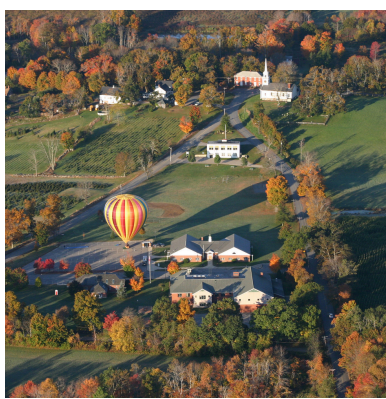
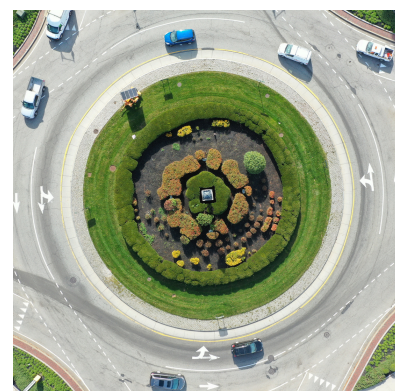


# Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC)

# Annual Report



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## Our Mission

The Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission is a regional partnership serving the planning and development interests of 40 member communities in southern Worcester County in Massachusetts. Our primary mission is to improve the quality of life for those who live, work, and visit our region. We do this by addressing growth and development issues that extend beyond community boundaries; maintaining the region's certification for federal transportation improvement funds; providing technical knowledge and resources to assist local government in addressing specific land use, economic or environmental problems resulting from growth or decline, and building strong working relationships with member communities, state and federal officials, as well as the range of area stakeholders.

# 1200+

Meetings & Events that Staff Participated in  
for Community Outreach in FY24



Town of Leicester



Town of Spencer





# Year in Review

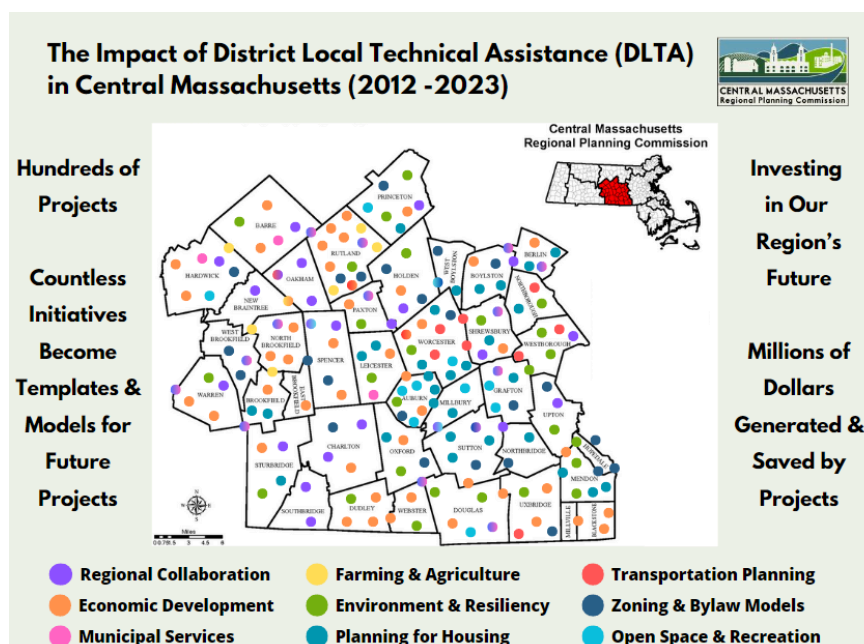
FY24 is highlighted by significant growth and impact across all divisions within CMRPC. The span of services that CMRPC has been able to provide is because of the trust and relationships that have been forged within all parts of the region.

**Project Development & Resource Consultations** - Community Planning Director, Dominique DuTremble led a concerted effort to assist municipalities with project development by creating forums for resource consultations. Open Office Hours are held twice weekly for any community member to meet with a CMRPC Planner to discuss a proposed project or initiative.

**District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA)** - Since 2006, this program has enabled CMRPC to provide technical assistance to member communities on eligible projects. Additionally in 2023, the Legislature provided CMRPC additional Augmentation funds to develop Federal grant applications.

**Redesigned CMRPC Website & Community Snapshots** - The long-awaited website redesign was presented at the March 2024 Quarterly Meeting. New features include a resource library of plans and resources and the updated interactive Community Snapshots tool. Community Snapshots utilizes the most current U.S. Census Data and other publicly accessible datasets.

