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**PVPC NEWS**

**PVPC Launches New Website**

The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission recently launched a new, improved website especially designed to make it easier and more engaging for different categories of users-citizens, planners, and media members alike-to search, explore, and connect with PVPC staff and the commission's diverse areas of work.



With the aim of creating a different web model rather than just a redesign, PVPC contracted with Shrewsbury-based Geisel Software, Inc. to build a new site with Drupal, an open-source content management platform used by numerous non-profit, education, economic, and government entities. PVPC's new website offers these (and more) features for users:

- Easy to search
- Ability to find content for a specific community using an interactive map, including data, plans, events, and other projects
- Growing library of content searchable by topic, community, and many other key words
- Project pages that allow staff to easily interact with working groups to organize meetings, agendas, documents, and other materials all in one place
- Ability to subscribe to content for a specific community, project, or keyword

Please visit [www.pvpc.org](http://www.pvpc.org) to find out more about what we do and how we can work with you.

Contact: [Todd Zukowski](#), GIS/Cartographic Section Manager

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### **A Clean Energy Road Map for the Pioneer Valley**



An array of clean energy technologies are in our region's future - hydro, home energy efficiency, solar, wood, electric vehicles, low-energy buildings, wind, LED lighting,

and more!

When you're going someplace new, it helps to have a map. The same might be said of our region's clean energy future. In this spirit, PVPC has partnered during the past year with the communities of Amherst, Easthampton, Hadley, and Holyoke to create a Clean Energy Road Map with strategies to help us arrive at new "destinations" in clean energy. The project is supported by the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center.

There has already been considerable success in clean energy in our region, including anaerobic digesters for farm waste in Hadley, municipal building efficiency measures in Holyoke, an innovative power purchase agreement for solar power on municipal land in Amherst, and a solar facility on a former town-owned landfill in Easthampton. Stakeholders from these communities shared their experience and opinions about the kinds of renewable energy projects (both energy conservation and renewable generation) that are likely to succeed in coming years. The top ten strategies resulting from this community process are:

1. Implement a renewable thermal technology marketing and group purchase discount campaign for rooftop solar hot water heaters, air source heat pumps, and ground source heat pumps
2. Create a regional "Solar Challenge" and group discount program similar to Solarize Mass
3. Develop a regional bike sharing system
4. Provide energy conservation information and incentives for landlords and tenants
5. Coordinate regional energy planning services for municipalities
6. Increase access to electric vehicle charging stations.
7. Develop a "One-Stop Shop" information center for clean energy
8. Assist municipalities in streamlining clean energy regulations
9. Help communities with community engagement for Organics-to-Energy projects
10. Develop a "Zero-Net Energy" Building (ZNEB) demonstration project

With additional support from Clean Energy Center and other agencies, PVPC is now working to put into action the

first four of these strategies later this year.

Contact: [David Elvin](#), Senior Planner

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### **Communities to Participate in Health Assessment**

The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, through funding from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Administration and Finance Community Innovation Challenge grant program, has engaged Ready EDI and Associates, a local consulting group, to conduct a community health assessment for twelve Hampden County municipalities: the City of West Springfield and the towns of Blandford, Tolland, Granville, Southwick, Montgomery, East Longmeadow, Ludlow, Hampden, Monson, Brimfield, and Palmer.

Hampden County continues to rank the lowest of the 14 counties in the Commonwealth with respect to health and health outcomes. According to Joshua A. Garcia, PVPC Municipal Services Coordinator, this community health assessment will aid in identifying unmet health needs that can be addressed by local public health boards and other health initiatives occurring within the region. The assessment is rooted in the shared nursing service between the participating communities that grew out of the work of the Hampden County Public Health Coalition under the coordination of PVPC planner Nikki Nixon.

The study will investigate community health conditions, as well as health care access issues, and will be organized around five prevalent health sectors:

*Chronic Diseases-(Cancer, diabetes, asthma/COPD, hypertension, heart disease, etc.)*

*Infectious Diseases-(Lyme disease, STDs, influenza, food-borne pathogens, etc.)*

*Environmental and Occupational Health-Asthma, workplace, etc.*

*Health Related Behaviors-opiate use, mental health, obesity rates, teen pregnancy, etc.*

*Injury and Violence-Adolescent suicide, domestic violence reports, elder abuse, etc.*

The study will be conducted over the next six months and will be made available to the public in the spring of 2015.

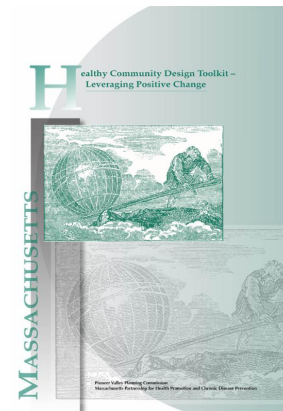
Contact: [Joshua Garcia](#), Municipal Services Coordinator

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## Reuniting Land Planning and Public Health

As part of an ongoing collaboration with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, under the local Capacity Building agreement, PVPC has been revising its Massachusetts Healthy Community Design Toolkit to incorporate the needs of older people. The toolkit, which has been recognized by the CDC, is a valuable resource for public health advocates who increasingly recognize that the built environment can play a significant role in the quality of people's health and who want to know how to implement change.

