



# Region Matters

[mvpc.org](http://mvpc.org)

Merrimack Valley  
Planning Commission  
*plan • develop • promote*

*Summer*

## *Merrimack Valley: Feels Like Home*

Lane Glenn, President of NECC, welcomes the standing room only crowd at MVPC's first Regional Open House on May 24<sup>th</sup> at the NECC Lawrence campus.



The Merrimack Valley is currently home to over 340,000 residents. Many of our households are comprised of families living in single family homes, however we are seeing an increase in apartments, which comprise about 42% of the housing unit types in the region. And the residents of those households are getting older – the average age of a Merrimack Valley resident is 43 years old. With a projected 13,000 new residents over the next 20 years in our region, where are they going to live? Who is moving to this region and what needs do they have now and in the future? Over the next year, the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission is looking for the answers to these questions and more to develop the first ever, *Merrimack Valley Regional Housing Plan*. In April 2017, MVPC launched a region-wide effort to develop a plan to create housing for all: seniors, the disabled, families, low-income residents, millennials, empty-nesters, and many more. How can our housing prices, location, quality and quantity mirror the needs of our residents today and tomorrow in the Merrimack Valley?

To better understand our housing needs and develop realistic solutions, we are collecting data and best practices, but we are also asking YOU! MVPC is engaging stakeholders in person and online throughout this project. In-person opportunities include region-wide events like our recent Regional Open House in Lawrence on May 24<sup>th</sup> (see right), and individual community housing needs workshops. Virtual tools include a series of new webpages designed specifically for this project, social media postings and the use of a new engagement platform called coUrbanize. coUrbanize allows us to have a two-way, virtual conversation using an interactive, fun, accessible online tool. We will use this tool to facilitate discussion throughout the project. Join the conversation now: <http://courb.co/mvhousing>. Also, check out our new website for events, data, and other information about this project: <http://mvpc.org/programs/regional-housing-plan>. If you have any questions, please contact Angela Vincent, AICP, Economic Development Planner at MVPC [avincent@mvpc.org](mailto:avincent@mvpc.org).



*Article written by Angela Vincent  
MVPC Economic Development Coordinator*



Photo by: Linda Orloski  
"Cycling through Newburyport"  
Downtown Newburyport

[Economic Development](#)

[Environmental](#)

[GIS](#)

[Transportation](#)

[Bradford Trail Ribbon Cutting](#)

[Workshops, Events and Meetings](#)



Cashman Park  
Coastal Trails Coalition

## *“Ask This Old House” Crew Swoops in the Great Marsh*



MVPC Coastal Coordinator Peter Phippen’s recent guest appearance on an episode of Ask This Old House is generating a bounty of accolades...but alas no Emmy nominations.

Peter served as technical expert working with a Salisbury homeowner to beautify her North End Blvd. property and minimize the impact of stormwater runoff contamination to the abutting Great Marsh, the largest salt marsh in the Northeast and a resource that Peter has spent decades of his career protecting.

Peter, the homeowner and Ask This Old House crew constructed a rain garden with plantings of switchgrass, summer sweet and highbush blueberry at the rear of the residential property driveway to filter runoff...all reportedly in a single video shooting take last year.

The episode originally aired May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2017 on PBS. You can view it on line at <https://thisoldhouse.com/watch/ask-toh-rain-garden-lighting>

## *MVPC Awarded EPA Funding to Boost Brownfields Redevelopment*



The Merrimack Valley region has new resources to advance the redevelopment of former industrial sites abandoned due to environmental contamination.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced the award of a \$300,000 Brownfields Assessment grant to the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission. MVPC will use the grant to work with its 15 member cities and towns in conducting environmental site assessments and developing remediation plans at blighted properties that have been obstacles to community revitalization efforts.