**Staffing Growth** - From July 1, 2023 to the present, the total number of employees has increased by over 25% (from 44 to 56 employees). The significant growth is due to the strong relationships that have been formed with communities and stakeholders.



# 175+

Total Projects & Initiatives in FY24

# 30+

District Local Technical Assistance Projects



# Transportation Planning

- Worked closely with MassBike on the E-Bike Pilot Program. Hosted bicycle safety workshops, distributed bicycle lights, completed data analysis, survey review, e-bike voucher analysis, and bicycle deployments. Co-hosted multiple events to highlight the need for safe bicycle accommodation in the region.
- Completed the Title VI Program, updated the Language Assistance Plan and required compliance materials. Completion and endorsement of the Coordinated Human Service Transportation Plan. Worked with various communities regarding local transit needs.
- Continued promotion of the MicroProjects Program. The City of Worcester completed a successful application for bicycle parking informed by the bicycle parking inventory results.
- Provided guidance and support to the Town of Hardwick on their Complete Streets policy. Community engagement efforts in the Town of Westborough to support the Boston Worcester Airline Trail feasibility study, design and implementation.
- Assisted with Federal Grant applications for regional (Blackstone River Bikeway, Vernon St over I-290) and community (Worcester, Southbridge, Gardner) lead projects.



# Central Mass Metropolitan Planning Organization

- Staff provided technical assistance to communities and local organizations in the collection, analysis, and reporting of transportation data. Efforts included the Auburn Local Sidewalk Prioritization Plan in which all sidewalks and curb ramps in Auburn were inventoried and a five-year improvement plan was developed, Regional Bike Parking Inventory in Collaboration with the City of Worcester in which the CMRPC and the City of Worcester are working jointly to inventory bike parking infrastructure utilizing a common GIS database, and the Wachusett Mountain Parking Study where the CMRPC conducted traffic counts and parking utilization counts on high traffic usage days at the State Reservation to assist in the assessment of parking needs.
- Successful compilation and subsequent CMMPO endorsement of the Long-Range Regional Transportation Plan, 2050 Connections, as well as both the annual Transportation Improvement Program (“TIP”) and Unified Planning Work Program. Annual Environmental Consultation session also held that addressed each federal certification document.
- Applied for a Safe Streets Four All (SS4A) regional planning grant and demonstration project to help work towards the elimination of serious roadway injuries and fatalities in the region. The planning grant will supplement the work already being completed by CMRPC staff such as the participation in Road Safety Audits across the region, supporting the development of master plans and assisting communities with roadway safety concerns. CMRPC staff members are also at the Statewide Level advocating for safer roads.
- Completed the third and fourth installments of the Highway Freight Accommodation Assessment study series that focused on the federal-aid State-Numbered highways in both the Southwest & Southeast transportation planning subregions. The reports conclude with a range of potential improvement options for consideration by MassDOT and the host communities.
- Work activities related to Electric Vehicles (EV) also progressed during 2023 and included an EV survey distributed to all CMRPC communities, the submittal of a DER grant seeking advanced engineering condition assessment of a pair of culverts in the town of Warren as well as the sharing of other EV grant opportunities with interested local stakeholders.



# Community Development

- Applied for \$4.4 million in new Community Development Block Grants for five partner communities in FY 2024, including funding requests for five neighborhood-scale infrastructure projects and two park planning/design projects
- Oversaw startup and/or completion of five public works or public facilities construction projects during the 2023 season, with six additional construction projects set to launch in summer 2024
- Managed nearly \$12 million and seventeen projects/programs under current CDBG funding – from planning and design to construction and housing rehabilitation – on behalf of Athol, Barre, Brookfield, Dudley, Leicester, Millbury, North Brookfield and Warren

# Economic Development

- Submitted for the following Federal grants, Brownfields Coalition Application (EPA), Thriving Communities (USDOT), Warren Wright's Mill Master Plan (EDA)
- Completed two Community One Stop Applications, one EEA Planning Assistance Grant applications, one EEA PARC Grant Application
- Projects include the 2023-2028 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, Milltown Caucus creation, Oxford Economic Development Phase I, Charlton Permitting Guidelines, Princeton Eco-Tourism Project, Millville Economic Development Phase I, Charlton Digital Equity, Worcester Digital Equity, Millbury Digital Equity, Dudley Site Specific Economic Development Project, Dudley Gateway District Project, Blackstone Site Specific Economic Development Project, Mendon/Upton Sign and Façade Program.

