



TOGETHER, **we**
PLAN
INNOVATE
PROMOTE

2019 ANNUAL REPORT



In 2019, MVPC celebrated 60 years of planning and serving our 15 member communities. Coincidentally, we refreshed our look with the final stages of our office renovation, as well as with a new logo and web site. At the end of the year, we bade a fond farewell

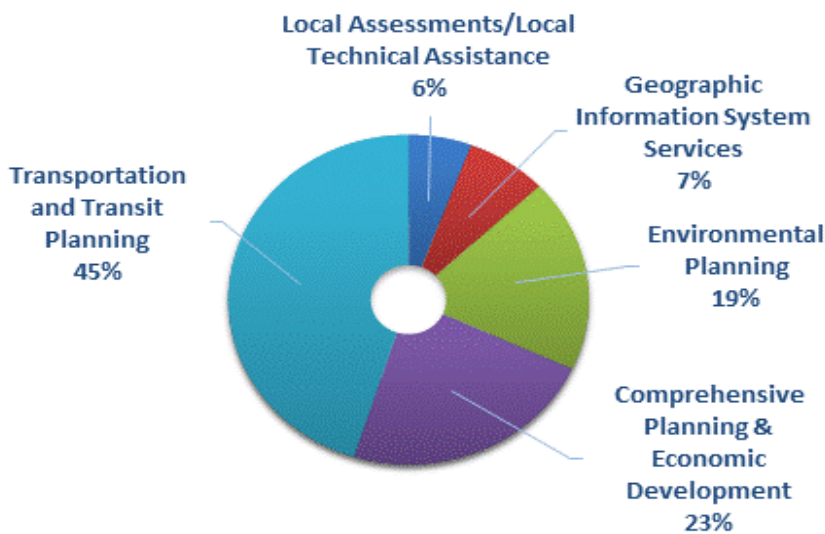
to our former Executive Director, Karen Conard, thanking her for her contributions regionally. In 2020, we look forward to welcoming our incoming Executive Director, Theresa Park.

Looking back over the year, we have accomplished so many projects. For example, at the direction of the **Mayors and Managers Coalition**, we led the rebirth of a regional economic development campaign newly dubbed *Here for the Making*. The campaign tells the story of successful small businesses in the region. We were also proud to have finalized the regional **Housing Production Plan** with the final vote by the Lawrence City Council to accept their plan.

It is our privilege to work with local municipalities, organizations, residents, businesses and other partners on issues related to the environment, transportation, housing, economic development, health and more. Inside this report, we have shared some of our successes over the past year. As we look forward, we relish the opportunity to take on new challenges.

Finance Administration

Distribution of Funds



MVPC's operating funds for FY2019 supported a broad range of planning and technical services in the five major functional areas shown in the image to the left.

94% of our budget comes from a variety of largely non-local sources, including state and federal grants as well as contracts with selected non-profit organizations and businesses that support MVPC's mission. Local assessments to our member communities make up the remaining 6%. MVPC used these local funds as match to leverage the 94% of outside funding brought into the region by the MVPC staff.

Independent Audit

The FY2019 independent single audit of MVPC's financial statements has been completed. Audited statements show MVPC expenditures to be within the budget with a positive operating fund balance.

Community and Economic Development

MVPC is an essential partner in economic development initiatives across the region. We manage funds from U.S. Economic Development Administration, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and other stakeholders to cultivate a prosperous, inclusive, and thriving region.

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)

Partnered with Essex County Community Foundation's *Cultural County Initiative* to start a first-of-its-kind regional cultural asset mapping initiative.

Completed an EDA funded comprehensive report about growing the textile industry in Lawrence.

Awarded \$37,500 through EDA to create a Merrimack Valley Data Portal which will host all of the latest information about the region from a variety of sources.

Launched WeAreMV.com — *Here for the Making* marketing campaign.

Housing

Finalized the state-approved **Housing Production Plan**.

Worked with our communities to implement our regional Housing Production Plan.

Merrimack Valley Economic Development Corporation (MVED)

Issued a \$35,000 loan to **G's Restaurant** in Haverhill. This loan was used to help renovate the critically located downtown property and helped create 32 jobs.