As part of this effort, PVPC conducted focus groups with seniors and staff from local Councils on Aging including representatives from Amherst, Chicopee, Hadley, Holyoke, Northampton, Springfield, and Williamsburg. The focus groups provided a much-needed snapshot of how the built environment affects the day-to-day lives of older people -- a rapidly growing segment of our region's population.



In addition, PVPC has conducted several trainings and presentations for public health workers and care providers, particularly those who work with older people. These trainings provide an introduction to land planning and the regulatory environment that governs it. They are designed to help public health workers better understand how the built environment may be affecting their clients' health, and how to become effective advocates for healthy community design. Land planning and public health are natural allies that share a common history, and PVPC is excited to participate in reuniting them. [Click here](#) to view/download toolkit.

Contact: [Dillon Sussman](#), Land Use and Environment Senior Planner

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## Regional Bike Share Feasibility Study

PVPC is currently developing a feasibility study for a regional bike share program in order to provide local residents and visitors with inexpensive and convenient access to bicycle travel. A bike share system enables users to pick up a bicycle at any self-serve bike share station, make a short trip, and return the bike at any other station in the system's service area. Many cities, including Boston, MA; Boulder, CO; Minneapolis, MN; and Madison, WI, currently have bike share systems.

The study will examine different case studies, business models, and projected costs to determine how a Pioneer Valley system should be implemented. The project is funded through the



Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, in collaboration with the City of Holyoke, the City of Springfield, the City of Northampton, and the Town of Amherst. Several area colleges are also participating, including the University of Massachusetts Amherst, Springfield College, Springfield Technical Community College, Mount Holyoke College, Hampshire College, Amherst College, and Smith College. For more information about the study, please visit [www.pvpc.org/regionalbikeshare](http://www.pvpc.org/regionalbikeshare).

Contact: [Josiah Neiderbach](#), Land Use and Environmental Planner

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## 2014 CEDS Ten-Year Update

The 2014 ten-year update of the region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) will be available in September. The update reviews the accomplishments of the region's 15 economic development strategies over the past decade as part of the Plan for Progress, and sets forth new goals and objectives for 2014-2024. The CEDS report is funded by the U.S. Economic Development Administration to 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 2015, which begins October 1, 2014. The report will be available in hard copy from PVPC and online at [www.pvpc.org](http://www.pvpc.org).

Contact: [Lori Tanner](#), Senior Economic Development/Policy Analyst

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### **PVPC Honors Regional Leaders at 52nd Annual Meeting**

The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission honored three individuals for their contributions to the betterment of the region and the commonwealth at large at its 52nd Annual Meeting in June at Judd Gymnasium at Springfield College. Regional Recognition Awards were presented to:

**State Senator Stephen M. Brewer**, Chair, Senate Committee on Ways and Means, for his assistance in regional cooperation and problem solving, his staunch support of funding under the District Local Technical Assistance program to help our cities and towns with planning and municipal shared services, and his successful efforts in securing PVPC-assisted MA DHCD Community Block Grant and other state funding requests in his service area, including those for the towns of Ware, Wales, Warren, Palmer, Monson, Holland, Brimfield, West Brookfield, Sturbridge, Spencer, and Hardwick.

**Deborah S. Dachos**, Director of Planning and Community Development for the Town of Agawam for more than 30 years, for her active involvement in regional ventures, her work in economic and community development projects including expedited permitting for new businesses, and her commitment to the preservation of open space and the development of recreational opportunities. She has worked with PVPC on many projects throughout the years and has served on PVPC-sponsored advisory bodies such as the Valley Development Council. Ms. Dachos is also a long-standing member of the regional Economic Development Partners, which is coordinated by the Western Massachusetts EDC.

**David Kielson**, Select Board Member Emeritus for the Town of Chesterfield, for a quarter century of service to the town and to the region: as town accountant for 25 years, as a member of the town's Planning Board, as a

member of numerous town committees, as president of both the Massachusetts Selectmen's Association and Massachusetts Municipal Association, and more. Mr. Kielson was a PVPC Commissioner in the 1980s while a member of the Chesterfield Planning Board and also served on the PVPC Executive Committee, helping the agency to manage its finances as it grew and expanded the array of services it provided to its member communities.

This year's Annual Meeting also provided an opportunity to salute and acknowledge the 36 years of service generously contributed by PVPC Commissioner Richard E. Butler to the agency and to his own home community of Wilbraham. After three and a half decades on the Wilbraham Planning Board, he officially stepped down from his post on June 20, 2014. In addition to his service locally, Mr. Butler's accomplishments include serving as Chair and board member of the Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies, the New England Association of Regional Councils, and the Washington, D.C.-based National Association of Regional Councils. In addition to his remarkable record of public service, Mr. Butler has also served in numerous capacities as a volunteer for the Springfield Museums, the Diocese of Springfield, and others. On the PVPC Executive Committee, he served a total of 14 years as Chair.

The meeting's keynote speaker was national public health, planning, and transportation consultant Mark Fenton, a vocal advocate for non-motorized transportation, a frequent consultant on bicycle and pedestrian community plans, and a recognized authority on public health issues and the need for community, environmental, and public policy initiatives to encourage more walking, bicycling, and transit use.

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### **Joint Transportation Committee Meetings**

Aug. 13, Sept. 10  
10:15 a.m. at PVPC office

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### **Plan for Progress Coordinating Council Meetings**

Sept. 17  
8:15 a.m. at PVPC office



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## **PVPC Commission Meetings**

### **Executive Committee:**

Aug. 28, Sept. 18  
4 p.m. at PVPC office

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