# \$4.4M

In Newly Applied for  
Community Development  
Block Grants



# 14+

Completed/Ongoing  
Economic  
Development Projects



# Regional Services

- Brought on a Regional Housing Coordinator to support affordable housing trusts and implement housing production plans in 6 communities
- Introduced a Public Health Training Manager dedicated to providing advanced, applied training to health inspectors across Worcester County, aiming to significantly elevate public health standards and practices in the region.
- Facilitated the integration of three public health services regions, encompassing 18 towns and 14 shared staff, to strengthen regional public health collaboration and efficiency, ensuring a more coordinated approach to health services.
- Spearheaded innovative projects including a Rural Transit Study to assess and enhance transportation options for rural communities, a Strategic Assessment for optimizing municipal department structures, and Enrollment Projections for the Wachusett Regional School District, all aimed at bolstering municipal services across Central Mass.



# Community Planning

- Submitted Federal efforts, including two community project funding requests, three federal grant applications.
- State grants include 8 applications to misc. state programs, 7 Community One Stop applications, 11 EEA Planning Assistance Grant applications, 14 expressions of interest.
- Projects include 8 master plans, 8 housing production plans, 20 DLTA projects, 10 MBTA Communities assistance, 2 buildout analyses, 2 comprehensive zoning rewrites, 1 gateway study, 1 town center plan.

# 18

Towns Organized with  
Regional Public Health  
Services

# 8

Completed/Ongoing  
Master Plans

# Environmental & Resiliency Planning

- Planned for local resiliency through Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) climate adaptation plans and FEMA-funded natural hazard mitigation plans, with plans completed or ongoing in thirteen towns this year, including strategies to reduce the impacts of changing flooding, severe temperatures, invasive species and other hazards
- Received final approval from the Mass. Division of Conservation Services (DCS) on Open Space and Recreation Plans (OSRPs) for the towns of Douglas and Dudley and conditional approval for the towns of Hardwick, Hopedale, and Oxford, while continuing to update plans for the towns of Oakham, Charlton, and West Boylston
- Helped 28 Green Communities in our region apply for, administer, close out, or plan for \$2.54 million in grants for municipal building energy efficiency projects, including weatherization, LED lighting, electrification of HVAC through heat pumps, new building energy management systems, EV chargers, and much more.
- Launched the Greater Worcester Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) program, a four-year US EPA-funded initiative to plan for mitigation of climate change through reduced greenhouse gas emissions on a metropolitan level, with an initial focus on community engagement and prioritization of actions.

## \$2.45M

Green Communities Grants for Municipal Building Energy Efficiency Projects



Oakham MVP Workshop



## 28

Green Communities Assisted by CMRPC

## 13

Completed/Ongoing MVP & Hazard Mitigation Plans



10

Completed  
Annual Assessor  
Map Updates



## GIS & Data Services

- Performed annual assessor map updates for the communities of Berlin, Charlton, Hopedale, Mendon, Millbury, New Braintree, North Brookfield, Northbridge, Princeton and updated the property parcel data for the City of Worcester.
- Completed the Town of Grafton's Open Space Parcel Prioritization project with the assistance of the Town Planner and Open Space and Recreation Committee. The parcel prioritization was a recommendation in the Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) and was a project that included development of a methodology to prioritize parcels, standardized ranking criteria and tables, and a final map of the results (parcels in red are higher priority for acquisition). The final results and methodology can be found on the Town of Grafton's website under the planning department, studies and projects.
- Created OSRP maps for the communities of Charlton, Rutland, Dudley, Northbridge, Oakham, Oxford and West Boylston. Created master plan maps for the communities of Barre, Brookfield, Spencer and Warren. Ran GIS process to calculate and extract required records for use in the states MBTA zoning compliance model.

## Visual Services

- Captured locations in the towns of Spencer, Brookfield, and Grafton for their Master Plans. Capturing locations in each community aids in celebrating each community's unique attributes. Additionally, photos of taken in the Town of Sutton for a potential rehabilitation of Sutton Mill.

