



# 2023-2027 CEDS

Berkshire County, Massachusetts

Submitted to U.S. Economic Development Administration on December 15, 2022



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# Acknowledgements

## Indigenous Acknowledgement

We recognize the economic development strategies discussed and recommended in this document suggest actions that would take place on the unceded ancestral homelands of various Indigenous peoples. Tribal nations within the Wabanaki Confederacy (People of the Dawnland) and Mohican community (People of the Waters That Are Never Still) resided in these lands until genocide and dispossession forced many of them away. Yet, despite those tremendous hardships caused by colonization, these communities still exist and grow today. Many Wabanaki bands reside in Vermont, Maine, New York, and Canada, while the Stockbridge-Munsee Band of Mohicans is based in Wisconsin but continues to strengthen its connection to the Housatonic River Valley every day.

These communities have a profound and intimate relationship to this land - to the valleys, rivers, meadows, and mountains around us - and we pay honor and respect to their ancestors, past and present. We aspire to plan for and integrate the needs of all residents, building a more inclusive and equitable space for all, and pledge to establish and deepen relationships to do so over the 5-year implementation of this plan.

## Participating Communities

The 2023-2027 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for Berkshire County was developed in consultation with the region's thirty-two partnering communities - represented by their delegates and alternates, and through efforts by the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee. More information about CEDS Committee members may be found in Appendix A, along with a list of current delegates and alternates serving on the Commission.

## CEDS Committee Members

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Michael Coakley, City of Pittsfield  
John Duval, BRPC Chair  
AJ Enchill, Berkshire Black Economic Council  
Keith Girouard, MA Small Business Development Center  
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Lesley Herzberg, Berkshire County Historical Society  
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## Other Participating Organizations

This CEDS could not have been accomplished without the participation of representatives at the U.S. Economic Development Administration. Funding was provided for this planning effort by the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development through the District Local Technical Assistance Program, the U.S. Department of Commerce through the Economic Development Administration, and Berkshire Regional Planning Commission.

*Cover photo credits (clockwise from top left): Berkshire United Way; Mark Pruhenski, Town of Great Barrington; MassHire Berkshire; Nicholas Russo, BRPC.*

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# Executive Summary

**A** Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, or “CEDS” is both a document and a process. Although a complete CEDS is submitted to the US Economic Development Administration every five years, containing a summary of the region, a SWOT analysis, and an action plan for pursuing regional goals and strategies, the process by which these components are built and agreed upon is perhaps more important than the resulting document. In this, the third 5-year cycle for which Berkshire County stakeholders have developed a regional CEDS, that process took on new meaning and significance during of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) is the designated regional planning agency for the county, and the entity responsible for developing the regional CEDS. BRPC’s work is guided by a CEDS Committee, with members representing local government, primary industries, higher education, nonprofits, and the business community. With assistance from these committee members, our public process included listening sessions, one-on-one interviews, electronic surveys, and presentations to local boards and committees.

Our ability to conduct thorough outreach and stakeholder engagement was bolstered by a concurrent project also supported by the Economic Development Administration (EDA) beginning in early 2021. The “Agility and Resilience in Berkshire County” project allowed BRPC and its sub-recipient, 1Berkshire, to undertake in-depth resiliency planning, foster recovery projects, improve our ability to track regional indicators, and provide technical assistance and capacity building support to a wide range of small businesses and nonprofits in an active, nimble manner even as the pandemic continued to impact our region’s residents, communities, and economy.

This combination of long-term planning and in-the-moment implementation of recovery and resilience techniques provided a unique opportunity to put into practice some of the objectives and recommendations found within the 2023-2027 CEDS even before it was published. This experience - which turned planners into practitioners and practitioners into seasoned professionals - may have been an unwelcome chapter in our regional story, but we are emerging with a stronger sense of cohesiveness and a field-tested confidence in our ability to collaborate in meaningful, impactful ways.

## Vision Statement

The foundation of the 2023-2027 CEDS is the Vision Statement, which is born out of the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis:

***“Berkshire County will be sought after as an affordable, inclusive, and safe place for **PEOPLE** of all ages and backgrounds, offering a high quality of life and abundant employment opportunities. Our **COMMUNITY** will nurture and support each other, prioritizing equitable access to education, healthcare, and housing, and protecting our environment for future generations. We will build a resilient **ECONOMY** grounded in the region’s history of innovation and entrepreneurialism - one that values and invests in its workforce and embraces change.”***

The three components of this statement are centered on our region’s People, Communities, and Economy, a framework proposed by rural policy analyst and researcher Brian Dabson to encourage rural regions to take a fresh look at rural economic development starting with well-being. This framework heavily informed the Resiliency Chapter in this document, as well as our organization of the SWOT analysis.

**SWOT Analysis**

The SWOT aims to capture a moment in time in the life of a region by answering the question, “Where are we now?” Considering the shock the region experienced during COVID-19, answering that question requires re-examining the past, taking stock of the present, and using this knowledge to inform how we approach our future aspirations. While many of the county’s characteristics remain consistent, analysis of our region’s Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats revealed several new themes since the previous CEDS.

## Strengths

- Agricultural Heritage
- Brand Identity
- Collaborative Approach
- Cultural Amenities
- Educational Institutions
- Outdoor Recreation
- Redevelopment Potential
- Strong Core Employers

## Weaknesses

- Broadband/Cellular
- Health Rankings
- Insufficient Housing
- Low Wage Levels
- Limited Access to Capital
- Public Transportation
- Regional Disconnect

## Opportunities

- Entrepreneurship
- Future-Proof Job Training
- Increased Coordination
- In-Migration
- Increased Diversity
- Outdoor Recreation
- Remote Work
- Tourism

## Threats

- Access to Childcare
- Declining Population
- Educational Setbacks
- Future of Work Changes
- High Energy Prices
- Housing Crisis
- Loss of Farmland



### Goals, Strategies, and Objectives

Taking into account information within the summary background and results of the SWOT analysis, the CEDS Committee identified five goals and corresponding strategies for the 2023-2027 CEDS, which will guide future economic development efforts in the region. These, along with the Action Plan objectives, represent a roadmap for growth and stability that builds upon the unique assets and abilities of the region. The five goals, which emphasize the importance of well-being at the personal and community level, are as follows:

#### Goal #1: Healthy People

Foster the wellbeing of all residents by ensuring affordable, equitable access to food, housing, education, and healthcare.

#### Goal #2: Resilient Communities

Equip our communities to serve their constituents, steward resources, and manage governance effectively.

#### Goal #3: Future-Ready Workforce

Prepare our workforce through a life-span approach to education, training, up-skilling, and career versatility.

#### Goal #4: Strong Business Environment

Provide a streamlined ecosystem of support for a diverse range of businesses through access to capital, technical assistance, and opportunities for expansion.

#### Goal #5: Robust Infrastructure

Prioritize improvements to critical elements of economic prosperity, including communications, transportation, and utilities.

#### Action Plan

The Action Plan documents a wide range of community initiatives that will help the region pursue the five goals listed above. In each case, at least one partner is named as the primarily responsible entity for managing the initiative, effort, or event.

### Priority Projects

Priority Projects are not a required component of a regional CEDS. However, documenting them and updating the list during intervening annual reports

before the next five-year CEDS helps track progress and secure support. The 2023-2027 CEDS Priority Projects are organized into the following categories:

- Food Access & Security
- Housing
- Tourism, Hospitality & Outdoor Recreation
- Municipal and Public Safety Facilities
- Programs & Services
- Mixed Use & Commercial Site Redevelopment
- Workforce & Industry Support

### Resiliency Planning

While resiliency-building strategies are woven throughout the CEDS, the severe economic disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic prompted EDA to specifically support regional resiliency planning work, allowing for in-depth research and analysis of current conditions and best practices. This timely opportunity resulted in a distinct and more robust Resiliency Chapter within the Berkshire County 2023-2027 CEDS.

### COVID-19 Addendum

Since the onset of the pandemic, annual reports related to Berkshire County's previous CEDS (2017-2022) have included an addendum exploring impacts on unemployment rates, labor force, and the small business community through federal assistance programs. Within Appendix F, we have updated that information with the most recent data available.

# Summary Background

## Description of the Region

### Location and Geography

Berkshire County is located on the western edge of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and is bordered by Connecticut to the south, New York to the west, and Franklin, Hampshire, and Hampden counties to the east. Of the 32 municipalities that comprise the county, the cities of Pittsfield and North Adams are the most populous (populations of 42,514 and 12,961, respectively). Outside of these and a few other concentrated population centers in Adams, Williamstown, Great Barrington, Dalton, Lee, and Lenox, Berkshire County is largely rural with sparsely populated expanses of land.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the county has a total area of 605,400 acres or 946 square miles, of which 927 square miles are land and 20 square miles are water. The county is the second largest in Massachusetts by total area and the fourth least populated with a total population of 125,927 (demographic data throughout the CEDS is based on ACS five-year averages through 2020, as at the time of publication most decennial census data had not been released).

Elevations range from 3,491 feet at Mount Greylock, the highest point in the state, to 566 feet on the Hoosic River in Williamstown. There are two main river systems, the Hoosic (in the north) and the Housatonic (in the south). Running north-south are the Hoosac Range of the Berkshire Hills in the eastern part of the county and the Taconic Mountains in the western part of the county. These dominate the landscape, and most of the region's development has been constrained to the valley. Approximately seven percent of the county is developed, primarily for residential/commercial purposes. The remaining land (approximately 93%) consists of water bodies, recreational land, forest, wetlands, and agriculture.

### Law and Government

Berkshire County, originally part of Hampshire County, was incorporated on April 24, 1761. The region is often referred to simply as "The Berkshires." Of fourteen Massachusetts counties, Berkshire is one of eight that exists today only as a historical and geographic region, with no county government. Berkshire County's government was abolished effective July 1, 2000, with all former county functions assumed by state agencies. Local communities were granted the right to form their own compacts for sharing services, and the towns of Berkshire County formed such a regional compact known as Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC).

## Infrastructure

### Airports

The region is located approximately 60 minutes from Albany International Airport and approximately 90 minutes from Bradley International Airport in Windsor Locks, CT. The region has two municipally operated airports, one in Pittsfield (Pittsfield Municipal Airport) and the other in North Adams (Harriman and West Airport). Neither airport has regularly scheduled commercial passenger service. There is also one private airport located in Great Barrington (Great Barrington Airport).

### Highways, Local Roads, and Bridges

Interstate 90 (I-90) passes through the region east to west through Becket, Otis, Lee, Stockbridge, and West Stockbridge. I-90 interchanges are in Lee and West Stockbridge. The interchanges are approximately 20 minutes from Pittsfield and nearly 60 minutes from North Adams. The lack of access to I-90 from the region's most populous areas is problematic. U. S. Routes 7 and 8 pass through the region from north to south and U.S. Route 20 and

State Route 2 run east to west. Several other state numbered highways crisscross the region. Except in a few instances, the state numbered highways are two lane roads. Most of the state numbered highways are maintained by MassDOT while local roads are maintained by communities. Many of the region's local roads and bridges are in moderate to poor condition and need significant investment that municipalities have difficulty funding.

A 2021 report by the Massachusetts State Auditor's Office, [Public Infrastructure in Western Massachusetts: A Critical Need for Regional Investment and Revitalization](#), notes that "Western Massachusetts has long been left without the tools necessary to maintain or develop public infrastructure for roadways, buildings and broadband as a result of a declining population, geographic challenges, and a lack of overall resources." The report calls for a Rural Rescue Plan to increase to \$300M the Commonwealth's Chapter 90 program funding, which supports roadway, bridge, bikeway, sidewalk, and transportation improvement projects, and creates a public infrastructure agency; that would similarly improve investment in expanding access to broadband.

### Freight and Passenger Rail

Two main rail corridors are in use across the region. The CSX Boston-Albany Main Line runs east to west, passing through Pittsfield and carrying over 10 million tons of freight annually. The Pan Am Railway/Pan Am Southern (now part of CSX) Main Freight Line travels through Williamstown, North Adams, and Florida, carrying over five million tons of freight annually between Boston, MA and Rotterdam, NY (outside of Albany). Amtrak also provides limited passenger rail service, accessible at the Intermodal Center in Pittsfield, from which passengers can reach Boston or New York City via Albany.

The region is also served by two secondary rail corridors. The Berkshire Line passes north to south from Pittsfield to Danbury, CT. The Housatonic

Railroad operates as a Class C freight railroad along the Berkshire Line. In 2015, MassDOT acquired the Berkshire Line from the Housatonic Railroad. The rail infrastructure on the Berkshire Line was in poor condition with total replacement needed of the approximately 100-year-old rail. The other secondary rail corridor, owned by MassDOT, runs from Adams to North Adams. A limited amount of freight is carried through this corridor and the Berkshire Scenic Railway operates a tourist train between Adams and North Adams. The track on the Adams branch line was replaced in 2015 and is in excellent condition.

In 2022, a pilot program offering seasonal, weekend-only service known as The Berkshire Flyer began to operate, providing a 3 ½-hour route from New York City to Pittsfield on Fridays with a return journey on Sundays. Although the service, originally planned to begin in 2020 but delayed by the



pandemic, is primarily aimed at tourists and leisure travelers, it may be convenient for Central and Northern Berkshire residents, many of whom currently drive an hour and a half or more south to the northernmost Metro-North railroad station in Wassaic, New York when travelling to New York City. If successful, the pilot program may give birth to more regular service.

### **Broadband Internet**

As with other primarily rural regions of the Commonwealth, Berkshire County has traditionally lagged Massachusetts' average rates of internet access and broadband coverage. This is a function of isolation from major populations - and thus data centers - and low population density that make installing costly network infrastructure less commercially viable for service providers than in more heavily and densely populated areas.

Broadband in Berkshire County encompasses ADSL, cable, fiber, fixed wireless, and satellite. Sixteen towns recently completed last-mile projects (the infrastructure closest to end users) and five more are in the process of doing so as of late 2022. Thirteen towns were already fully served. Broadband access and fast, reliable service are not synonymous, and [FCC mapping](#) suggests many towns lack the fastest upload (10 Mbps) and download (100 Mbps) speeds needed for emergency readiness and economic competitiveness. Fiber networks exist in 10 towns, with cable the dominant technology in the remaining communities. The 2020 American Community Survey found nearly 85% of Berkshire County households with broadband of some type as compared to 88% in Massachusetts. Twelve percent of Berkshire County households lack any internet access as compared to 9% in the Commonwealth.

### **Public Transportation**

Public transportation is limited in the region. The Berkshire Regional Transit Authority (BRTA) operates the region's public transportation system consisting almost exclusively of buses and vans.

Due to the region's geographic expanse and dispersed population, BRTA is unable to provide full coverage throughout the region. Instead, BRTA bus routes focus on the most populated areas in the region from North Adams to Great Barrington. BRTA operates a limited schedule at night and during weekends which creates difficulties for those working non-traditional hours.

*Please note: In addition to the summary background above, more detailed information about infrastructure and public services in Berkshire County is included in the Resiliency Planning chapter.*

## Regional Demographics

### Population

The total population of Berkshire County is 125,927, which has been declining since its peak of 149,402 in 1970. Between 1970 and 2020, the region experienced an overall 15.7% drop in total population, though the rate of decline decreased over the last decade. The population decline in Berkshire County is not occurring in surrounding regions. The Capital District of New York – including the four largest counties of Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Schenectady – is now at 849,577 (+17.7%). The Pioneer Valley – including Hampden, Hampshire, and Franklin Counties – has a population of 698,537 (+8.8%). The Commonwealth of Massachusetts’ population is now 6,873,003, a 20.5% increase since 1970.

### Population Density

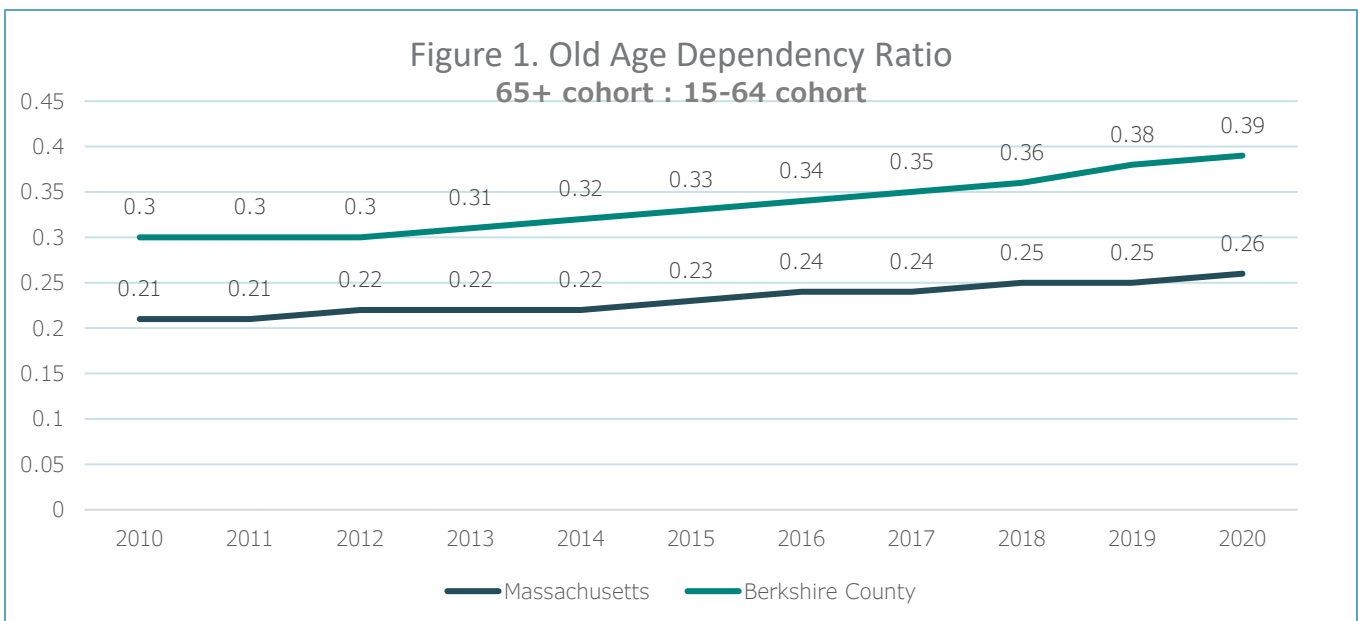
While Berkshire County contains 8.96% of land in the Commonwealth, its share of the population is only 1.83%. Furthermore, Berkshire County has a population density of 133.1 people/sq. mi. compared to a Commonwealth average of 650.5 people/sq. mi., making it the fourth least densely populated county in Massachusetts.

The total population in Berkshire County consists of 52% females and 48% males. The percentage of females to males is similar to surrounding regions, the Commonwealth, and the United States.

### Age

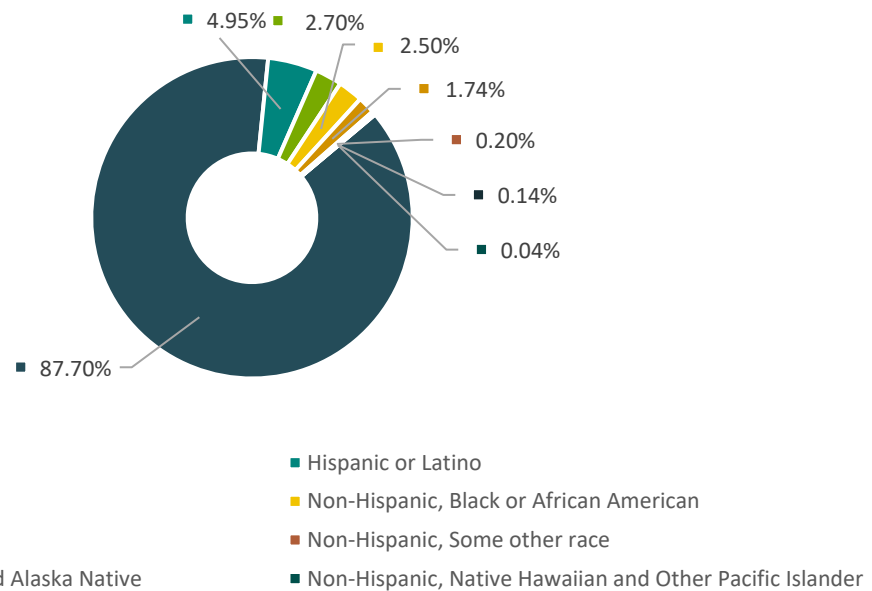
The median age for Berkshire County residents is 47.2 years as compared to 39.6 for Massachusetts and 38.2 for the nation. Berkshire County’s median age is also higher than the Capital District (40.2), and the Pioneer Valley (41).

Berkshire County has a high percentage of adults aged 45 and over: 52.5% compared to 41.7% nationally, 43.4% in Massachusetts, 44.3% in the Capital District, and 43.9% in the Pioneer Valley. In terms of the 65+ cohort, the difference is even more pronounced. In Berkshire County, the population aged 65 and over is 23.2%, while in Massachusetts it is 16.5%, and in the US, 16%. Corresponding percentages for neighboring regions are 17.3% in the Capital District and 17.5% in the Pioneer Valley. The age distribution in Berkshire County results in an increasing old-age dependency ratio that is higher and growing faster than that of the state.



Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates (2010-2020), Table S0101

Figure 2. Berkshire County Race &amp; Ethnicity



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates (2016-2020), Table DP05

### Race and Ethnicity

While the population of Berkshire County is predominately White, it is becoming increasingly diverse. Eighty eight percent of the region's total population identifies as White. The largest minority groups are Two or More Races (2.7%), followed by Black or African American (2.5%), and Asian (1.7%). In terms of ethnicity, nearly 5% of the total population identifies as Hispanic or Latino. For more information about how questions of race and ethnicity are handled by the U.S. Census, see:

[www.census.gov/topics/population/race/about.html](http://www.census.gov/topics/population/race/about.html)

### Diversity

In 2010, the non-White population was 11,589, or 8.8% of the population. In 2020, that number and percentage increased to 15,489 or 12.3% of the population. While the total population has declined, the White population dropped by almost 10,000 while the non-White population increased by 5,000. That increase offers an opportunity, if appropriate steps are taken, to welcome and support this growing community.

### Net Migration

From 2010 to 2019, Berkshire County consistently lost about 250 people per year due to out-migration. In 2020, the county saw a significant change, with a net gain of over 400 people. This change can be attributed to an increase in people relocating to the Berkshires due to the COVID pandemic.

### Educational Attainment

Over 90% of the total population over age 25 in Berkshire County have obtained a high school diploma or equivalency certificate. Thirty-one percent of the population have obtained at least a bachelor's degree and 13.7% have obtained one or more graduate degrees. Only 9.4% of those over 25 have received an education below that required for a high school diploma.

In comparison to surrounding regions, Berkshire County residents are more highly educated than those in the U.S. and Pioneer Valley but are surpassed by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and New York's Capital District at the college and graduate level.

## Economic Characteristics – Distress Criteria

### Average Unemployment Rate and Per Capita Income

According to EDA’s definition, an area is considered distressed if it has either: (1) an unemployment rate that is, for the most recent 24-month period, at least one percentage point greater than the national average or (2) has a per capita income (PCI) that is 80% or less than the national average.

**Table 1. Economic Distress Criteria – Primary Elements**

	Berkshire County	United States	Threshold Calculation
24-Month Average Unemployment Rate	6.3%	5.1%	1.2
2020 Per Capita Income	\$37,025	\$35,384	104.6%

Source(s): MA Dept. of Economic Research, Labor Force and Unemployment Data; US Dept. of Labor Statistics, Unemployment Rate; US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates (2006–2010–2016–2020), Table B19301.

Berkshire County has not historically met the threshold for either distress criteria, although a few individual municipalities and census tracts have. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the county did meet the 24-month unemployment rate threshold, and continues to do so, as unemployment has not fallen as quickly for the county as it has nationwide.

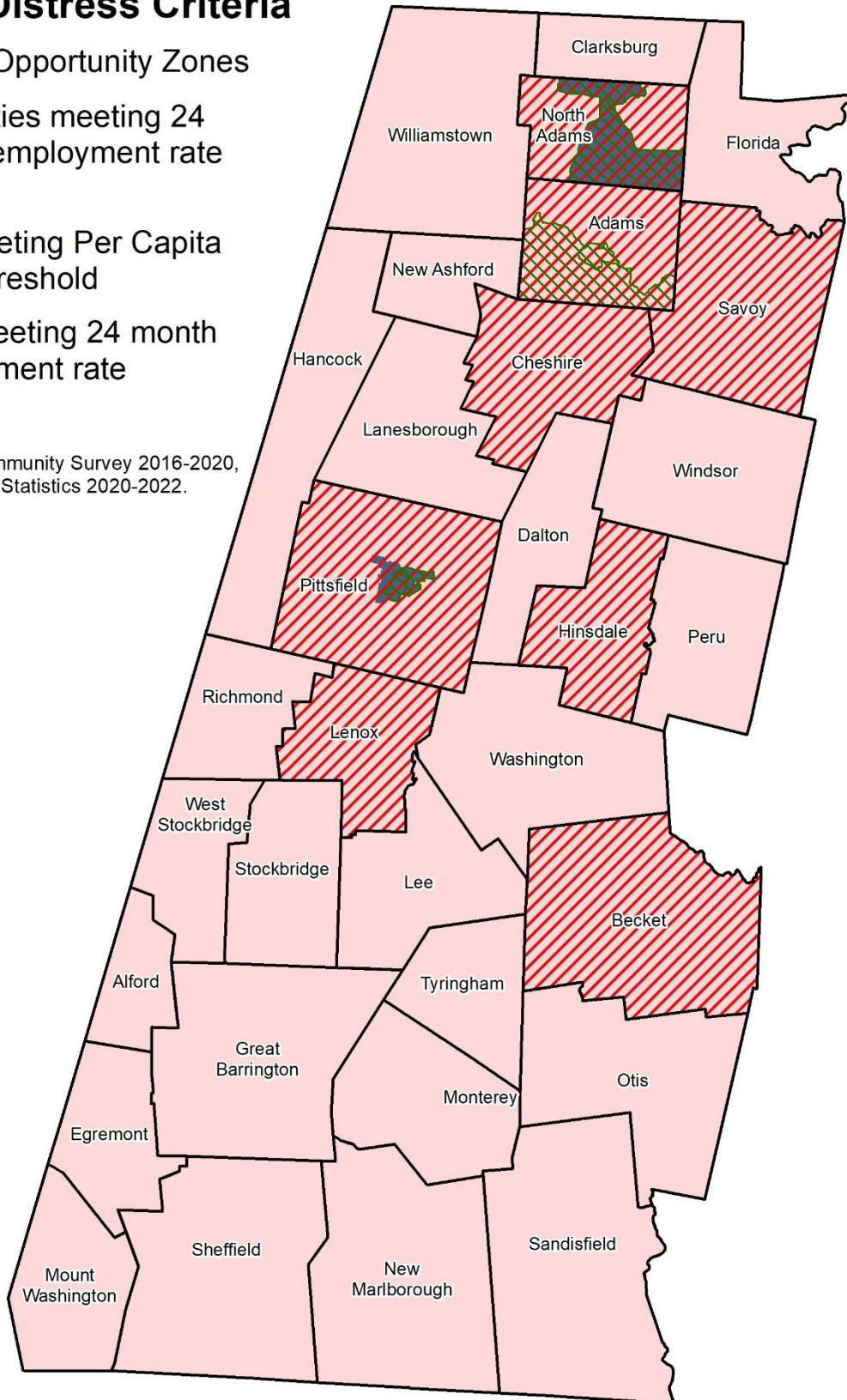
The unemployment effects of COVID-19 meant more municipalities than usual meet the 24-month average unemployment rate distress criterion. This continues into 2022, with a total of eight meeting the criterion: Adams, Becket, Cheshire, Hinsdale, Lenox, North Adams, Pittsfield, and Savoy.

Conversely, two fewer tracts met PCI distress criteria than in 2019, with Census Tract 9004 (Pittsfield) and Census Tract 9215 (North Adams) clearing the threshold. This leaves five distressed tracts in 2020: 9001 (Pittsfield), 9002 (Pittsfield), 9006 (Pittsfield), 9214 (North Adams), and 9353 (North Adams). The following page contains a map of locations meeting EDA distress criteria, as well as the locations of federally designated Opportunity Zones. Detailed information by municipality and census tract is in Appendix C.

### Economic Distress Criteria

-  Qualified Opportunity Zones
-  Communities meeting 24 month unemployment rate threshold
-  Tracts meeting Per Capita Income threshold
-  County meeting 24 month unemployment rate threshold

Source: American Community Survey 2016-2020, Bureau of Labor Statistics 2020-2022.



December 12, 2022

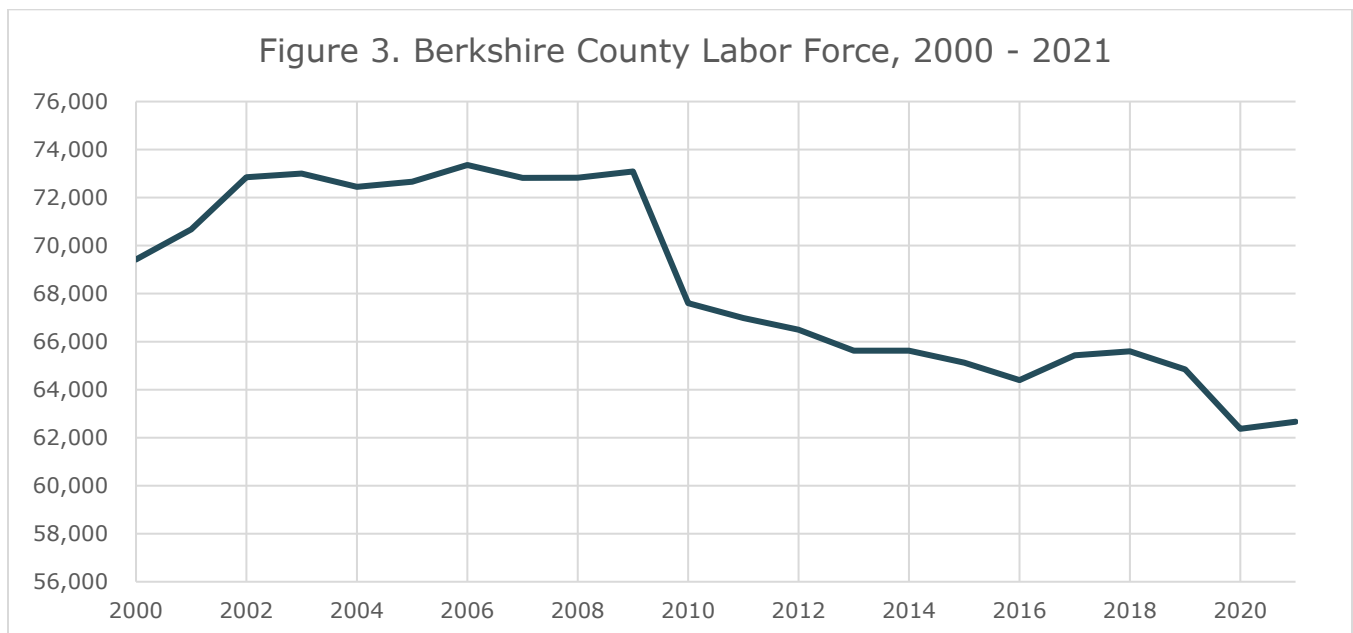


## Economic Characteristics – General

### Labor Force

Between 2020 and 2021, the Berkshire County labor force increased by 296 workers (0.5%) from 62,370 to 62,666. The labor force remained 6,756 workers (10%) below the 2000 level of 69,422 and 9,691 (13.2%) from the peak of 73,357 in 2006. Although

the year-over-year increase in the labor force is encouraging, it can likely be attributed to workers returning after the sharp drop in labor force between 2019 and 2020 caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. See *Figure 3*.



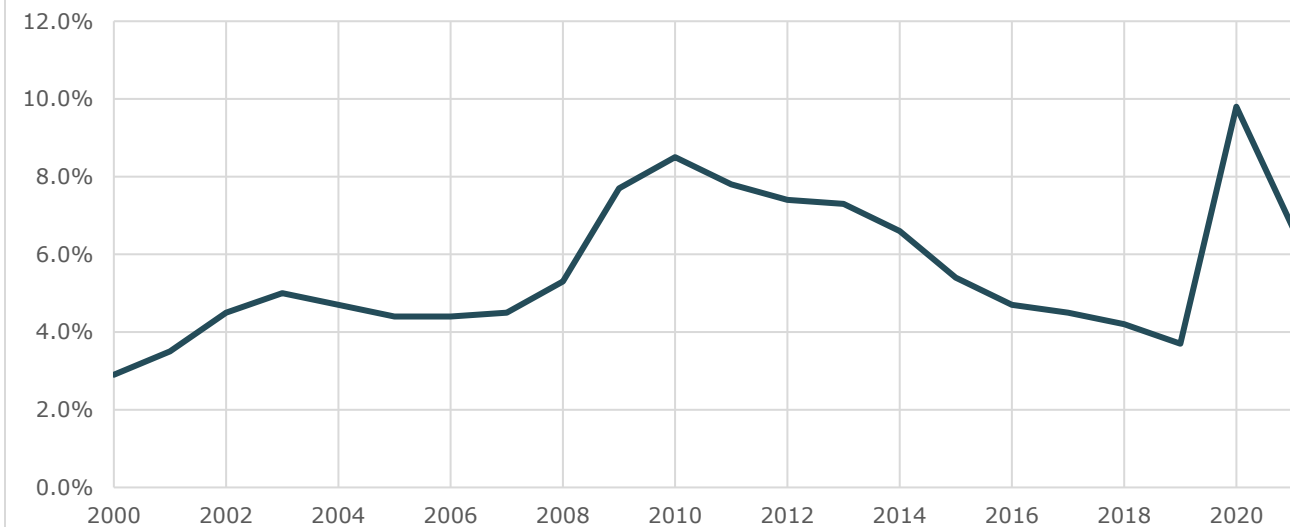
Source(s): MA Dept. of Economic Research, Labor Force and Unemployment Data.

### Unemployment

Berkshire County's unemployment rate in 2021 was 6.7%, a dramatic reduction from the COVID-19-induced 2020 unemployment rate of 9.1%. It was still above pre-pandemic levels and nearly equal to the level of unemployment Berkshire County

experienced in the years following the Great Financial Crisis. However, provisional data from Q1 and Q2 2022 indicate that tight labor conditions have moved the regional unemployment rate closer to pre-pandemic levels. See *Figure 4*.