The regional award is one of 279 grants totaling \$56.8 million in Brownfields Assessment and Cleanup funding made by EPA to 172 communities & organizations across the country. The Brownfields programs are designed to aid underserved and economically disadvantaged communities through the assessment and cleanup of abandoned industrial and commercial properties, and expand the ability of communities to recycle vacant and abandoned properties for new, productive reuses.

In addition to the MVPC award, EPA also provided the City of Lawrence \$550,000 in Brownfields Assessment and Cleanup funding for remediation at the former Tombarello site on Marston Street. The abandoned site, which housed a scrap metal recycling facility until a decade ago, has been the subject of tax title foreclosure by the City and is fenced off because of high levels of PCB and other hazardous material contamination. With its longstanding negative impact to neighbors and the nearby Parthum School as well as its visible location along Interstate 495 near the city line with Methuen, cleanup and redevelopment that gets the property back onto the tax rolls and into productive use are priorities of Mayor Rivera and the City of Lawrence, along with MVPC’s regional economic development plan.

“We appreciate the continued EPA financial commitment and critical support in helping our communities rebuild and create places that are healthier and more vibrant for our residents and more sustainable for long-term growth,” said MVPC Executive Director Karen Conard.

The MVPC Brownfields Assessment grant will be targeted to sites in the Gateway cities of Lawrence, Methuen and Haverhill, but all 15 MVPC communities are eligible to participate and nominate eligible sites for assistance. According to the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection and MVPC site inventory, almost half of the 2,000 identified brownfield sites in the MVPC region are located in the three Gateway communities.

Planning and site testing done through the Assessment Program will be used to prioritize regional cleanups. Under prior EPA funding, MVPC has established the Merrimack Valley Revolving Loan Fund, which makes gap financing available for hazardous material and petroleum site cleanups. The program also provides sub-grants for eligible municipal properties, including tax title distressed properties, and offers low-interest loans for cleanups at private sites targeted for redevelopment and positive community impact.

For more information on the MVPC Brownfields Programs, contact Joseph Cosgrove, Environmental Program Manager at [jcosgrove@mvpc.org](mailto:jcosgrove@mvpc.org) or (978) 374-0519 x16.

Above articles written by Joseph Cosgrove  
MVPC Environmental Program manager



## MVPC's GIS Receives Grant State's NextGen-911

MVPC's GIS Program was recently awarded a small competitive grant to assist with the rollout of the State's NextGen-911 emergency response system. Acting in its capacity as the regional GIS service center, MVPC is working collaboratively with the state's GIS office, MassGIS, as well as municipal building inspectors. This work is an outgrowth of efforts by the State 911 Department to revolutionize the way map and address information are collected and maintained at the local level. The state identified regional planning agencies like MVPC as key collaborators in the NextGen-911 project because of their existing relationships with municipal officials. MVPC's role in this pilot project will be to train building inspectors in the new electronic system and to review data collected through the mobile application. For more information about this initiative please contact Jerrard Whitten, MVPC GIS/IT Manager at [jjwhitten@mvpc.org](mailto:jjwhitten@mvpc.org).

## Check out MVPC's Interactive Annual Report via "Storymap"



This year Merrimack Valley Planning Commission is thrilled to debut its new online, interactive Annual Report "Storymap". This new web-based version of the annual report brings the Commission's accomplishments to light using high-resolution images, videos, web pages, mobile applications and interactive maps and provides an exciting opportunity to showcase MVPC's work during 2016. The Storymap is a relatively new technology within the GIS field and is quickly becoming the go-to format to share ideas, projects, and reports.

The traditional version of the annual report will not be going away - we've simply created a supplemental way to view the printed content. Using the Storymap framework each department shares programmatic highlights for the year: GIS showcases its online map viewer of Newburyport's Plum Island Sewer System, Transportation features the *Urban Update* describing Lawrence's Ciclovía, the Environmental program highlights drone footage of the new solar project in Boxford, and Economic Development presents growth and development strategies for the region. These are just a few examples of the interesting content found in the new annual report format.