# Central Region Homeland Security Advisory Council (CRHSAC)

- Over the past year, CMRPC Homeland Security Grant Program staff managed the expenditure of the Federal Fiscal Years 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023. CMRPC Homeland Security Grant Program personnel also prepared and submitted to EOPSS a plan for Federal Fiscal Year 2024 on behalf of the CRHSAC.
- CMRPC staff managed projects for the Council subcommittees to purchase services or equipment including:
  - Initiation of the ALERRT AAIR Training Program. The Town of Uxbridge is hosting monthly trainings for all Central Massachusetts agencies to meet the State and National standards (NFPA 3000) for Active shooter response.
  - Purchasing new sets of body armor with improved protection standards for 36 members of Central Massachusetts Law Enforcement Council (CEMLEC) regional response teams including Special Weapons And Tactics (SWAT) and Joint Hazardous Incident Response Team (JHIRT).
  - Replacing the regional K9 vehicle hosted by Westborough Police Department with a Police Canine that is not only throughout Central Massachusetts, but also across the Commonwealth as well as other New England states when called.
  - CMRPC created a new position, Regional Emergency Preparedness Planner, not only as part of the Homeland Security Program staff, but also to support Health & Safety Planning, Evacuation Mapping & Planning, and Hazard Mitigation Planning.

# 5

Federal Fiscal Years Being Managed by  
Homeland Security Staff



CRHSAC Board Meeting







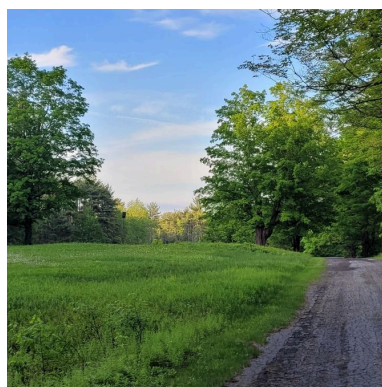
## In Our Community

- For the first time CMRPC participated in the Regional Environmental Council's Annual Earth Day Clean Ups. CMRPC staff identified a location in the City of Worcester Canal District to remove debris near "Buckley's Store".
- Mishel Caisapanta, Public Health Training Manager, received the President's Award and the National Environmental Health Association Certificate of Merit. The President's Award recognizes an individual who demonstrates dedication to their colleagues and to the environmental and public health sectors. The National Environmental Health Association Certificate of Merit nationally recognizes a member of each affiliation for the outstanding contributions to the environmental health profession.
- Nathan Lewis, Public Outreach Coordinator / Assistant Planner was appointed as a Board Member for the non-profit organization, Earn-A-Bike. The organization is a community bicycle shop dedicated to teaching people bicycle maintenance while enabling them to earn a bike from their inventory of donated bicycles.
- Sujatha Krishnan, Deputy Executive Director, participated as a panelist for the National Cooperative Highway Research Program, offering her expertise to guide the consultant's work. The project aims to navigate the complexities of modern transportation funding, with a focus on understanding the interdependent sources of funding and financing from various levels of government and the private sector. Challenges such as uncertain revenue streams, evolving intergovernmental relationships, and the emergence of new technologies like connected and automated vehicles are central to the research.



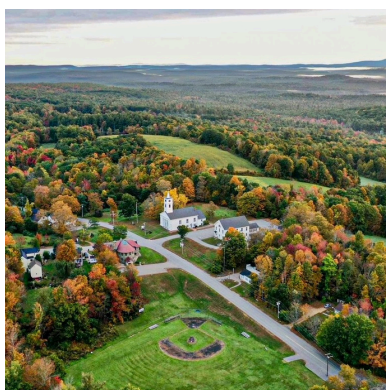
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CMRPC  
Communities

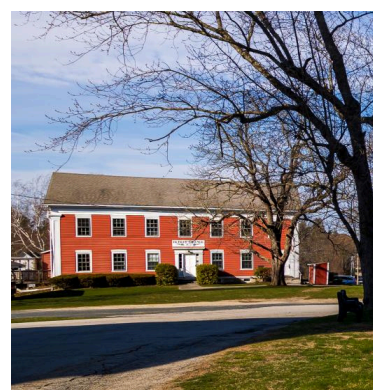


60

Years of  
CMRPC

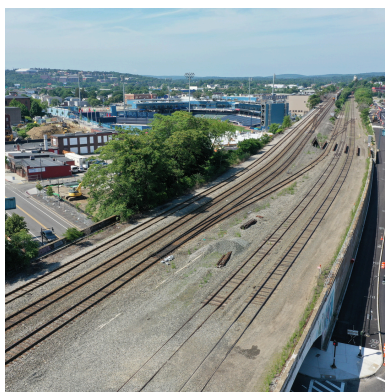


**CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS**  
Regional Planning Commission



56

Dedicated  
Staff Members



1

Central  
Massachusetts

# Planning for the Future

*We plan for the future for those who live, work, and visit the region.*



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**[www.cmrpc.org](http://www.cmrpc.org)**