Figure 4. Berkshire County Unemployment Rate, 2000 - 2021



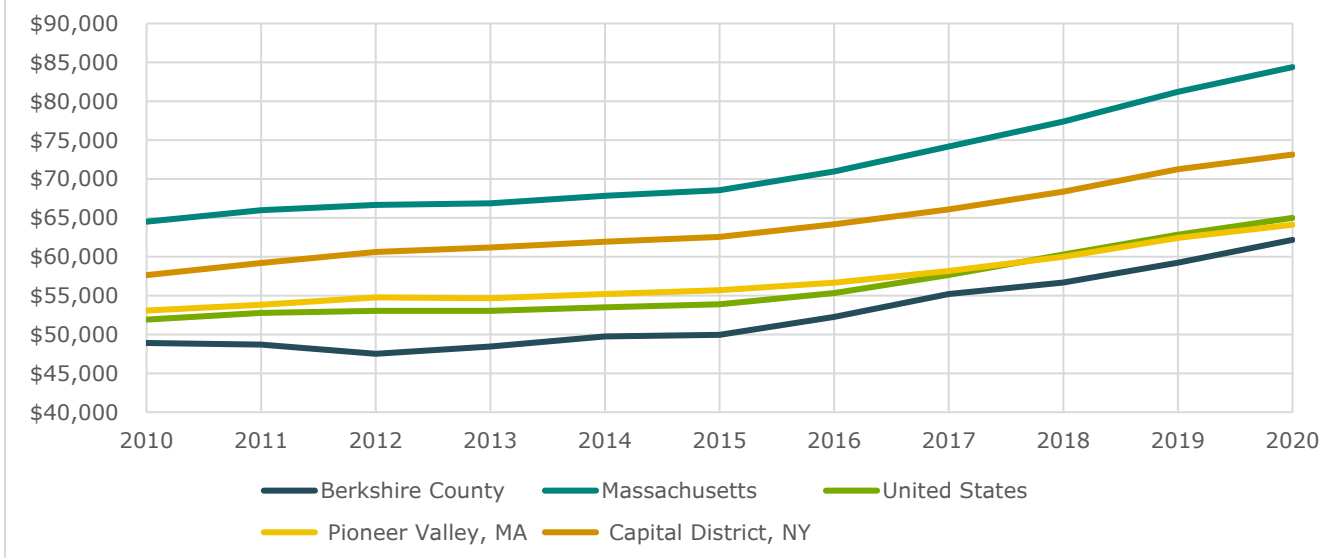
Source(s): MA Dept. of Economic Research, Labor Force and Unemployment Data.

**Median Household Income**

In 2020, the median household income for Berkshire County was \$62,166. This was a \$2,939 increase (5%) over the 2019 median household income of \$59,230. Median household income in Berkshire County continues to be slightly lower than the national median household income and substantially

lower than the statewide median household income. Furthermore, Berkshire County’s median household income remains lower than the median household income of the Pioneer Valley and Capital District. See Figure 5.

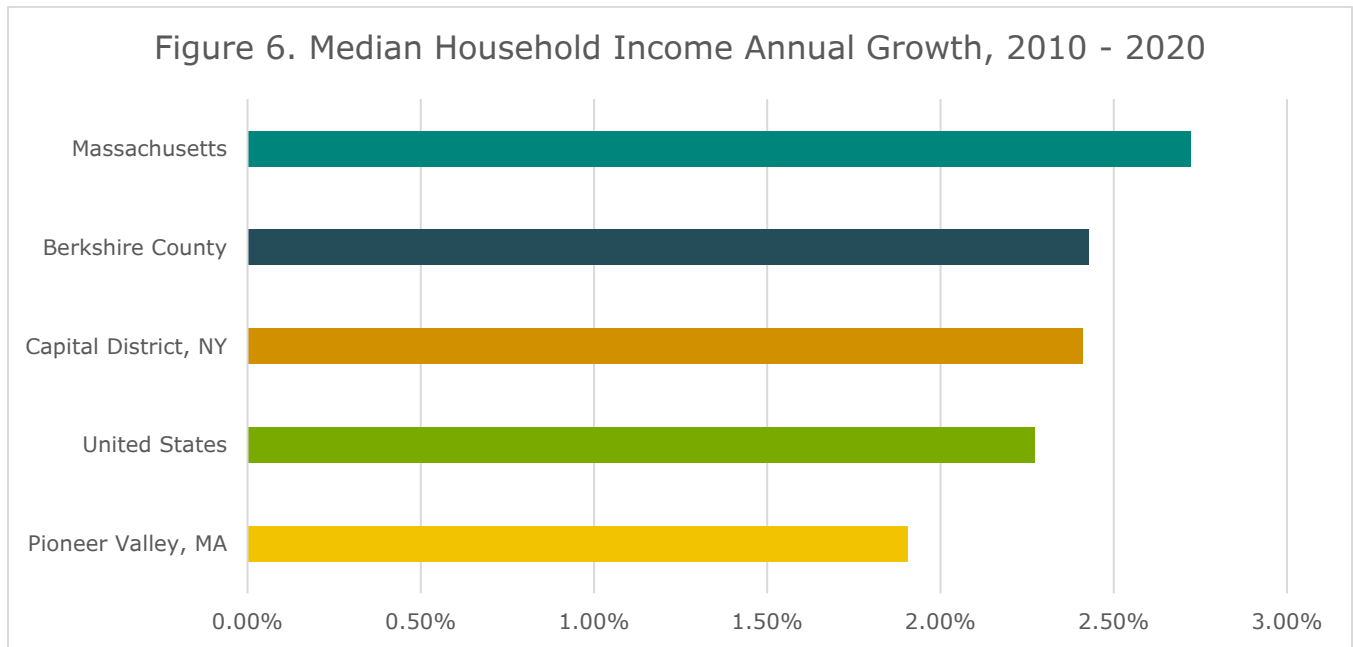
Figure 5. Median Household Income, 2010 - 2020



Source(s): US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates (2016-2020), Table S1901.

Between 2010 and 2020, the average annual growth rate of the median household income in Berkshire County was 2.43%, slightly higher than the national annual growth rate of 2.27% and slightly lower than

the statewide growth rate of 2.72%. Additionally, it was higher than the annual growth rate of the Pioneer Valley and Capital District. *See Figure 6.*



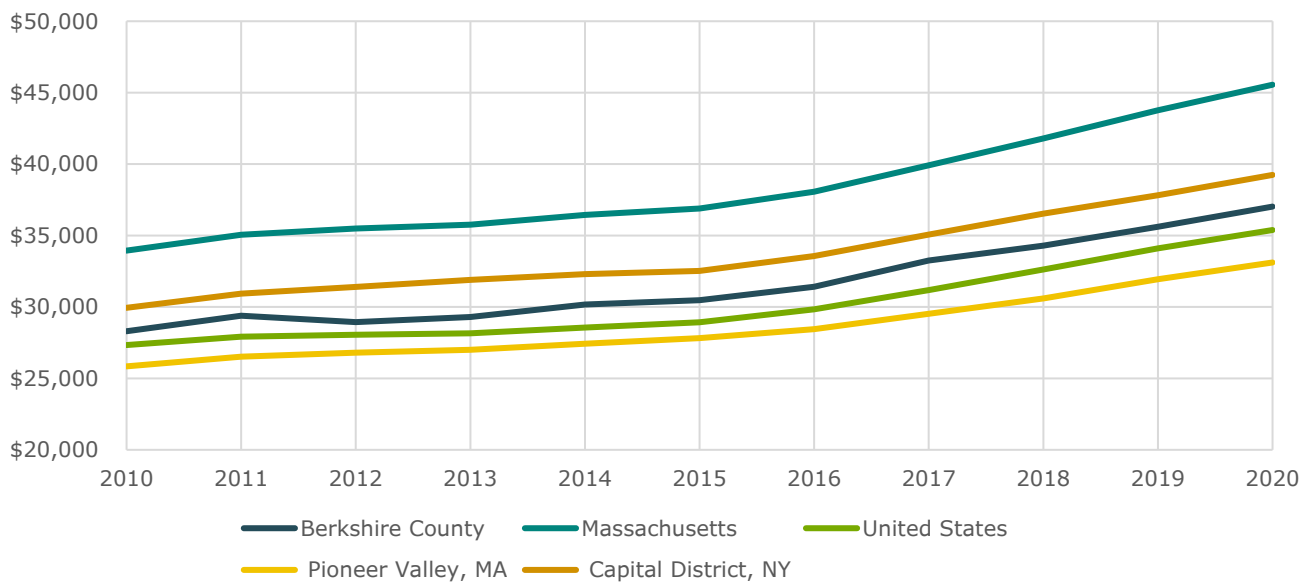
Source(s): US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates (2006-2010—2016-2020), Table S1901.

### Per Capita Income

The per capita income for Berkshire County in 2020 was \$37,025. This was \$1,409 higher (4%) than the 2019 per capita income of \$35,616. Berkshire County's per capita income remained slightly above the national per capita income and substantially below the statewide per capita income. *See Figure 7.* Among surrounding regions, Berkshire County's per capita income is approximately average, being higher than the Pioneer Valley and lower than the

Capital District. *See Figure 7.* The discrepancy between Berkshire County's median household income and per capita income, with the per capita income ranking higher among surrounding regions than median household income, suggests an outside presence of earners at the top of the income distribution. This corresponds with Berkshire County's reputation as a retirement destination for the wealthy.

Figure 7. Per Capita Income, 2010 - 2020

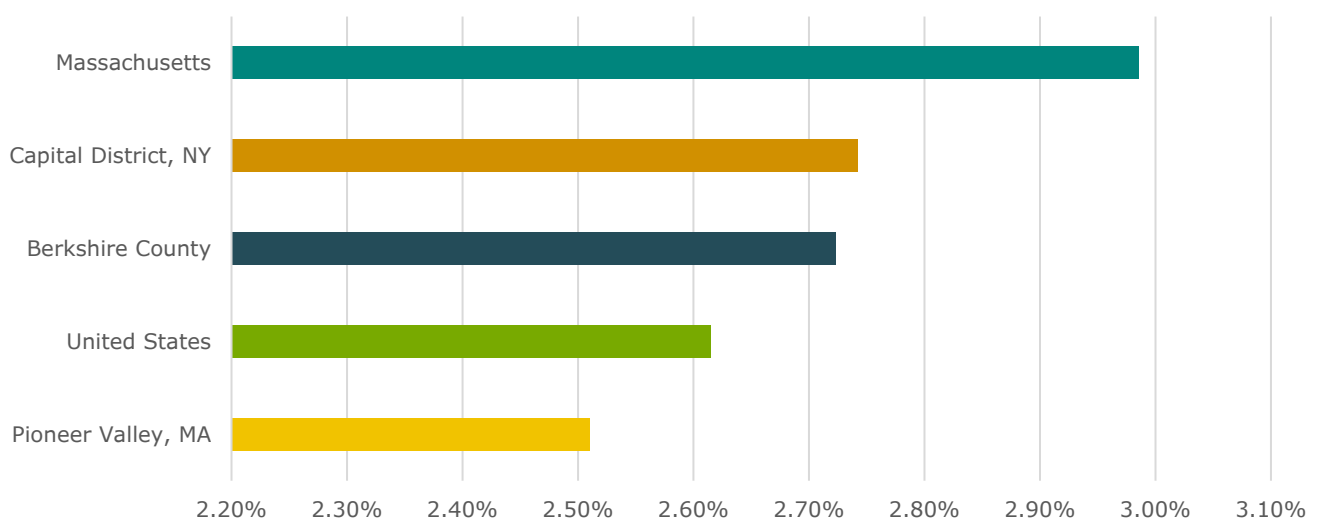


Source(s): US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates (2006–2010—2016–2020), Tables B19301; B01003.

Between 2010 and 2020, the average annual growth rate of Berkshire County’s per capita income was 2.72%. This was somewhat lower than Massachusetts’ average annual growth rate of 2.99% and slightly higher than the nation’s average

annual growth rate of 2.61%. It was also higher than the annual average growth rate of the Pioneer Valley’s per capita income but lower than that of the Capital District. See Figure 8.

Figure 8. Per Capita Income Annual Growth, 2010 - 2020



Source(s): US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates (2006–2010—2016–2020), Tables B19301; B01003.

### Labor Force Age Distribution

In 2020, the Berkshire County labor force continued to trend older than that of Massachusetts and the United States, with 10.4% of Berkshire County's total workforce 65 years old or older. This is more than 50% higher than the portion of the Massachusetts workforce comprised of this age cohort and nearly 80% higher than the portion of the total American workforce comprised of this age cohort. Additionally, the portion of the Berkshire County workforce comprised of workers between the prime working ages of 25 and 64 has diminished

from 78.9% in 2015 to 80.6%. This has happened while the corresponding portions of the Massachusetts and national workforces have remained relatively static. One welcome development is that the portion of the Berkshire County workforce comprised by the youngest age cohort increased between 2010 and 2020, albeit only by 1.5 percentage points. This is contrary to statewide and national trends, where the workforce portion comprised by this age cohort decreased. See *Table 2*.

**Table 2. Labor Force by Age Cohorts, 2010, 2015, 2020**

Berkshire County	2010	2015	2020
16 - 24	13.5%	13.9%	14.0%
25 - 44	36.7%	34.6%	33.8%
45 - 64	43.9%	44.3%	41.8%
65 and Older	5.9%	7.2%	10.4%
Massachusetts	2010	2015	2020
16 - 24	14.5%	14.4%	13.6%
25 - 44	42.3%	40.7%	41.4%
45 - 64	38.8%	39.4%	38.2%
65 and Older	4.4%	5.5%	6.8%
United States	2010	2015	2020
16 - 24	15.1%	14.4%	13.8%
25 - 44	43.9%	42.9%	43.5%
45 - 64	37.2%	37.8%	36.9%
65 and Older	3.9%	4.7%	5.8%

Source(s): U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates (2006–2010—2016–2020), Table S2301.

### Key Industry Sectors by Employment and Average Weekly Wage

The Berkshire County sectors with the highest average monthly employment in 2021 were Healthcare and Social Assistance, Retail Trade, Educational Services, Accommodation and Food Services, and Manufacturing. Together, these five industries employed a monthly average of 36,922 people and accounted for approximately 65% of the monthly average of 56,008 people employed across all sectors. Of these five industries, three had average weekly wages below the median average weekly wage of \$1,131, including Health Care and Social Assistance and Retail Trade, the two sectors

comprising the largest shares of average monthly employment. *See Table 3.*

The sectors with the highest average weekly wages in 2021 were Utilities, Finance and Insurance, Professional and Technical Services, Information, and Wholesale Trade, with average weekly wages ranging from \$1,418 to \$1,993. Of these sectors, all but Professional and Technical Services had average monthly employment figures below the median of 1,766. *See Table 4.*

**Table 3. Top Sectors by Average Monthly Employment, Berkshire County, 2021**

NAICS Code	Sector	Average Monthly Employment	Average Weekly Wages	Rank in Average Weekly Wage
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	11,765	\$1,112	11/20
44-45	Retail Trade	7,575	\$717	18/20
61	Educational Services	6,605	\$1,165	9/10
72	Accommodation and Food Services	5,776	\$534	20/20
31-33	Manufacturing	3,421	\$1,321	8/20

Source(s): MA Dept. of Unemployment Assistance, Employment and Wages (ES-202); US BLS, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages.

**Table 4. Top Sectors by Average Weekly Wages, Berkshire County, 2021**

NAICS Code	Sector	Average Weekly Wages	Average Monthly Employment	Rank in Average Weekly Wage
22	Utilities	\$1,993	267	18/20
52	Finance and Insurance	\$1,829	1,677	11/20
54	Professional and Technical Services	\$1,787	2,873	7/20
51	Information	\$1,676	804	15/20
42	Wholesale Trade	\$1,418	1,194	13/20

Source(s): MA Dept. of Unemployment Assistance, Employment and Wages (ES-202); US BLS, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages.

### Average Annual Pay by Industry

In 2021, Berkshire County workers earned on average less than their counterparts in other regions. For every single NAICS sector, the average annual pay was less for Berkshire County workers than workers in other regions of Massachusetts, with Berkshire County sectors commanding an average of 69.8% of the average annual pay of their Massachusetts counterparts. The sectors with the greatest discrepancies were Management of Companies and Enterprises (40% of the Massachusetts figure), Real Estate and Leasing (51.8% of the Massachusetts figure), and Finance and Insurance (51.8% of the Massachusetts figure).

This relationship largely held when Berkshire County was compared to the nation, with the average Berkshire County worker making less than their national counterpart in every sector except Educational Services and Accommodation and Food Services. Berkshire County workers commanded an average of 82.3% of the average annual pay of their national counterparts, and the sectors with the greatest discrepancies were Management of Companies and Enterprises (42.2% of the national figure), Information (59% of the national figure), and Mining, Quarrying, Oil and Gas Extraction (66.9% of the national figure). See *Table 5*.

**Table 5. Average Annual Pay by Sector, Berkshire County, MA, 2021**

NAICS Code	Sector	Berkshire County	Massachusetts	United States
11	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting	\$41,444	\$71,448	\$41,846
21	Mining, Quarrying, Oil and Gas Extraction	\$73,217	\$79,404	\$109,414
22	utilities	\$103,636	\$126,516	\$107,785
23	Construction	\$61,984	\$86,788	\$69,607
31-33	Manufacturing	\$55,640	\$99,476	\$76,618
42	Wholesale Trade	\$73,736	\$123,084	\$90,341
44-45	Retail Trade	\$37,284	\$43,992	\$39,706
48-49	Transportation and Warehousing	\$47,684	\$63,180	\$59,348
51	Information	\$87,152	\$150,592	\$147,707
52	Finance and Insurance	\$95,108	\$183,560	\$131,462
53	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	\$50,700	\$97,916	\$69,648
54	Professional and Technical Services	\$92,924	\$167,440	\$114,072

55	Management of Companies and Enterprises	\$59,748	\$149,292	\$141,616
56	Administrative and Waste Services	\$46,904	\$60,320	\$50,211
61	Educational Services	\$60,580	\$71,344	\$58,181
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	\$57,824	\$64,792	\$59,362
71	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	\$33,800	\$48,152	\$45,369
72	Accommodation and Food Services	\$27,768	\$30,472	\$25,800
81	Other Services, Except Public Administration	\$39,364	\$48,048	\$46,157
92	Public Administration	\$55,640	\$86,008	\$72,905

Source(s): MA Dept. of Unemployment Assistance, *Employment and Wages (ES-202)*. MA Dept. of Economic Research, *Employment and Wages (ES-202)*; US Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages*.

### Industrial Concentration

Sector concentration may be measured using location quotients (LQs), which compute how much more or less concentrated a particular sector is in region A compared to region B. An LQ greater than 1 implies greater concentration in region A, whereas an LQ below 1 indicates the opposite. We compute LQs comparing Berkshire County to the United States for each NAICS sector according to the number of establishments, average monthly employment, and total wages associated with each sector.

According to this metric, Berkshire County demonstrates high levels of sectoral concentration in Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation, Accommodation and Food Services, and Health Care and Social Assistance.

This is intuitively correct given Berkshire County's reputation as a tourism and leisure destination, and its older population. By contrast, Berkshire County

demonstrates low levels of sectoral concentration in Management of Companies and Enterprises, Mining, Quarrying, Oil and Gas Extraction, and Transportation and Warehousing. See *Table 6*.



Table 6. Location Quotients by Sector, Berkshire County vs. United States, 2021

NAICS Code	Sector	Establishment LQ	Employment LQ	Wages LQ
11	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting	0.7	0.6	1.3
21	Mining, Quarrying, Oil and Gas Extraction	0.4	0.4	0.2
22	Utilities	1	1.6	0.5
23	Construction	1.2	1.2	1.1
31-33	Manufacturing	0.8	0.9	0.6
42	Wholesale Trade	0.4	0.7	0.4
44-45	Retail Trade	1.1	0.9	2.1
48-49	Transportation and Warehousing	0.5	0.4	0.5
51	Information	1	1.1	0.3
52	Finance and Insurance	0.6	1.2	0.4
53	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	0.5	0.6	0.6
54	Professional and Technical Services	0.7	1.2	0.4
55	Management of Companies and Enterprises	0.4	0.3	0.1
56	Administrative and Waste Services	0.9	0.6	0.9
61	Educational Services	1	1.5	1.6
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	1.6	1.5	1.6
71	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	1.4	1.1	2.6
72	Accommodation and Food Services	1.2	0.6	3.2
81	Other Services, Except Public Administration	0.9	0.8	1.7
92	Public Administration	2.3	0.9	0.8

Source(s): MA Dept. of Unemployment Assistance, Employment and Wages (ES-202). MA Dept. of Economic Research, Employment and Wages (ES-202); US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages.

# SWOT Analysis

## Regional Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

A SWOT analysis identifies the critical internal and external factors that contribute to a region's unique assets and competitive positioning. The SWOT serves as a strategic planning tool that allows stakeholders to arrive at clear objectives for strengthening the regional economy. The SWOT captures a moment in time in the life of a region by answering the question, "Where are we now?" Considering the shock Berkshire County and the nation experienced during COVID-19, answering that question requires re-examining the past, taking stock in the present, then using this knowledge to inform how we approach future aspirations.

To arrive at this SWOT, BRPC staff and a CEDS Committee that includes a diverse array of municipal, sector, and community leaders presented to local Select Boards, surveyed regional business leaders, and invited public input. Following broad-ranging discussions, the CEDS Committee organized input into focused categories that captured the region's key attributes. Suggestions were vetted over multiple working sessions and confirmed by the CEDS Committee.

### Strengths

*EDA defines strengths as the unique advantages that distinguish a region from its peers and can be leveraged to attract and retain people and businesses.*

#### Regional Character

The Berkshires' strengths are many, owing to the vitality of its **world-class cultural** (Jacob's Pillow, The Clark); and **educational institutions** (Williams College, Miss Hall's); **year-round natural beauty** (Mt. Greylock, the state's highest peak, October Mountain the state's largest park, and Bash Bish Falls, the state's tallest waterfall); and **voluminous historic assets**. Combined with its **enviable geography** within easy reach of major urban and regional hubs (Albany, Boston, Hartford, New York), Berkshire County is a place that for centuries has attracted thinkers (W. E. B. DuBois), innovators (the Shakers at [Hancock](#)), and creators ([Edith Wharton](#), [Herman Melville](#)).

The Berkshires' reputation as a place where people come to be inspired took on new life during the pandemic, sparked by the **pivot to remote work**. This strong **brand identity** continues into the

present, supported by popular institutions like the renowned [Tanglewood Music Festival](#), museums celebrating American icons such as the [Norman Rockwell Museum](#) and [Chesterwood](#), and [MASS MoCA](#), one of the most visited museums in the country. The bold plan for an [Extreme Model Railroad and Contemporary Architecture Museum](#) could further cement the region as [one of the county's leading cultural hubs](#), and a place where the creative class go to dream big.

#### PEOPLE

Although Berkshire County's total population is nearly 130,000, that number fails to include 18,000 second homeowners and 5,300 college students, not to mention millions of annual tourists, who vastly expand the region's reach and influence. The region can rightly call itself an [Age-Friendly Community](#) welcoming people across the lifespan.

United States Postal Service data showed an uptick in people moving to the Berkshires between 2019 and 2021, both temporarily and permanently. Many newcomers were urban transplants seeking to marry the best of city life (vibrant downtowns, high-quality food and retail, bike- and pedestrian-friendly

communities) with rural amenities (clean air, safety, larger dwellings, and access to outdoor recreation), setting the stage for an era in which the Berkshires are reimagined not solely as a place to recreate but as a location for permanent residency to achieve the elusive **work-life balance** so many crave.

Berkshire County is also celebrated for its **collaborative approach**, as seen in high rates of volunteerism across [1,000 nonprofits](#); an engaged regional philanthropic foundation ([Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation](#)); and novel initiatives such as [Berkshares](#), a locally designed and issued currency that seeks to keep and recirculate money regionally to expand wealth creation.

## COMMUNITY

### Essential Services

The county benefits from comprehensive healthcare through Berkshire Health Systems (BHS), which offers services in the county's North (North Adams), Central (Pittsfield), and Southern (Great Barrington) sub-regions. BHS has received [numerous awards](#)

[and accreditations for its clinical care](#) and been rated high performing in four adult procedures and conditions (Heart Failure, Kidney Failure, COPD, and Stroke) by [U.S. News and World Report](#). Having dedicated BHS medical and nursing staff during COVID-19 was critical to the region's ability to rapidly respond to an ever-shifting public health emergency.

### Forests

The county is committed to environmental sustainability, as seen in [land trusts and conservancies](#) and [protection of and advocacy for the region's forests](#), which make up 75 to 85% of land cover. Forests support a burgeoning [Outdoor Recreation economy](#) while mitigating climate change. Protected forests have led to **cleaner air and more temperate weather**, making the region attractive to those fleeing storm, fire, and flood in other states. The soon-to-open [Greylock Glen Outdoor Center](#) in Adams will convey that message to the public, doing so in ways that ensure the next generation values the region's unique ecosystems.



Du Bois Freedom Center, Great Barrington

photo credit: David Edgecomb

### Education

The region is home to **four colleges** (Williams, Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, Berkshire Community College, Simon's Rock/Bard), which serve as **anchor employers** and introduce young people to the region's amenities.

Students often return here to start families and retire in the region later in life, attracted back by fond memories. All four schools have made diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging central to their missions. Williams is forgoing work requirements for low-income and first-generation students. MCLA is expanding arts education in public schools to connect students to art-related careers and internships. BCC is offering grant-funded, tuition-free programs that prepare disadvantaged students for higher paying in-demand jobs with local employers. And Simon's Rock offers a scholarship named after local luminary W. E. B. DuBois to assist eligible students of color who are underrepresented in higher education.

### ECONOMY

#### Workforce

Berkshire County's labor force, as of the first quarter of 2022, stands at 61,431 with employment increasing 5.6% since the same period in 2021. The largest industry is [Health Care and Social Assistance](#) (12,170 workers), a field in which jobs are plentiful and which the [Commonwealth's 2021 Future of Work report](#) predicts is poised to generate the most new jobs in Massachusetts by 2030. [The Bureau of Labor Statistics](#) confirms that among occupations with the largest projected growth are nurse practitioners, physical therapy assistants, occupational therapy assistants, and home health care aids.

#### Commercial Development

Large and unique properties, including Victorian mansions, turn-of-the-century textile mills, and mid-century motels have made the Berkshires attractive for **innovative redevelopment**. Mixed-use commercial and residential ([Eagle Mill](#)); advanced

manufacturing ([Berkshire Sterile Manufacturing](#)); and value-added food processing and hospitality ([Greylock WORKS](#)) are all emblematic of the region's development potential. The pandemic saw renewed interest in such projects, including revitalization projects spearheaded by Mill Town Capital, such as Bousquet Mountain Ski Area and Camp Arrow Wood, among others.

#### Agriculture

As the second most rural county in Massachusetts, Berkshire County is a major contributor to the state's food economy. The region boasts 475 farms, 58,647 acres of agricultural land, and 857 producers generating \$23.5 million in annual sales. The region has the leading value of dairy sales in the state at \$13.5 million, just under 25 percent of the state's dairy economy. One hundred and five of the region's farms sell direct-to-consumers, helping Berkshire County contribute to the [New England Feeding New England](#) goal of having 30% of the food consumed in New England produced here by 2030.

## Strengths

- Agricultural Heritage
- Brand Identity
- Collaborative Approach
- Cultural Amenities
- Educational Institutions
- Outdoor Recreation
- Redevelopment Potential
- Strong Core Employers

## Weaknesses

*EDA defines weaknesses as a region's competitive disadvantages relative to its peers, not all of which are in its control.*

Like many mid-sized and predominantly rural regions, Berkshire County's strengths often compete with its challenges. Some are long-standing: **aging population, shrinking labor force, underfunded infrastructure, lack of industry diversification**, distance from major highways or rail service, and **limited access to capital** for the region's small businesses. Others are outgrowths of the pandemic and not unique to Berkshire County. These include difficulty hiring, supply chain constraints, inflationary cost pressures, and difficulty forecasting future needs due to economic uncertainty. Berkshire County's leaders are working to address these challenges through stakeholder engagement and cross-sectoral collaboration.

### PEOPLE

#### Health and Mental Health

Social determinants of health such as lower wages that contribute to food insecurity; a car-centric built environment that disincentivizes walking and biking; and lack of specialized healthcare providers underlie [Berkshire County's higher rates of negative health behaviors in comparison with the Commonwealth \(smoking, drinking, opioid use\) and poorer health outcomes \(cancer, heart disease, obesity, and diabetes\)](#). Unless these determinants are addressed as part of a comprehensive public health response, the region's residents may struggle to reach their potential.

#### Wage Levels

Lower wages across nearly every industry, but particularly in seasonal and service sector jobs such as Retail, Accommodation and Food Services, and Construction deny these workers the ability to [earn a living wage in Berkshire County](#). This wage discrepancy also leaves many entry level and blue

collar workers in a category best described as [Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed \(ALICE\)](#). This means they earn above the poverty level and thus are ineligible for federal benefits such as SNAP and WIC, yet do not make enough to comfortably manage basic expenses like rent, food, and utilities. In the Pittsfield MSA (synonymous with Berkshire County) 5,598 individuals or 12% of the population meet ALICE criteria.

#### Government

Located far from Boston, and with a small population relative to its East and Central Massachusetts counterparts, Berkshire County often lacks the **political clout** needed to ensure its priorities are understood and funded by the state. This is particularly true for projects requiring major capital investment ([East-West Rail](#); [North-South Rail Link](#)). Although such projects stimulate the flow of goods, services, and people beyond Berkshire County, framing projects so legislators outside the region appreciate the benefits to their own constituents remains a challenge.

### COMMUNITY

#### Housing

What had been a strength in the *2017-2021 CEDS* - the availability of affordable rental apartments and single-family homes - has now become a weakness. As reported in [A Housing Vision for the Berkshires](#), "with the exception of affluent households, the current supply of decent housing available is inadequate; this is true for low, low-to moderate, and modest-income households." The report finds Berkshire County's current **housing stock outdated**, while noting that building new housing is expensive and time-consuming. New housing sites are also hard to find due to logistical challenges (e.g., unavailability of public water and sewer) as well as not-in-my-backyard (NIMBY) resistance when the word "affordable" is attached. Berkshire County's for-profit and nonprofit developers argue that state

and federal housing programs are rarely suitable for the types of housing the region needs, making it harder to secure capital for scalable projects. Summaries of two housing related surveys – Recent Movers and Second Homeowners – can be found in Appendix D.

### Food Processing and Storage

Lack of a regional facility to refrigerate or freeze, store, and process locally produced food, including meat for slaughter, reduces local farmers' ability to sell goods locally or export goods outside the region. This diminishes the county's gross regional product in Agriculture and threatens individual farmers' profitability and sustainability.

### Emergency Preparedness

The county's recently released [BCBOHA After-Action Report/Improvement Plan](#) evaluating the region's COVID-19 response identified weaknesses in **emergency response protocols** that must be addressed before the next public health shock. Among issues cited were lack of training for leaders

and responders around Incident Command Structures and outdated and ignored Emergency and Pandemic plans.

### Education

The region's safe, rural character has attracted more older residents than young families, leading to consolidation of school districts and difficulty attracting teachers. Inconsistent broadband tested schools' ability to pivot to remote learning during the pandemic. A renewed emphasis on vocational training is forthcoming but has not yet focused sufficiently on training youth for high-paying jobs in Industry 4.0 that do not require college degrees.

### ECONOMY

#### Workforce

A lack of workers for open positions within priority industries has been cited by many regional leaders as a serious weakness. Some cite lack of affordable housing as contributing to difficulties keeping existing and attracting new workers. Others note



Grand Opening of The Adams Incubator

*photo credit: Eammon Coughlin, Town of Adams*

the need for more diverse food and entertainment amenities to ensure a healthy inflow of young people and families to replace retiring workers. The impending exit of experienced government and private sector workers threatens a loss of institutional knowledge without a talent pipeline to fill the gap.

#### Access to Capital

Commercial lending is limited to a few local and regional banks and has not kept pace with entrepreneurial activity. This is particularly true for Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), women, and immigrant entrepreneurs and small business owners who may be categorized as higher credit risks without prior lender relationships. For established start-ups, geographical distance from urban centers reduces access to venture capital and connections needed to take their businesses to the next level.

#### Infrastructure

[Decades of underfunding](#) have left towns with shrinking tax bases and little to no commercial activity responsible for costly public land and infrastructure maintenance and upkeep. Recent recognition by the State Auditor's Office of the burden borne by rural regions like the Berkshires for stewarding public land ([Rural Rescue Plan](#); [PILOT Program](#)) suggests solutions are being considered, but whether they are implemented in time to address urgent repairs is uncertain.

#### Transportation

For many low-income, immigrant, youth, senior, and disabled residents, regional buses are a primary means of transportation. Long waits between buses

and limited hours and routes, however, reduce their utility, especially for workers in priority industries such as Hospitality, Health Care & Social Assistance, and Arts and Entertainment, where in-person work on weekends and evenings is typical.

#### Broadband/Cellular

High-speed internet and cellphone service are essential both to emergency responsiveness and daily life in a 21<sup>st</sup> century economy. While many small towns in the region established municipal fiber optic - and now report speeds that rival many cities - more heavily populated areas, including Pittsfield and North Adams, rely on cable-based service that is incompatible with participation in [Industry 4.0](#), students in remote learning situations, and small businesses conducting remote sales.

## Weaknesses

- Broadband/Cellular
- Health Rankings
- Insufficient Housing
- Low Wage Levels
- Limited Access to Capital
- Public Transportation
- Regional Disconnect

## Opportunities

*Opportunities can improve upon or positively shift regional dynamics. Opportunities also help stakeholders rally around early-stage projects or leverage emerging trends to accelerate beneficial economic outcomes.*

### PEOPLE

#### In-Migration and Tourism

[United States Postal Service data](#) showed a more than doubling of people moving to the region during the pandemic. While some moves were temporary, an opportunity exists to encourage relocators to stay in the region permanently. With **worker and employer interest in remote and hybrid work rising**, the region's economic development stakeholders have ramped up marketing to attract new visitors, residents, and businesses. In 2021, 1Berkshire, the region's state-designated economic development organization, reported positive results from such

efforts, with [visitors trending younger \(between the ages of 25 and 45\) and coming from farther away \(e.g., Philadelphia and Washington, D.C.\)](#). 1Berkshire also discovered that the leading reason people reported for coming to the Berkshires was **outdoor recreation**, [a recently identified economic lever](#) the region is now more actively promoting.

