as a whole: Berkshire County?
 - 1 or more communities: Adams—Windsor (Census term: Minor Civil Divisions or "MCD's")?
 - Tracts, Block Groups, or Blocks?
 - Pittsfield Metropolitan Statistical Area?
 - Voting Districts?

What are Tracts?

Berkshire County (like other non-metro counties nationwide) is divided into census *tracts* averaging fewer than 4,000 people, with each *tract* generally* remaining the same area from census to census to allow for comparison.

Tract identifying numbers for all 32 Berkshire communities are listed on the back.

Note that of the 40 *tracts* in this county, the 3 largest communities (Pittsfield (12), North Adams (5), and Adams (3)) have sufficient population to be sub-divided into several *tracts*. Thirteen communities are each a single *tract*, i.e.: all of *tract 9111* is Lanesborough. Sixteen of the smaller communities are grouped into *tracts* comprised of two or three towns, where the population (area, and other data) for a single town is only part (**pt**) of the *tract* total.

[*Berkshire County experienced several *tract* changes from 1990 affecting 17 communities, now re-grouped from 4 (1990) *tracts* into 10 new combinations.]

Block Groups and Blocks?

Within each census tract are *Block Groups*: collections of blocks totaling about 1,000 people. A single *block* contains about 30 people and is the smallest geographic area that the census releases data describing or summarizing. *Blocks* are delineated by roads, natural features like rivers, and community boundaries.

Tip: Limited Block data available or accessible to users.

(con't.) What Census 2000 data is available now?

- **Summary File 1 (SF 1)** Detailed data file of Demographic Characteristics described on p. 1, available for Berkshire County communities down to the block level; on CD-ROM, at BRPC* and academic libraries, and on the internet through **American FactFinder** website noted below. [*BRPC assists member communities with data requests, or may arrange to provide data through a fee for service.]

**And Coming Soon: March —May, 2002
Selected Social, Economic, and Housing Characteristics
(Demographic Profiles 2, 3, and 4)**

Just the data everyone is looking for and communities need for Community Development Plans: education level, population migration and place of birth, disability status, employment and occupation details, household and family income and poverty, housing values and rental cost, age and type of housing structure, and more!

Available as 1 page Profiles — by community — this spring.

Tip: What Level Data When?

Most data-users in the region will find community (“MCD”) data adequate and readily available to answer questions similar to those on page 1, unless a closer look at the characteristics of a particular segment of the population or their households (ex. elderly living alone) could yield insights into improved access to services or outreach, etc.

Below the community or tract level, less data is available due to confidentiality issues.

How can I get access to Census 2000 data I need?

➔ **Online:**

- **BRPC website:** www.berkshireplanning.org
Click on “Information Services/GIS” to view list;
Data pages from the *DATABOOK* providing regional, community, and comparative state and US figures;
- 1 pg *Profiles of General Demographic Characteristics* for:
Berkshire County,
32 county communities, and also:
Pittsfield MSA, Congressional District One,
Massachusetts

➔ **Census websites:** www.census.gov
www.factfinder.census.gov

➔ **Libraries:**

- *Berkshire County DATABOOK 2001* *
- *Also available for purchase from BRPC

**Use the American FactFinder Website:
www.factfinder.gov**

- **To locate Census data to answer most questions!**
- **To locate a street address/area and its Census data:**
In the upper left corner of the **FactFinder Home Page** is a street sign icon: Click and Go! Fill in the address, click on the blue top banner the *Change Selection* button to select the Census 2000 data types desired (Population? Household? or Housing?)