Awarded a \$200,000 loan to **Jessica's Bakery** in Methuen. This loan is being used to complete a renovation to the Methuen property, an estimated investment of \$2.4 million which plans to create an additional 20 jobs.



Fishing in the glow of a newly lit bridge during Illuminación Lawrence

Photo by John Andrews, Creative Collective

Environment



Clipper City Rail Trail, Photo by the Newburyport Planning Office/MassDOT

MVPC continues to be a resource for towns and communities seeking financial and technical assistance for redevelopment of properties with known or suspected sources of environmental contamination through its **Brownfields Program**. In 2019, MVPC executed an additional \$100,000 subgrant of EPA Revolving Loan funds for the Clipper City Rail Trail after additional needs were identified to complete the cleanup effort.

As hosts of the **Merrimack Valley Stormwater Collaborative**, MVPC aided several communities with Stormwater Management Plans and Year 1 annual reports in Rowley, Boxford and West Newbury as required for compliance with the EPA Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permit. In addition, MVPC conducted collective procurement to assist Collaborative members with the more technical aspects of the permit including outfall testing.

The Merrimack Valley is known for beautiful vistas, including farm fields, forests, rivers and salt marshes. MVPC assisted several communities with open space protection including updates of **Open Space and Recreation Plans** for Groveland and Georgetown.

Many Merrimack Valley communities are experiencing the effects of a changing climate including more intense storms, sea level rise and more summer days above 90 degrees. As a certified **Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness provider**, MVPC assisted the City of Methuen and the Town of Andover in conducting planning workshops to prioritize hazard mitigation and resilience strategies. MVPC looks forward to assisting Merrimack with this process in the coming year.

The **Eight Towns and the Great Marsh Committee** and the **Great Marsh Partnership** performed several projects in 2019. The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant-funded projects began early in the year to establish marsh drainage site projects such as runneling to combat rising sea level impacts on the marsh. Other projects included a new eelgrass bed in Plum Island Sound off Nelson's Island in Rowley, and continued management efforts to control invasive Phragmites and pepperweed to help restore native marsh vegetation in Newburyport, Newbury, and Salisbury.



Kayaking in the Great Marsh, Staff Photo

Serving as the Regional Geographic Information System (GIS) Service Center for northeastern Massachusetts, MVPC provides GIS services and expertise to each of our 15 communities. Our GIS Program has a suite of software and equipment to meet the needs of an evolving technical landscape and is staffed with three full-time GIS personnel with professional certifications (GISP). In the last year alone the GIS Program operated 25 mobile applications designed to assist communities in managing systems from public works to electrical utilities. We produced more than 100 custom maps and over 1,000 individual assessor maps. GIS is an invaluable tool to assist planning efforts and increases efficiency across the region – let us help you navigate the way.



City of Newburyport DPS Deputy Director Jamie Tuccolo with Miles Reese and Lance Rickard, Staff Photo

Recognizing the value in GIS, the City of Newburyport uses **MVPC's mobile and desktop applications** to oversee its infrastructure and municipal resources. As an outgrowth of this work, the City and MVPC launched a pilot project during 2019 aimed at managing the City's vehicle assets using global positioning systems (GPS). The ultimate goal is to integrate GPS vehicle locations with the City's infrastructure applications to provide better response times and during system outages resulting from severe winter storms.



MVPC's GIS Program continued operation of its **Municipal Information Mapping Access Program (MIMAP)** for 14 of its communities during 2019. MIMAP has evolved to serve as a critical information portal through which the wealth of data ranging from open space and conservation information to electrical systems and stormwater infrastructure can be accessed. Methuen's Conservation Commission uses MIMAP to visualize data and environmental resources. The timely and accurate data that can now be accessed while in the field provides an essential tool for documenting conservation issues from wildlife management to enforcement actions.

In addition to mapping and mobile applications, MVPC GIS also facilitates the acquisition of aerial imagery for the region also known as **Pictometry**. Pictometry is a system that allows users to view any location in the region from any of the four compass points. Assessing offices like the Town of Salisbury take advantage of the rich visual information available through Pictometry to compare development patterns between different year classes of imagery. During the spring of 2020, MVPC will be conducting a new flight of the region in which all Merrimack Valley communities will be flown.