### COMMUNITY

#### BIPOC and Immigrant Representation

After years of advocacy by BIPOC and immigrant leaders, recognition of their contribution to the region's civic and business vibrancy is at a critical turning point. Newly formed organizations such as [Berkshire Black Economic Council](#), [Blackshires](#), and [Latinas413](#) are leading the way toward greater diversity, equity, inclusion, access, and belonging in a region long known for racial and ethnic homogeneity. The work being done by these and



Mentor Program Celebration

Photo credit: Latinas 413



other organizations (e.g., [Multicultural BRIDGE](#)) to move the needle on DEIA-B acknowledges that dismantling barriers benefits not only people of color but the whole region.

### Public Education

A project in southern Berkshire County to combine school districts to achieve educational advantages and budgetary efficiencies could become a bellwether for other rural school districts. The proposed consolidation would expand programming for high-school students and create up to eight [Career Vocational Technical Education \(CVTE\) Programs](#) that would be a boon to local businesses seeking a skilled workforce while increasing youth readiness for in-demand careers in construction, advanced manufacturing, and healthcare, among others.

## ECONOMY

### Entrepreneurship

A rise in [new business formation](#) before the pandemic suggested a possible turning point for the region around economic expansion. When contraction brought on by the pandemic halted that movement, the region's economic organizations (SBDC, LEVER, EforAll, 1Berkshire, CDCSB, PERC, BIC, and MassHire) rallied to support these entrepreneurs by deepening their collaborations. A rise in pitch competitions, networking events, and hands-on training, including for minority-, women-, LGBTQ-, and veteran-owned businesses to achieve state and federal certifications are a few of the ways their efforts are bearing fruit. More broadly, the pandemic gave rise to **improved coordination among economic development practitioners** and sub-regional organizations to reduce redundancies that hampered small business growth.

### Industry Diversification

Berkshire County is home to 33 **advanced manufacturing** companies making primarily material goods (e.g., plastics, rubber, fabricated metal, paper). Attracting more companies engaged in

Industry 4.0 (e.g., robotics, 3D printing, cybersecurity) could future-proof the sector and change the outmoded image young people have of manufacturing as dirty and labor intensive. The underutilized **former Berkshire Mall property** offers an opportunity to expand in this or other fields that would allow for increased industry diversification.

Opportunities are also emerging in **clean energy**, where [Massachusetts ranks in the top five in six job categories](#): solar (#2), energy storage (#4), overall renewable energy (#4), bio energy/combined heat and power (#5), and low-impact hydropower (#5). Berkshire County already exceeds neighboring counties in jobs per 1,000 residents (15-20), but in an industry that employs nearly 3,000 regionally, access to training so that even more people can reskill for these occupations is critical.

The **cannabis sector** could further its reach in the county even as neighboring states enter the medical and recreational markets through legalization. Recent data from the [Commonwealth's Cannabis Control Commission](#) found 62 licenses in Berkshire County: six under Provisional Consideration, 28 Provisional, and 28 Final.

Like Outdoor Recreation, **Agritourism** has [untapped potential](#) for the regional economy. USDA research indicates that recreational and educational activities, such as tours of working farms or "pick-your-own" experiences, help revitalize rural economies, educate the public about agriculture, preserve agricultural heritage, and provide labor opportunities for residents. USDA also notes that farm agritourism revenue more than tripled between 2002 and 2017 from \$704 million in 2012 to almost \$950 million in 2017. ERS researchers found being near natural amenities or outdoor activities was associated with higher agritourism revenue, something Berkshire County readily offers. Separately, the Agriculture industry regionally is exploring diversifying into new crops and adding processing facilities to create value-add products that could attract younger farmers and farm jobs.

### Workforce

Berkshire County companies and organizations are well poised to train workers in industries with high growth potential, among them **Health Care and Social Assistance** and **Arts and Entertainment**. In Health Care, Berkshire Community College's [non-credit Community Health Worker Program](#) was the first in the state approved to educate public health workers to serve as advocates and liaisons between traditionally underserved patients and health and social service providers. In Arts and Entertainment, the proposed [BFMC+](#) Film and Education Center could draw people seeking skills in creative occupations including editing, cinematography, and art design. Many future positions will be within non-profit organizations, which employ 1 in 4 people in Berkshire County. Supporting increased wages and expanded benefits at these non-profit institutions will help to retain population and attract new residents to the region.

The region's airports also present an under-utilized opportunity as a launching pad for jobs in the airline industry, which is losing workers and [wants to diversify its workforce by recruiting more women and BIPOC pilots](#).

In the Information sector, the recently launched [Berkshires Can Code](#) aims to build a vibrant tech talent pool while expanding digital equity. Supported by regional partners (Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, Berkshire Innovation Center, 1Berkshire), the program is reskilling and upskilling adults for tech careers while assisting employers identify software coders, developers, and engineers.

Further expanding youth internships and apprenticeships (e.g., [MassHire's YouthWorks Program](#), [Lever's Berkshire Interns](#), [1Berkshire's](#)

[Youth Leadership Program](#)) to expose young people to career paths earlier in life is another opportunity around which regional stakeholders can invest.

### Transportation

A promising summer 2022 [Berkshire Flyer](#) train pilot, as well as expanding intra-regional transportation modalities ([BRTA capacity](#); [county-wide bike paths](#); [electric vehicle-charging stations](#); [micro-transit](#)) suggest an opportunity to diversify and strengthen the region's transportation landscape. With support from state and federal government, these projects can strengthen connections between urban and rural centers and, in parallel, people to knowledge and jobs.

## Opportunities

- Entrepreneurship
- Future-Proof Job Training
- Increased Coordination
- In-Migration
- Increased Diversity and BIPOC/Immigrant Representation
- Outdoor Recreation
- Remote Work
- Tourism

## Threats

*Threats are conditions that engender negative regional outcomes or accelerate regional decline. Threats tend to be external in nature.*

### PEOPLE

#### Population Decline

The 2020 U.S. Census indicates a Berkshire County population of 129,026. This count represents a loss of 2,193 residents since 2010, or 1.7%. Although this decline is less than the Census Bureau predicted, the continued trajectory of loss remains a concern, especially given the region's aging population. The gain or loss of population did not affect all communities equally. Many small towns saw growth in terms of overall percentage (Tyringham, 30.6%), many larger communities saw decline in the hundreds of total people (Pittsfield lost 810, North Adams lost 747, and Dalton lost 426). Despite these concerning numbers, it is notable that the U.S. Census was conducted prior to modest permanent in-migration sparked by the pandemic.

#### Health Status and Healthcare Personnel

The health of Berkshire County's residents remains a threat to the region's future, made urgent by the difficulty recruiting high-quality medical and dental professionals to the region, among them foreign-born and educated providers who are more likely to seek residence in culturally diverse cities. [The Migration Policy Institute](#) notes that while immigrants represent 17% of the overall U.S. civilian workforce, they are 28% of physicians, 24% of dentists, and 38% of home health aides. Offering higher wages and attracting more culturally diverse amenities to the region could help make it more attractive.

### COMMUNITY

#### Childcare

[A shortage of affordable and accessible childcare](#) and fewer people interested in working in the childcare profession also makes it harder for parents

who want to work to do so. The shortage is especially hard on low-income families. As of March 2022, 700 children from low-income families in the region qualified for childcare vouchers, but 223 of them were on a statewide waitlist. Berkshire County has approximately 108 childcare providers, but only 59 accept vouchers.

#### Housing

In-migration during the pandemic caused home prices to spike and made existing housing unattainable for long-time working- and middle-class residents. Farther afield, threats from venture capitalist firms and small, independent real estate investors buying up distressed properties have made it harder for everyone to find starter housing. For service-sector and retail workers, securing apartments within walking, biking, or short driving distance to the region's downtowns has become very difficult, resulting in out-migration, longer commutes, and small businesses unable to meet customer demand, made worse by the so-called Great Resignation.

The redeployment of existing housing as **short-term rentals** is a mixed opportunity and threat, depending on setting. The controversy around these housing arrangements and the passage of town bylaws to better regulate the market remains an evolving situation. Summaries of two housing surveys – Recent Movers and Second Homeowners – is found in Appendix D.

#### Education

Math and reading proficiency are key to the region having a prepared workforce. In Berkshire County, unequal school funding leads to uneven school quality, with students and young people shouldering the impact. While significant setbacks in student achievement during COVID have been reported nationally, helping rural Berkshire County students – many of whom lack access to high-speed internet – catch up academically is even more difficult. Future

employment projections for the region show contraction (.6% over the next 10 years), but occupations requiring a post-graduate degree will contract far less (.2%) than those requiring a two-year degree or certificate (.7%). Ensuring students are being educated for these more academically and technically rigorous jobs in Health Care, Information, and similar fields must start now.

### Governance

The recent redistricting of Berkshire County, which resulted in the loss of a House seat in the Massachusetts legislature, diminishes the region's ability to advocate at the state level for policy changes such as [Chapter 90](#) or funding ([PILOT](#)) needed to make regional infrastructure improvements. The changed map reflects a trending **population decline**, which signals a larger concern about issues ranging from financial solvency to institutional memory. Within municipal government, reliance on volunteers to serve in roles - from Select Boards to firefighters - puts communities at risk for burnout and turnover.

## ECONOMY

### Workforce

Jobs decreased in Berkshire County by 7,778 over the last five years and are [projected to decrease by another 2,983 over the next five](#). While the [pandemic hit the Arts and Culture sector especially hard in the short-term](#), one of the region's Priority Industries, Hospitality and Tourism, is likely to experience the greatest job loss by 2030, according to the Commonwealth's [Future of Work](#) report. Three others, Retail, Finance, and Insurance are similarly projected to experience significant declines.

As workplaces shift to **automation, e-commerce, and digitization**, the most vulnerable members of Berkshire County's workforce (women, young people, people of color, and people for whom English is a second language) will be hurt disproportionately. Many of these workers are employed in low-skill, low-paying occupations earning below the \$15.09 minimum hourly wage



Stormwater Mapping in Lanesborough

*Photo credit: Courteny Morehouse, BRPC*

needed to support a family of three, suggesting further destabilization of a portion of the population whose resiliency is already fragile. Competition from regions that pay higher wages for the same work could also hasten people leaving. More troubling is that some of the lowest compensated workers in the region are those providing essential services in Health Care and Social Assistance Education, Public Administration and Government, Accommodation and Food, and Agriculture.

### Business Environment

Despite an increasingly strong regional ecosystem supporting businesses at any stage of conception or growth, external factors such as **rapid inflation**, particularly related to fuel and food costs, and the cost of financing including **interest rates** for business loans, present significant threats to many businesses across industries in the region and across the country. Ongoing issues with supply chains also remain a concern.

The **high cost of utilities**, most notably electricity, remains a threat to the growth of our Manufacturing sector, which has its pick of regions and is inclined to locate where the cost of doing business, from taxes, regulations, and energy is low.

Inconsistent **broadband and cellular** threaten business activity and will slow brick-and-mortars' ability to make online sales. Separately, growth in e-commerce nationally and internationally could hurt the region's small and mid-size businesses as shopping moves online.

### Agriculture

The high cost of land and agricultural inputs has made it harder for the region's farmers to be profitable. On average, the net profit for a farm in Berkshire County was \$1,153 and 71% of all farms reported no profit in 2017, the year of the most recent USDA Agriculture Census. Berkshire County has the most acreage (14,086) of any Massachusetts county for dairy farms, but the county is losing farms to development at an alarming rate. Between 2001 and 2016, thousands of acres transitioned to urban and highly developed (UHD) and low-density residential (LDR) uses as documented by the [American Farmland Trust's Farms Under Threat analysis](#). Climate change further threatens local food and forests by increasing risks from drought, flood, and pests.

## Threats

- Access to Childcare
- Population Decline
- Educational Setbacks
- Future of Work Changes
- High Energy Prices
- Housing Crisis
- Loss of Farmland

# Strategic Direction

## Vision Statement

The foundation of the 2023-2027 Berkshire County CEDS is the Vision Statement, which centers itself around the People, Community, and Economy of the Berkshires:

*“Berkshire County will be sought after as an affordable, inclusive, and safe place for people of all ages and backgrounds, offering a high quality of life and abundant employment opportunities. Our community will nurture and support each other, prioritizing equitable access to education, healthcare, and housing, and protecting our environment for future generations. We will build a resilient economy grounded in the region's history of innovation and entrepreneurialism - one that values and invests in its workforce and embraces change.”*

The Vision Statement above recognizes that recovering from the pandemic and ensuring we are prepared for future shocks requires that Berkshire County re-imagine itself as a dynamic, centrally located hub where economic activity is robust, and people want to come - not only for tourism - but for long-term residency and work. The examples below illustrate how some see the county now and our **VISION for the future**:

- *Currently, we are a region with an aging population and shrinking workforce.*

Our **VISION** is to be a region that attracts people of all ages because we are safe, offer affordable housing, have great schools and high-quality healthcare, and provide easy access to amenities, namely the arts and outdoor recreation.

- *Currently, we are a relatively racially and ethnically homogenous region.*

Our **VISION** is to be a region that values the diversity of our residents and welcomes newcomers without prejudice or malice.

- *Currently, we often lose young people to employment opportunities elsewhere.*

Our **VISION** is to nurture our young people as they apply their skills and talents to starting businesses, building careers, and establishing families in our region.

- *Currently, much of our regional employment revolves around healthcare, education, and tourism.*

Our **VISION** is to train and employ people for in-demand, future-proof jobs (e.g., Industry 4.0: robotics, AI, Internet of Things, cybersecurity, digital and tech enabled economy, biomanufacturing) and believe everyone, regardless of their chosen career path, deserves to earn a fair and living wage.

## Goals and Strategies

From the Vision Statement and SWOT Analysis, the Berkshire County CEDS Committee established five goals and accompanying strategies to guide future regional economic development efforts. These goals and strategies were informed by outreach to municipal boards, businesses, non-profits, educational institutions, and community members through surveys, focus groups, and interviews. The resulting Action Plan represents a roadmap for growth and stability that builds on the region's unique assets and abilities and supports key industries and emerging entrepreneurial innovators to generate intra-regional and export-oriented economic activity, particularly in underutilized or economically distressed areas.

### Goal #1: Healthy People

*Foster the wellbeing of all residents by ensuring affordable, equitable access to food, housing, education, and healthcare.*

- Prioritize diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in programming and initiatives
- Improve public education from early education to high school to ensure college and career readiness
- Increase access to affordable, high-quality physical and mental healthcare
- Encourage walkable/bikeable communities and commercial districts
- Raise the wages of Asset-Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE) residents
- Explore collaborations among school districts to increase access to curriculum and extracurriculars



Photo credit: Volunteers in Medicine, Sarah Kenyon



Photo credit: Roots Rising

## Goal #2: Resilient Communities

*Equip our communities to serve their constituents, steward resources, and manage governance effectively.*

- Assess and support municipalities' community and climate change resiliency
- Help communities identify and secure new sources of funding
- Connect municipal leadership with training opportunities
- Nurture emerging volunteer leaders for boards and committees
- Encourage shared services for efficiency and cost savings
- Facilitate management of physical assets and natural resources
- Increase use of technology to reach and serve community members



Climate Preparedness/Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) workshop in Cheshire  
photo credit: Courteny Morehouse, BRPC



## Goal #3: Future-Ready Workforce

*Prepare our workforce through a life-span approach to education, training, up-skilling, and career versatility.*

- Increase availability of vocational training in a broader range of disciplines
- Improve participation by incumbent workers in re-skilling and up-skilling programs
- Cultivate career paths in occupations with strong projected growth
- Support wrap-around services to ensure full participation in the workforce
- Continue to access accumulated expertise of retiring workforce
- Seek creative ways to combine seasonal/part-time positions
- Support and expand remote and hybrid work



*Photo credit: Ryan Cowdrey, Clayson Creative*



*Photo credit: MassHire Berkshire*



*Photo credit: MassHire Berkshire*



*Photo credit: MassHire Berkshire*

## Goal #4: Strong Business Environment

*Provide a streamlined ecosystem of support for a diverse range of businesses through access to capital, technical assistance, and opportunities for expansion.*

- Maintain collaborative efforts among economic development practitioners in and around the region
- Continue technical assistance programs aimed at small- and medium-sized businesses
- Embed diversity, equity, inclusion, access, and belonging in business support programming
- Encourage certification for Women- and BIPOC-owned businesses to improve supplier diversity
- Explore cooperative ownership models for existing and emerging businesses
- Facilitate digitization of business models – online retail, e-communications, etc.
- Expand access to research and development facilities, guidance, and funding
- Support industry diversification, focusing on promising growth and export-oriented industries



*Photo credit: Ryan Cowdrey, Clayson Creative*



*Photo credit: Electro Magnetic Applications*

## Goal #5: Robust Infrastructure

Prioritize improvements to critical elements of economic prosperity, including communications, transportation, and utilities.

- Expand access to high-speed broadband to close the digital divide
- Facilitate redevelopment of underutilized properties, including downtown commercial districts
- Pursue increased passenger rail access to and from the region
- Increase regional transit and micro-transit options
- Improve cellular service to ensure emergency preparedness and response
- Ensure roads, bridges, and culverts are safe and maintained in a good state of repair
- Guarantee access to clean water and maintain high standards in water treatment facilities



*Photo credit: Nicholas Russo, BRPC*



*Photo credit: Eammon Coughlin, Town of Adams*



*Photo credit: Nicholas Russo, BRPC*



*Photo credit: Pittsfield Municipal Airport*

## Action Plan

The Action Plan puts specific and measurable targets to CEDS Goals. Action Plan items, by their nature, require participation by the public sector (government), private sector (business), and nonprofits, each separately and jointly contributing expertise to achieving objectives within the 2023-2027 timeframe.

**Goal #1: HEALTHY PEOPLE - Foster the wellbeing of all residents by ensuring affordable, equitable access to food, water, housing, education, and healthcare.**

Objective	Potential Partners	Regional Strategy Alignment
Update and make corrections to land use and regulatory tools which limit, prohibit, or reduce the likelihood of affordable and workforce housing	Municipalities	<a href="#">A Housing Vision for the Berkshires</a> (BRPC and <a href="#">1Berkshire</a> )
Increase use of housing programs and financing tools to encourage housing rehabilitation	Municipalities, Lenders	<a href="#">A Housing Vision for the Berkshires</a> (BRPC and <a href="#">1Berkshire</a> )
Expand the Regional Housing Rehabilitation program by increasing the number of participating contractors and municipalities; increase affordable seasonal housing	BRPC	<a href="#">A Housing Vision for the Berkshires</a> (BRPC and <a href="#">1Berkshire</a> )
Increase access to cold/frozen storage and processing facilities for local farmers	Berkshire Agricultural Ventures, Berkshire Grown	<a href="#">Berkshire Blueprint 2.0</a> (1Berkshire)
Increase enrollment in food access programs such as SNAP and WIC, as well as access to affordable, fresh, locally grown food	Berkshire Agricultural Ventures, Berkshire Grown, Berkshire Health Systems, VIM	
Expand broadband access to the underserved, including public and affordable housing residents, seniors, people with disabilities, low-income residents, and English language learners	Municipalities, BRPC, private sector	
Enhance accessibility and safety of downtown commercial districts		<a href="#">2020 Regional Transportation Plan</a> (BRPC)
Access technical assistance and training to improve and update approaches to safe, affordable, and reliable drinking water, wastewater, and solid waste disposal	Municipalities, BRPC, USDA, Rural Community Assistance Partnership,	

*Goal #2: RESILIENT COMMUNITIES - Equip our communities to serve their constituents, steward resources, and manage governance effectively.*

Objective	Partners	Regional Strategy Alignment
Launch and sustain the <a href="#">Berkshire Funding Focus</a> initiative, which includes a focus on municipal funding opportunities	BRPC, Advisory Group	<a href="#">Sustainable Berkshires</a> (BRPC)
Explore shared services opportunities to attract and retain municipal staff	BRPC, Berkshire Municipal Managers Association, Municipalities	<a href="#">Sustainable Berkshires</a> (BRPC)
Connect municipal leadership and staff to quality training opportunities	Municipalities, BRPC, OIG	
Complete FEMA’s Resilience Analysis and Planning Tool (RAPT) to establish baselines by municipality	Municipalities	Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness and Hazard Mitigation plans
Advocate for increased Chapter 90 funding	Municipalities, BRPC, elected officials	
Increase participation in 1Berkshire’s Economic Development Practitioners group by municipal leaders	1Berkshire, BRPC, Municipalities, PERC	
Increase applications to the Commonwealth’s funding programs through Community One Stop and Community Compact, or subsequent state-level programs	Municipalities, BRPC	
Improve capacity of municipal leaders to apply for and manage grant funds	BRPC, Berkshire Funding Focus	
Explore consolidation of public safety answering points and regional dispatch to provide regional 911 dispatching services	PSAPs, Municipalities, Berkshire County Sheriff’s Office	
Invest in vibrant, safe, and walkable downtown commercial districts with a focus on vacant storefronts and facades	1Berkshire, local Chambers of Commerce, Municipalities, BRPC	
Increase use of revamped <a href="#">Berkshire Benchmarks</a> data clearinghouse and indicators to develop strong funding applications	BRPC, Berkshire Leadership Impact Council, municipalities and non-profits	<a href="#">Sustainable Berkshires</a> (BRPC)

*Goal #3: FUTURE READY WORKFORCE - Prepare our workforce through a life-span approach to education, training, up-skilling, and career versatility.*

Objective	Partners	Regional Strategy Alignment
Increase educational programs at all grade levels in STEM disciplines	Berkshire Compact, MassHire, school systems	<a href="#">Workforce Blueprint</a> (MassHire Berkshires)
Connect more students with internships and career exploration opportunities	MassHire, LEVER, 1Berkshire, private sector	<a href="#">Workforce Blueprint</a> (MassHire Berkshires)
Launch and expand the Manufacturing Academy at Berkshire Innovation Center	Berkshire Innovation Center, MIT, private sector	<a href="#">Berkshire Blueprint 2.0</a> (1Berkshire)
Increase availability and range of vocational training regionwide through CTI, develop new training to support Individual Training Accounts (CDL,CNA, etc.)	School Districts, BCC, Mildred Elley, MCLA, MassHire	<a href="#">Berkshire Blueprint 2.0</a> (1Berkshire); <a href="#">Workforce Blueprint</a> (MassHire Berkshires)
Cultivate career paths in occupations with projected growth	MassHire, School Districts, BCC, MCLA, Williams College, others	<a href="#">Berkshire Blueprint 2.0</a> (1Berkshire); <a href="#">Workforce Blueprint</a> (MassHire Berkshires); <a href="#">Commonwealth's Future of Work Report</a>
Advance goals of the <a href="#">Tech Impact Collaborative</a> to support and grow tech-enabled workforce, launching a missing-middle accelerator to support a continuity of care for tech and tech-enabled startups, build mentor and investment networks, and grow and inclusive and resilient digital economy ecosystem	1Berkshire, Berkshire Innovation Center, OLLI	<a href="#">Berkshire Blueprint 2.0</a> (1Berkshire)
Develop collaborative efforts between area high schools and colleges and public safety agencies to teach and recruit for public safety careers	Public Safety entities in all municipalities, public school systems, BCC, MCLA, Williams College	
Expand reach of 1Berkshire's The Jobs Thing to recruit new workforce	1Berkshire, private sector	<a href="#">Berkshire Blueprint 2.0</a> (1Berkshire)

*Goal #4: STRONG BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT - Provide a streamlined ecosystem of support for a diverse range of businesses through access to capital, technical assistance, and opportunities for expansion.*

Objective	Partners	Regional Strategy Alignment
Access MassCEO services to encourage individual succession plans and explore employee-owned models	1Berkshire, MSBDC, BBPW, Chambers of Commerce	
Expand collaboration among regional economic development practitioners to offer technical assistance to businesses	1Berkshire, MSBDC, PERC, Chambers, BBEC, Blackshires, Municipalities	<a href="#">Berkshire Blueprint 2.0</a> (1Berkshire)
Improve new-business onboarding coordination in the region through collaborative and comprehensive services	1Berkshire, PEDDA, PERC, local Chambers and business associations, municipalities	<a href="#">Berkshire Blueprint 2.0</a> (1Berkshire)
Establish and grow business incubator programs and facilities	Berkshire Innovation Center, BAMTEC, BBEC, Blackshires	<a href="#">Berkshire Blueprint 2.0</a> (1Berkshire)
Expand access to capital for small businesses and entrepreneurs	PERC, Local lenders, especially CDFIs (GFCU, Common Capital)	
Increase participation in and awareness of 1Berkshire Entrepreneurial Meetups, etc.	1Berkshire, MSBDC, PERC, BBEC, Blackshires, BBPW	
Facilitate expansion of emerging industry clusters in the region	1Berkshire, PEDDA, PERC, MassHire	<a href="#">Berkshire Blueprint 2.0</a> (1Berkshire); <a href="#">Workforce Blueprint</a> (MassHire)
Provide ongoing training to businesses and nonprofits regarding increased resilience to economic shocks and disruptions	1Berkshire, Nonprofit Center of the Berkshires, BRPC, MSBDC, PERC	
Encourage certification for Women- and Minority-owned businesses to improve supplier diversity	1Berkshire, BBEC, BBPW, MSBDC, PERC	
Use <a href="#">MA Vacant Storefronts District Program</a> to designate certified districts, offering EDIP tax credits to tenants	Municipalities, local Chambers of Commerce	
Establish a small business Revolving Loan Fund in Berkshire County	BRPC, CDFI partner(s)	

*Goal #5: ROBUST INFRASTRUCTURE - Prioritize improvements to critical elements of economic prosperity, including communications, transportation, and utilities, as well as key redevelopment sites.*

Objective	Partners	Regional Strategy Alignment
Improve conditions at sites prioritized for redevelopment through Brownfields funding and other programs	BRPC, PEDDA, MassDevelopment, Municipalities	
Prepare eligible redevelopment sites to qualify for <a href="#">ReadyMass 100</a> list	1Berkshire, BRPC, Municipalities, private sector	
Identify and facilitate eligible projects for New Market Tax Credits		
Advocate for increased rail transportation to and from the region (East-West, Berkshire Flyer)	1Berkshire, BRPC, elected officials, Municipalities, Chambers, others	<a href="#">2020 Regional Transportation Plan</a> (BRPC)
Advocate for increased funding to support more robust BRTA services, including micro-transit implementation	BRTA, BRPC, 1Berkshire, Municipalities, others	<a href="#">2020 Regional Transportation Plan</a> (BRPC)
Improve the region's electric distribution system to accommodate increased demand	Utility companies, Mass DOER, DPU	
Work with Regional Emergency Planning Committees and Emergency Management Directors to develop robust hazard mitigation and crisis response plans	BRPC, BCBOHA, BPHA, REPCs, Berkshire County Sheriff's Office, Municipalities	



# Priority Economic Development Projects in Berkshire County

The Berkshire County Priority Project list inventories regionally significant economic development proposals submitted for consideration by project proponents. Projects are selected based on their ability to help diversify, stabilize, and strengthen the region's economy. The list includes twenty new projects as well as returning projects from the 2017-2021 CEDS. To identify projects, BRPC contacted regional leaders across business, government, and charitable organizations to compile a list ensuring sub-regional and sectoral representation. These proposals represent construction-based and programmatic projects and serve as the basis for an ongoing process of identifying and tracking impactful projects over the next five years. Although extensive efforts were made to assemble a comprehensive list, some important projects may have been missed. Annual review and updates will help refine the list further. **More information on each project is included in Appendix E.**

## **Food Access & Security**

Farm to Food Access  
 Farmland Access and Conservation  
 Growing the Future Food Economy of the Berkshires  
 Shared Cold and Freezer Storage Facility

## **Housing**

Berkshire Cottages at 100 Bridge Street (Great Barrington)  
 Community Center at 20 East Street Redevelopment (Adams)  
 Union Block Redevelopment (Dalton)  
 White Terrace (Pittsfield)  
 Wright Building (Pittsfield)

## **Tourism, Hospitality & Outdoor Recreation**

79 Bridge Street Redevelopment (Great Barrington)  
 Adventure Trail Design & Engineering (North Adams)  
 Adams Theater Redevelopment (Adams)  
 Explore Northern Berks Digital Tourism Office (North Adams)  
 Greylock Glen (Adams)  
 Springside House Restoration (Pittsfield)  
 Wahconah Park (Pittsfield)

## **Municipal and Public Safety Facilities**

Columbus Avenue/Summer Street Parking Garage (Pittsfield)  
 Harriman & West Airport (North Adams)  
 Hoosic River Flood Control Modernization (North Adams)  
 North Adams Public Safety Complex (North Adams)  
 Pittsfield Police Station (Pittsfield)  
 Williamstown Fire Station (Williamstown)

**Programs & Services**

Berkshire Family YMCA (Pittsfield)  
 BRPC Brownfields Program  
 VIM Berkshires Facility Expansion

**Mixed Use & Commercial Site Redevelopment**

Blackinton Infrastructure Supporting Blackinton Mill Redevelopment (North Adams)  
 Columbia Mill Redevelopment (Lee)  
 Curtis Fine Paper Redevelopment (Adams)  
 Dowlin Building Redevelopment (North Adams)  
 Eagle Mill Redevelopment (Lee)  
 Greylock Mill Redevelopment (Lee)  
 Greylock WORKS (North Adams)  
 Housatonic School Redevelopment (Housatonic)  
 Monument Mills Area Reuse (Great Barrington)  
 Waverly Mills/Spinning Mill/5-7 Hoosac Street Redevelopment (Adams)  
 Western Gateway Urban Heritage State Park (North Adams)  
 William Stanley Business Park, Site 9 (Pittsfield)

**Workforce & Industry Support**

BAMTEC, Inc., (North Adams)  
 Berkshire Black Business and Entrepreneur Center  
 Berkshire Blueprint 2.0 Implementation  
 Berkshire Compact for Education & Berkshire County STEM Pipeline  
 Berkshire Innovation Center 2.0  
 Berkshire Workforce Blueprint/Berkshire Skills Cabinet  
 BFMC+ (Lenox)  
 Connecting Activities – College & Career Readiness Programming  
 CDCSB Small Business Assistance Program  
 Digital and Tech-Enabled Economy

# Resiliency Planning

The CEDS process helps regions understand their vulnerability to shocks that disrupt economic activity and prepare to ward off the most harmful impacts. Shocks include acute, sudden, or localized events like hurricanes, cyberattacks, or major employers leaving or can be broader incidents affecting multiple regions or a nation such as COVID-19, recession, or climate change. Between 1954 and 2020, [Berkshire County experienced 25 FEMA-declared disasters](#), almost exclusively weather-related, few resulting in economic disruptions.

Predominantly rural regions like Berkshire County, including those with cities at their core, are generally more vulnerable to shocks than large metropolitan regions because of their smaller populations, less diverse mix of industries, and greater distance from emergency services. Given that increased risk, these regions must become resilient by developing or strengthening their ability to prevent, withstand, and quickly recover from economic disruptions.

Regions can use two strategies to increase economic resiliency: **steady-state** and **responsive**:

**Steady-state** strategies bolster resilience through long-term goal setting, including:

- increasing the range and diversity of a region's industry mix,
- regularly tracking and measuring a region's economic activity and health, and
- improving and/or expanding programs that attract and retain regional businesses.

**Responsive** strategies address how communities, businesses, and residents communicate and coordinate with one another before, during, and aftershocks, such as by:

- strengthening relationships among local, regional, state, and federal officials so that priorities are understood in advance,
- building or updating websites where emergency information and resources are shared, and,
- engaging in pre-disaster recovery planning so stakeholders agree about their respective responsibilities during crises.

Berkshire County's [previous CEDS](#) identified three goals for enhancing regional resiliency:

- strengthen and diversify the regional and local economy,
- assist businesses persevere through times of economic disruptions,
- develop regional strategies to respond to future economic disruptions.

Among the strategies stakeholders agreed to pursue were:

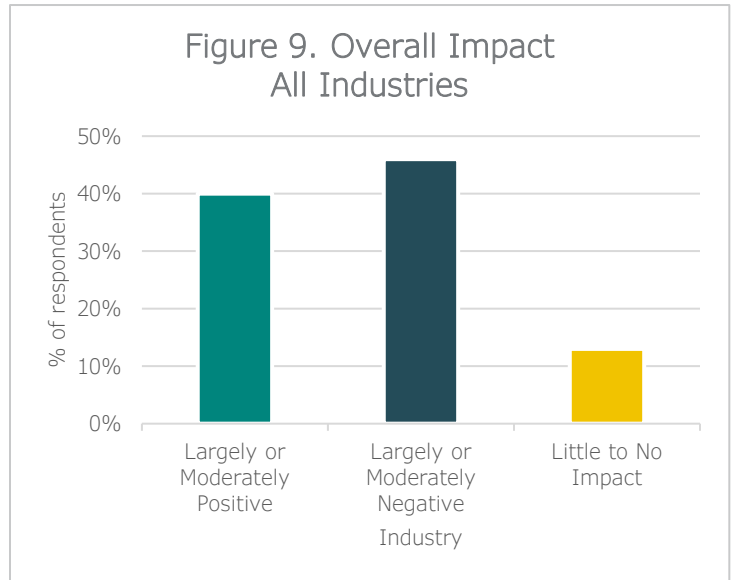
- developing and regularly assessing measures of economic resilience (Berkshire Benchmarks),
- providing training to businesses about withstanding natural disasters and economic downturns,
- engaging the private sector in hazard mitigation and disaster response and recovery planning.

Although work had begun on these steady-state strategies before COVID-19, the pandemic quickened the pace of activity, while forcing stakeholders to shift focus from steady state to responsive activities, primarily by helping small businesses and entrepreneurs (1Berkshire, EforAll, Lever, chambers of commerce, CDC of South Berkshire, PERC, among others) and implementing county-wide disaster continuity plans. As a result of this coordinated response, the 2023-2027 CEDS, and the resiliency chapter specifically, are deeply grounded in real-world knowledge and experience.

### Business/Nonprofit Survey Results

To understand how COVID-19 impacted Berkshire County’s businesses and nonprofits, BRPC issued a survey to 100 regional leaders, focused on those representing priority industries. Sixty-five respondents completed the survey and 23 participated in follow-up interviews. Respondents represented a broad range of industries, but largely reflect larger establishments and employers.