Tips for Navigating: Finding Tract Maps

The website www.census.gov has great **Tract Outline Maps for Berkshire County** with boundary street names. To get to the Index and maps available:

Click on: Geography
Then: Maps & Mapping Resources
Next: Map Products
Scroll down to & Click: Census Block Maps (which gives a good explanation of how to proceed)
Then: Census Tract Outline Maps Index
Click: Massachusetts
c25003 Berkshire County --which leads to a list:
with CT25003_000 (map of county communities)
CT25003_001 (**North part** of county including Pittsfield)
CT25003_002 (**South part**)

Separate maps show detail of multiple tracts in central areas of:
North Adams: CT25003_A01
Adams: CT25003_B01
Pittsfield: CT25003_C01

Berkshire County: Tract Numbers

<u>Community</u>	<u>Tract Numbers</u>	<u>Pt. of Tract with:</u>
Adams	9221-9223	
Alford	9343 (pt)	Egremont, Mt. Wash.
Becket	9322 (pt)	Washington
Cheshire	9231	
Clarksburg	9311	
Dalton	9121	
Egremont	9343 (pt)	Alford, Mt. Wash.
Florida	9313 (pt)	Savoy
Great Barrington	9251	
Hancock	9351 (pt)	New Ashford, Richmond
Hinsdale	9323	
Lanesborough	9111	
Lee	9141	
Lenox	9131	
Monterey	9332 (pt)	Tyringham
Mount Washington	9343 (pt)	Alford, Egremont
New Ashford	9351 (pt)	Hancock, Richmond
New Marlborough	9333	
North Adams	9211-9215	
Otis	9334 (pt)	Sandisfield
Peru	9314 (pt)	Windsor
Pittsfield	9001-9012	
Richmond	9351 (pt)	Hancock, New Ashford
Sandisfield	9334 (pt)	Otis
Savoy	9313 (pt)	Florida
Sheffield	9261	
Stockbridge	9241	
Tyringham	9332 (pt)	Monterey
Washington	9322 (pt)	Becket
West Stockbridge	9342	
Williamstown*	9201.01, 9201.02	
Windsor	9314 (pt)	Peru

*Williamstown has one tract: "split tract" 9201

Communities highlighted are sub-divided into multiple tracts.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

Clearinghouse Reviews

The following comments were submitted by the BRPC under the direction of the Clearinghouse Review Committee between 12/13/01 and 2/20/02.

- Sewer Extension, Rtes. 20 and 41 (Pittsfield). Comments on the sewer extension permit were submitted to the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, 1/3/02.
- Shakespeare and Company (Lenox). Comments submitted to MassDevelopment regarding preliminary bond approval, 1/15/02.
- Improvements at Benedict Pond (Great Barrington/Monterey). Comments on the Expanded ENF were submitted to MEPA on 1/23/02.
- Parkway Rehabilitation Mt. Greylock State Reservation, Immediate repairs (Adams, New Ashford, North Adams). Comments on the ENF were submitted to MEPA, 2/12/02. *Contact: Jim McGrath*

BerkshireBits

A new exhibit exploring the heritage of the Jacob's Ladder Trail is now on display at the Corporate Center in Lee, 480 Pleasant Street (Rte. 102). The exhibit will be officially "unveiled" at an open house on March 14. Open house hours are from 4 to 7 pm, with the unveiling ceremony at 5:30. The public is invited to attend. The museum quality multimedia exhibit presents the transportation history and cultural development of Russell, Huntington, Chester, Becket, and Lee from the trail's beginnings as a colonial-era stagecoach turnpike to its present incarnation as a scenic byway. The exhibit was produced by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission in collaboration with Jacob's Ladder Trail Scenic Byway, Inc. and the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission. The exhibit will be at the Corporate Center in Lee through May, and is open to the public weekdays from 9 to 4 pm.

BRPCConnections

Web Site

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Date CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Sun, March 3	Lecture, "Building Community" by author/environmentalist Bill McKibben, 3PM, First Congregational Church, 251 Main Street, Great Barrington, MA \$7
Wed, March 6	Executive Committee Meeting, 3:30PM, BRPC Conference Room 2nd Floor
Thur, March 21	BRPC Commission Meeting, 7:30PM, BRPC Conference Room 2nd Floor
Mon, March 25	Workshop: Generic Notice of Intent (GNOI), 7PM, Stockbridge Town Hall
Wed, April 3	Executive Committee Meeting, 3:30PM, BRPC Conference Room 2nd Floor
Wed, April 24	Smart Growth Workshop, 5:30PM, Red Lion Inn, Stockbridge
Wed, May 1	Smart Growth Workshop, 5:30PM, The Porches Inn, North Adams

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