

ANNUAL MEETING IN AMHERST

PVPC's 48th Annual Meeting was held Thursday, June 10 at the Keefe Campus Center at Amherst College. This year's meeting highlighted local food and farms with guest speakers Philip Korman, Executive Director of Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture (CISA) and Ruth Hazzard, UMass Extension educator and researcher. Regional Recognition awards were presented to Richard Chandler, Western Region Field Staff for the MA Department of Agricultural Resources; Dan Hellyer, Building Inspector for the Town of East Longmeadow; Rich Hubbard, Executive Director of the Franklin Land Trust; and Donald J. Schmidt, Director of Smart Growth Planning Emeritus of the MA Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD).

PLANNING, DESIGN SERVICES

As part of an ongoing effort to promote the smart growth and sustainability principles set forth in the Valley Vision 2 Regional Land Use Plan, PVPC is now offering Community Preservation Act Planning Assistance to help municipalities effectively use their CPA dollars to address community housing needs, protect open space, create recreation opportunities, and preserve historic resources; and Community Design and Predevelopment Services to help communities advance implementation of a broad array of smart growth projects. In addition, PVPC is continuing to offer Planning Board Assistance that allows municipal boards and local officials to access high-quality planning support services from PVPC on a part-time, fee-for-service basis.

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HATFIELD CENTER STUDY

PVPC is helping the Town of Hatfield develop a framework for revitalizing its town center with District Local Technical Assistance funds provided by the state. With PVPC's assistance, the Board of Selectmen will hold a public workshop in early September to gather public opinion on these efforts. PVPC will provide the Town with a report on the information gathered and synthesized from this planning process. Town officials anticipate using this report as the basis for drafting RFPs for the redevelopment of town-owned land in the Town Center.

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REGIONAL PAVEMENT MGMT.

PVPC, under a contract with MassHighway, continues to survey and collect pavement distress information and update the geometric information on the region's approximately 1,400 miles of federal-aid eligible roadways. The information is used to report on the existing pavement condition of such roadways, develop roadway project priority listings based on a benefit/cost ratio, and aid in the development of the update to PVPC's Regional Transportation Plan, due in FY 2011.

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DATA DIGEST RELEASED

PVPC has just released a new report exploring geographic and socio-economic trends related to foreclosures in the Pioneer Valley region in 2008 at a public event with a related panel discussion. The report can be found at www.pvpc.org/resource_center/publications.shtml.

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DESIGN IDEAS WINNERS

Winners of the Pioneer Valley Smart Growth Design Ideas Competition have been announced. Hosted by the Valley Development Council in collaboration with the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission and the Western Massachusetts Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, the competition aimed to create a local example of sustainable development and redevelopment and to provide a model of how communities in the region can grow smarter. The Valley Development Council will be coordinating a final display of all the design submission and winners within the next few months. A list of the winning entries is available at www.valleyideas.org.

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CT RIVER MONITORING

PVPC, in partnership with the Connecticut River Watershed Council and Water Resources Research Center at the University of Massachusetts, has launched a water quality monitoring project on the Connecticut River and its tributaries throughout the summer at locations in Hampden, Hampshire, and Franklin counties. Data collected in this project will provide a more complete picture of the river's health and understanding about sources of contamination. This information will be useful not only for recreational users who have direct contact with the waters, but for local, state, and federal officials in addressing combined sewer overflow discharges and stormwater flows.

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EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

The Western Region Homeland Security Advisory Council has hired PVPC and the Franklin Regional Council of Governments to prepare a public information and education campaign to inform, engage, and motivate individuals in western Massachusetts to prepare for and respond appropriately to emergencies. Research has shown that training people to move quickly in an emergency is often the key to survival.

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HOLYOKE CANAL WALK

Construction has been completed on Phase I of the Holyoke Canalwalk, a pedestrian walkway and promenade along the city of Holyoke's historic canals. The project was planned jointly by the Holyoke Office of Planning and Development and PVPC, with design and engineering by Tighe and Bond, Inc. The Canalwalk will link City Hall, Holyoke Heritage State Park, the Holyoke Arts and Industry District, the Holyoke Children's Museum, the Connecticut Riverwalk, and many waterfront businesses, artists' studios, and other destinations. It will feature a 12- to 20-foot-wide promenade, benches, decorative paving, historic lighting, canalfront green space, and landscaping.

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GREEN COMMUNITIES

Six Pioneer Valley municipalities were among the first in the Commonwealth to achieve Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources designation as Green Communities: Belchertown, Easthampton, Holyoke, Northampton, Palmer, and Springfield. PVPC staff worked with nine municipalities to help them develop plans to achieve the designation. DOER plans to provide a second round of this free planning assistance to all municipalities that did not receive assistance in the first round.

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TOPS IN TRANSIT TRIPS

Where do most people take the bus in the Pioneer Valley? The region's top transit corridor is in Amherst on West Street (Route 116) from Atkins Corner north to downtown, through UMass and north to Sunderland. In 2009, an estimated 6,157 bus trips per day were made along this route (when school is in session). And the second most heavily traveled transit route? It's Route 9 through Hadley, between Amherst and Northampton, with 3,520 trips per day—also during the academic year. PVPC's Transportation Section calculated the trips as part of the recently completed Congestion Management Process report, now available for public review at www.pvpc.org.

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2010 CEDS RELEASED

PVPC recently completed the region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), which is the annual report of the Plan for Progress. The document, available at www.pvpc.org, is required by the U.S. Economic Development Administration to update the 2004 Plan for Progress and report the status of ongoing economic development initiatives. The document also identifies priority rankings for eligible projects seeking federal grant assistance from the EDA during the upcoming federal fiscal year 2011, which begins October 1.

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COMMUNITY ENERGY AUDITS

Thirteen Pioneer Valley municipalities are moving forward with performance contracting with Siemens to comprehensively reduce municipal energy use, manage risk, and save money. Belchertown, Easthampton, Granby, Hadley, Holyoke, Ludlow, Monson, Palmer, South Hadley, Southampton, Wilbraham, and Williamsburg have signed Preliminary Energy Audit agreements and are working to inventory energy use and identify areas to improve efficiency through building retrofits such as insulation, lighting improvements, and possible equipment replacement.

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MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

Joint Transportation Committee

Jul. 14, Aug. 11, Sep. 8
10:15 a.m. at PVPC office

PVPC Executive Committee

Aug. 19, Sept. 23
4 p.m. at PVPC Office

Plan for Progress

Coordinating Council:
Sept. 15
8:15 a.m. at PVPC office