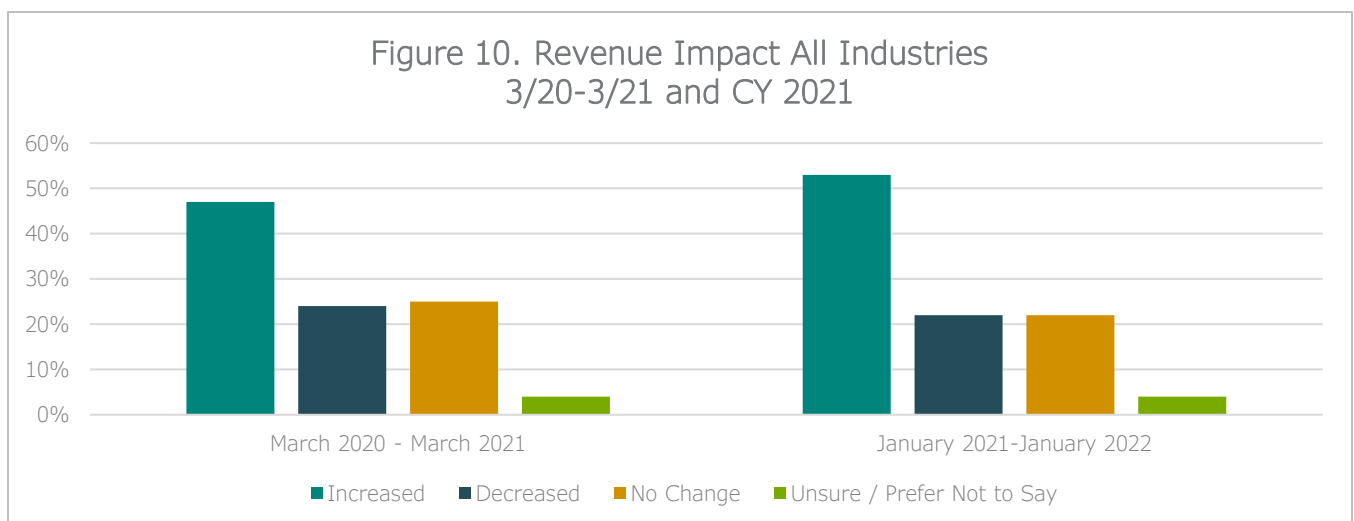
Respondents were evenly divided about the pandemic’s overall impact on their businesses, with 46% rating it as positive and 40% as negative (See Figure 9). Agriculture respondents were most likely to view COVID’s impacts as positive, while Accommodation and Healthcare respondents were most likely to view impacts as negative.



Source: Berkshire Business & Organization Economic Resilience Survey

### Revenue

Many respondents reported positive revenue impacts through the first and second years of the pandemic. Finance and Insurance and Manufacturing saw the greatest revenue increases both years. Accommodation

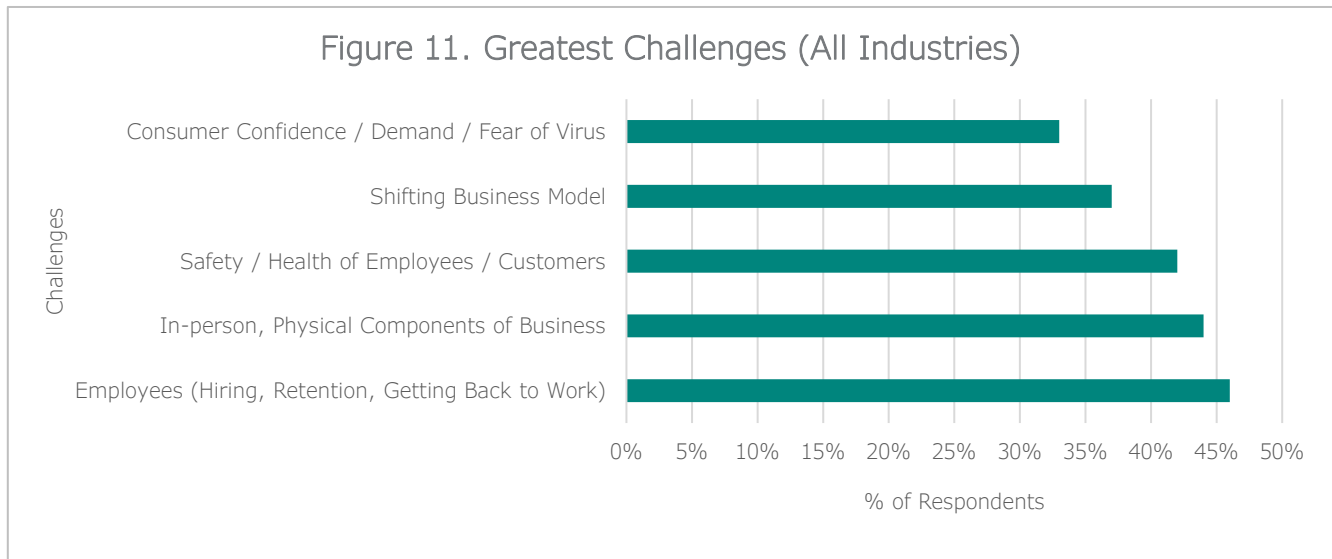


Source: Berkshire Business & Organization Economic Resilience Survey

and Education reported the greatest revenue declines in Year 1, while Accommodation and Food Service had the strongest rebound in Year 2, followed by Agriculture and Healthcare and Social Assistance.

**Challenges**

Survey respondents were asked to identify the greatest challenges they faced during the pandemic from a list of 13 items. Among priority industries, Healthcare and Social Assistance experienced the widest range of challenges (13) followed by Arts, Entertainment and Recreation (10), and Accommodation and Food Service (9). The top five challenges across all industries are shown in the chart below.

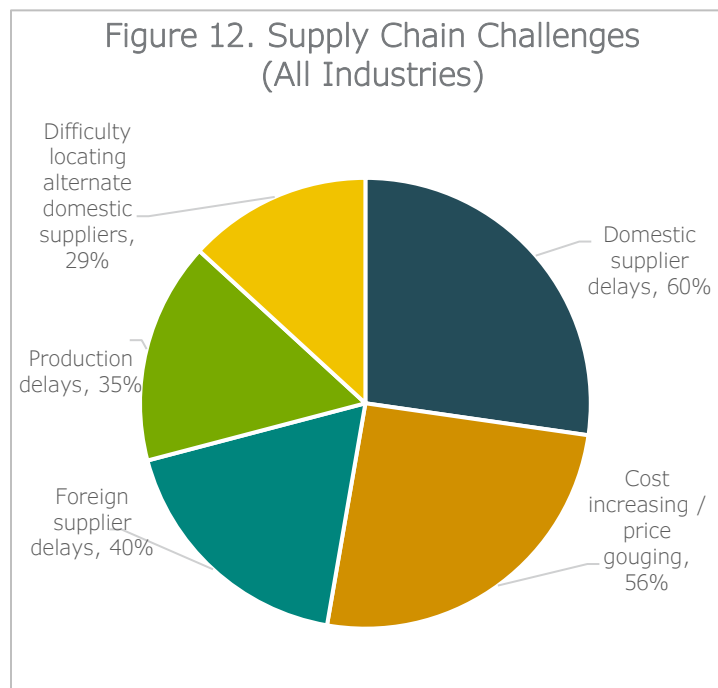


Source: Berkshire Business & Organization Economic Resilience Survey

**Supply Chain and Workforce Issues**

Supply chain issues arose across all industries. Among priority industries, delays hurt Accommodation and Food Service and Manufacturing most. Figure 12 details the specifics of supply chain challenges faced.

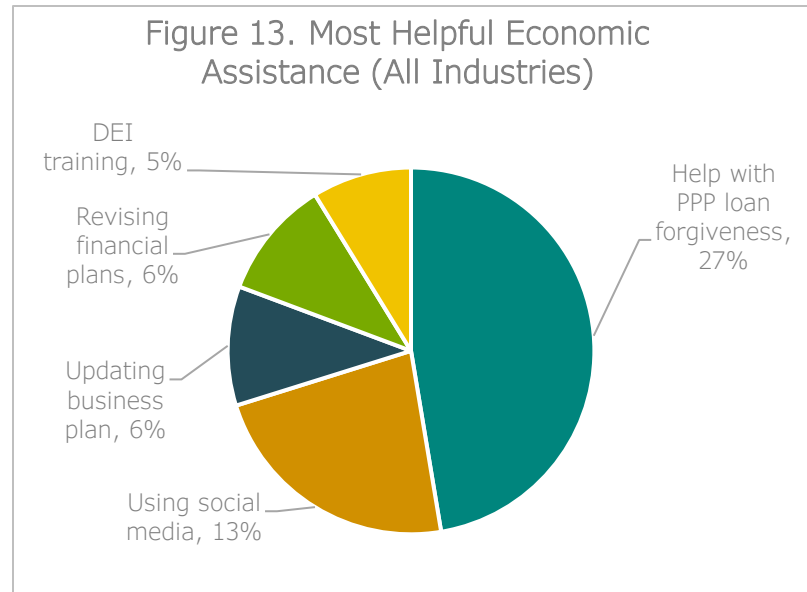
In the area of workforce, across all respondents, 53% had to hire new employees because of the pandemic, 22% had to furlough workers, and 15% had to let workers go. Among the region’s priority industries, rates of furloughing, layoffs, and re-hiring were highest in Accommodation and Food Service followed by Educational Services. Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation reported the highest rates of furloughing. The Information sector had high rates of layoffs but did not report subsequent re-hiring.



Source: Berkshire Business & Organization Economic Resilience Survey

### Technical Assistance

Respondents consulted various agencies for support during the pandemic. Among the most used were Boards of Health, local banks or lenders, the Department of Unemployment Assistance, local Small Business Administration (SBA) liaisons, and 1Berkshire. The top two forms of assistance primary industry representatives found most helpful were securing PPP loan forgiveness, and assistance with the use of social media. A smaller number also benefitted from help revising financial plans and accessing low-interest loans. Figure 13 shows the most helpful assistance across all industries.



Source: Berkshire Business & Organization Economic Resilience Survey

### Current Conditions

As of August 2022, 62% of survey respondents reported demand for their services having returned to pre-pandemic levels; among priority industries that rate was 58%. Agriculture, Healthcare, Information, and Manufacturing saw the largest increase in demand. Moderate to large price increases across nearly every industry, however, could reduce profitability for these sectors in the near term.

### Resiliency and Continuity Planning

Anticipating future shocks is critical to business resiliency. To that end, many priority industry respondents adopted or expanded their use of digital technologies (apps, websites, social media) during the pandemic. However, only about half had drafted business continuity plans pre-pandemic. Manufacturing and Finance and Insurance had engaged in the most continuity planning (100%), while Accommodation, Agriculture, and Arts were least prepared. Finance and Insurance and Manufacturing also had the highest rate of sharing their continuity plans with employees (100%) followed by Healthcare (67%). Many other priority industry representatives had not shared their continuity plans with employees or were unsure if they had.

### Resiliency Interviews

In follow-up interviews, 23 respondents provided more detail about their pandemic experiences. Common themes included:

**Workforce:** Difficulty finding workers, concerns about the quality of the workforce, and needing to pay higher wages to recruit and retain talent.

**Housing:** A shortage of locally available, affordable housing for workers, leading to longer commutes, difficulty recruiting, worker shortages, and reduced business hours.

**Supply Chain:** Delays in finding crucial components resulting in bulk buying, despite uncertain cash flow and lack of storage.

**Population:** [Declining population](#) as well as pressure from newly arrived “urban pandemic refugees,” resulting in a bifurcated landscape in which those with means and those without grow while the middle- and working-class shrink.

## Multifaceted Regional Resilience

Although EDA’s focus is primarily economic resilience, practitioners increasingly recognize the need to address resilience in terms of people and communities, too. Proposed by rural policy analyst Brian Dabson, the People-Communities-Economy framework encourages regions to “take a fresh look at economic development starting with rural well-being.” This advice is echoed by The Aspen Institute’s [Thrive Rural Framework](#), which aims to move regions toward producing more “widespread and equitable rural prosperity, health, and well-being.” FEMA also advocates a [Whole Community Approach](#), in which [stakeholders] work collectively to understand and assess the needs of their communities and determine the best ways to organize and strengthen their assets, capacities, and interests. These three perspectives emphasize that economic resilience is less of a static condition and more of an interconnected web in which well-resourced and supported people contribute to strong and stable communities which, in turn, foster sustainable and healthy economies able to prevent, withstand, and quickly recover from shocks.

## People

How residents of a region respond when faced with natural and non-natural shocks can vary widely based on social and demographic factors: young people may be more physically able to handle a shock than older people and those with financial resources can likely withstand periods of instability more easily than people who are poor. Berkshire County’s residents overall have improved their resilience since the last CEDS in the following ways:

### Increase in...

- population age 16 to 24
- stabilization of 25- to 44-year-old population
- number of adults 25 and over with a bachelor’s degree or higher
- higher median household income
- households earning more than \$75,000 annually

### Decrease in...

- share of residents living in poverty
- percentage of residents unemployed
- percentage of rent-burdened households

Not all Berkshire County residents meet these criteria. The table below indicates health and mental health challenges that may impede resilience for some Berkshire County residents and compromise their ability to prevent or manage shocks. Scores below are at least two percentage points higher within Berkshire County than for the Commonwealth and are thus cause for concern for both the at-risk individuals and the community at large.

**Table 7. Critical Health and Mental Health Resiliency Challenges: People**

Health / Mental Health Challenges	Berkshire County	Massachusetts	% Difference
Heart Disease: Annual Death Rate per 100K	291.1	254.4	13.45%
Cancer: Annual Death Rate per 100K	152.9	146.9	4%

Opioid-Related Overdose: Death Rate per 100K	48.1	32.6	38.41%
Suicides per 100K	17.4	10	54%
Adult Obesity	27%	25%	2%
Excessive Drinking	26%	24%	2%
Adult Smoking Prevalence: <i>*2nd highest in MA</i>	19%	14%	5%
Diabetes Prevalence: <i>*2nd highest in MA</i>	10.70%	8.40%	2.3%

Sources: [Berkshire Health System's 2021 Community Health Needs Assessment](#); [www.mass.gov/doc/opioid-related-overdose-deaths-by-city-town-november-2021/download/](http://www.mass.gov/doc/opioid-related-overdose-deaths-by-city-town-november-2021/download/)

For many of the region’s Black residents, resilience is further [undermined by generations of systemic racism](#) leading to disparities in household income, poverty, educational attainment, and homeownership, and years of [potential life lost](#) as compared to their White peers. Similar challenges face the region’s immigrants, a population Berkshire Immigrant Center estimates at more than 10,000. For these residents, learning a new language, securing affordable housing, finding employment, and addressing workplace safety represent resiliency stressors.

Race and ethnicity notwithstanding, a higher percentage of Berkshire County residents self-reported resiliency challenges during the pandemic according to the Commonwealth’s [COVID-19 Community Impact Survey \(CCIS\)](#). Central and Northern Berkshire County respondents reported the most concerns regarding paying for general expenses (53.2%; 42.7%); mortgage, rent, or utilities (38.7%; 33.3%); and food and groceries (27.4%; 26%). Berkshire County overall scored second highest for respondents working outside the home during the lockdown (64%).

**Table 8: COVID-19 Community Impact Survey Self-Reported Resiliency Risks**

CCIS Question	Berkshire County % responding "Yes"	Ranking* Among 14 counties
Are you worried about paying at least one expense/bill in the next few weeks?	48%	2nd
Are you worried about paying your mortgage, rent, or utilities in the next few weeks?	38%	2nd
Are you worried about getting food/groceries for you/your family now or in the next couple of weeks?	28%	3rd
Are you worried about getting internet access?	19%	1st
Are you worried about getting medications for you/your family now or in the next couple of weeks?	15%	3rd

Source: [State's COVID-19 Community Impact Survey \(CCIS\)](#). \*Higher ranking indicates more residents with concerns



**Food Insecurity**

Another determinant of resilience during shocks is people’s ability to secure food. Prior to the pandemic, [Be Well Berkshires/Mass in Motion](#), as part of a two-year [Community Food Assessment \(CFA\)](#), found 12% of the region’s adults and nearly the same percent of children (12.3%)-- regularly struggled to have enough food.. [The pandemic exacerbated this problem](#), increasing the food insecurity rate among adults to 13.9% and to 19.7% for children. Currently 7,843 Berkshire County households access SNAP, while another 29% who are food insecure cannot receive the benefit because they earn too much. Another 3% are income-eligible, but either do not know the program exists or do not realize they qualify. Berkshire County currently has 18 food pantries, eight brown bag programs, six hot meal sites, a mobile food pantry that visits 10 sites, and another mobile pantry that visits three.



Day of Caring, hosted by LP Adams Co., Inc in Dalton  
photo credit: Berkshire United Way

**Community**

How exposed and prepared Berkshire County is at the community-level to manage natural disasters and man-made shocks is another key resiliency indicator. Community resilience encompasses:

- municipal government
- regional emergency preparedness and public health
- public lands and environment
- public infrastructure and buildings
- public utilities and broadband
- public and private major transportation
- public housing
- public education

Many tools are available to measure a community’s risk to shock and its resilience to the same. FEMA’s [Resilience Analysis and Planning Tool](#) rates Berkshire County at **Relatively Low Risk** for natural hazards while the [Baseline Resilience Indicators for Communities Index](#) (BRIC) finds Berkshire County to have **Medium High Resilience** as compared to the nation in terms of its ability to prevent, withstand, and quickly recover.

**Table 9: BRIC Rankings for Berkshire County**

Location	Social	Economic	Housing/ Infrastructure	Community Capital	Institutional	Environment	Total
Berkshire County	0.73	0.46	0.32	0.37	0.42	0.62	2.92
National Median	0.67	0.46	0.26	0.37	0.40	0.58	2.73

Source: [www.sc.edu/study/colleges\\_schools/artsandsciences/centers\\_and\\_institutes/hvri/data\\_and\\_resources/bric/index.php](http://www.sc.edu/study/colleges_schools/artsandsciences/centers_and_institutes/hvri/data_and_resources/bric/index.php)

Since the onset of COVID-19, Berkshire Regional Planning Commission has assisted communities in assessing and strengthening their resilience, primarily by supporting their public health response (Read the full scope of BRPC’s COVID-related recovery and resiliency activities [here](#)).

Among the services BRPC continues offering communities are:

- Recovery & Resilience e-newsletters providing towns with funding leads, best practice resources, links to trainings and technical assistance, and announcements about tools such as Berkshire Benchmarks,
- coordinating with the Massachusetts’ Office of the Inspector General to cover costs for municipal staff to take [Massachusetts Certified Public Purchasing Official \(MCPPO\) trainings](#), a critical part of capacity-building many towns could not otherwise afford,
- developing a Municipal Needs Assessment to catalog physical infrastructure challenges and understand their scale and breadth so leaders can seek funding and aggregate applications,
- establishing the Berkshire Funding Focus (BFF) initiative, which includes an online clearinghouse to deliver capacity-building support to four core audiences, among them municipalities and school districts, to identify, vet, apply for, and manage state and federal grants,
- creating an online [Planning Toolkit](#) with two-page tip sheets to assist municipal leaders in better understand planning, zoning, and related programs that may be appropriate for their communities, from Accessory Dwelling Units to adoption of Property Assessed Clean Energy.

Separately, as part of steady-state planning through the [District Local Technical Assistance \(DLTA\) Program](#), BRPC has helped draft 23 town and 14 regional plans since the last CEDS on topics ranging from improving the quality of public education (2018) to analyzing impacts from the Rest of River Housatonic PCB clean-up (2021).

**Municipal Government**

Towns with current (within the last 10 years) Master, Land Use, Open Space and Recreation, and Community Development Plans; those that regularly apply for state funding (e.g., Community One Stop); and towns participating in Massachusetts’ Community Compact [Best Practice Program](#) are better prepared, broadly speaking, for future shocks than towns that have not. The charts below list the number of towns in Berkshire County meeting these benchmarks and suggests the extent to which towns need more support.

**Table 10. Berkshire County Community Planning**

Plan Document	# of Berkshire communities	% of Berkshire communities
Master Plans 2010+	8	25%
Open Space and Recreation Plan*	14	43%
Community Preservation Act	8	25%
40R - Smart Growth Zoning	5	16%
PACE Adoption	4	13%

Source: BRPC. \*Completed or in process as of October 2022

**Table 11. Berkshire County Community Compact Grant Awards**

Communities Awarded Community Compact Grants	Year
6	2015
8	2016
2	2017
16	2018
2	2019
3	2020
<b>21</b>	2021

To identify the acute stressors confronting municipal governments during COVID, BRPC held in-depth conversations with municipal leaders in towns large and small. Among the responsive challenges they shared were the unexpected rise in housing prices that hurt existing residents and a need for more robust broadband and cellular service to help people reliably access online education, healthcare, and small business services.

Infrastructure, particularly roadway and building repairs, emerged as a steady-state resiliency concern. Leaders noted that the program that reimburses towns for managing state-owned lands within their boundaries (State-Owned Land (SOL) PILOT Program) has been underfunded for decades and failed to keep pace with maintenance needs. Finding qualified paid professional staff and volunteers for boards and committees were additional resiliency challenges, even before the pandemic. Regionalization is a potential solution to the issue, as it would reduce overhead, increase the likelihood of recruiting and retaining qualified staff at higher wages, and reduce the tax burden on homeowners in towns with few businesses. Additional resiliency challenges reported by local government leaders included:

- limited capacity to pursue state, federal, and philanthropic grants,
- lack of digitization of town records, and
- susceptibility to cyberattacks and digital intrusion.

Municipal websites offer some insight into how the latter challenges manifest. Some have intuitive navigation that make it easy for residents and businesses to quickly find what they need while others are minimally maintained and present outdated information. Well-resourced towns have professionally designed websites where information can be translated into other languages and that adhere to [best practices for Web accessibility](#). Others use colors and fonts that make them hard to read and limit their utility, especially for older residents.

### **Regional Emergency Planning and Public Health**

Berkshire County has three [Regional Emergency Planning Committees](#) (REPC) serving the Northern, Central, and Southern subregions. The committees are staffed by police, fire, emergency management, hospital, and public health responders who work together to enhance preparedness and fulfill the federal requirement that communities have local emergency planning committee procedures to deal with hazardous material ("hazmat") emergencies, meet right-to-know requirements, and encourage community awareness of disaster planning. Separately, Public Health Emergency Preparedness funding supports local Boards of

Health plans for emergencies and disasters that are public health-related, such as COVID-19. The Boards of Health are supported by the [Berkshire County Boards of Health Association \(BCBOHA\)](#), an educational organization that serves as the Berkshire Public Health Emergency Preparedness Coalition, for which BRPC serves as fiduciary. Twenty-seven of 32 municipalities also participate in Emergency Alert Systems (e.g., Code Red, 911).

BCBOHA's [2022 COVID-19 After-Action Report and Improvement Plan](#), the most comprehensive assessment of the community's response to a non-economic, public health shock, found community resilience strongest regarding:

- regular planning and exercise training,
- ability to leverage established regional structures for large-scale incidents,
- robust Emergency Response Teams in larger communities
- model regional Incident Command System, Command Structure, and Emergency Operations Centers able to be replicated in sub-regions, and
- prepared Medical Reserve Corps able to quickly onboard volunteers and distribute emergency resources.

Areas needing improvement include:

- lack of regional agreement among section chiefs about the public health-led incident command structure needed to guide an immediate, coordinated, sustained, county-wide public health emergency response,
- out-of-date or unused emergency and pandemic plans with the role of local Boards of Health unspecified or unclear,
- lack of awareness in smaller towns about how to respond to a public health emergency, with over-reliance on the State's Department of Public Health, and
- failure of state and local Boards of Health to use WebEOC, a MEMA-based system to manage resources and ensure situational awareness during public health and disaster events.

Emergency response providers will also need to prepare for the Commonwealth's [Next Generation \(NG911\) Emergency Call System](#), that will soon replace 911. In NG911, the physical location of a caller, likely provided by a cell phone, determines the answer point to which a call is routed. Inconsistent cellular coverage in Berkshire County could compromise providers' ability to respond accurately to NG911 calls, and issue that should be addressed in future REPC planning.

### **Public Lands and Environment**

[FEMA's National Risk Index \(NRI\)](#) rates Berkshire County's community resilience as Very High and its overall and annual loss risk from natural hazards Relatively Low as compared to the U.S. Natural hazards where Berkshire County's risk level rises to Relatively Moderate include Cold Wave, Ice Storms, Lightning, Tornado, Landslides, and Riverine Flooding. FEMA predicts that Riverine Flooding is likely to cause the most financial damage in the region (est. \$1,232,733), followed by Tornados (est. \$630,274). Other natural hazards that could put Berkshire County at risk, according to tracking by [the Commonwealth's climate change clearinghouse Resilient MA](#), are shown in the chart below.

Table 12. Resilient MA Natural Hazard Risks

Hazard Risks	# of Towns at Risk	% of Towns at Risk
Severe Winter Storms   Ice/Severe Storms   Nor'easters/Ice Storms/Severe Storms   Severe Weather/Storms   Severe Thunderstorms   Severe Storms   Other Severe Weather	24	75%
Inland Flooding   Flooding/Heavy Rains  Flooding   Inland Riverine Flooding   Extreme Precipitation	19	59%
Wildfires   Drought   Drought/Extreme Temperatures   Extreme Heat/Drought	11	34%
Average/Extreme Temperatures   Extreme Temperature Fluctuations   Extreme Temperature   Gradually Rising Temperatures	10	31%
High Velocity Wind   High Winds   Wind   Power Outage	4	13%

Source: <https://resilientma.mass.gov/>

Having experienced or witnessed natural disasters previously, 26 of 32 communities have secured the state's Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness designation by identifying their climate hazards, assessing their vulnerabilities, and developing action plans. Twenty-three have [FEMA-Approved Local and Regional Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plans](#) and 19 are taking a steady-state approach by cutting energy costs, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, promoting energy-efficient building home construction, and fostering renewable energy and clean energy technologies to secure the Commonwealth's [Green Communities designation](#).

But community vulnerability to climate change is measured not only in terms of the safety and security of capital assets but also in terms of the likely impact on people. FEMA rates Berkshire County's social vulnerability as Relatively Moderate, due to factors such as poverty, age, race, ethnicity, and lack of health insurance. Among the most vulnerable are residents of the region's 59 [Environmental Justice Communities](#), which includes 51,633 people in 11 towns 41% of the region's total population.

## Public Infrastructure

### *Buildings*

There are 70 public schools, 55 Department of Public Works buildings (state and local), 45 fire stations, 33 police stations, 32 town or city halls, 31 libraries, and 27 senior centers across the county that must be maintained to properly serve the community and protect against shocks. As part of steady-state resiliency planning, reconstruction and/or adaptation and repair of some of these critical facilities, including upgrades to make them ADA accessible, have been included as Priority Projects.

### *Roads and Bridges*

Roads and bridges are the backbone of Berkshire County's infrastructure, allowing for safe transport in and out of the region during disasters and efficient conveyance of materials for businesses during normal operation. [A recent Mass DOT report](#), however, found that 42 bridges (6%) across 19 towns were structurally deficient, with an average age 10 years higher than the typical 50-year lifespan. Among the general public, residents have ranked improving smaller residential streets, sidewalks, and pedestrian crossings and expanding bike paths and lanes as their chief requests. [Berkshire County's 2020 Regional Transportation](#)

[Plan](#) notes that a long-standing underfunding of the Commonwealth’s [Chapter 90 Program](#) that pays for these improvements limits municipalities’ ability to deliver on repairs.

**Culverts**

Culverts are another integral part of Berkshire County’s infrastructure network, but because most were installed using precipitation, flow, and overall storm event estimates that do not account for climate change, the bulk of culverts in Berkshire County are undersized. Moreover, many will need to be replaced to conform to the [State’s new Stream-Crossing Standards](#). With little funding available to right-size systems, many towns are at risk of flooding, an otherwise preventable outcome.



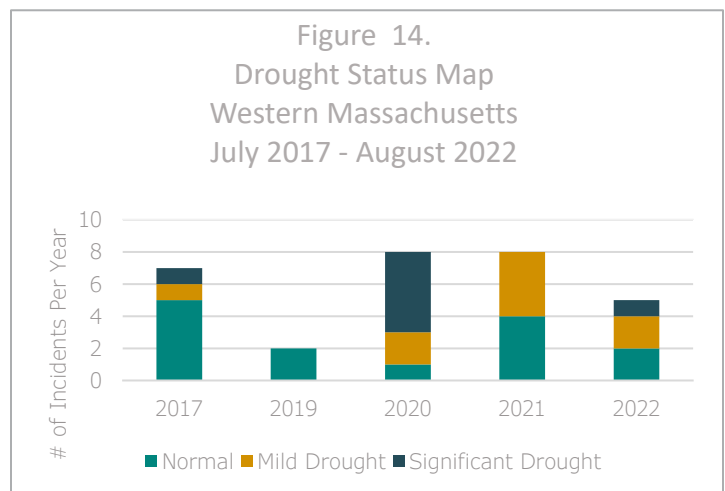
Culvert Assessment  
photo credit: Elia del Molino, Greenagers

**Stormwater and Sanitary Sewers**

Like culverts, [stormwater and sanitary sewer systems across Berkshire County](#) were designed for lower flow and less intense storms. As a result, systems sometimes contribute to flooding, even in areas outside the 100-year floodplain. These areas are not insured through the National Flood Insurance Program and thus cannot seek compensation for damages. Many communities are exploring green infrastructure solutions and requiring low-impact development in new construction to reduce the load on these systems. Five communities in Berkshire County have systems regulated under the EPA Clean Water Act’s National [Pollution Discharge and Elimination System](#) and the state’s [Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System General Permit](#). These communities have set a higher standard around reducing stormwater pollution and are thus more resilient.

**Water**

Berkshire County’s water comes from six sources across 382 sites with future water demand calculated based on state projections of Residential and Non-Residential Use. Resiliency thus means ensuring a safe, clean, and steady supply of water to support the increased population and economic activity (industrial and commercial) the region seeks to cultivate. Figure 14 documents the potential risks to Western Massachusetts’ water supply, as documented by the state’s Drought Management Task Force; the region encompasses areas beyond Berkshire County.



Source: <https://www.mass.gov/orgs/drought-management-task-force>

If drought conditions worsen, water levels in the county’s reservoirs will decline, as they did in August 2022, when conditions necessitated [restrictions in six towns](#) (Adams, Cheshire, Dalton, Hinsdale, Pittsfield, and

Williamstown). [Drought.gov](#) estimates Berkshire County’s entire population being affected by drought. Lack of rainfall also hurts the region’s farmers and increases risk of forest fires.

High levels of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a new resiliency threat identified in some of the county’s public water supplies\*. Studies by [MassDEP](#) of 12 of the region’s public water systems found three (Clarksburg, Lanesborough, and Egremont) with levels of PFAS higher than what is recommended by the state. Although PFAS can be removed with filter vessels, no Berkshire County towns have been awarded state [PFAS water treatment grants](#) to cover that expense. Likewise, no towns have received zero-interest loans through the state to construct new water treatment facilities, water mains, or wells, an issue that is receiving increased attention from BRPC and the county’s Public Health Alliance.

Finally, water resiliency means protecting municipal water infrastructure from cyberattacks, [which the state has warned remains an active threat](#). The region’s Homeland Security Councils are working to develop strategies to help rural towns develop robust IT and cybersecurity systems to prevent such attacks, but the project is still in the early stages.

### ***Wastewater***

Berkshire County has nine publicly owned wastewater treatment plants (Adams, Great Barrington, Lee, Lenox, North Adams, Pittsfield, Stockbridge, West Stockbridge, Williamstown), although most communities rely on private, on-site septic. Recent audit reports from the State’s Department of Environmental Protection describe the condition of these as variable in terms of infrastructure, staffing, and regulatory compliance. Some require hundreds of thousands in repairs while others have reported levels of contaminants (e.g., e-coli) higher than what is considered safe.

*[\\*PFAS has been detected across all Massachusetts rivers.](#)*

### ***Waste Management***

Berkshire County has 13 composting facilities, two anaerobic digesters (Pittsfield and Sheffield) and one local site for handling construction and demolition waste (Lenoxdale). For many towns, waste disposal is among their largest annual expenditure, and one of the fastest growing. Organic materials (i.e., food, yard waste, natural textiles) relegated to landfills release methane, one of the chief contributors to climate change. The antidote is diversion, which can include donating safe, edible goods to food-insecure residents and turning inedible food and carbon-rich plant matter into compost for the region’s farmers. The EPA’s [Excess Food Opportunities Map](#) is one tool local stakeholders can use to identify the largest food waste generators in the region to help them reduce waste at the source or match them with social service organizations where excess food can be donated.

### ***Energy***

Being an energy-resilient county means reducing reliance on fossil fuels across all sectors public and private and replacing it with sustainable sources. The chart below shows the current landscape of Berkshire County’s electricity-generating infrastructure and how it contributes to the Commonwealth’s [net-zero emissions by 2050 goal](#). Currently, Massachusetts derives 15.6% of its electricity from renewable sources with solar accounting for 5.4%, biomass 5%, and wind 1.5%.

Table 13. Energy Infrastructure in Berkshire County

Energy Source	# Plants	Nameplate Capacity: MW	Net Zero Capacity: MW
Solar	17	38.4	38.1
Wind	4	51.1	51.3
Petroleum	3	48.5	43.4
Hydroelectric	2	28.7	25.1
Pumped Storage (Hydroelectric)	1	600	600
Natural Gas	1	175.5	151.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>942.2</b>	<b>909.3</b>

Source: <https://www.eia.gov/dashboard/newengland/electricity>

The Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) [Green Power Partnership Program](#) works with local governments, colleges and universities, and businesses to encourage their transition to green power. EPA has recognized three Massachusetts towns as Green Power Communities (Greenfield, Wellesley, Swampscott). While Berkshire County has [19 state-certified Green Communities](#), this additional federal designation is one the region may wish to explore to further the benefits of these climate-resilient strategies. More detailed information about renewable energy in Berkshire County is in Appendix G.



Last Mile Celebration Event  
photo credit: Wylie Goodman, BRPC

### Broadband

Broadband in Berkshire County encompasses Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line (ADSL), cable, fiber, fixed wireless, and satellite. [Sixteen towns recently completed last-mile projects](#) (the infrastructure closest to end users) and five more are in process. Thirteen towns were already fully served. Broadband access and fast, reliable service are not synonymous, and [FCC mapping](#) suggests many towns lack the fastest upload (10 Mbps) and download (100 Mbps) speeds needed for emergency readiness and economic competitiveness. High-speed broadband (e.g., fiber) exists in 10 towns with cable the dominant technology in those remaining. The 2020 American Community Survey found nearly 85% of Berkshire County households with broadband of some type as compared to 88% in Massachusetts. Twelve percent of Berkshire County households lack any internet as compared to 9% in the Commonwealth.

Digital equity and narrowing the digital divide, particularly for underserved residents such as seniors, low-income residents, people with disabilities, those without shelter, English-language learners, and the formerly incarcerated, also continue to be foci of resiliency efforts. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Massachusetts Broadband Institute worked with internet service providers in communities lacking broadband to offer indoor and outdoor Wi-Fi hotspots. Additionally, [through a program called MB123](#), 288 Community Anchor Institutions such as schools, libraries, town halls, and healthcare centers can now access state-of-the-art fiber previously unavailable to them.



