

Pioneer Valley Planning Commission

2020 HIGHLIGHTS



\$2.7
MILLION

PVPC received an additional \$2.7 million specifically for COVID-19 response and relief. The funds were awarded to provide COVID-19 support, including in the areas of public health, economic development, social services and microenterprise business support.

115
FAMILIES

PVPC helped 115 families to stay in their homes through our Housing Rehabilitation and Home Modification Loan Programs. This represents a \$3,309,786 investment in housing in our communities.

79%
of the
PIONEER VALLEY

As of 2020, 34 of our 43 cities and towns have participated and been certified in the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program, which assists municipalities in understanding and building community resilience for the future.

Community Development



- Delivered \$3,366,473 in grant money for infrastructure projects in our region, including upgrades to sewer lines, curbing, paving, new sidewalks, and municipal building improvements, among others.
- Worked with the Agawam Historical Commission to update historic resources inventory to current standards. This work will support planning, inform decisions on proposed demolitions, and provide increased public information on the built history of Agawam.
- Pivoted quickly to assist our cities and towns by setting up a microenterprise business assistance program with CARES Act funding, enabling the PVPC to administer direct economic assistance to qualified residents.

Data and Mapping



- Assisted three communities with successful grant applications to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for municipal technology needs.
- Supported the Western Regional Homeland Security Advisory Council by designing signage for COVID-19 safety actions. These signs were used by communities throughout Berkshire, Franklin, Hampden and Hampshire Counties.
- Delivered technical assistance to various local communities by completing requests for drone footage, mapping services and graphic design to support planning efforts.

Economic Development



- The U.S. Economic Development Authority awarded the PVPC a grant totaling \$400,000 to work on economic development recovery and response in the region, to be completed by June 2022.
- Worked with other regional planning agencies across the Commonwealth to establish new partnerships with state-level agencies working on economic development issues. The group is focused on sharing resources and best practices as well as potential project ideas.
- Assisted Belchertown in community outreach and preparation of an economic development chapter for the town's Master Plan.

Health and Human Services



- Deployed \$606,552 for social service programs in the region, including food banks, elder services, adult education and community health services, among others.
- Provided leadership, coordination and funding to the 19 participating Hampden County communities to prepare for human-made and natural disasters as well as public health emergency preparedness.
- Delivered funds for the six Medical Reserve Corps Units in Hampden County which cover 16 separate municipalities, to support training and exercises to maintain a skilled pool of volunteers ready to assist municipal health departments with emergency dispensing of medication and/or sheltering of individuals displaced due to a disaster.

Land Use and Environment



- Supported 25 member municipalities in their efforts to lead by example and reduce their municipal energy use by 20%. This has resulted in saving our cities and towns thousands of dollars each year.
- Highlighted the importance of trees in climate change and air quality through completing assessments of tree canopy cover in two municipalities and studied the fate of tree debris in Hampshire County.
- Served as interim Conservation Agent and part-time Municipal Planner to various towns as needed, providing a cost effective way to improve land use planning.

Transportation



- Conducted 94 traffic counts for 26 different communities in the PVPC region, to enable future transportation planning efforts.
- Provided the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTA) with ongoing monitoring, analysis, and reporting of key transit performance metrics, including on time performance, ridership, and financial information. This was especially important to the PVTA as the agency grappled with the changes to transit use in light of COVID-19.
- Advanced bicycle and pedestrian work in the region through shared use path data collection and various collaborations, including with the City of Holyoke, to update bicycle facilities for the MassDOT bicycle inventory on locations of new bike lane installations among others.

Municipal and Regional Services



- Started exploration of the potential for a working Shared Fire Services program with the communities of Chesterfield, Cummington, Goshen, Plainfield and Worthington.
- Increased the number of communities utilizing the professional municipal services of the PVPC Regional Accounting Program. The program has been so successful that PVPC has started receiving inquiries for a similar program for human resources.
- Convened meeting and learning sessions for PVPC member communities including Hampden, Longmeadow, East Longmeadow, and Wilbraham to share how they were managing the complex and changing effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on their ongoing municipal management and response efforts.

"The commission has been thrilled with the work Shannon has done on the inventory. She is flexible, responsive to the commission's needs, and the impressive level of organization and detail she has provided to our inventory will benefit our town for years to come. Her genuine interest in local history and every property she researches shines through everything she does."

David Cecchi, Agawam Historical Commission

"The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission has been pivotal in our ability to explore options and possibilities for sharing resources. I believe that in our small communities in western Massachusetts our survival as viable municipalities depends on our ability to work with our neighbors cooperatively and the PVPC has been enormously helpful and responsive to those efforts."

Charley Rose, Worthington Select Board



Kimberly H. Robinson,
Executive Director

Through COVID-19, an economic downturn, the continued implications of climate change, and the ever evolving technical and technological needs of our communities, 2020 proved to be a year that clearly showed that our Valley must invest serious time and effort into adapting to major shifts in our status quo and the inevitability of a new reality ahead.

And adapt we have. In the office, on the road, or working remotely from home, I could not be prouder of the effort put forth by the public servants of this Commission this past year.

As is often said here at the PVPC, planners must live in two times zones – the present and the future. And so, while we leaned in with everything we had to bring immediate relief to the people of this Valley, we have never allowed the present crisis to cause us to forget that this too shall pass, there will be a tomorrow, and the outlook of that tomorrow is being molded by the work we do today, here at the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission.

<https://tinyurl.com/PVPC-2020-HIGHLIGHTS>