The Story map has its own URL; you can think of it like any web page. It can be viewed in any browser, on a desktop, laptop, phone, or tablet. All you need is the web address and an internet connection: <http://bit.do/mvpc-2016>. Please take a moment to check it out – we would enjoy hearing your feedback.

*Above articles written by Jerrard Whitten  
MVPC GIS Program Manager*

## MVPC's MVMPO TIP Update

At its May 24<sup>th</sup> meeting, the Merrimack Valley MPO voted to endorse the region's FFYs 2018-2022 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), the document that identifies the roadway, bridge and transit projects and programs that will be undertaken in the region using any federal funds. It includes over \$156 million in roadway, trail and bridge projects and \$48 million to fund various transit services and improvements. Three of these roadway and bridge projects are highlighted below.

By far, the largest project is the **replacement of the I-495 Bridges over the Merrimack River in Haverhill** between Exit 48 (Route 125 Connector) and Exit 49 (River Street). This \$79 million project will begin construction in 2018 and should be completed in 2021. Problems with the decking on these bridges in recent years have created significant traffic delays not only on I-495 but within the City of Haverhill as well.

**Signalization of Marston Street/Commonwealth Drive /Ferry Street intersection in Lawrence** is slated to begin late 2018 or early 2019. This busy intersection is located near just south of the Edward J. Parthum Middle School on Marston Street and connects that roadway to I-495. Signalization and other improvements in the area should improve traffic safety and promote pedestrian travel in the area.

Another safety project is the **Nock Middle School & Molin Upper Elementary School Safe Routes to School Project in Newburyport**. This \$1.6 million project scheduled for 2019 currently calls for making a series of pedestrian improvements along High Street including a new pedestrian signal, sidewalk 'bump outs' to make it easier to cross High Street, as well as improved signage and ADA ramps. The entire FFYs 2018-2022 TIP may be found at <http://mvpc.org/wp-content/uploads/Main-FINAL-MVMPO-2018-2022-TIP-Endorsed-May-24-2017-No-Sigs.pdf>.

*Article written by Anthony Komornick  
MVPC Transportation Program Manager*

*Join MVPC for the  
Grand Opening and Dedication of the  
Mayor James J. Fiorentini  
Bradford Rail Trail*

*Saturday, June 24, 2017*



*Vendors, Live Music, and more !*

**10:00 am Ribbon Cutting and Trail Walk**

Next to Mal's II Barber Shop  
173 South Elm Street  
Bradford, MA 01835

**10:30 am Opening Ceremony**

Next to Basiliere Bridge, behind Dunkin Donuts

In the event of rain  
we will meet at the entrance next to:

Dunkin Donuts  
15 South Main Street  
Bradford, MA 01835

**MVPC Monthly Commission Meetings**

Third Thursday of the month @ 7pm

**June 15, 2017**

No Meetings scheduled for July and August

**MPO Monthly Meetings**

Fourth Wednesday of the month @ noon

Check our website for Commission Meetings Agenda and  
Details on Upcoming Meetings & Workshops [mvpc.org](http://mvpc.org)

**Upcoming Meetings and Events**

**June 16 [Great Marsh Revitalization Task Force](#)**

Time: 10:30—1pm

Location: Parker River National Wildlife Refuge

**June 24 Ribbon Cutting—Bradford Rail Trail**

Time: 10:00

Location: Next to Mal's II Barber Shop  
173 South Elm Street  
Bradford, MA

**July 11 MPO Certification Review**

Time: Noon

Location: MVPC Office

**October 18** MV Chemical Safety & Resiliency Training  
For Municipal Facility Managers and Emergency Response/  
Public Safety Officials. [Click here for Survey](#)



Find us on  
**Facebook**

MVPC Commission Office 160 Main Street Haverhill, MA

Contact: Nancy Lavalley [nlavallee@mvpc.org](mailto:nlavallee@mvpc.org)

Tel: 978.374.0519 ext. 10