## Public and Private Transportation

### Buses

Having a wide array of public transit options so that individuals can travel quickly, easily, and affordably to their destinations is a key component of community resilience. Berkshire County is served by a regional transit authority (BRTA) that provides 100% accessible fixed route, on-demand, and paratransit to 27 of 32 communities along 12 routes, six days a week, with limited evening service. The system, which serves a dispersed rural population, is supplemented by parallel systems (e.g., Councils on Aging) that offer specialized transportation to vulnerable populations (Medicaid recipients, people with disabilities, seniors, veterans) via other state-funded mechanisms (MassHealth Transportation Program; Mass Rehabilitation Commission; VA Van Service).

**Table 14. BRTA Ridership 2018-2021**

Year	Fixed Route	Demand and Response	Paratransit
2018	540,045	28,710	28,628
2019	497,498	20,978	25,733
2020	429,730	32,669	22,561
2021	327,100	21,156	15,044

Source: BRTA Annual Reports and staff

During the pandemic, bus travel in the region fell considerably (58% for fixed routes; 67% paratransit). Yet a [BRTA survey, shared in its FY20 Annual Report](#), found 60% of riders continued using public transit during the pandemic with 72% relying on it for work outside the home, and 69% more concerned about bus schedule changes than sanitizing or safety precautions. Although ridership has not returned to pre-pandemic levels, supporting expanded public transit via micro-transit, transit-on-demand, and shared biking remains a post-pandemic priority.

### Railroads

The region offers passenger and freight transect for two main (CSX Boston-Albany, Pan Am Railway/Pan Am Southern [recently purchased by CSX](#)) and two secondary (Berkshire Line-Housatonic Railroad Company, MassDOT) rail lines.

The Pam Am/CSX Line is currently being explored for [East-West Rail](#) along a corridor that would connect Boston to Pittsfield via Worcester and Springfield; the Massachusetts Senate has allocated \$275 million to the project and called for the creation of a commission to evaluate oversight and funding. The project would connect the economically robust life science, health care, and technology sectors in the Eastern portion of the state to the nature, culture, and a more affordable cost of living in the West. With the goal of hourly service between Springfield and Boston, and efficient connections to Pittsfield, the project could be a boon to the region.

Amtrak uses the central CSX line for intra- and inter-state service with a focus on the [Northeast Corridor](#). The much-anticipated launch in summer 2022 of the [Berkshire Flyer](#) to facilitate travel between New York City and Berkshire County proved successful in its inaugural run and may run for a longer season in 2023 to further spur post-COVID regional recovery.

In the Southern Berkshires, the [Housatonic Railroad Company](#) (HRRC) provided critical freight service to local businesses during the pandemic including Becton Dickenson (syringe manufacturer), Kimberly Clark (sanitary paper products), Plaskolite (PPE face shields), and Pharmco (sanitizer). HRRC is now proposing a passenger route from Pittsfield to Stamford with proposed stops in Lenox, Lee, Great Barrington, and Stockbridge. This new line, which would ultimately connect to Metro-North's Grand Central Station in New York City, offers another opportunity to reduce the urban-rural divide.

### **Airports**

The county benefits from two municipal (Pittsfield and North Adams) and one private (Great Barrington) airport. Together they provide medical transport during emergencies, accommodate business and recreational travel, and, less explored, training for local residents interested in careers in the airline industry, which needs more pilots and is [seeking to recruit](#) women and people of color to diversify its workforce.



Boeing 737 Business Jet at Pittsfield Municipal Airport  
photo credit: Pittsfield Municipal Airport

### **Electric Vehicles**

The transportation sector broadly is the largest contributor of greenhouse gas emissions nationally (28.2%), at the state level (39%), and in the region (43%), where more than 80% of residents use a car to commute. [The Berkshire County Electric Vehicle Charging Station Plan](#) demonstrates how the region can reverse the negative environmental externalities of the sector by leveraging Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) funding to make electric vehicles the preferred mode for personal and public transit. [Plugshare.com](#) has identified 53 electric charging stations in Berkshire County as of March 2022; four offer Direct Current Fast Charging (20 DCFC ports/plugs) and the rest slower Level 2 (154 L2 plugs/ports) charging. The region's stations are currently concentrated in Lee, Lenox, Pittsfield, and Williamstown.

*\*For a list of transportation services at the sub-regional level in Berkshire County see [BRPC: The Coordinated Public Transit - Human Services Transportation Plan](#) (2018) and [Berkshire County Transportation Guide: Berkshires Without Barriers](#) (2018).*

### **Public Housing**

Berkshire County is served by a Regional Housing Authority with eight sub-regional agencies in Adams, Dalton, Lee, Lenox, North Adams, Pittsfield, Stockbridge, and Williamstown. A ninth, Berkshire Housing Services, offers 31 units across five towns. Together they oversee [1,623 state and federal units](#), far below what is needed for the [county's 11,627 individuals \(9.7% of population\)](#) living in poverty, despite apartment complexes offering subsidized housing or accepting Section 8, homeless shelters, boarding houses, and motels allowing extended stays. [While homelessness has decreased in Western Massachusetts since 2018](#), the number of chronically homeless rose sharply during COVID. Homelessness in Western Massachusetts was found by the [Western Massachusetts Coalition to End Homelessness \(WMCEH\)](#) to be 2.6x higher for Black residents and 3x higher for Hispanic and Latino. WMCEH estimates that the Western Massachusetts region, which includes Hampden, Hampshire, Franklin, and Berkshire counties, needs at least 17,000 more affordable rental units to meet current demand.

Only two towns in Berkshire County, Great Barrington and Williamstown, have achieved [Housing Choice designation from the Commonwealth](#), while five have been awarded Housing Choice grants. The designation rewards municipalities that produce a certain rate or amount of new housing units and adopt best practices in housing production. Designated communities have exclusive access to the Housing Choice Grant Program and receive bonus points or other considerations for state grants.

### Public Education

Berkshire County has 16 school districts serving close to 16,000 students. The system's ability to prepare young people for success after high school in their chosen college or career path can be impacted by multiple factors, among them individual student abilities, family and environmental supports, class size, teacher-to-student ratio, and teacher salaries. The table below compares Berkshire County to Massachusetts on some of these metrics. In 2019, the most recent year for which data was available, the [Department of Education's Annual Accountability Report](#) found 13 Berkshire County school districts required no assistance reaching progress toward improvement targets while two needed focused/targeted support.

**Table 15. Comparison of Berkshire County and Massachusetts: DOE Data, 2021**

Criteria	Berkshire County	Massachusetts
% Students Economically Disadvantaged	40.00%	34.20%
% Students with Disabilities	18.2	19.8
% Students English-Language Learners	2.3	11.4
Teachers Per 100 Students	9.7	8.3
Instructional Spending: School + District Non-Instructional + Instructional Spending	\$19,285.00	\$18,044.00
% Teachers Exemplary	16.23%	16.95%
% Teachers Proficient	80.90%	80.30%
% Teachers Needing Improvement	2.57%	2.64%
% Teachers Unsatisfactory	0.28%	0.80%
Teacher Salary	\$69,411.00	\$79,202.00

## Economy

Economic resilience is the byproduct of steady-state efforts to foster a business-friendly environment for a diverse range of industries and responsive strategies that respond to and support businesses and workers before, during, and after economic shocks or disruptions strike.

### Steady State Economy

EDA's [StatsAmerica](#) provides a range of data sets and tools local stakeholders can use to compare how economically resilient their region is relative to others in the country. One of these, the [Indiana Business Research Center's Metrics for Development \(M4D\)](#), looks at more than 70 county-level variables and can be used to understand the county's ranking nationally, help with development decisions, and inform the efficient and equitable allocation of financial resources.

The M4D places Berkshire County's Development Capacity as Moderate (.68), due in part to the county's concentrated employment in a small set of local industries. EDA notes that "counties with a low score...may want to prioritize diversifying their structure and attracting more traded industry clusters (financial services, software development and IT, manufacturing, etc.), which are regarded as beneficial because they generate higher wages and greater innovation than local clusters." Table 16 highlights the range and extent of sector activity and suggests where encouraging business diversification would be beneficial.

**Table 16. EDA Metrics for Development**

Metrics for Development Description	Score
Headline M4D Index	0.68
Industry Mix	0.68
Indexed ratio of emp. in local industries to traded industries	0.99
Indexed share of emp. in all local industries	0.92
Indexed share of emp. in top 2 local industries	0.90
Indexed share of emp. in top 3 industries	0.82
Indexed share of emp. in top 5 traded industries	0.05
Indexed share of emp. in the Arts & Entertainment occupation SC	0.37
Indexed share of emp. in the Manufacturing, Technology, & Engineering occupation SC	0.22
Indexed share of emp. in the Business & Other White Collar occupation SC	0.19
Indexed share of emp. in the College occupation SC	0.09
Indexed share of emp. in the Business Services & Support industry supercluster (SC)	0.07
Indexed share of emp. in the High IP Manufacturing industry SC	0.01
Indexed share of emp. in the Tech & Knowledge Services industry SC	0.01

Another economic measurement instrument, the [Innovation Intelligence Index](#), attempts to answer the question, "Why do some regions prosper while others do not?" The test helps regions:

- evaluate their innovation capacity and potential
- take a snapshot of how their region is performing across multiple economic indicators, and
- compare their performance to peers within the state and across the nation.

The Index gives Berkshire County an overall score of 122.9 (scores range from 152 to 86) indicating the region has moderate relative Innovation Capacity. The county scores slightly higher on Human Capital and Knowledge Creation (133.7) based on the number of residents with graduate degrees and spillover effects from local universities. It scores lowest on the overall index Business Dynamics, based in part on the ratio of Establishment Births to Deaths, which measures how many businesses open and how many close within a given period. The highest and lowest categories within the five major indices are shown in Table 17:

**Table 17. Innovation Intelligence Index: Top 10 Strengths**

Indices	Index Value
<b>Human Capital and Knowledge Creation</b>	<b>133.7</b>
Graduate Degree Attainment	192.6
STEM Education and Occupations	101.3
<b>Business Dynamics</b>	<b>108.7</b>
Average High-Tech, Early-in-Life-Cycle Establishment Ratio	128.4
Establishment Births to Deaths Ratio	95.8
<b>Business Profile</b>	<b>108.8</b>
Change in Average Venture Capital Deals	199.9
Foreign Direct Investment Attractiveness* includes Employment and Investment Ratio, both Domestic and Foreign Source	50.0
<b>Employment and Productivity</b>	<b>128.4</b>
Patent Diversity	188.1
Industry Cluster Strength	50.7
<b>Economic Well-Being</b>	<b>135.0</b>
Broadband Infrastructure and Adoption	184.4
Average Net Migration	101.2

Source: [Stats America Innovation Intelligence](#)

**Responsive Economy**

The [Analysis Platform for Risk, Resilience, and Expenditure in Disasters](#) Business Vulnerability Index (APRED) highlights the industries in the region most vulnerable to a specific kind of shock: natural disasters. At-risk businesses are those 1) most dependent on supply chains, 2) highly reliant on public utilities like water and electricity, and/or 3) with a large infrastructure footprint but low infrastructure mobility. Seventeen industries in Berkshire County were found to be *invulnerable* to such disasters while two, Accommodation and Food Services and Utilities, are considered vulnerable.

**Table 18: APRED Business Vulnerability: Berkshire County 2017-2019**

Industry	Total Estab.	Vulnerable Estab. Total	Vulnerable Estab. %	Total Employees	Vulnerable Employee Total	Vulnerable Employee %
Accommodation & Food Services	510	343	67%	7267	4131	57%
Utilities	11	5	48%	196	55	28%

### Gross Regional Product

Gross Regional Product (GRP) is the market value of goods and services produced by labor and property in a region. [The Bureau of Economic Analysis \(BEA\)](#), which compiles GRP data for the U.S., characterizes Berkshire County as a medium-sized region based on its population density. In 2020, of 467 medium-sized counties, 89% saw a fall in GRP while 11% saw a rise. Berkshire County's GRP fell by 4.3% between 2019 and 2020. That compares to a 1.8% drop for Massachusetts in the same period. Tables 35-39 in Appendix G show how key industries in Berkshire County performed between 2019 and 2020 as compared to the state. The top five contributors to the region's GRP are shown in Table 20.

**Table 19: Top GRP Industries in Berkshire County: 2022**

Industry	GRP (Thousands)
Real Estate and Rental Leasing	1,067.4
Health Care and Social Assistance	923.7
Nondurable Goods Manufacturing	680.7
Finance and Insurance	481.7
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	466.5

Source: Argonne National Laboratory National Economic Resilience Data Explorer (NERDE) County Dashboard

### Employment Projections

Employment in some of Berkshire County's top industries such as Health Care and Social Assistance, Professional Services, Manufacturing, and Construction are projected to see increased labor demand by 2030, while others, namely Retail, Information, Real Estate, and Accommodation and Food Service, could see a small to moderate decline, according to the Commonwealth's [Future of Work](#) report. Health Care and Social Assistance will be buoyed by a national surge in the population age 65 and older, while Professional Services will benefit from the trend toward more remote and hybrid work. One additional industry in which the region has a high location quotient - Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation includes occupations the [Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts will be among the fastest growing for employment](#).

### Establishments and Employment

The region lost relatively few establishments during the pandemic, a positive sign for regional economic resilience, although likely attributable to the extensive financial support provided to businesses through PPP and EIDL loans and other philanthropic sources. *See Appendix F: COVID-19 Addendum.*

Table 20. Average Annual Establishments in Berkshire County: 2017-2022

Table 21. Average Annual Employees in Berkshire County: 2017-2022

Year	Annual Establishments	Year	Annual Average Employees
2017	5,166	2017	61,731
2018	5,199	2018	61,266
2019	5,248	2019	61,098
2020	5,204	2020	53,904
2021	5,432	2021	55,999

Source: Series ENU2500320010, Number of Establishments in Total Covered Total, all industries for All establishment sizes in Berkshire County, Massachusetts, NSA

Employment, however, did decline. The top five industries in which workers experienced job losses were Local Government (-9%), Healthcare and Social Assistance (-6%), Educational Services (-6%), Construction (4%), and Real Estate (-2%). These roughly track to [the top five industries for employment](#): Healthcare and Social Assistance (13.5K), Retail Trade (8.4K), Accommodation and Food Service (5.63K), Professional Services (5.38K), and Construction (5.10K).

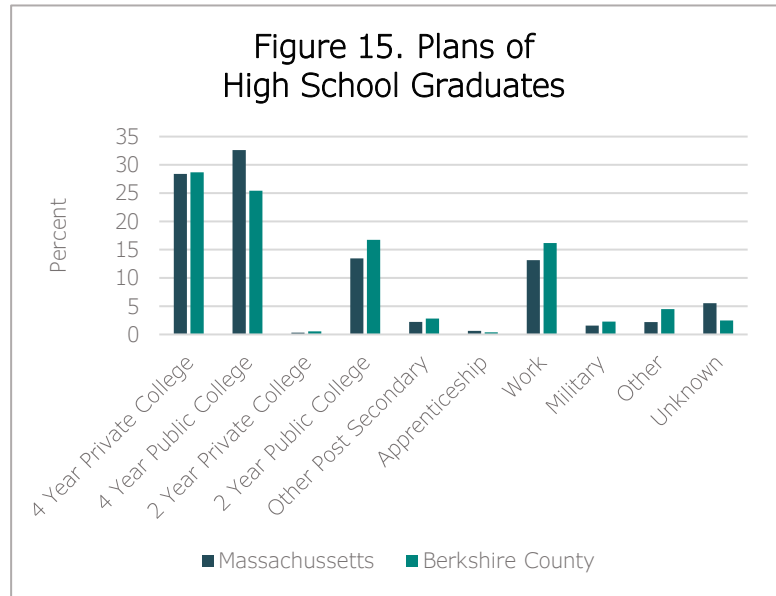
### Workforce Readiness

Preparing a future-ready workforce means helping young people identify their talents and skills, providing them with mentors who can offer real-world work experience and foster meaningful relationships, and ensuring, upon graduation from college or vocational school, that the region can offer competitive wages to avoid the “brain drain” that often besets rural communities.

To help young people identify their talents and skills, the region aims to build on its Chapter 74 Career Vocational Technical Education (CVTE) countywide. In the northern Berkshires, [McCann](#), a highly regarded CVTE-only school, offers high school and post-secondary training in fields such as Advanced Manufacturing, Cosmetology, Computer-Assisted Design (CAD), and Metal Fabrication, as well as various healthcare professions. In the central Berkshires, [Taonic High School will transition to an entirely CVTE campus](#) teaching similar specializations. And in the southern Berkshires, [an eight town regional school district coalition](#) is looking to consolidate schools, secure funds for capital improvements at Monument Mountain High School, and create new CVTE tracks aligned with anticipated demand by the region’s employers in auto mechanics, horticultural/agriculture technology, health technology, culinary, and construction with a focus on carpentry. A re-imagined Monument Mountain would also serve adult learners, allowing facilities and equipment to be repurposed in the evening to train displaced and third-shift workers.

The current post-graduation trajectory for Berkshire County students is shown in Figure 15. The most recent data from Mass DOE finds Berkshire County students attending two-year public colleges and entering the workforce at higher rates than students in Massachusetts overall.

Long-term, hands-on apprenticeships, both in the region and the state, remain limited, although MassHire’s YouthWorks program, which in 2021-22 served 98 students, does offer subsidized employment exposure for low-income teens and young adults. For local college students and recent graduates, [Lever’s Berkshire Interns](#) program is a model program connecting them to paid internships at leading Berkshire businesses that has served 98 participants since its inception in 2018 with 27 local businesses participating.



Source: [profiles.doe.mass.edu/statereport/plansofhsgrads.aspx](https://profiles.doe.mass.edu/statereport/plansofhsgrads.aspx)

In Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation, Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts has established a [clearinghouse for employment and internships in the region's creative economy](#). For adults seeking to reskill, 1Berkshire, in partnership with Berkshire Innovation Center and Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, recently launched [BerkshiresCanCode](#), which aims to build a tech talent pipeline by delivering computer coding education and training. Another program, [TOOLING-U](#), spearheaded by Berkshire Workforce Board in collaboration with Berkshire Community College, will be offering 25 online classes in topics geared toward the Advanced Manufacturing sector.

### Living Wages

In 2019, there were 3,780 business establishments in Berkshire County with 52,368 employees. The average annual pay per employee was \$47,000, higher than the Living Wage needed to support a single adult in Berkshire County, according to [MIT's Living Wage Calculator](#). Recently though, some policymakers have questioned Living Wage is a sufficient measure of an individual's ability to cover their basic costs. Instead, a new tool, [UnitedforAlice](#), looks at whether a person's wages can support what they call a Household Survival Budget, defined as an estimate of "the bare minimum cost of household necessities (housing, childcare, food, transportation, health care, and a basic smartphone plan), plus taxes and a contingency fund (miscellaneous) equal to 10% of the budget." [Using the ALICE Tool](#), an individual or family can determine if their single or combined hourly wages support their Household Survival Budget. In Berkshire County, many more workers fall below the ALICE threshold, even if they are above the Federal Poverty level. This more realistic assessment of economic security is one local leaders should use to estimate the region's at-risk population and to help identify the wraparound services they are likely to need in the event of a shock.

1Berkshire's [The Jobs Thing](#) posts positions that pay at least \$40K a year, which closely matches the Living Wage calculation. At the height of COVID, postings shrank 35%. However, as of October 2022, they exceed



pre-COVID levels, a sign of both inflationary pressures and the need to offer competitive salaries to attract and retain talent for higher-level roles.

**Table 22. Job Postings on 1Berkshire’s The Jobs Thing**

Year	# of Postings
2019	243
2020	156
2021	295
January-October 2022	278
<b>Total</b>	<b>640</b>

Source: 1Berkshire

For employers and jobseekers, [Berkshire Workforce Board](#) the county’s branch of MassHire, works to meet the employment needs of businesses and workers by supporting partnerships with industry, education, and workforce organizations. Their focus is primarily on individuals who qualify under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. These individuals face additional challenges finding work due to their being (*from their annual report*) low-income (100%), single parents (73%), below 9<sup>th</sup> grade in reading or math (27%), disabled (7%) or a prior offender (7%). Among the dislocated workers they served, 88% qualified for unemployment insurance and 33% were age 55 or older. For their most recently served youth population, 85% had left high school early, 30% had reading or math skills below grade 9, 22% had a disability, and 11% were pregnant or parenting. Among MassHire’s key initiatives, many borne out of the pandemic, were:

- **Workforce Training Fund Grant**, which provides resources for employers to upgrade the skills of their workforce,
- **Advanced Manufacturing Training**, which identifies workforce needs of the region’s manufacturers and develops solutions for recruitment, retention, and training and enhances manufacturing career pathway opportunities for unemployed, under-employed, and incumbent workers,
- **Healthcare Initiatives**, which identifies workforce gaps and establishes an action plan to address the needs of Berkshire healthcare providers; establishes initiatives to train registered nurses, CNA/PCA, technicians, and behavioral therapists; and expands training options for those seeking careers as nursing assistants and home health aides,
- **Connecting Activities High School Internship Program**, which annually reaches nearly 500 students who participate in internships, 2,500 who participate in career exploration activities, and educators who participate in teacher externship and professional development, and
- **STEM & STEAM Initiatives**, which held activities over a week in 2020 to help students, educators, parents, and the community learn more about Science, Technology, Engineering & Math (STEM) in the Berkshires.

## Recommendations

The recommendations below, organized into the categories of People, Community, and Economy, are informed by the Business and Nonprofit Resiliency Survey, feedback from municipal leaders, conversations with local stakeholders (e.g., 1Berkshire, Berkshire Workforce Board, CEDS Resiliency Committee, industry representatives), participation in the Public Comment period for the CEDS, and data gathered from regional, state, and federal sources.

### Resiliency Recommendations - People

Implement recommendations from [FEMA's Guide to Expanding Mitigation, Making the Connection to Older Adults](#) especially community outreach through Councils on Aging and related organizations to help the region's most vulnerable populations prepare emergency plans and ensure they understand and can access local resources for food, shelter, and related assistance.

Identify and implement the top three to five recommendations from the Berkshire County Community Food Assessment, [Growing Great Barrington](#), and the [Massachusetts Local Food Action Plan](#).

Increase enrollment in SNAP and WIC for all eligible Berkshire County residents. Expand options for providing food to those who do not qualify for SNAP but are food-insecure by gathering at the source excess food from regional generators and distributing it more efficiently to food providers.

Identify evidence-based strategies from [Take Action to Improve Health](#) that can be tested countywide with vulnerable populations to establish a baseline for intervention and tracking of outcomes.

Advocate to raise Berkshire County's overall score as a [Health Professional Shortage Area](#). Identify strategies beyond NHSC Loan Repayment to promote Berkshire County as a desirable location to establish a medical, dental, or mental health practice.

Work closely, early, and often with community and faith-based organizations and businesses serving Berkshire County's BIPOC communities to ensure outreach materials related to resiliency speak to all constituencies and are provided in multiple languages as needed.

Provide free financial literacy and education, including at younger ages, using the [Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's Best Practices](#) plan so that vulnerable people begin to establish a practice of saving.

Support behavioral health of job seekers and workers.

Augment the area impact of future cash assistance distribution (public or non-profit) by exploring distribution in local currency, thereby funneling a greater share of spending to area-owned businesses.

Continue to recruit new residents through Berkshires.org, associated communication tools, and The Jobs Thing.

## Resiliency Recommendations - Community

Encourage towns to complete [FEMA's Resilience Analysis and Planning Tool](#) (RAPT) to establish a baseline of knowledge about each community's resilience. Use the findings to identify opportunities for regionalization based on shared needs.

Encourage towns to take [EPA's Smart Growth Rural Self-Assessment](#) as a step toward long-term planning about creating healthy, environmentally resilient, and economically robust places. Use data to create a baseline to inform training, frameworks, regionalization, and joint applications for funding.

Establish a [Rural Fellowship program](#) to recruit college and graduate students to spend three to six months in Berkshire County municipalities working on locally-designed projects.

Support the City of Pittsfield in becoming a UNICEF-USA recognized [Child-Friendly City](#) to attract more families to the region and increase youth participation in civic life.

Explore implementation of [Participatory Budgeting](#) in the region's two cities.

Advocate for increased Chapter 90 and PILOT funding for infrastructure maintenance and upgrades.

Work with the Massachusetts Broadband Institute and local stakeholders to increase digital literacy and narrow the digital divide as a first step toward high-speed broadband expansion.

Help more communities achieve Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness, Green Communities, Home Choice, and Green Power Partnership designations.

Create a region-wide waste management plan and pilot a Source-Separated Organics Program to reduce export of organic waste to landfills, provide beneficial soil amendment to area farmers, and stimulate green, resource recovery employment.

Update and improve municipal regulations and building code to reduce vulnerability of existing developed areas and promote resiliency of new development.

Assess cost-effective green infrastructure opportunities for stormwater management.

Use the Berkshire Community Land Trust as a vehicle for philanthropic/ public transfer of land for community development initiatives, lowering the land debt burden of new business or housing ventures (e.g., farmland, workforce housing, manufacturing/reuse facilities).

Leverage the Berkshire Funding Focus initiative to share relevant and appropriate resources in an accessible and informative manner.

Look for opportunities to create "[Third Places](#)" outside of work and home to attract more young people and strengthen community connections.

### Resiliency Recommendations - Economy

Cultivate and support traded industries, as an industry diversification tactic and to reduce over-reliance on locally based industries.

Strengthen relationships with MassDevelopment to identify synergies with grant programs and technical assistance offerings, disseminating information to a broader local audience.

Offer training to at-risk employers and employees to identify steps for preventing, withstanding, and recovering from economic shocks specific to their business or industry.

Assist with the development of continuity and resiliency plans for individual businesses.

Increase the number of businesses with state-level WMBE-owned certifications, supporting application and renewal processes, and expanding to include disadvantaged-, veteran-, and LGBTQ-owned.

Support the expansion of CVTE, upskilling, and reskilling programs to prepare students for well-paying jobs in industries resistant to economic shocks.

Standardize and digitize business permitting and licensure processes to eliminate unnecessary hurdles or in-person requirements.

Monitor redevelopment plans and opportunities at former Berkshire Mall site, assisting with the pursuit of options identified in the Berkshire Mall Reuse study of 2019.

Support and promote MassHire career readiness activities, industry training programs, and career pathway opportunities for youth, job seekers, and career changers.

Support and promote MassHire Career Center recruitment and retention programs (On-the-job training; workshops; incentives, etc.) for both job seekers and employers.

Coordinate with public-serving anchor institutions (schools, hospitals, tourism/arts) to identify import replacement strategies to employ more area suppliers and stimulate local employment.

Discourage wealth leakage from the county while alleviating card processing costs for small businesses by encouraging use of BerkShares at and between area businesses.

Improve the vibrancy of downtown and commercial corridors by making them more accessible to diverse users (walkers, bikers) including through transit-oriented development initiatives.

# Appendices

# Appendix A

## CEDS Committee Members

### Berkshire County CEDS Committee Members

The 2023-2027 Berkshire County CEDS was developed in consultation with members of the CEDS Committee. The Committee roster is shown below along with brief bios indicating the members' area of expertise and their representation rolls on the committee. Following that is a list of our communities' delegates and alternates that serve on the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission.

TABLE 23: FY2023 Berkshire Comprehensive Economic Development Committee Members

Contact Information	Description
George Ambriz <i>Berkshire Community College</i> 1350 West Street Pittsfield, MA 01201	Mr. Ambriz serves as the Director of Academic and Career Advising at Berkshire Community College, contributing to the committee both as a representative of higher education and workforce development.
Roger Bolton <i>Berkshire Regional Planning Commission</i> 1 Fenn Street, Suite 201 Pittsfield, MA 01201	Mr. Bolton is a retired professor of Economics at Williams College, as a community leader and public official he serves on the CEDS Committee and the BRPC Executive Committee and has a special interest in regional economics.
Michael Coakley <i>City of Pittsfield</i> 70 Allen Street Pittsfield, MA 01201	Mr. Coakley is the Business Development Manager for the City of Pittsfield.
John Duval <i>BRPC Commission Chair, ex officio</i>	Mr. Duval is a Senior Systems Engineer at General Dynamics. He serves as Chair of BRPC and is also the Chair of the Adams Board of Selectmen.
AJ Enchill <i>Berkshire Black Economic Council</i> P.O. Box 461 Pittsfield, MA 01202	Mr. Enchill is the Executive Director of the Berkshire Black Economic Council.
Keith Girouard <i>MA Small Business Development Center - Berkshire Regional Office</i> 33 Dunham Mall, Suite 103 Pittsfield MA 01201	Mr. Girouard is the Regional Director with the Berkshire Regional Office of the MA Small Business Development Center. He is the private sector representative for small business assistance.
Kyle Hanlon <i>Plimpton &amp; Hills Corporation</i> 28 Yorkshire Avenue Pittsfield, MA 01201	Mr. Hanlon is the Chair of the Berkshire CEDS Committee, and on the Executive Committee of the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission.

<p>Lesley Herzberg  <i>Berkshire Historical Society</i>  780 Holmes Road  Pittsfield, MA 01201</p>	<p>Ms. Herzberg is the Executive Director of Berkshire Historical Society at Arrowhead, representing the non-profit cultural sector on the CEDS committee.</p>
<p>Ben Lamb  <i>1Berkshire</i>  66 Allen Street  Pittsfield, MA 01201</p>	<p>Mr. Lamb is the Economic Development Director who leads the Economic Development team at 1Berkshire, the Region's Economic Development and Marketing organization.</p>
<p>Jim Lovejoy  <i>Town of Mount Washington</i>  118 East Street  Mount Washington, MA 01258</p>	<p>Mr. Lovejoy is the Chair of the Mt. Washington Select Board, and as the Chair of the MMA Transportation Policy Committee.</p>
<p>Paul Mattingly  <i>MassHire Berkshire Workforce Board</i>  66 Allen Street  Pittsfield, MA 01201</p>	<p>Mr. Mattingly is the Manager of Industry Relations at the MassHire Berkshire Workforce Board and serves as the Workforce Development Board representative on the CEDS Committee.</p>
<p>Thomas Matuszko  <i>Berkshire Regional Planning Commission</i>  1 Fenn Street, Suite 201  Pittsfield, MA 01201</p>	<p>Mr. Matuszko is Executive Director of Berkshire Regional Planning Commission.</p>
<p>Laurie Mick  <i>City of Pittsfield</i>  City Hall - 70 Allen Street  Pittsfield MA 01201</p>	<p>Ms. Mick serves on the CEDS Committee as the representative from the Pittsfield Economic Revitalization Corporation (PERC).</p>
<p>Mike Nuvalle  <i>City of North Adams</i>  City Hall - 10 Main Street  North Adams MA 01247</p>	<p>Mr. Nuvalle is the Community Development Director for the City of North Adams and serves on the Berkshire Brownfields Committee. He is the Public Official representing Northern Berkshire County.</p>
<p>Shannon Smith  <i>Berkshire Agricultural Ventures</i>  314 Main Street, Office #23  Great Barrington, MA 01230</p>	<p>Ms. Smith represents Berkshire Agricultural Ventures, a non-profit that supports food and agriculture in Berkshire County.</p>
<p>Ian Rasch  <i>Alander Construction</i>  40 Railroad Street  Great Barrington, MA, 01230</p>	<p>Mr. Rasch is one of the principals with Alander Construction and has more than 17 years of experience in real estate development and construction management. He is the private sector representative for this industry.</p>
<p>Chris Rembold  <i>Town of Great Barrington</i>  Town Hall - 334 Main Street</p>	<p>Mr. Rembold is the Assistant Town Manager/Director of Planning &amp; Community Development in Great Barrington and is the Public Official representing Southern Berkshire County.</p>

Great Barrington MA 01201	
Debra Sarlin <i>Berkshire Community College/Public</i> 1350 West Street Pittsfield, MA 01201	Ms. Sarlin is the Executive Director for Workforce at Berkshire Community College and serves as the CEDS Committee's Higher Education representative.
Ben Sosne <i>Berkshire Innovation Center</i> Pittsfield, MA 01201	Mr. Sosne is the Executive Director of the Berkshire Innovation Center, recognized as a Priority Project in the 2017-2022 Berkshire CEDS.
<b>Alternate Members</b>	
Ciana Barnaba <i>Berkshire Agricultural Ventures</i> 314 Main Street, Office #23 Great Barrington, MA 01230	Ms. Barnaba is Project Manager at Berkshire Agricultural Ventures, a non-profit that supports food and agriculture in Berkshire County.
Jayne Bellora <i>MA Small Business Development Center - Berkshire Regional Office</i> 33 Dunham Mall, Suite 103 Pittsfield MA 01201	Ms. Bellora is the Client Service Coordinator and Office Manager at the Berkshire Regional Office of the MA Small Business Development Center.
Heather Boulger <i>MassHire Berkshire Workforce Board</i> 66 Allen Street Pittsfield, MA 01201	Ms. Boulger is the Executive Director of MassHire Berkshires, engaging employers throughout the county to define their workforce needs and assist with recruitment and retention.
Justine Dodds <i>City of Pittsfield</i> 70 Allen Street Pittsfield, MA 01201	Ms. Dodds is the Director of Community Development for the City of Pittsfield.
Kevin Pink <i>1Berkshire</i> 66 Allen Street Pittsfield, MA 01201	Mr. Pink is the Deputy Director of Economic Development at 1Berkshire, the Region's Economic Development and Marketing organization.