Transportation



Bridge Construction, Haverhill, Photo by MassDOT

Throughout the year the Merrimack Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (MVMPO) staff identifies transportation problems, studies them, offers solutions, and allocates funding for transportation projects that respond to the changing needs of the region.

We completed the 2020 Merrimack Valley Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), which analyzed the transportation network and its impacts on our communities from the perspectives of safety, mobility, equity, environmental sustainability, quality and maintenance of the network, and economic development. 31 specific projects were included representing a \$351 million dollar investment.

The annual Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) process resulted in funding programmed for trail, road and bridge projects, including the reconstruction of Elm Street in Amesbury, Route 1 in Salisbury, and Route 114 in North Andover as part of the MVMPO's 2020-2024 TIP. Several multi-use trail projects were also included that will help the region realize its 40-mile trail network goal.

We finished an extensive inventory of and condition reports for 460 miles of sidewalks in Amesbury, Andover, Georgetown, Lawrence, Methuen, North Andover and Salisbury. The data can be used for creating management programs and for prioritizing Complete Street projects.

Traffic counts were collected at 78 locations, which are used for traffic studies, as well as economic and residential development initiatives.

Roadway surface condition data was collected on all federal aid roadways in the region. Nearly 80% of the roadways were found to be in good to excellent condition.

We studied pedestrian crossings along Route 28 between Park Street in Lawrence and Park Street in Methuen and made recommendations for additional crosswalks, pedestrian lights and safety features.

We studied traffic conditions and patterns at the intersection of Tyler St. and Route 113 in Methuen. This location was found to have a higher than expected level of congestion.

Data was collected at intersections in Methuen, Salisbury and Haverhill including an exhaustive traffic movement count at four intersections in the vicinity of Marston's Corner in Methuen.

A new software macro was developed to analyze travel time data on National Highway System roadways in the region that allows us to automate the process for managing large data sets, which contain 15-minute interval data points.



Clipper City Rail Trail, Newburyport, Photo by Geordie Vining

The Mission of the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission is to foster a cooperative effort among its communities in resolving common, regional problems, to allow its communities to plan jointly, and to promote with the greatest efficiency and economy the coordinated and orderly development of the region and the general welfare of its residents.

MVPC Commissioners

These are the leaders who represent their communities at our Commission meeting each month.

Amesbury	Robert Laplante
Andover	Lisa Schwarz
Boxford	Jim Barnes, <i>Treasurer</i>
Georgetown	John Cashell
Groveland	Rebecca Oldham
Haverhill	April Der Boghosian
Lawrence	Theresa Park, <i>Chair</i> (former) / Vilma Martinez-Dominguez
Merrimac	John Thomas
Methuen	Kathleen Bradley Colwell, <i>Secretary</i>
Newbury	Martha Taylor
Newburyport	Ed Ramsdell, <i>Secretary</i> (former) / Rick Taintor
North Andover	Rick Byers
Rowley	Robert Snow, <i>Chair</i>
Salisbury	Lou Masiello
West Newbury	Brian Murphey
Rep-At-Large	Brad Buschur

Merrimack Valley Planning Commission Staff

Administration

Karen Sawyer Conard, Executive Director (former)
Jenifer Dunlap, Financial Administrator
Nancy Lavallee, Office Administrator

Community and Economic Development

Nate Robertson, Community and Economic Development Planner

Environment

Jennifer Hughes, Environmental Program Manager
Peter Phippen, Coastal Coordinator

GIS and IT

Jerrard Whitten, GISP, GIS-IT Program Manager
Steve Lopez, GISP, Senior GIS Analyst
Mikayla Minor, GIS Analyst

Transportation

Anthony Komornick, Transportation Program Manager
Mary Kay Beninati, Senior Transportation Planner
Betsy Goodrich, Senior Transportation Planner
Jim Terlizzi, Transportation Engineer
Daniel Ovalle, Field Services Specialist