## Appendix B

### Partnering Communities

#### BRPC Partnering Communities

Adams, Alford, Becket, Cheshire, Clarksburg, Dalton, Egremont, Florida, Great Barrington, Hancock, Hinsdale, Lanesborough, Lee, Lenox, Monterey, Mount Washington, North Adams, New Ashford, New Marlborough, Otis, Peru, Pittsfield, Richmond, Sandisfield, Savoy, Sheffield, Stockbridge, Tyringham, Washington, West Stockbridge, Williamstown, and Windsor

TABLE 24: FY2023 Berkshire Regional Planning Commission Delegates and Alternates

Community	Name	Representing
Adams	Delegate - Michael Mach	Planning Board
	Alternate - John Duval	BRPC Chair, CEDS, Regional Issues Committee
Alford	Delegate - Alexandra Glover	Planning Board
	Alternate - Shirley Mueller	
Becket	Delegate - Robert Ronzio	Planning Board
	Alternate - Ann Krawet	
Cheshire	Delegate - Peter Traub	Planning Board, Council on Aging; Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services
	Alternate - vacant	
Clarksburg	Delegate - vacant	
	Alternate - vacant	
Dalton	Delegate - Caleb Darby	Planning Board
	Alternate - John Boyle	
Egremont	Delegate - Mary McGurn	Planning Board; Other Services
	Alternate - Stephen Lyle	
Florida	Delegate - Jon Oleson	Planning Board
	Alternate - Cynthia Bosley	
Great Barrington	Delegate - Pedro Pechano	Planning Board
	Alternate - Malcolm Fick	Regional Issues Committee

<b>Hancock</b>	Delegate - Christie Moran	Planning Board
	Alternate - vacant	
<b>Hinsdale</b>	Delegate - Richard Roussin	Planning Board
	Alternate - Dan Brown	
<b>Lanesborough</b>	Delegate - Barb Davis-Hassan	Planning Board, ZBA, EDC; Other Services
	Alternate - Leanne Yinger	
<b>Lee</b>	Delegate - Buck Donovan	Planning Board
	Alternate - Peter Bluhm	
<b>Lenox</b>	Delegate - Pamela Kueber	Planning Board; Other Services
	Alternate - Mark Smith	
<b>Monterey</b>	Delegate - Laura Mensi	Planning Board
	Alternate - vacant	
<b>Mount Washington</b>	Delegate - Bill Short	Planning Board
	Alternate - James Lovejoy	CEDS Committee
<b>New Ashford</b>	Delegate - Mark Phelps	Planning Board
	Alternate - Kevin Flicker	
<b>New Marlborough</b>	Delegate - Jonathan James	Planning Board
	Alternate - Robert Hartt	Planning Board; Finance & Insurance
<b>North Adams</b>	Delegate - Kyle Hanlon	Planning Board, CEDS Committee Chair, Regional Issues Committee
	Alternate - Lisa Blackmer	
<b>Otis</b>	Delegate - Mark Anthony	Planning Board; Public Administration
	Alternate - vacant	
<b>Peru</b>	Delegate - Samuel Haupt	Planning Board
	Alternate - vacant	

<b>Pittsfield</b>	Delegate - Sheila Irvin	Planning Board, Regional Issues Committee; Educational Services
	Alternate - CJ Hoss	Regional Issues Committee (Chair)
<b>Richmond</b>	Delegate - Pete Lopez	Planning Board
	Alternate - vacant	
<b>Sandisfield</b>	Delegate - Barbara Cormier	Planning Board
	Alternate - Lisa Leavenworth	
<b>Savoy</b>	Delegate - Sarah Satterthwaite	Planning Board; Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services
	Alternate - Bill Drosehn	
<b>Sheffield</b>	Delegate - Sari Hoy	Planning Board
	Alternate - Rene Wood	
<b>Stockbridge</b>	Delegate - Nancy Socha	Planning Board
	Alternate - Christine Rasmussen	Regional Issues Committee
<b>Tyringham</b>	Delegate - Amanda Hamilton	Planning Board, Regional Issues Committee
	Alternate - Sarah Hudson	
<b>Washington</b>	Delegate - Donald Gagnon	Planning Board; Manufacturing
	Alternate - Kent Lew	Select Board
<b>West Stockbridge</b>	Delegate - Dana Bixby	Planning Board
	Alternate - vacant	
<b>Williamstown</b>	Delegate - Kenneth Kuttner	Planning Board
	Alternate - Roger Bolton	CEDS Committee; Educational Services
<b>Windsor</b>	Delegate - Doug McNally	Planning Board, Select Board; Educational Services
	Alternate - vacant	

## Appendix C

### Economic Distress

**Table 25. Economic Distress Criteria – Primary Elements**

	Berkshire County	United States	Threshold Calculation
2020 Per Capita Income	\$37,025	\$35,384	104.6%

Source(s): US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates (2016-2020), Table B19301.

**Table 26. Economic Distress Criteria – Geographic Components**

Census Tract	2020 Per Capita Income	Threshold Calculation	Geographic Area
Tract 9001.00 Berkshire, MA	\$22,507	64%	Pittsfield
Tract 9002.00 Berkshire, MA	\$22,562	64%	Pittsfield
Tract 9003.00 Berkshire, MA	\$30,477	86%	Pittsfield
Tract 9004.00 Berkshire, MA	\$32,055	91%	Pittsfield
Tract 9005.00 Berkshire, MA	\$48,312	137%	Pittsfield
Tract 9006.00 Berkshire, MA	\$20,246	57%	Pittsfield
Tract 9007.00 Berkshire, MA	\$31,999	90%	Pittsfield
Tract 9008.00 Berkshire, MA	\$52,788	149%	Pittsfield
Tract 9009.00 Berkshire, MA	\$35,840	101%	Pittsfield
Tract 9011.00 Berkshire, MA	\$28,784	81%	Pittsfield
Tract 9111.00 Berkshire, MA	\$38,381	108%	Lanesborough
Tract 9121.00 Berkshire, MA	\$44,622	126%	Dalton

Tract 9131.00 Berkshire, MA	\$46,010	130%	Lenox
Tract 9141.00 Berkshire, MA	\$36,200	102%	Lee
Tract 9201.01 Berkshire, MA	\$36,447	103%	Williamstown
Tract 9201.02 Berkshire, MA	\$34,241	97%	Williamstown
Tract 9213.00 Berkshire, MA	\$31,124	88%	North Adams
<b>Tract 9214.00 Berkshire, MA</b>	<b>\$26,689</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>North Adams</b>
Tract 9215.00 Berkshire, MA	\$30,804	87%	North Adams
Tract 9221.00 Berkshire, MA	\$29,124	82%	Adams
Tract 9222.00 Berkshire, MA	\$33,808	96%	Adams
Tract 9223.00 Berkshire, MA	\$34,669	98%	Adams
Tract 9231.00 Berkshire, MA	\$38,874	110%	Cheshire
Tract 9241.00 Berkshire, MA	\$41,355	117%	Stockbridge
Tract 9251.01 Berkshire, MA	\$39,959	113%	Great Barrington
Tract 9251.02 Berkshire, MA	\$32,070	91%	Great Barrington
Tract 9261.00 Berkshire, MA	\$44,775	127%	Sheffield
Tract 9311.00 Berkshire, MA	\$34,049	96%	Clarksburg
Tract 9313.00 Berkshire, MA	\$29,728	84%	Florida/Savoy

Tract 9314.00 Berkshire, MA	\$46,092	130%	Peru/Windsor
Tract 9322.00 Berkshire, MA	\$40,487	114%	Becket/Washington
Tract 9323.00 Berkshire, MA	\$33,616	95%	Hinsdale
Tract 9332.00 Berkshire, MA	\$66,896	189%	Monterey/Tyringham
Tract 9333.00 Berkshire, MA	\$44,698	126%	New Marlborough
Tract 9334.00 Berkshire, MA	\$44,700	126%	Otis/Sandisfield
Tract 9342.00 Berkshire, MA	\$44,765	127%	West Stockbridge
Tract 9343.00 Berkshire, MA	\$52,935	150%	Alford/Egremont/Mt. Washington
Tract 9351.00 Berkshire, MA	\$61,658	174%	Hancock/New Ashford/Richmond
Tract 9352.00 Berkshire, MA	\$37,007	105%	Pittsfield
Tract 9353.00 Berkshire, MA	\$27,333	77%	North Adams

Source(s): US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates (2016-2020), Table B19301.

**Table 27. Economic Distress Criteria – Geographic Components**

Municipality	24-Month Average Unemployment Rate	Threshold Calculation
Berkshire County	6.3%	1.2
Adams	<b>7.4%</b>	<b>2.3</b>
Alford	2.5%	-2.6
Becket	<b>7.5%</b>	<b>2.4</b>
Cheshire	<b>6.1%</b>	<b>1.0</b>

Clarksburg	5.6%	0.5
Dalton	5.8%	0.7
Egremont	2.9%	-2.2
Florida	6.0%	0.9
Great Barrington	5.4%	0.3
Hancock	3.7%	-1.4
<b>Hinsdale</b>	<b>7.7%</b>	<b>2.6</b>
Lanesborough	5.6%	0.5
Lee	5.6%	0.5
<b>Lenox</b>	<b>6.8%</b>	<b>1.7</b>
Monterey	4.6%	-0.5
Mount Washington	2.7%	-2.4
New Ashford	3.7%	-1.4
New Marlborough	4.2%	-0.9
<b>North Adams</b>	<b>7.6%</b>	<b>2.5</b>
Otis	5.6%	0.5
Peru	4.9%	-0.2
<b>Pittsfield</b>	<b>7.1%</b>	<b>2.0</b>
Richmond	3.7%	-1.4
Sandisfield	5.2%	0.1
<b>Savoy</b>	<b>6.5%</b>	<b>1.4</b>
Sheffield	4.3%	-0.8
Stockbridge	5.4%	0.3
Tyringham	4.4%	-0.7

Washington	4.4%	-0.7
West Stockbridge	4.4%	-0.7
Williamstown	4.7%	-0.4
Windsor	4.4%	-0.7

Source(s): MA Dept. of Economic Research, Labor Force and Unemployment Data; US Dept. of Labor Statistics, Unemployment Rate, monthly September 2020 through August 2022.



# Appendix D – Housing Survey Summaries

## Berkshire County Survey of Recent Movers

During the COVID-19 pandemic, housing in Berkshire County turned over quickly as urban dwellers looked to move to more rural areas. This quick turnover, as well as reduced supply, caused prices to jump. Year-round residents often found themselves unable to afford these new prices.

The Recent Movers survey was for people who purchased a house in Berkshire County since January 2000. The survey is designed to understand who they are, why they purchased a home in the Berkshires, how they spend their time and money, and how the pandemic impacted their purchasing decision.

Using a list provided by the Berkshire REALTORS in May 2022, everyone who purchased a home from January 2020 to April 30, 2022, was sent a postcard. Three hundred seventy-seven responses were received, or approximately 7.5%. Two hundred eight six of these, or 75%, were from people who were living outside of Berkshire County prior to January 2020. Throughout the results, difference between the respondents who are from outside of the county as compared to the overall total respondents are called out.

Overall, recent home purchasers are wealthy, educated whites, with an average age of around 55. They purchased single-family residences with two to four bedrooms and used them for personal use. Fifty percent of respondents use the property year-round, with 45% using it as a second home.

For most respondents, the house is their first purchase in Berkshire County; however, 25% came from within the county. Those outside the county came predominantly from the greater New York City area or elsewhere in Massachusetts. Most respondents had planned to purchase a house in the county, but forty percent purchased one in the county due to the pandemic.

The highest percentage of respondents purchased homes for less than \$200,000, but many purchases were from across all price ranges. Renovations, but not expansions, are planned for most properties, including many planning energy improvements.

Most new homeowners are employed full-time but with employers outside the county. They work in-person, remotely, and hybrid and see more hybrid work and less remote moving forward. They work in the Professional and Technical industries, followed by Educational Services, Health Care and Social Assistance, and Other industries.

When it comes to the internet, most new homeowners are using cable internet and are happy with the available service.

Community services used by the new homeowners include municipal transfer stations and public parks, followed by libraries, state parks, and conservation lands. Professional services include trade and repair, snowplowing, construction, landscaping, banking, trash collection, legal and medical services. Purchasing goods is predominately done within their municipality or neighboring municipality, followed by online purchases.

Respondents who lived outside the county before their recent purchase primarily purchased properties in the southern half of the county. They have higher incomes and purchased more expensive properties than those who already live in the county. They purchased their homes due to the cultural amenities, environmental quality, access to lakes and ponds, access to mountains, outdoor recreational opportunities, being a good place to retire, historical character, fewer people/more open space, and proximity to New York City and Boston. The respondents from outside the county mostly report that the pandemic did not influence their decision to purchase property in Berkshire County. They are primarily part-time residents who plan to continue to use it as a second home.

The results and analysis of each question in the survey are available in the full version of the report here:

<https://berkshireplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Survey-of-Recent-Movers-Results-220825.pdf>

## Berkshire County Survey of Second Homeowners

The Berkshires are a well-known tourist destination with almost 9,000-second homes throughout the region. Understanding these second homeowners' needs is vital to ensure they continue to visit and invest in the Berkshires.

The Second Homeowner survey was designed to understand why second homeowners have a house in the Berkshires, how they spend their time and money in the region, and what their plans are for their properties in the future. Additionally, questions were asked about how they used their home during the pandemic and how that use differed pre- and post-pandemic.

The survey was sent to all second homeowners in the county in spring of 2022. Second homeowners were determined by examining assessor records and selecting single-family residences and condominiums with a mailing address more than one municipality away from the property. Postcards were sent to each property, and 731 second homeowners responded, about 8%.

Overall, second homeowners are wealthy, educated whites from major urban areas, primarily New York City. They have a home in the Berkshires mainly for the cultural activities, but also the scenic beauty and outdoor recreation. Many second homeowners have owned their homes for over 20 years. Still, a significant portion has purchased homes during the pandemic in the last two years.

Few second homeowners use municipal services, but if they do, it is likely to be transfer stations, libraries, parks, and beaches. Groceries, hardware/building supplies, and garden supplies tend to be purchased from within their municipality or neighboring municipality, while other items are purchased elsewhere. Trade and repair services are the most used local service, followed by snowplowing, construction, and landscaping.

Almost three-quarters of respondents get internet through Cable or Fiber, and 2/3rds are satisfied with their service. For respondents not satisfied with their internet, better internet

service not being available or being too expensive are equally reported as why they cannot improve their service.

Over half of second homeowners are employed full-time by an employer outside the county, followed by retirees. About 20% of those employed are self-employed. The majority work a combination of remote and on-site. The respondents anticipate a reduction in remote and an increase in hybrid over the next six months.

During the pandemic, most second homeowners used their Berkshire County home as a second home; however, 10% used it as their primary home. Over the next year, those who use it as their primary home will go down significantly, but the region will see an increase in the number that will rent it out part of the year. In 5 years, more respondents plan to make their second home their primary home, which will continue to increase over the next 20 years. In 20 years, many respondents plan to hand their homes down to other family members.

Overall, 20% plan to move to the Berkshires in the future. Most of these will be retirees, but some will continue to work, usually part-time, with their existing employers or their own business.

Most respondents use their second home 5-14 days of the year, with a spike in summer in the 30+ days per month group. During the pandemic, use increased across all time frames over 15 days a month. For the 20% of respondents who rent out their second home, most rent it for year-round or weekly/nightly use. Before the pandemic, there were more monthly rentals. Most renters rent for 0-4 days or 30+ days, with an increase in monthly rentals during the pandemic.

**The results and analysis of each question in the survey are available in the full version of the report here:**

<https://berkshireplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Survey-of-Second-Homeowners-Results-220825.pdf>

# Appendix E - Priority Project Profiles

## Food Access & Security

A pre-pandemic USDA report titled “Enhancing Food Security in the Northeast” describes two components of food security: 1) A region producing enough food to feed itself in the event of shocks such as crop failures or drought, and 2) community food security in which all community residents have access (economic, physical, social) to adequate food supplies. Projects within this section strengthen Berkshire County’s position regarding these components of food security and are representative of major efforts being undertaken within a complex and evolving food access and security landscape in the region.

### Farm to Food Access

**Location:** County-wide

**Project Summary:** Launched in 2021, Berkshire Grown’s Farm to Food Access Program (F2FA) arranges large-scale buying contracts between food access organizations and local farmers to augment the emergency food supply with fresh, locally grown, nutritionally dense food. Berkshire Grown establishes advance buying contracts with local farms and pays a 20% deposit for crops to be delivered to their walk-in storage cooler where the food is aggregated, stored, and distributed. According to their capacity, the food access organizations pay 30-80% of the balance due to the farmers.

**Impact and Significance:** In year 1, with assistance from Berkshire Bounty and Berkshire Community Action Council, F2FA connected fourteen local farms with three primary local food access organizations: People’s Pantry in Great Barrington, Community Health Programs in Great Barrington, and South Congregational Church in Pittsfield, as well as smaller meal programs such as Elder Services of Berkshire County in Pittsfield and Berkshire Food Project in North Adams.

**Related Linkages:** CEDS Goal #1: Healthy People

**Source:** Berkshire Grown, Inc.

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### Farmland Access and Conservation

**Location:** County-wide

**Project Summary:** Berkshire Natural Resources Council (BNRC) is engaged in the expansion of farmland access and farm viability strategies, which will be applied across the county. Such efforts include buy-protect-sell, wraparound farm support services, and deeper collaborations with supporting organizations. In 2022, BNRC is in the process of purchasing a former dairy farm adjacent to one of its conservation reserves (land open for public, passive recreation.)

**Impact and Significance:** This pilot project will serve as a model for determining future structures, building capacity, and gathering support and interest for such efforts across the county. This project moves beyond the historic priorities of conserving prime farmland soils, shifting toward consideration of enabling whole farm viability.

**Related Linkages:** CEDS Goals #1: Healthy People, #4: Strong Business Environment

**Source:** Berkshire Natural Resources Council

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## Growing the Future Food Economy of the Berkshires

**Location:** County-wide

**Project Summary:** This initiative builds on priorities of the Berkshire Blueprint 2.0 relating to the Food and Agriculture cluster: 1) expand local food processing and distribution capacity to grow markets; 2) increase financial viability for existing farmers; 3) build a best-in-class food and farm to table training center; 4) spark the next generation of entrepreneurs and social innovation in the farm and food business; and 5) build the Berkshire brand as a destination for food, culinary, and farm to table authenticity. Implementing these priorities will involve: 1) Supporting processing, distribution, and other supply chain infrastructure projects for local food producers; 2) Development of existing support services for food and agricultural owner-operators, including one on one business technical assistance, financing, and grant writing support; 3) Prioritization of regenerative agriculture adoption to improve climate change resilience in the sector while catalyzing opportunities for greenhouse gas mitigation; and 4) funding commitments from private foundations, investors, state and federal agencies to support the above priorities.

**Impact and Significance:** Berkshire Agricultural Ventures (BAV) invests in farms and food businesses, targeting capacity building resources to gaps and opportunities in the regional food supply chain. As of June 30, 2022, BAV has invested more than \$1.6M in 94 food and farm businesses to help strengthen their viability and grow our region's food economy. In 2021 and 2022, BAV launched a Local Meat Processing Support Program to increase capacity of meat processor operations and improve local supply chain efficiency. In 2022, BAV established a "Market Match" grant program that doubled the purchasing power of over \$100,000 for SNAP spending for consumers and producers at 10 area farmers markets in its first round. BAV also established "climate smart" farmer programs that foster adoption of adaptive and mitigating practices, such as agroforestry, soil health management, and integrated pest management.

**Related Linkages:** CEDS Goals #1: Healthy People, #3: Future-Ready Workforce, #4: Strong Business Environment

**Source:** Berkshire Agricultural Ventures

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## Shared Cold and Freezer Storage Facility

**Location:** County-wide

**Project Summary:** To address food access, storage, and security, this needs-driven effort will design and build a cooperatively owned and operated cold and freezer storage facility that provides ample space for our agricultural and food-based business stakeholders in the Berkshires. The proximal access to cold and freezer storage at scale will decrease carbon footprints from transportation of goods, decrease costs for farms and buyers of food goods, and improve direct access to local food by the regional population.

**Impact and Significance:** With a robust and growing food shed in the region, a critical gap in available cold and freezer storage, unreliable pricing of goods used by local food businesses, and high risk to outside food supply chains, having a local, scaled, centralized hub for cold food storage and distribution will greatly improve the resiliency of our food access and security infrastructure.

**Related Linkages:** CEDS Goals #1: Healthy People, #4: Strong Business Environment

**Source:** 1Berkshire/Berkshire Agricultural Ventures

## Housing

Housing is identified as a key cross-cutting theme in the Berkshire Blueprint 2.0. 1Berkshire and Berkshire Regional Planning Commission convened housing practitioners to assist in identifying critical issues. The resulting [Housing Vision for the Berkshires](#) recommends near-term actions and strategies to begin addressing these issues. Projects such as those listed below can be supported and expedited by ongoing pursuit of the strategies named within the Housing Vision document.

### Berkshire Cottages at 100 Bridge Street

**Location:** Great Barrington

**Project Summary:** The CDC of South Berkshire is planning to develop the remaining 2-acre parcel of a redevelopment project which includes Bentley Affordable Housing Complex and the CDC's Riverfront Park. The new complex is in preliminary planning stages, with one possibility including a mix of rental units and home ownership. When complete, this will be the CDCSB's fourth affordable housing complex in Great Barrington, increasing to a total of more than 150 units. The CDCSB is in discussions with Berkshire Housing Development Corporation as a co-sponsor and has begun working with the Great Barrington Affordable Housing Trust as a source of down payments for potential homebuyers.

**Impact and Significance:** This project will help improve economic conditions by adding more much-needed affordable (and workforce) housing units to the region, helping LMI families remain in their communities and impacting businesses that have difficulty hiring and retaining staff because of the lack of housing.

**Related Linkages:** CEDS Goals #1: Healthy People, #2: Resilient Communities

**Source:** Community Development Corporation of South Berkshire

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### 20 East Street Redevelopment

**Location:** Adams

**Project Summary:** 20 East Street is a 5.7-acre parcel, home to the town's former Community Center and close to downtown. An RFP in 2021 resulted in CMV Construction of Stephentown NY being awarded the project, and approval of a future purchase and sale agreement being approved at the Town of Adams' June 2021 Town Meeting. Phase 1 of CMV's proposal is to redevelop the Community Center structure into eight market rate housing units. Phase 2 will explore roughly twenty additional townhouse style housing units throughout the rest of the site. The developer would like to utilize the Town's Smart Growth zoning during the second phase, which will require 20% of the units to be designated as affordable. The developer also plans to pursue creation of an early childhood education center at the site.

**Impact and Significance:** The project will create much needed market rate and affordable housing as well as childcare services in Adams and the northern Berkshires which will benefit working families. The projects proximity to the Adams downtown will help generate demand and foot traffic to local businesses.

**Related Linkages:** CEDS Goals #1: Healthy People, #2: Resilient Communities

**Source:** Town of Adams

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### Union Block Redevelopment

**Location:** Dalton

**Project Summary:** Construction of four new single bedroom apartments with appliances, each between 530 and 620 s.f. with additional storage on the third floor. The project also includes the placement of an elevator on the east side of the building. A later phase would include two additional apartments.

**Impact and Significance:** The Town of Dalton has a severe shortage of market rate downtown housing. The additional units will bring in more tax dollars to the town, add more potential workers, contribute to construction development, and inspire more development of needed housing in this community, especially in the downtown area. This project also adds much needed accessible housing.

**Related Linkages:** CEDS Goals #1: Healthy People, #2: Resilient Communities

**Source:** Ali Unionblock LLC / Linda & Faisal Ali

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### White Terrace

**Location:** Pittsfield

**Project Summary:** Proposed renovation of the historic White Terrace building trio on North Street in downtown Pittsfield into 41 affordable apartments with supportive services. Design work is complete, and a purchase and sale agreement has been executed with an experienced developer.

**Impact and Significance:** Services will focus on ensuring tenancy for residents by addressing root causes of housing insecurity. Project will add a significant number of affordable units in the largest municipality in Berkshire County

**Related Linkages:** CEDS Goals #1: Healthy People, #2: Resilient Communities

**Source:** City of Pittsfield

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### Wright Building

**Location:** Pittsfield

**Project Summary:** Project consists of the renovation of the historic Wright Building on North Street in downtown Pittsfield. The completed project will create 16-20 market rate residential units on the upper two stories and 12,000 square feet of modern commercial space on the ground floor.

**Impact and Significance:** This project is part of the greater effort to revitalize downtown Pittsfield, which has seen the renovation and reuse of many significant buildings in recent years. Other projects include Hotel on North, Onota Building redevelopment, and Howard Building redevelopment, as well as the proposed White Terrace renovation.

**Related Linkages:** CEDS Goals #1: Healthy People, #2: Resilient Communities

**Source:** City of Pittsfield

## Tourism, Hospitality & Outdoor Recreation

Although not the region's largest industry, Tourism and Hospitality contributes significantly to the economy of Berkshire County and through employment, revenue for businesses and nonprofits, local rooms and meals tax receipts, quality of life for residents, and impact on the region's brand recognition. In addition to high-profile arts and culture reputation, outdoor recreation opportunities have become an increasingly important aspect of the overall draw of the Berkshires.

### 79 Bridge Street

**Location:** Great Barrington

**Project Summary:** Redevelopment and reuse of the former Searles and Bryant Schools in downtown Great Barrington. In 2014, renovations on the former Bryant School were completed and the building reopened as the world headquarters for Iredale Cosmetics. In 2016, the former Searles School was sold to 79 Bridge

Street Realty LLC, owned by local hotel developer Vijay Mahida, who intends to convert the building into a 60,000-square-foot luxury hotel with 88 rooms. In 2021, expected completion date changed to 2024.

**Impact and Significance:**

**Related Linkages:** CEDS Goal #4: Strong Business Environment

**Source:** Town of Great Barrington

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## Adventure Trail Design and Engineering

**Location:** North Adams

**Project Summary:** This proposed 3.4-mile scenic path intended to continue the Williamstown bike path currently under construction, would cross the Hoosic River multiple times, incorporate elevated boardwalks through abandoned industrial waterways, reimagines century-old infrastructure, and highlights North Adams history, passing through repurposed mill buildings and rugged natural landscapes. While the long-term goal is to connect with the Ashuwillticook Trail to the south, the Adventure Trail is laser-focused on connecting cultural, educational, and recreational assets in North Adams and Williamstown, catalyzing increased economic activity, leveraging private investment, and creating outdoor opportunities for residents and visitors. After many years of study and route selection, the project is now in the active design and engineering phase. A grant from Mass Trails funded full survey and alignment work on the western half of the trail, and Mass DOT funded a feasibility study for the eastern portion (completed in early 2022.) Additional private funds have been raised to continue the design and engineering process and work is progressing in collaboration with Mass DOT so that project may be added to the Commonwealth's construction funding cycle.

**Impact and Significance:** The Adventure Trail is the artery for a circulation network connecting community and cultural assets while also providing new access to underutilized natural resources. Effectively linking MASS MoCA to Williams College and The Clark, it's a complete game changer for visitors and residents in the Northern Berkshires. It addresses the community needs of safe alternative transportation, public health and wellness, and intra-neighborhood connectivity. As envisioned it will also be an independent attraction, encouraging new generations to visit and more importantly, to stay, explore, and reside in North Adams. Over \$800k in public and private investment has already funded the initial conceptual design. Ultimately, the construction of the Adventure Trail, and the related capital infusion, could generate over 100 permanent jobs and will produce an initial annual economic impact in excess of \$8M.

**Related Linkages:** CEDS Goals #1: Healthy People, #2: Resilient Communities, #5: Robust Infrastructure

**Source:** North Adams Adventure Trail Consortium

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## Adams Theater Redevelopment

**Location:** Adams

**Project Summary:** Adams Theater LLC has purchased the long-vacant (since 1967) 11,056 square foot building in the heart of downtown Adams, which includes an unused auditorium and two vacant street-front retail spaces. After extensive planning and community engagement, renovations of the lobby/café and bathrooms have begun. The auditorium needs electric and mechanic upgrades as well as a new roof and an accessible new floor.

Adams Theater aims to develop a new business model for performing arts centers that would expand the space and program to non-traditional users, including local schools, event rentals, and regional performing arts groups looking for teaching, rehearsal, and performance space.

**Impact and Significance:** From a commercial perspective, performing arts programs will increase the time one spends downtown from an hour to an evening, spurring more economic activity. From a community building perspective, a performing arts center has the capacity to engage local working families as well as visitors, artists, as well as businesspeople, children as well as seniors. Once completed, Adams Theater will be a multifunctional performance venue and accelerate downtown development. Adams Theater is taking on a leadership role in revitalizing the downtown economy, collaborating with new businesses on shared resources and co-marketing efforts. The Theater's long-term goal is to collaborate with more businesses in the region, including the Greylock Glen project that focuses on attracting ecotourism and outdoor recreational activities. Together, the two can boost overnight tourism, provide new employment opportunities in the creative and recreational industry, and attract other private investment in the region.

**Related Linkages:** CEDS Goals #2: Resilient Communities, #4: Strong Business Environment

**Source:** Adams Theater LLC

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### Explore Northern Berks (Digital Tourism Office)

**Location:** North Adams

**Project Summary:** This mobile app will act as a digital Office of Tourism to make Northern Berkshire County business, cultural, and natural recreation information more easily accessible and accurate for locals and visitors. The Explore Northern Berks app will: Clarify and amplify a unified story and brand for the Northern Berkshires that has not previously been done; expand the digital marketing footprint for all local businesses in the Northern Berkshires, especially for those that don't have the resources or expertise to manage their own digital marketing; centralize, curate, and maintain local information about businesses, cultural activities, natural resources, and events to encourage more spending in our local economy; elevate and highlight minority-owned businesses.

**Impact and Significance:** The Explore Northern Berks app will stimulate economic activity for the small business community in Northern Berkshire County by making local information more seamless, accessible, relevant, and up to date, thus encouraging a deeper exploration of our region by tourists and locals, particularly among younger demographics.

**Related Linkages:** CEDS Goals #2: Resilient Communities, #4: Strong Business Environment

**Source:** North Adams Chamber of Commerce

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### Greylock Glen Resort Project

**Location:** Adams

**Project Summary:** The Town's Greylock Glen Resort, envisioned as a four-season recreation and environmental education destination, includes construction of an environmental education center (the "Outdoor Center"), a 140-site campground, lodging and conference facilities, performing arts amphitheater, and multi-use trails system with a Nordic ski center. The Glen is well positioned adjacent to the Mount Greylock State Reservation, which is traversed by the Appalachian National Scenic Trail.

**Impact and Significance:** The Glen development project will place Adams and Berkshire County in the global marketplace as a destination for outdoor recreation. With recreation a primary reason some 3 million visitors come to the Berkshires annually (pre-pandemic), the Glen development will lead to long term increases in tourist activity in Adams and the region, complimenting existing cultural venues that have also strengthened the Berkshire economy until impacted so negatively by the pandemic. Unlike other Berkshire communities, Adams has not yet benefitted from tourism. The Project, in advancing the Glen, will change this -



transforming the local economy from one based primarily on manufacturing to one recreational tourism-based.

Highlights from the study by C. H. Johnson Consulting, Inc., "Proposed Greylock Glen Resort Impact Analysis - Adams, MA," (December 2019) show the immediate economic impact from the first phase of the development, with imminent construction of the Outdoor Center component. Approximately 118 jobs are expected to be created in the first year of the Outdoor Center operations, and this is expected to grow to 168 jobs over 10 years (Johnson). Total spending (direct, indirect, and induced) is projected to be \$3.4 million in year 1 and will grow to \$5.4 million in year 10 from the Outdoor Center element of the resort. The overall Glen development is estimated to generate \$19.4 million in total spending, \$6.5 million in increased earnings, 476 FTE jobs (including 269 direct FTE jobs and 207 indirect and induced FTE jobs), and \$2.2 million of increased tax revenues in Year 3 of the project, which is the first full year in which all components are in operation. Each of these figures is anticipated to grow over the course of the first 5-10 years of full operation. These projections are limited to the direct impact of the resort itself, and do not include the potential for additional impact from subsequent developments in the surrounding local area.

The economic impact generated by the construction of the proposed Greylock Glen development is estimated to create 1,100 temporary construction jobs, \$40.6 million in total spending, and \$9.3 million in increased earnings (Johnson). These impacts will be seen incrementally, beginning as early as spring 2022 with the anticipated construction start of the Outdoor Center. Construction of the overall Greylock Glen Resort will occur in phases (Phase 1 = Outdoor Center, Campground) and upon completion, the region will see major economic and fiscal impacts through jobs, direct spending, and tax revenue.

**Related Linkages:** CEDS Goals 2#Resilient Communities, #4: Strong Business Environment

**Source:** Town of Adams

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### Springside House

**Location:** Pittsfield

**Project Summary:** Renovation of the historic Springside House in Pittsfield's Springside Park into a "natural park center" with space for a visitor center, natural and historical exhibits, classrooms, and public gatherings. Potential space for anchor commercial tenant as well as opportunity to house other environmental and/or historic preservation-based non-profits. Feasibility, preliminary engineering, cost estimates completed, permitting is underway. Approximately 12% of funding committed.

**Impact and Significance:** The restoration of this historic property will provide a destination for visitors to experience Springside Park, Pittsfield, and the County.

**Related Linkages:** CEDS Goals #1: Healthy People, #2: Resilient Communities

**Source:** City of Pittsfield

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### Wahconah Park

**Location:** Pittsfield

**Project Summary:** The renovation of the Wahconah Park, a National Register listed baseball park grandstand, is a priority project for the City. The project that is being proposed will rebuild the grandstand and bring it into compliance with modern building codes, enhance the fan and operator experience and preserve the character defining elements that have made this historic park a beloved sports and entertainment venue for nearly 75 years. Local funds (\$20,000) have already been committed for a comprehensive structural assessment of the grandstand. Additional city funding commitments are being

discussed and an overall project funding strategy is being developed. The City will seek funding from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA) PARC grant program and the Massachusetts Historic Commission (MHC) Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund (MPPF), among others.

**Impact and Significance:** Wahconah Park, located in a working-class Environmental Justice neighborhood, is a historic park that is vital to the City's history and its heart. The Park boasts one of the last remaining wooden grandstands in the country and in 2005 - in recognition of its historical significance - was placed on the National Register of Historic Places. Aside from its historical significance, the park is a regional facility that serves all of Berkshire County, offering a large open-air arena for various community events.

**Related Linkages:** CEDS Goal #2: Resilient Communities

**Source:** City of Pittsfield

## Municipal & Public Safety Facilities

An important area for investment in the Berkshire region is within municipal properties serving our communities, especially public safety facilities. The specific projects listed below are representative of a larger need for increased investment in repair, renovation, or relocation of such facilities.

### Columbus Avenue Parking Garage

**Location:** Pittsfield

**Project Summary:** Construction of a new three-story parking garage between Columbus Ave. and Summer St. in downtown Pittsfield. The garage will be adjacent to the Berkshire Intermodal Transportation Center, the primary rail and public transit hub in the County. All pre-construction work has been completed and project is shovel ready, the old garage has been demolished and surface lot constructed.

**Impact and Significance:** Part of the greater effort to revitalize downtown Pittsfield, expand downtown market rate housing and expand transit options in the City and County. The renovation of the garage will coincide with the Berkshire Flyer, a pilot program providing seasonal rail service from Pittsfield to New York City.

Berkshire Flyer, seasonal rail service from Pittsfield to NYC, will bring visitors from outside of the region into Berkshire County and downtown Pittsfield. As part of a regional economic development effort, Berkshire Flyer is directly related to the region's tourism and hospitality cluster, which is cited as one of the 5 central economic clusters for the region in the Berkshire Blueprint 2.0.

**Related Linkages:** CEDS Goals #2: Resilient Communities, #5: Robust Infrastructure; Priority Project category: Tourism, Hospitality & Outdoor Recreation

**Source:** City of Pittsfield

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### Harriman & West Airport

**Location:** North Adams

**Project Summary:** Harriman & West Airport (AQW) has a new Administration Building with restaurant space that needs to be built out. A restaurant at the airport would drive additional traffic to Harriman & West and provide economic opportunities for the entire Northern Berkshire area. The view from floor to ceiling windows is a stunning view of the runway against the mountains. The restaurant space currently exists with infrastructure but requires kitchen design, build out and furnishings.

**Impact and Significance:** The presence of a restaurant will make Harriman & West more attractive to

tourists and persons flying into the region to visit Williams College, Clark Art Institute, MASS MoCA, and other venues throughout Northern Berkshire. Word of mouth will generate increased interest in AQW, increase overnight stays at area hotels and increased revenue for the airport itself.

**Related Linkages:** CEDS Goal #5: Robust Infrastructure; Priority Project category: Tourism, Hospitality & Outdoor Recreation

**Source:** City of North Adams/FAA

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### Hoosic River Flood Control Modernization

**Location:** North Adams

**Project Summary:** The current flood control system in North Adams consists of two concrete channelized branches running through the City's downtown, converging at the MASS MoCA complex, and continuing west to Vermont and New York. The flood chutes were constructed by the US Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) in the 1950s and are deteriorating in several locations. Continued deterioration threatens the City's resilience from flooding.

The City of North Adams, in partnership with Hoosic River Revival (HRR), endeavors to have the modernization of the Hoosic River flood control system provide four major outcomes: climate resiliency; economic development; an ecologically-sound river; and connections with our cultural, historical, and recreational resources. Our Federal and State representatives are working to obtain the necessary funding for the Corps to undertake a Feasibility Study, a necessary first step in modernizing the flood control system. Once the Feasibility Study is complete, modernization work could begin, and the economic development would follow shortly thereafter.

**Impact and Significance:** Today, culture, education, hospitality, and retail drive the City's economy. A 21st century redesigned flood-controlled river is an opportunity to enhance economic opportunity that leverages existing community assets such as the world-renown MASS MoCA, our Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts (MCLA), our bike trails, restaurants, and river-based recreation. A thoughtful plan for the new flood control system can add to the appeal of our regional, cultural, and educational venues. Additionally, new cultural and commercial enterprises, such as entertainment venues, retail shops, restaurants, and river view residential developments are expected outgrowths along an enhanced riverway.

**Related Linkages:** CEDS Goals #2: Resilient Communities, #5: Robust Infrastructure

**Source:** Hoosic River Revival, Inc./City of North Adams

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### North Adams Public Safety Complex

**Location:** North Adams

**Project Summary:** Construction of a new North Adams Public Safety Complex. The present facility was built in the mid-1950s and is antiquated across many areas (small interior spaces, old roof, electrical, heating, windows, etc.). The building is not fully handicap compliant and the city must temporarily relocate the police department to comply with current Department of Justice demands. The footprint of the overall property is too small to hold both needed police vehicles, let alone employees. It is time to construct a new multi-purposed facility that houses police and fire, emergency/ambulatory, as well as dispatching disciplines. The city is presently doing a "Needs Assessment" with an architect, which in turn will dictate the necessary site size. This work is about 25% completed.

**Impact and Significance:** Having a state of art and modern police and fire safety complex will not only improve the general welfare of the community in terms of having better equipment, training, etc. it will also benefit the region. It is not uncommon for workers to live in other parts of the county, and being a Northern

Berkshire project, improved employment will help retain professional workers in the county. The needed modernization for such a new facility is overdue and will present North Adams as being a more inviting community in which to locate. Another factor will be the ability to improve upon "mutual aid." The surrounding communities of Williamstown, Adams, Clarksburg, and Savoy have some local firefighting capacity, although it is all volunteer based. There are public safety issues that arise whereby additional police and fire protection need to be dispatched. A new facility will help to achieve this.

**Related Linkages:** CEDS Goals #1: Healthy People, #2: Resilient Communities, #5: Robust Infrastructure  
**Source:** City of North Adams

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### Pittsfield Police Station

**Location:** Pittsfield

**Project Summary:** Construction of new police headquarters facility for the Pittsfield Police Department to replace the current aging and failing facility. The new facility will improve safety standards, expand storage, and accommodate entire authorized and funded police force, and is part of city's overall program to enhance public safety and modernize government. Site screening and facility needs assessment have been completed. Short listed potential sites are being evaluated and ranked. Design and permitting work expected to begin in 2022 with a goal of being shovel ready by 2023.

**Impact and Significance:** The new facility will improve safety standards, expand storage, and accommodate the entire authorized and funded police force in Berkshire County's largest municipality.

**Related Linkages:** CEDS Goals #2: Resilient Communities, #5: Robust Infrastructure  
**Source:** City of Pittsfield

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### Williamstown Fire Station

**Location:** Williamstown

**Project Summary:** The Williamstown Fire District is planning to build a new fire station to meet the needs of the community for the next 50 years. Members of the Williamstown Fire Department are equipped and trained to respond for structural and wildland fires, search and rescue, ice and water rescue, hazardous materials spills or releases, motor vehicle extrication, CPR, and first aid support. The department is also responsible for code enforcement, community education, fire prevention and safety training.

**Impact and Significance:** This project will improve public safety for the community as a whole and provide a safer and healthier work environment for volunteer first responders who are on call 24-7 to respond to risks of life, property, and the environment. Having a new facility that meets today's standards, will ensure a healthy and safe work environment for years to come and aid in attracting volunteers to the service. In addition, a new station will improve the ISO rating for Williamstown, which translates into lower risk therefore better insurance rates for all community properties, a real economic benefit for everyone. A safer town also translates into a more attractive town for new residential growth.

**Related Linkages:** CEDS Goals #1: Healthy People, #2: Resilient Communities, #5: Robust Infrastructure  
**Source:** Williamstown Fire District

## Programs & Services

### Berkshire Family YMCA Building Renovation and Expansion

**Location:** Pittsfield

**Project Summary:** The Y building at 292 North Street is composed of two structures; a 1909 building (housing the childcare facility) and an addition built in 1981 (housing pool and fitness facilities). The major components of the facility project are:

- **Childcare Center Renovation:** The YMCA's full-day, year-round, high-quality care is highly valued by local families. The Y provides a 50% reduction of the daily rate for childcare for qualified families through our financial aid process. The quality and size of the nationally accredited child development program is being expanded to address community needs and to shorten our ever-present waiting list. Available slots will increase by 35%, from 70 to 100+. Renovations will include the addition of a multi-purpose room with open space for gross motor development and enhanced staff facilities.
- **Health and Fitness Improvements:** A youth basketball court will be installed to support the Y's thriving basketball program and other youth and adult group programs. An elevated indoor walking/running track for year-round use will be added above the court to offer flat, smooth-surfaced exercise options in a monitored, climate-controlled setting. This is especially important for seniors, and those challenged by uneven surfaces and inclement weather.
- **Structural, systems and façade improvements:** Drafty and bricked up windows will be replaced with energy efficient glass to let natural daylight in. Mortar joints will be repointed, LED lights and an energy-efficient heating and cooling system will be installed to conserve energy and save on utility costs. This also opens the front facing façade on North St. opening the Y to the community.

**Impact and Significance:** The project will facilitate community improvements and investments including:

- **Direct Job Creation:** Construction will provide 50+ FTE, well-paying jobs. Post construction, the project will result in approximately 6 new FTE positions at the YMCA.
- **Community Revitalization:** Maintaining and enhancing the physical fabric of downtown Pittsfield boosts not only the aesthetic of the neighborhood, but feelings of safety and pride among residents. The project will serve as an example to other property owners and has the potential to spur other preservation and revitalization efforts in the area. Projections demonstrate that Y membership will grow by 15% within 3 years of completion. Both childcare and membership/program revenue increases will strengthen Y operations over the long term. Y programs cultivate the values, skills and relationships that lead to positive behaviors, civic-mindedness, better health and educational achievement.
- **Education:** The Y is the largest early childcare provider in Berkshire County and also provides high quality after school and summer programming for children and youth ages 5-18. The renovation will expand after school programming that includes both academic enrichment (homework help, tutoring and mentoring) and physical, wellness, social and cultural activities for hundreds of school-aged children each year. As such, the project will enhance academic achievement, socialization, and workforce readiness for ongoing generations of Pittsfield and Berkshire County young people.

**Related Linkages:** CEDS Goals #1: Healthy People, #2: Resilient Communities, 3#: Future-Ready Workforce

**Source:** Berkshire Family YMCA

## BRPC Brownfields Program

**Location:** County-wide

**Project Summary:** Two-part assessment program and revolving loan fund (RLF) used to provide municipalities and developers with the resources to assess and cleanup brownfields sites. Through its assessment program, BRPC hires a licensed site professional to investigate potential contamination on sites. The RLF program provides flexible loans (and sub-grants) to municipalities and other entities to help pay for the removal of contamination. The purpose of this program is to promote the reuse and redevelopment of contaminated, vacant, or underutilized properties.

**Impact and Significance:** This program is intended to put unused or underused properties back into beneficial use. Benefits include the cleanup of blighted properties, removal of potential threats to human health and safety, and increased investment in underused or vacant properties. This program aims to improve the economic conditions of the region through investment in the community and redevelopment in the form of parks and open space, housing, or for commercial, industrial, or institutional use, all of which are beneficial to the economic conditions of the region.

**Related Linkages:** CEDS Goals #1: Healthy People, #2: Resilient Communities, #4: Strong Business Environment; Priority Project categories: Mixed Use & Commercial Site Redevelopment, Housing

**Source:** Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

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## VIM Berkshires Facility Expansion

**Location:** Great Barrington

**Project Summary:** Volunteers In Medicine (VIM)'s mission is to provide access to free, comprehensive, quality health care for income-qualified, uninsured, and underinsured adults living in the Berkshire region, with a vision of a society in which everyone has an equal opportunity to achieve good health. VIM's services include primary and preventive medical care, women's health, full restorative dentistry, behavioral health, optometry, diabetic and nutritional counseling, and non-opioid pain management incorporating acupuncture, therapeutic massage, and mindfulness training. VIM treats the social determinants of health as a fully integrated component of every patient's care. VIM's Social Determinants of Health program provides patients with hundreds of direct referrals annually to over 30 area social service agencies to assist with housing, food insecurity, job training, education, and other critical services that impact their health outcomes.

Since 2004, VIM's patient base has grown steadily to more than 1,300, in response to external policies and practices that leave so many without adequate care. In the past year, 90% of VIM's medical patients were minority immigrants. Dental patients represent a more mixed population as Medicare patients do not receive dental benefits. Most patients work multiple part time jobs that offer no benefits.

To keep pace with rapidly increasing demand, VIM needs to expand and upgrade our facility. This expansion will allow VIM to continue to provide comprehensive health care to the most vulnerable. VIM currently rents 4200 square feet. With an opportunity to expand to 5200+ feet, and option to buy the building. The expansion project will include a complete renovation of current space as well as incorporating additional square footage.

**Impact and Significance:** VIM exists for the sole purpose of addressing gaps in access to healthcare and in eliminating health inequity, treating the people the system leaves behind: low-income, uninsured, and underinsured adults, primarily minority immigrants. Perhaps most importantly, VIM understands the vital importance of fully integrating attention to the social determinants of health into each patient's treatment

plan. Their comprehensive approach to healthcare has been vital to the health outcomes of our patients and is being held up as a model for healthcare across the state. In fact, the Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation of MA has awarded VIM a grant to assess and document its healthcare model so that it may be used by others. In a region with a growing immigrant population, it is vital that VIM Berkshires can meet the growing demand- improving not only the lives of the individuals, but also helping to ensure economic strength of the region.

- VIM has a robust behavioral health program that addresses substance use disorders and helps patients process the trauma they have experienced before, during and after their arrivals in our area. VIM is the only area facility that provides counseling in Spanish, Portuguese, and French.
- VIM helps patients manage chronic conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, obesity, and hyperlipidemia. Management of chronic illness leads to a healthier work force, and less economic impact on our healthcare system.
- VIM offers same day appointments for acute issues and has an average wait of less than a month to establish new patients (less than a week for new patients with urgent needs). VIM works closely with BHS's Advocacy for Access to determine if those seeking care are eligible for insurance. This has a direct impact on ensuring funding for our local healthcare system when applicable.
- Beginning with the first appointment, VIM's highly trained community health workers (all immigrants themselves) assess each patient for critical needs related to housing, food insecurity, safety, employment, education, childcare and more.
- BHS's third-year residents complete their public health rotations at VIM under the tutelage of VIM Medical Director and BHS resident supervisor. They also run a vibrant program of externships with BCC, UMass and Elms College nursing students, the Tufts Dental School, Springfield Technical Community College (dental hygiene students), and welcome high school students for internships or shadowing opportunities, with the goal of encouraging young professionals to eventually set up practice in our area where they are sorely needed.
- Half of VIM's small paid staff comes from the minority immigrant community, and our commitment to diversity, equity, accessibility and inclusion (DEAI) includes ensuring they are paid a living wage and given meaningful learning, development and managerial opportunities.

**Related Linkages:** CEDS Goals #1: Healthy People, #2: Resilient Communities, #3: Future-Ready Workforce

**Source:** VIM Berkshires

## Mixed Use & Commercial Site Redevelopment

Previous CEDS documents and other BRPC reports have emphasized the importance of redevelopment at existing sites, particularly in light of the limited developable land in the region due to factors such as slope, presence of wetlands, conservation restrictions, and other factors. Commercial site redevelopment for industrial and mixed-use purposes makes the most of our economic past and sets the stage for future successes.

### Blackinton Infrastructure

**Location:** North Adams

**Project Summary:** The first phase of this project involves significant infrastructure improvements to the historic Blackinton neighborhood in North Adams to address longstanding flooding and drainage issues caused by the 19th century industrial waterways once used to feed the Blackinton Mill and the adjacent former tannery property. Ultimately, the project will restore the former tannery site to a landscaped

greenspace and new parking area, a public canoe launch, and trailhead for a publicly accessible trail system. This project will lay the groundwork for an eight-figure mixed-use redevelopment of the Blackinton Mill site by developers of the nearby TOURISTS Hotel and will help advance the long-awaited North Adams bike path project. The Blackinton Mill redevelopment has been approved for federal and state Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit programs and the developers are eager to move forward. However, this critical infrastructure work must be completed prior to the mill renovation. As of July 2022, the first phase of the project is being put out to bid for construction to begin this year.

**Impact and Significance:** North Adams, along with other Berkshire communities, has significant issues with outdated or failing public infrastructure. This project is a prime example of how a strong public/private partnership can advance community goals and priorities by making investments in infrastructure improvements that catalyze private development. The recognition that fixing something like a failing stormwater system can lead directly to the creation of much-needed permanent jobs and increased economic activity is a powerful connection. Beyond the impact of this project, there's a latent opportunity for communities like North Adams to assess where infrastructure limitations may be inhibiting private investment and growth.

**Related Linkages:** CEDS Goals #2: Resilient Communities, #4 Strong Business Community, #5: Robust Infrastructure; Priority Project category: Tourism, Hospitality & Outdoor Recreation

**Source:** City of North Adams/TOURISTS

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### Columbia Mill Redevelopment

**Location:** Lee

**Project Summary:** The Columbia Mill is a former paper mill built in 1826 and in operation until 2008. The mill was purchased for marijuana cultivation and received a permit for such in 2019. No progress has been made on this project since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic

**Impact and Significance:** This project will convert a vacant facility into a newly renovated facility with the potential to create many new jobs in the area. Former industrial sites such as mills and factories are some of the largest developable lots in Berkshire County by land and building area, with some containing upwards of 200,000 square feet. Given the general lack of large plots suitable for development throughout the County, the redevelopment and reuse of these sites is crucial for the regional economy. The large size and often open floorplan of these buildings make them appropriate for many uses including housing, small office and retail space, manufacturing, restaurants and hotels, and large, service-based enterprises, as well as multi-use facilities that combine these applications.

**Related Linkages:** CEDS Goal #2: Resilient Communities

**Source:** Town of Lee

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### Curtis Fine Paper Redevelopment

**Location:** Adams

**Project Summary:** The Curtis Fine paper site is an 11.8-acre former industrial property in Adams with contamination found in soil, water, and hazardous waste throughout the existing structures. The property was owned and operated by several paper companies throughout its life, with mill operations ending in 2003. The Town is currently in the process of acquiring the property through tax-title and is eager to facilitate its reuse and redevelopment. Town ownership of the property is anticipated soon. The site is prime for redevelopment as it is located adjacent to a major transportation route (Route 8), as well as rail. Additionally, the property is fully connected to electric, water, and sewer utilities. Its relatively large size and multiple structures could accommodate potential subdivision and multiple uses. The Town needs to



identify and mitigate development constraints (environmental contaminants, functionally obsolete buildings, etc.) on the property for the private sector to transition the property to a higher and better use (and contribute to the local economy and tax base).

**Impact and Significance:** Preparing the Curtis Fine Paper site for future redevelopment could help to attract large employers to the area.

**Related Linkages:** CEDS Goal #2: Resilient Communities, #4: Strong Business Environment

**Source:** Town of Adams

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### Dowlin Building Redevelopment

**Location:** North Adams

**Project Summary:** The Dowlin Building (101-107 Main Street) in downtown North Adams was built in 1895 and has been home to a variety of businesses as well as a 50-unit apartment complex. The building has sat vacant for over a decade, leaving a massive gap in the downtown corridor. Redevelopment of this building will encompass a top to bottom renovation into a mixed-use complex that aims to incorporate elements of housing, hospitality, and retail. Additionally, preservation and restoration of historic components of the building will be done to maintain its iconic historic integrity as one of the largest buildings remaining downtown.

**Impact and Significance:** The project will not only create housing in downtown North Adams, but also will create several jobs, both temporary and permanent, while reactivating a massive vacant footprint in the central commercial district of the second largest city in Berkshire County. The project helps address a large housing need previously identified in the City's Housing Needs Assessment of 2020. Bringing this building into operation again will add a significant amount to the commercial tax base, both from the building itself and the businesses that will occupy the commercial spaces.

**Related Linkages:** CEDS Goals #1: Healthy People, #2: Resilient Communities, #4: Strong Business Environment

**Source:** Veselko Buntic/Dowlin Building LLC

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### Eagle Mill Redevelopment

**Location:** Lee

**Project Summary:** Eagle Mill is a former paper mill originally built in 1808 and most recently operated by Schweitzer-Mauduit until the facility's closure in 2008. In 2017, Eagle Mill Redevelopment, LLC purchased the site, and has since acquired several abutting and nearby properties. Eagle Mill Redevelopment plans to complete a two-phase \$70,000,000 renovation of the mill and surrounding properties comprised of historic renovation of three mill buildings and construction of three new buildings into a mixed-use complex that will include 122 affordable apartments, 6 ownership townhouse units, 10,000-square-foot restaurant/market space and 4000 square feet of commercial/office space.

**Impact and Significance:** This project will provide affordable and workforce housing which will enhance the region's ability to attract and maintain a more sufficient work force. New residents will substantially improve the economic conditions of the Town of Lee by supporting local businesses, cultural institutions, etc. Because of its location, the project will promote the walkability of the downtown area. This project will clean up the significant hazardous materials and brownfields areas associated with the former industrial complex.

**Related Linkages:** CEDS Goals #2: Resilient Communities, #3: Strong Business Environment; Priority Project category: Housing

**Source:** Eagle Mill Redevelopment, LLC

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## Greylock Mill Redevelopment

**Location:** Lee

**Project Summary:** Greylock mill is former paper mill that was built in the 1960's and operated by Schweitzer-Mauduit until 2008. The property was purchased by Lee Town Development with the intention of converting the mill into a cannabis cultivation and manufacturing plant.

**Impact and Significance:** This project is estimated to create up to 100 new jobs. Unfortunately, no progress has been made on this project since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Former industrial sites such as mills and factories are some of the largest developable lots in Berkshire County by land and building area, with some containing upwards of 200,000 square feet. Given the general lack of large plots suitable for development throughout the County, the redevelopment and reuse of these sites is crucial for the regional economy. The large size and often open floorplan of these buildings make them appropriate for many uses including housing, small office and retail space, manufacturing, restaurants and hotels, and large, service-based enterprises, as well as multi-use facilities that combine these applications.

**Related Linkages:** CEDS Goal #2: Resilient Communities

**Source:** Town of Lee

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## Greylock WORKS

**Location:** North Adams

**Project Summary:** Greylock WORKS is the adaptive repurposing of a 240,000 square foot former cotton-spinning mill with a synergistic mix of uses, including indoor and outdoor event spaces, farm-to-table restaurant, incubator kitchen, artisanal food production areas, co-work community, fitness center, residential lofts ( $\pm$  50), and public waterfront park. Greylock WORKS' goal remains to create complementary culture, strengthen communities, and support a circular economy through regenerative design and connection to place. The movement to safeguard healthy regional food systems is growing. Greylock WORKS' programming strives to increase access to nutrition, engage multiple generations through convivial interaction around the terroir of the region, train a hospitality workforce, and help support a philosophy that values the intellect, the arts, and the natural environment. Greylock WORKS celebrates local food as a cultural complement to the bounty of art and education that the region already enjoys.

**Impact and Significance:** The vision to revitalize this campus grew out of an appreciation for the Northern Berkshires and listening to the community's clear desire to spur economic development while safeguarding its core characteristics of mills and farming. Greylock WORKS has become a bridge between communities, as well as a regional destination. Our intimate gathering spaces provide a place for peer networking and focused strategic planning at the local level, while our main event venue provides ample space for annual community meetings for organizations such as the Northern Berkshire Community Coalition and 1Berkshire. The Break Room, Berkshire Cider, Project, the Distillery, and dozens of artisans draw over 1,000 visitors to Greylock WORKS each week. The opening of the LOFTS will bring year-round living and expanded cultural programming to this campus, creating another stabilizing aspect to a seasonal economy.

**Related Linkages:** CEDS Goals #1: Healthy People, #2: Resilient Communities, #3: Future-Ready Workforce, #4: Strong Business Environment

**Source:** LATENT Productions

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### Housatonic School Redevelopment

**Location:** Great Barrington, Village of Housatonic

**Project Summary:** Planned redevelopment of 1909 former Housatonic Elementary School. A local committee is meeting to discuss and review proposed reuse/redevelopment scenarios. RFP with associated marketing materials was issued in early 2022. As of October 2022, two development teams are competing to redevelop the school: one team proposes housing, one team proposes a mixed-use use housing/commercial use.

**Impact and Significance:** One of several infrastructure/redevelopment projects critical to the revitalization of the village of Housatonic.

**Related Linkages:** CEDS Goal #2: Resilient Communities; Priority Project category: Housing

**Source:** Town of Great Barrington

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### Monument Mills Area Reuse

**Location:** Great Barrington, Village of Housatonic

**Project Summary:** Redevelopment of Monument Mills, a National Historic Register listed mill complex, into approximately 100 mixed-income residential units, 12,000 square feet for office and retail use, a restaurant/café space, a river walk reconnecting the village to the adjacent Housatonic River, and integrated on-site parking.

**Impact and Significance:** One of several infrastructure/redevelopment projects critical to the revitalization of the village of Housatonic

**Related Linkages:** CEDS Goals #2: Resilient Communities, #4: Strong Business Environment

**Source:** Town of Great Barrington

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### Waverly Mills/Spinning Mill/5-7 Hoosac St. Redevelopment

**Location:** Adams

**Project Summary:** The project involves the phased redevelopment of over 238,000 SF of vacant former mill space into approximately 160 units of affordable, workforce, and market-rate rental housing. The project involves two buildings: 5 Hoosac Street, which consists of 44,000 square feet and is planned to create 26 market rate rental units and approximately 13,000 square feet of retail space on the first floor. 7 Hoosac Street, comprising 194,000 square feet is planned to create 134 affordable and workforce apartment units and an additional 10,000 square feet of retail. There will be various unit sizes, 1-, 2- and 3-bedroom units featuring modern amenities, plus a fitness center, multi-purpose rooms, and spaces for recreational uses (i.e., arts, music, etc.).

**Impact and Significance:** This project will have transformational impact on the Adams downtown district by providing new housing and commercial tenancy. Residents will be within walking distance of downtown and will support local businesses.

**Related Linkages:** CEDS Goal #2: Resilient Communities, #4: Strong Business Environment; Priority Project category: Housing

**Source:** Adams Spinning Mill Partners, LLC

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### Western Gateway Urban Heritage State Park

**Location:** North Adams

**Project Summary:** Western Gateway Urban Heritage State Park (HSP) consists of 9 separate parcels and 8 structures, of which 3 are currently occupied for commercial or institutional uses. The site ownership is the

City (three parcels) and the North Adams Redevelopment Authority (6 parcels). The site comprises much of the Urban Renewal Area (UR-2). The focal area is the HSP, a four-plus acre parcel listed on the National Register of Historic Places as the Freight Yard Historic District. A former rail depot, this parcel contains six buildings and a courtyard. The site was, in the early 1980s, envisioned as becoming a retail destination attracting as many as 100,000 annual visitors by leveraging its proximity to both downtown and Mt. Greylock. Due to several factors, including limited vehicular and pedestrian access, economically obsolete building, and poor site visibility, such a vision has yet to be realized and the subsequent disinvestment in the property has resulted in moderate-to-severe structural disrepair. The city secured a \$50k “Technical Assistance Grant” from MassDevelopment in 2021 to do an existing conditions and market analysis. Two basic strategies have been identified by over the years, one being the outright sale or a long-term lease. A venture for this in 2014 proved fruitless. The more encouraging route, a “building-by-building” approach, is to recruit new tenants for substantial private investment into each building in return for attractive terms. Another tenant has had preliminary discussions on the refurbishment of Building 3, as well as the incorporation of its two adjoining buildings.

**Impact and Significance:** A vibrant and rejuvenated HSP has the potential to become a destination if the proper mix of tenants and retail opportunities can be captured. This would significantly complement other area attractions, whereby those other attractions, especially MASS MoCA, already bring visitors to North Adams. DCR has its Hoosac Tunnel Train Museum at the park, yet there needs to be a formidable connection to the Mt. Greylock State Reservation atop the mountain, and in which there is already existing roadway connectivity between the two. A successful HSP would expand the economic base of the region, increase job opportunities, as well as enhance the area’s cultural and recreational assets.

**Related Linkages:** CEDS Goals #2: Resilient Communities, #4 Strong Business Environment

**Source:** City of North Adams/North Adams Redevelopment Authority

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### William Stanley Business Park, Site 9 Redevelopment

**Location:** Pittsfield

**Project Summary:** The William Stanley Business Park, located less than a half-mile from downtown in the heart of the Morningside neighborhood, consists of approximately 52 acres, formerly the core of General Electric’s industrial facilities in the city. Three parcels are developed and occupied, seven site remain available for new business and industry. Site 9 is the largest and most prominent section of the park. This 6.5-acre parcel has remained undeveloped for over 20 years due to its deplorable condition.

**Impact and Significance:** Site 9 is a scar in the center of Pittsfield that reminds us of a sad moment in our history - a massive loss of jobs, acres and acres of pollution left behind, and years of struggle to remediate the land and demolish huge vacant manufacturing buildings. Improving the condition of the parcel will make it a much more attractive option for residents and private sector development. This would meet the goals of PEDDA and the City of Pittsfield by addressing the blighted condition and increasing the prospect of attracting businesses, creating jobs, generating income, and enhancing the City’s tax base.

**Related Linkages:** CEDS Goals #2: Resilient Communities, #4 Strong Business Environment; Priority

Project category: Workforce & Industry Support

**Source:** Pittsfield Economic Development Authority (PEDDA)

## Workforce & Industry Support

The Berkshire Blueprint 2.0, coordinated by 1Berkshire, and the MassHire Berkshire Workforce Blueprint, both articulate the need for ongoing support regarding workforce and industry support. These efforts will assist in aligning training programs with the current and future needs of area employers and connect job seekers with the retraining or upskilling they need to future-proof their careers.

### Berkshire’s Advanced Manufacturing Training and Education Center (BAMTEC)

**Location:** North Adams

**Project Summary:** BAMTEC Inc. is a multi-phased project. Phase 1 is to create a “State of the Art” training center for Advanced Manufacturing focused on providing a trained workforce through a comprehensive employer-driven curriculum to serve the needs of the manufacturing community of Berkshire County and beyond. The training center also envisions the creation of multiple initiative programs such as “Women in Manufacturing”, Veterans to Work programs and a program designed to work with persons with Autism. Phase 2 is designed to develop a community makerspace/ small business incubator to also meet the demands of area artisans, crafters, designers, developers, and entrepreneurs. This space will provide through its variety of memberships the tools, expertise, and training to provide a safe, equitable, and affordable “Maker” facility for everyone. Phase 2 also envisions the development of a STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math) lab focused on the creation of youth programs as well as the development of a “STEAM’ mobile. A mobile STEAM lab/manufacturing lab that would venture to area schools, colleges, and public events to educate the public to all the opportunities afforded them through manufacturing and innovation.

**Impact and Significance:** Designed to meet the needs of manufacturing as outlined in Berkshire Blueprint 2.0, BAMTEC will be an integral part in the machine to develop a trained workforce for Advanced Manufacturing in Berkshire County and beyond. BAMTEC plans to create an aggressive advertising/recruitment campaign that is designed to reach out nationally to entice potential job seekers to consider moving/re-locating to the area to pursue a career in the regional Advanced Manufacturing sector.

**Related Linkages:** CEDS Goal #3: Future Ready Workforce, #4: Strong Business Environment

**Source:** BAMTEC Inc.

### Berkshire Black Business and Entrepreneur Center

**Location:** Pittsfield

**Project Summary:** The Berkshire Black Economic Council (BBEC) plans to create a collaborative workspace for underserved Black-owned small businesses and entrepreneurs in Berkshire County. BBEC will conduct scoping sessions, complete a market study, create a high-level business model, and assess potential site locations and building requirements. BBEC’s design will integrate best practices for meeting the needs of Black-owned businesses, the vast majority of which are sole practitioners or microbusinesses. BBEC is currently evaluating two potential locations in Pittsfield. The Berkshire Black Business and Entrepreneur Center will serve several functions:

- 1) A gathering space for the Black community to be exposed to new ideas and innovations through creative presentations, and, when appropriate, performances,
- 2) A functional space where the Black business community to share and gain knowledge and skills,
- 3) A meeting space where established businesses and community leaders can provide aspiring and new small business owners and entrepreneurs with guidance and inspiration,
- 4) A creative space that provides the tools, equipment, and supplies necessary to practice and perfect goods and services to optimize business success,

5) A resource for the broader community on cultural competence and competitiveness through collaboration. **Impact and Significance:** Black-owned businesses are unique in that most of them (96 percent) are microbusinesses and sole proprietorships. While incubators, accelerators, and collaborative workspaces are not new approaches to growing small businesses, BBEC's creative focus will be to help Black-owned businesses and entrepreneurs overcome market and structural barriers to success. 2021 reports by the McKinsey Institute for Black Economic Mobility and U.S. Black Chambers, Inc. call out the importance of reducing barriers to accessing capital, networks, and government contracting as key to unlocking the potential of Black-owned businesses. McKinsey estimates that achieving parity through improved access to capital, mentorships, and professional opportunities would create 615,000 new Black-led workplaces nationwide. By building a more resilient network of Black-owned businesses, and connecting them with broader community resources, BBEC seeks to achieve similar results on a County-wide scale.

**Related Linkages:** CEDS Goal #2: Resilient Communities, 3: Future-Ready Workforce, #4: Strong Business Environment; Priority Project category: Programs & Services

**Source:** Berkshire Black Economic Council

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### Berkshire Blueprint 2.0 Implementation

**Location:** County-wide

**Project Summary:** The Berkshire Blueprint 2.0 is the product of nearly five years of intensive research, interviews, and planning. This work, coordinated by 1Berkshire, aims to maintain an evolving but structured strategic imperative with the goal of sustained economic development across the region. Launched in February 2019, the Berkshire Blueprint 2.0 utilizes a cluster-based model to address the needs, and help to track and benchmark work, in six central industrial clusters. These clusters, each facilitated by a partner Hub, include Advanced Manufacturing, Engineering and Technology, Creative Economy, Food and Agriculture, Healthcare and Wellness, Hospitality and Tourism, and Outdoor Recreation. Along with a set of cross-cutting themes that impact everyone across the region, the Berkshire Blueprint 2.0 Advisory Committee, Cluster Hub leadership, and the team at 1Berkshire continue to provide resources, implementation support, and benchmarking to activate the goals and objectives of the Blueprint over time, while continuing to update the document through addenda that maintains contemporary importance and impact. This implementation model will allow for additional clusters, refreshed cross-cutting themes, and an agile approach to provide sustained and high-impact economic development for Berkshire County.

**Impact and Significance:** The Berkshire Blueprint provides a reliable and regionally owned strategic scaffolding that allows for improved collective approaches to challenges and opportunities, enhanced connective tissue between stakeholders, and a vision for pursuing resources and support that will allow for the economy to thrive over time.

**Related Linkages:** CEDS Goal #2: Resilient Communities; #3: Future-Ready Workforce, #4: Strong Business Environment; Priority Project category: Programs & Services

**Source:** 1Berkshire

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### Berkshire Compact for Education and Berkshire County STEM Pipeline

**Location:** County-wide

**Project Summary:** This initiative works to improve access to post-secondary education and raise the aspirations of all Berkshire County residents to pursue 16 or more years of education and/or training in a technical field and strives to build connections between the needs of the workplace and the local education system by providing students with knowledge of college and career readiness. The Berkshire Blueprint 2.0 is now used as the framework for the program's design. In the past year the Berkshire Compact for

Education partnered with MassHire-Berkshire as well as the Berkshire STEM Network to collaborate on two major projects for the region's students. The third week in October was STEM Week. Utilizing Pittsfield Community Television's resources, a series of twenty-five programs were streamed, and also placed on-demand, that captured several topics regarding STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) subjects in the county. Topics included: Berkshire Innovation Center, Boyd Technologies, Berkshire Sterile Manufacturing, education lectures on the topics of physics and environmental science as well as career opportunities with the Sciences. Lessons on agriculture and chemistry also were included. In April, the partners hosted a STEM Café at Berkshire Community College as well as an informational program with General Dynamics at MCLA. The High School/College Dual Enrollment program continues to provide access for students from the county's high schools as well as an Early College program which will be built into the Drury High School curriculum.

**Impact and Significance:** These initiatives and programs seek to ready the workforce for Berkshire County in the areas of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math. They also seek to create interest in these fields at a young age.

**Related Linkages:** CEDS Goal #3: Future Ready Workforce; Priority Project category: Programs & Services  
**Source:** Mass College of Liberal Arts

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## Berkshire Innovation Center 2.0

**Location:** County-wide

**Project Summary:** The Berkshire Innovation Center, Inc. (BIC) is in the early stages of planning and securing funding for BIC 2.0. BIC 2.0 will advance BIC's reach and impact by expanding the HQ in Pittsfield and extending their presence in northern and southern Berkshire County. Expansion at HQ in Pittsfield would include a flex space that would complement our existing facility and allow the Berkshires to host large scale business and technology conferences and events. The new building, which will also feature private office space for growing companies in the region, will complement the current Innovation Center in form and function and together the two buildings will be the foundation for a true campus for technology in the heart of the Berkshires.

BIC's expansion into Southern Berkshire County could feature a full renovation of the historic Housatonic Village School, which will fuel the economic revitalization of downtown Housatonic. The 22,000 SF project will feature a digital design studio, cyber-cafe, AR/VR sim lab, and co-working space, and embrace the community of audio engineers and special effects technicians. It will be a hub for coding and gaming competitions and hackathons. It will be rebuilt as a living laboratory and learning space for green building technologies. Students and organizations connected to BIC South will have access to the equipment at the BIC and will be funneled into county-wide educational and workforce development programming. BIC's expansion into Northern Berkshire County will serve as the launch pad for the BIC's Learning Institute. It will be a collaborative partnership with Mass MoCA, along with local and regional educational partners, that will not only give the BIC a physical presence to better reach and serve students and organizations in Northern Berkshire County but will create new learning experiences at the intersection of creativity and innovation.

**Impact and Significance:** This is an opportunity to further promote entrepreneurship and economic equality for young people throughout the Berkshires, and truly make the Berkshires a premiere rural innovation hub. The BIC has been a beacon for innovation and the growth of new and existing companies, job creation and investment in Western Massachusetts. As a central hub for advanced manufacturers and other technology-focused businesses in our region, we have helped industry partners adopt new technologies, access capital and drive our economy. By providing expanded services in Central Berkshire County and additional access in Northern Berkshire County and Southern Berkshire County, this is an

opportunity to reinvest and capitalize on existing assets, to reverse the population decline and provide thought leadership for rural communities around the country about effective models for local job creation, collaborative talent development and economic prosperity.

**Related Linkages:** CEDS Goals #3: Future-Ready Workforce, #4: Strong Business Environment; Priority Project category: Mixed Use & Commercial Site Redevelopment

**Source:** Berkshire Innovation Center

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### Berkshire Skills Cabinet and Berkshire Workforce Blueprint

**Location:** County-wide

**Project Summary:** The Berkshire Skills Cabinet (established in 2016) is a partnership of education, economic, and workforce agencies that set regional workforce priorities as part of a statewide network.

1. Pipeline development working with K-12 systems (3,500 youth annually),
2. Recruitment efforts working with MassHire Berkshire Career Center (2,500 residents, 75 youth, and 500 employers annually),
3. Training initiatives working un/under employed residents (goal of 100 annually) AND working with employers for incumbent worker training & on-the-job training efforts (goal of 25 annually),
4. Retention efforts working with 50-75 HR and business leaders to assist with their workforce needs.

The Berkshire Workforce Blueprint is a regional strategic plan based on intensive research, planning, and data gathering, and compiled by partners in workforce, education, and economic development. Originally established in 2018 with annual updates (including a response to the economic recovery and resiliency of the pandemic), the plan established priority industry sectors and occupations which help to guide resources that come into the region for maximum effectiveness.

**Impact and Significance:** The Berkshire Workforce Blueprint has established growth strategies for the following priority industries: Health Care & Social Services, Manufacturing & Engineering, Hospitality & Management, and Education (including early education & childcare.) This regional plan is a strong public/private collaboration and includes pipeline activities, recruitment, training, and retention efforts and has generated approximately \$1M annually for these strategies.

**Related Linkages:** CEDS Goals #3: Future Ready Workforce, #4: Strong Business Environment

**Source:** MassHire Berkshire Workforce Board

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### BFMC+

**Location:** Lenox

**Project Summary:** BFMC+ (previously referred to as Kemble Street Studios) is a creative film and media education center, to be housed inside a state-of-the-art production facility located in the Elayne Bernstein Theater Building on the campus of Shakespeare & Company in Lenox, with additional facilities at another educational organization. A project of the Berkshire Film and Media Collaborative, BFMC+ is a mixed studio and classroom environment dedicated to education in the art and craft of filmmaking and responsible media messaging, establishing the Berkshires as an international destination for media thought leadership and production, while also being accessible to everyone living in the region. BFMC envisions an inclusive environment where a diversity of viewpoints is essential, and will support this in hiring, recruitment, partnerships, scholarship programs and proactive engagement with diverse communities locally and nationally.

**Impact and Significance:** Video is becoming more critical for everyone - from entrepreneurs promoting their small businesses, to nonprofits reaching audiences for their programming and donors for fundraising, to corporations needing to brand themselves in a crowded internet marketplace and to train employees. It is



imperative for our companies to become “video literate.” BFMC+ will provide training and internships through our local schools and community programs – to attract and keep our young people here - as well as for our companies to have access to the latest equipment and techniques. BFMC+ will attract professionals to our region to shoot and produce their films and commercials creating good paying jobs for local professionals and revenue for local businesses (hotels, caterers, etc.) BFMC+ will also be able to stream and broadcast original content from the Berkshires allowing our arts organizations to reach a larger audience. This would increase tourism, giving more exposure to the Berkshires and everything our region has to offer.

**Related Linkages:** CEDS Goals #3: Future Ready Workforce, #4: Strong Business Environment

**Source:** Berkshire Film and Media Collaborative

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### Connecting Activities

**Location:** County-wide

**Project Summary:** Operated by the MassHire Berkshire Workforce Board, Connecting Activities, a statewide initiative, provides career readiness programming for all students in grades K-12. It places students in an array of career awareness, exploration and immersion programs and activities to develop essential workforce skills and facilitate post-secondary education readiness. The program annually connects around 350 - 400 high school students with internships and structured work experiences, 2,900 students with career awareness and exploration activities, and 50 educators with teacher externships and career-readiness oriented professional development opportunities. Approximately 45% of student interns are paid, contributing to regional income and pipeline development.

**Impact and Significance:** Connecting youth to work-based learning establishes awareness and pipeline activities for the young person, parents, their peers, educators, and the community. More than 3500 young people are exposed to career readiness activities with approximately 300 being placed in internships (40% are paid and 35% are hired directly) which contributes to the Berkshire economy about \$350K annually. Every high school and middle school are connected to career readiness programming which impacts the 32 communities in Berkshire County. Employers are struggling to find workers and our programs/activities connect youth to work and learning experiences which significantly help companies find workers, establish pipeline activities, and expand marketing efforts.

**Related Linkages:** CEDS Goal #3: Future Ready Workforce; Priority Project category: Programs & Services

**Source:** MassHire Berkshire Workforce Board

### CDCSB Small Business Assistance Program

**Location:** Southern Berkshire County

**Project Summary:** The Small Business Technical Assistance (SBTA) program, offered at no cost to participants, enables the CDCSB to assist area businesses at various stages of development, from prestart up to existing businesses planning for growth and scaling. The primary program goal is to equip active owners with foundational business operations knowledge, as well as practical guidance on business development issues, tasks, and initiatives that allow them to launch, pivot, or expand their business. The primary outcome is business growth and the creation of jobs. The services that the SBTA provides are not meant to substitute the work of staff or to replace an existing role in the clients’ organizations—we want to help participants develop their own “toolbox” of best practices that serve as a foundation for their business goals.

**Impact and Significance:** The highly individualized approach to the program is what sets it apart. The SBTA program is also unique in its ability to offer intensive training and support in accounting and financial management. As of March 2022, forty-three businesses have participated in the program. The SBTA program has helped leverage over \$755,000 of funding and support to participating businesses from banks

and state and federal funds. Due to demand, CDCSB is working to expand the program to be able to help even more small businesses.

**Related Linkages:** CEDS Goal #4: Strong Business Environment; Priority Project category: Programs & Services

**Source:** Community Development Corporation of South Berkshire (CDCSB)

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## Digital and Tech Enabled Economy

**Location:** County-wide

**Project Summary:** Through the work of the Tech Impact Collaborative, and in alignment with the Berkshire Blueprint 2.0, we will grow an inclusive, dynamic, digital and tech enabled innovation hub in the Berkshires. This hub work will tackle the project in multiple ways, including facilitating supports for entrepreneurs and innovators in tech enabled industries, improving resources for remote workers living in the Berkshires, bolstering programmatic components that help up-skill and re-skill individuals or tech enabled jobs, and working to improve equitable access to high-speed internet to the home across the region. Through these components, the Berkshires will see improved assets that help support the next generation of industry and innovation, as well as help to recruit and retain a critical and trained workforce in the region.

**Impact and Significance:** Rural regions are home to 15% of the population in the country but only see 5% of the tech and digital jobs in their economies. There is a huge gap and a large opportunity to grow rural innovation hubs to advance rural economies into the next generation. As a region we continue to see population decline, issues with employers finding a skilled workforce, and a large “missing middle” gap for entrepreneurs who are a step beyond ideation but are not yet to a point where Angel investors are ready to take on the risk. The work of growing an inclusive digital and tech enabled economy addresses all these factors and more and prepares the region to grow and innovate in industries not fully tapped into. This project will help digital and tech enabled startups to gain a footing in the Berkshires as they progress towards being investable ventures. Additionally, it will support recruitment of a workforce to the region that works remotely but lives here and spends their income here. Finally, it will provide the programming needed to lift the existing and incumbent workforce to help get them into high growth, high wage positions both at local businesses and those they wish to launch.

**Related Linkages:** CEDS Goal #3: Future-Ready Workforce, #4: Strong Business Environment; Priority Project category: Programs & Services

**Source:** 1Berkshire

# Appendix F

## COVID-19 Addendum – Economic Impact Through mid-2022

With some acute economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic having abated, this appendix serves to summarize the impact on the employment market as well as some of the response and recovery efforts taken within Berkshire County. Barring a deviation from current economic and public health trajectories, this will be the final year in which such an appendix will be included.

### Unemployment Rate

Much like the rest of the nation, Berkshire County experienced a dramatic increase in unemployment with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, with unemployment rate growing nearly fourfold from 4.6% in March 2020 to 17.9% in April 2020. This was the maximum the unemployment rate would reach and compares with maximum rates of 16.7% and 14.7% for Massachusetts and the United States, respectively. Over the next two and a half years,

the unemployment rate declined at a relatively steady rate, averaging 11.6% for the remainder of 2020, 6.7% over 2021, and 4.7% for the seven months of 2022 for which data are available. The July 2022 rate of 3.9% is lower than the March 2020—the last pre-pandemic month—rate of 4.6%. This is indicative of a new economic regime defined in part by extremely tight labor conditions. See *Table 29*.

**Table 28. Unemployment Rate, March 2020 – July 2022**

Month	Berkshire County	Massachusetts	United States
March 2020	4.6%	3.6%	4.4%
April 2020	17.9%	16.7%	14.7%
May 2020	15.4%	15.6%	13.2%
June 2020	13.7%	14.5%	11.0%
July 2020	13%	13%	10.2%
August 2020	10.3%	10.3%	8.4%
September 2020	9.7%	9.8%	7.9%
October 2020	8.3%	8.1%	6.9%
November 2020	8.2%	7.6%	6.7%
December 2020	8.3%	7.4%	6.7%
January 2021	9%	7.7%	6.4%

February 2021	8.6%	7.2%	6.2%
March 2021	8.2%	6.7%	6.0%
April 2021	7.3%	6.1%	6.0%
May 2021	6.6%	5.8%	5.8%
June 2021	6.9%	6.2%	5.9%
July 2021	6.4%	5.9%	5.4%
August 2021	5.9%	5.4%	5.2%
September 2021	5.6%	5%	4.7%
October 2021	5.2%	4.6%	4.6%
November 2021	5%	4.2%	4.2%
December 2021	5.2%	4.1%	3.9%
January 2022	6.3%	5%	4.0%
February 2022	5.5%	4.3%	3.8%
March 2022	4.8%	3.8%	3.6%
April 2022	4.2%	3.3%	3.6%
May 2022	4.1%	3.4%	3.6%
June 2022	4.1%	3.5%	3.6%
July 2022	3.9%	3.5%	3.5%

Source(s): MA Dept. of Economic Research, Labor Force and Unemployment Data; US Dept. of Labor Statistics, Unemployment Rate.

## Labor Force

In addition to an increase in the unemployment rate, the COVID-19 pandemic also had a sudden and negative impact on Berkshire County's labor force. Between March 2020 and April 2020, the labor force fell by 5,678 workers from 62,856 to 56,908. This represented a 9.1% drop and was the lowest level the labor force would reach during the pandemic. Furthermore, this drop was greater than the contemporaneous 7.6% and 3.9% decreases in

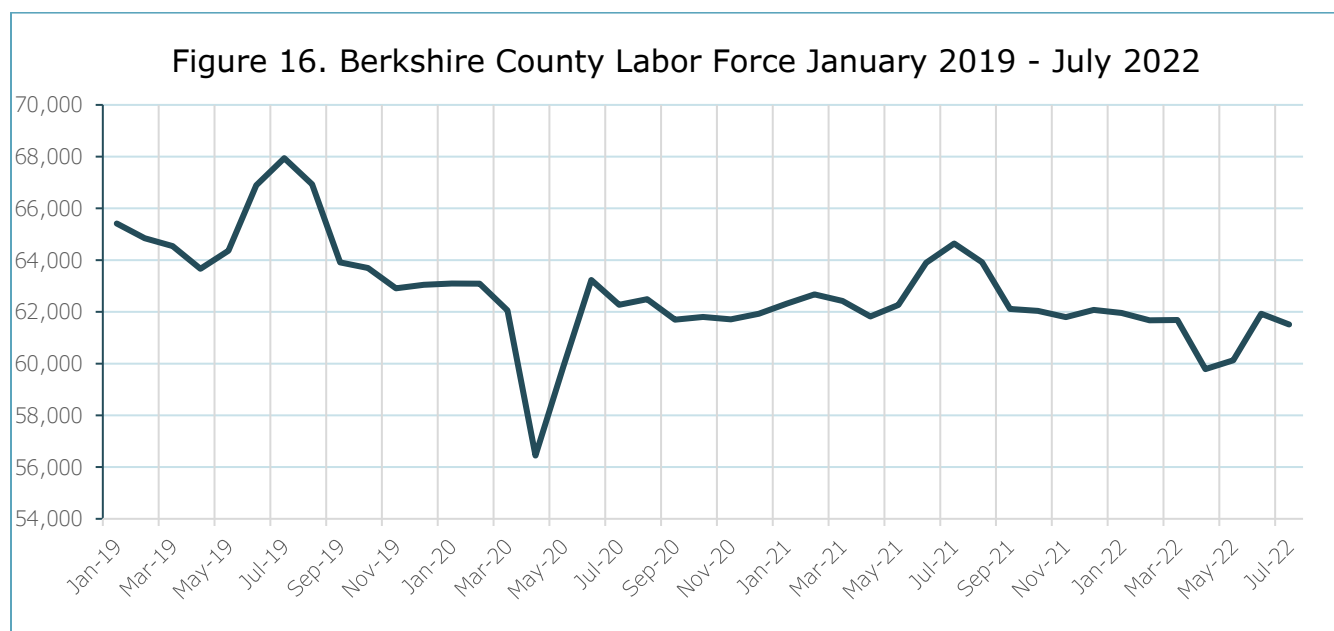
the labor forces of Massachusetts and the United States, respectively. Although the labor force mostly rebounded over the course of the pandemic, it never fully recovered, with the July 2022 labor force remaining 1.7% lower than the March 2020 level. This is unlike the Massachusetts and American labor forces, which have either remained steady or slightly grown over the same period. See *Table 29 and Figure 16*.

Table 29. Labor Force Percent Change From March 2020

Month	Berkshire County		Massachusetts		United States	
	Labor Force	Change Since March 2020	Labor Force (000s)	Change Since March 2020	Labor Force (000s)	Change Since March 2020
March 2020	62,586	-	3,761	-	162,764	-
April 2020	56,908	-9.1%	3,475	-7.6%	156,358	-3.9%
May 2020	60,150	-3.9%	3,718	-1.2%	158,122	-2.9%
June 2020	63,534	1.5%	3,766	0.1%	159,834	-1.8%
July 2020	64,930	3.7%	3,778	0.5%	160,015	-1.7%
August 2020	63,975	2.2%	3,754	-0.2%	160,707	-1.3%
September 2020	62,629	0.1%	3,775	0.4%	160,153	-1.6%
October 2020	62,549	-0.1%	3,755	-0.2%	160,834	-1.2%
November 2020	61,672	-1.5%	3,754	-0.2%	160,539	-1.4%
December 2020	61,928	-1.1%	3,751	-0.3%	160,671	-1.3%
January 2021	62,314	-0.4%	3,736	-0.7%	160,184	-1.6%
February 2021	62,676	0.1%	3,734	-0.7%	160,359	-1.5%
March 2021	62,423	-0.3%	3,735	-0.7%	160,631	-1.3%
April 2021	61,822	-1.2%	3,748	-0.4%	160,978	-1.1%
May 2021	62,266	-0.5%	3,748	-0.4%	160,801	-1.2%
June 2021	63,902	2.1%	3,760	0.0%	161,114	-1.0%
July 2021	64,644	3.3%	3,757	-0.1%	161,375	-0.9%
August 2021	63,915	2.1%	3,759	-0.1%	161,505	-0.8%

September 2021	62,114	-0.8%	3,756	-0.1%	161,471	-0.8%
October 2021	62,038	-0.9%	3,759	0.0%	161,610	-0.7%
November 2021	61,796	-1.3%	3,755	-0.2%	162,126	-0.4%
December 2021	62,074	-0.8%	3,751	-0.3%	162,294	-0.3%
January 2022	61,960	-1.0%	3,767	0.2%	163,687	0.6%
February 2022	61,670	-1.5%	3,773	0.3%	163,991	0.8%
March 2022	61,686	-1.4%	3,775	0.4%	164,409	1.0%
April 2022	59,786	-4.5%	3,776	0.4%	164,046	0.8%
May 2022	60,124	-3.9%	3,776	0.4%	164,376	1.0%
June 2022	61,924	-1.1%	3,773	0.3%	164,023	0.8%
July 2022	61,510	-1.7%	3,766	0.1%	163,960	0.7%

Source(s): MA Dept. of Economic Research, Labor Force and Unemployment Data; US Dept. of Labor Statistics, Civilian Labor Force.

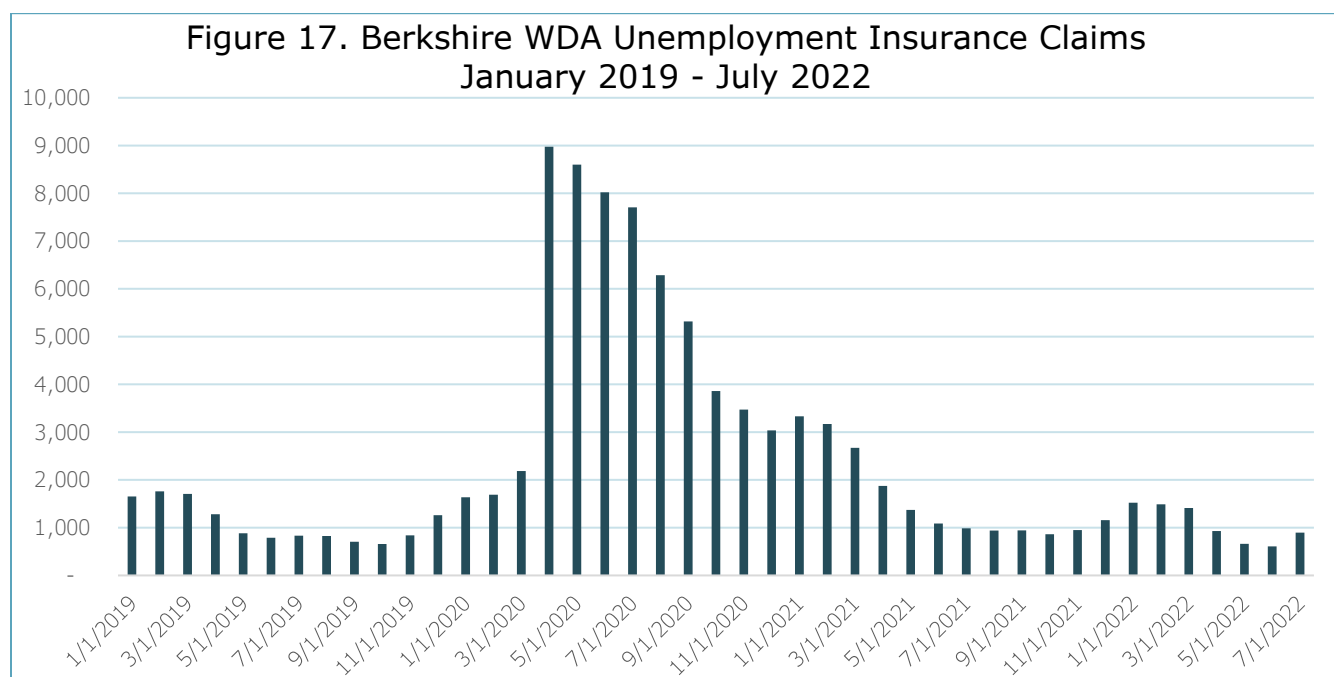


Source(s): MA Dept. of Economic Research, Labor Force and Unemployment Data.

### Unemployment Insurance Claims

Berkshire County unemployment insurance claims increased markedly with the onset of the pandemic, more than quadrupling from 2,187 claims in March 2020 to 8,975 claims in April 2020. Over the subsequent 12 months, the number of claims steadily decreased until they fell below pre-

pandemic levels in April 2021. Since then, no month has registered more than 2,000 claims and most months have registered fewer than 1,000. This is again emblematic of tight labor conditions. See *Figure 17*.



Source(s): MA Dept. of Economic Research, Unemployment Insurance Claimant Profiles.

### Federal Assistance – Small Business Administration (SBA) Loans in Berkshire County

As of August 2022, a total of 4,205 loans totaling \$376,642,478 had been disbursed to Berkshire County businesses through the Small Business Administration's paycheck protection loan program. According to the SBA website, this resulted in a total of 43,717 jobs retained, with an average job retention figure of 10.4 jobs per loan. Of these loans, 3,712 (88.3%) were for amounts less than \$150,000, totaling \$127,472,890 and with an average loan amount of \$34,340. These loans helped retain 18,780 jobs, with an average job retention figure of 5.1 jobs per loan. The remaining 493 (11.7%) loans were for amounts greater than or equal to \$150,000 totaling \$249,169,587 and with an average loan amount of \$505,415. These loans

helped retain 24,937 jobs, with an average job retention figure of 50.6 jobs per loan.

The sector with the greatest number of loans awarded is Construction with 610 (14.5%), followed by Accommodation and Food Services with 571 (13.6%), and Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services with 468 (11.1%). See *Table 30*. The sector with the greatest value of loans awarded is Health Care and Social Assistance with \$73,345,102 (19.5%) followed by Accommodation and Food Services with \$51,001,729 (13.5%), and Construction with \$45,498,449 (12.1%). See *Table 31*. The sector with the greatest number of jobs retained is Accommodation and Food Services with 8,559 (19.6%), followed by Health Care and Social

Assistance with 8,333 (19.1%), and Construction with 3,679 (8.4%). See Table 32. The sector with the greatest average loan amount is Utilities with \$258,462, followed by Manufacturing with \$207,797, and Health Care and Social Assistance with

\$181,998. The sector with the greatest average number of jobs retained per loan is Health Care and Social Assistance with 20.7, followed by Manufacturing with 16.8, and Transportation and Warehousing with 16.5. See Table 33.

**Table 30. PPP Loans by Sector in Berkshire County as of September 2022**

NAICS Code	Sector	Number of Loans	Percentage
11	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	65	1.5%
21	Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	6	0.1%
22	Utilities	8	0.2%
23	Construction	610	14.5%
31-33	Manufacturing	186	4.4%
42	Wholesale Trade	92	2.2%
44-45	Retail Trade	415	9.9%
48-49	Transportation and Warehousing	82	2%
51	Information	73	1.7%
52	Finance and Insurance	53	1.3%
53	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	128	3%
54	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	468	11.1%
55	Management of Companies and Enterprise	3	0.1%
56	Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	215	5.1%
61	Educational Services	83	2%
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	403	9.6%
71	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	229	5.4%
72	Accommodation and Food Services	570	13.6%



81	Other Services (except Public Administration)	450	10.7%
92	Public Administration	12	0.3%
Unknown/Unclassifiable	-	54	1.3%

Source(s): US Small Business Administration, Paycheck Protection Program Data.

**Table 31. PPP Loan Amounts by Sector in Berkshire County as of September 2022**

NAICS Code	Sector	Loan Amounts	Percentage
11	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	\$2,006,797	0.5%
21	Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	\$686,831	0.2%
22	Utilities	\$2,067,700	0.5%
23	Construction	\$45,498,448	12.1%
31-33	Manufacturing	\$38,650,333	10.3%
42	Wholesale Trade	\$11,023,930	2.9%
44-45	Retail Trade	\$30,842,529	8.2%
48-49	Transportation and Warehousing	\$10,378,714	2.8%
51	Information	\$7,344,836	2%
52	Finance and Insurance	\$3,026,997	0.8%
53	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	\$5,621,328	1.5%
54	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	\$31,292,978	8.3%
55	Management of Companies and Enterprise	\$346,923	0.1%
56	Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	\$10,744,795	2.9%
61	Educational Services	\$10,637,451	2.8%
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	\$73,345,102	19.5%
71	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	\$19,655,697	5.2%
72	Accommodation and Food Services	\$51,001,729	13.5%

81	Other Services (except Public Administration)	\$18,773,981	5.0%
92	Public Administration	\$1,891,328	0.5%
Unknown/Unclassifiable	-	\$1,804,049	0.5%

Source(s): US Small Business Administration, Paycheck Protection Program Data.

**Table 32. PPP Jobs Retained by Sector in Berkshire County as of September 2022**

NAICS Code	Sector	Jobs Retained	Percentage
11	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	341	0.8%
21	Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	63	0.1%
22	Utilities	124	0.3%
23	Construction	3,679	8.4%
31-33	Manufacturing	3,133	7.2%
42	Wholesale Trade	1,358	3.1%
44-45	Retail Trade	3,849	8.8%
48-49	Transportation and Warehousing	1,356	3.1%
51	Information	718	1.6%
52	Finance and Insurance	245	0.6%
53	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	695	1.6%
54	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	2,498	5.7%
55	Management of Companies and Enterprise	14	0%
56	Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	1,465	3.4%
61	Educational Services	1,210	2.8%
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	8,333	19.1%
71	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	2,972	6.8%
72	Accommodation and Food Services	8,559	19.6%

81	Other Services (except Public Administration)	2,596	5.9%
92	Public Administration	218	0.5%
Unknown/Unclassifiable	-	291	0.7%

Source(s): US Small Business Administration, Paycheck Protection Program Data.

**Table 33. PPP Loan Averages by Sector in Berkshire County as of September 2022**

NAICS Code	Sector	Loan Amounts	Jobs Retained
11	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	\$30,874	5.2
21	Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	\$114,472	10.5
22	Utilities	\$258,462	15.5
23	Construction	\$74,588	6
31-33	Manufacturing	\$207,797	16.8
42	Wholesale Trade	\$119,825	14.8
44-45	Retail Trade	\$74,319	9.3
48-49	Transportation and Warehousing	\$126,567	16.5
51	Information	\$100,614	9.8
52	Finance and Insurance	\$57,113	4.6
53	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	\$43,917	5.4
54	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	\$66,865	5.3
55	Management of Companies and Enterprise	\$115,641	4.7
56	Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	\$49,976	6.8
61	Educational Services	\$128,162	14.6
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	\$181,998	20.7
71	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	\$85,833	13
72	Accommodation and Food Services	\$89,477	15

81	Other Services (except Public Administration)	\$41,720	5.8
92	Public Administration	\$157,611	18.2
Unknown/Unclassifiable	-	\$33,408	5.4

Source(s): US Small Business Administration, Paycheck Protection Program Data.

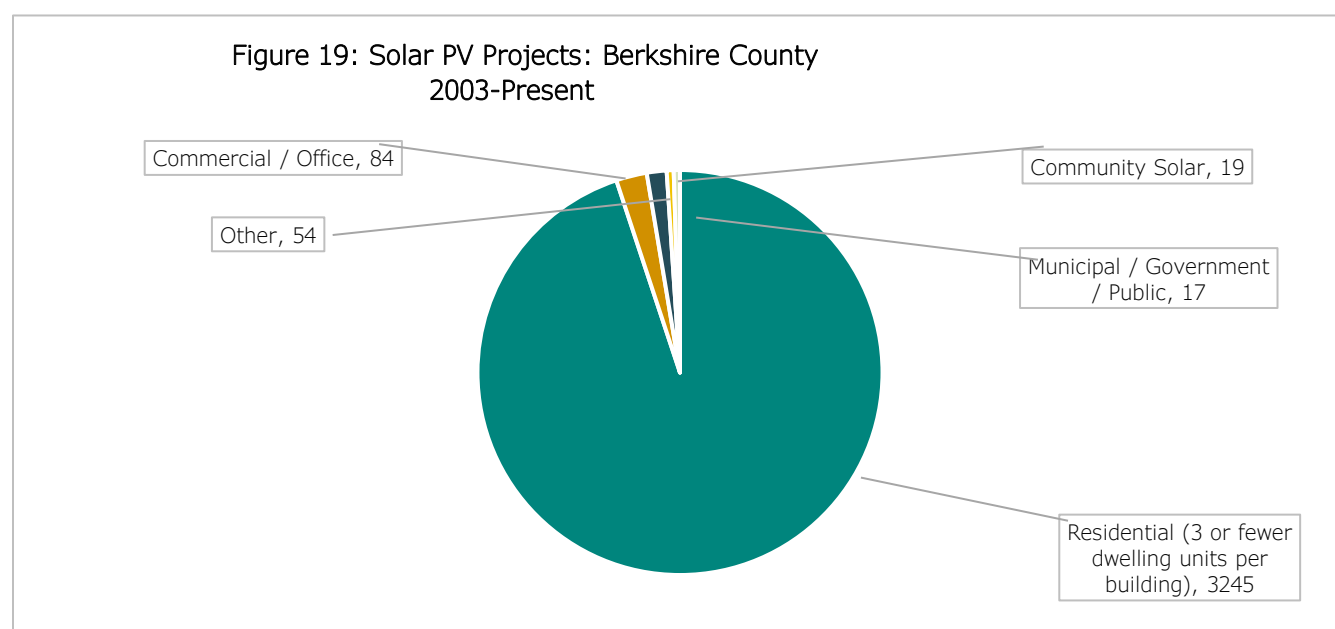
# Appendix G

## Resiliency Planning Supplemental Information

### Energy Infrastructure in Berkshire County, Continued

#### Solar

The region has [3,481 PV systems across all 32 towns](#), with 1,836 installed between 2017 and February 2022, the vast majority in residential settings. The chart below highlights the top five locations where solar is being used in the region and suggests more settings (e.g., colleges and universities, industry, public schools, mixed-use, retail, agricultural) where it could be implemented.



Source: [MassCEC, Solar Production Tracking Database](#)

#### Wind

[Thirty-six wind turbines generating 58 megawatts of energy](#) - including one of the largest commercial-scale projects in the Commonwealth, the [15MW Berkshire Wind Project in Hancock](#) - reside in Berkshire County. The largest wind farms and the largest share of the state's wind-generating capacity, about two-fifths, come from two projects in the mountains near the state's northwestern border. The siting of wind turbines requires sensitivity to ensure community support. [Only one town in Berkshire County, Savoy, has a Wind By-Law.](#)

#### Biomass

Berkshire County is 84% forested, yet the region has no biomass power plants. Across Massachusetts, which is 68% forested, the primary biomass resource used for electricity is municipal solid waste. Businesses, schools, and hospitals in the Commonwealth and surrounding Northeastern states are utilizing woody biomass to meet heating needs sustainably and affordably. [The U.S. Energy Information Administration](#) estimates the county's biomass potential at 24,559 Tons, including from Urban Wood Waste (17,685), Forest Residue (3,595), Primary Mill Residue (2,822), and Secondary Mill Residue (457).

**GRP information, continued**

Tables 35-39 show how key industries within Berkshire County's economy performed between 2019 and 2020 compared to the state. Cells in green indicate industries where Berkshire County performed better than the Commonwealth, even if the industry suffered a loss in GRP. Those include Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation; Accommodation and Food Services; and Educational Services. In contrast, Information, Nondurable Goods Manufacturing (e.g., chemical manufacturing, printing, and apparel, allied product manufacturing), and Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services were industries in which the state performed better than the county *and* where GRP rose.

Pre-pandemic, the top five industries in Berkshire County showing GRP growth were Information (16%), Finance and Insurance (13.06%), Nondurable Goods Manufacturing (11.65%), Professional Services (8.73%), and Real Estate (7%). In 2019, at the height of the pandemic, Information was the only industry of the five that grew; Nondurable Goods Manufacturing saw the most dramatic decline (-14.60%). Conversely, GDP from Mining (17.63%), Utilities (8.20%), and Retail (5.05%) shot up in 2019. Finance and Insurance had the strongest rebound in 2020 (8.81%), while Utilities continued its upward trajectory (14.34%).

**Table 34. % Change in GRP Berkshire County and Massachusetts, 2019-2020**

Industry Sector	Berkshire County	Massachusetts	Difference
All Industries Total	-4.3	-1.8	-2.5
Private Industries	-4.7	-1.9	-2.8

**Table 35. Berkshire County Top 5 Sectors decrease in GRP**

Sector	Berkshire County	Massachusetts	Difference
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	-36	-41.6	5.6
Accommodation and Food Service	-30.6	-31.2	0.6
Durable Goods Manufacturing	-11.8	-2.8	-9
Other Services (except government and government enterprises)	-11.6	-10.9	-0.7
Educational	-7.1	-6.4	-0.7

Table 36. Massachusetts Top 5 Sectors decrease in GRP

Sector	Berkshire County	Massachusetts	Difference
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	-36	-41.6	5.6
Accommodation and Food Service	-30.6	-31.2	0.6
Transportation and Warehousing	(D)	-27.6	N/A
Utilities	(D)	-14.9	N/A
Other Services (except government and government enterprises)	-11.6	-10.9	-0.7

Table 37. Berkshire County Top 5 Sectors increase in GRP

Sector	Berkshire County	Massachusetts	Difference
Utilities	14.3	2.4	11.9
Finance and Insurance	8.8	6.7	2.1
Information	3.9	6.8	-2.9
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	2.9	-1.8	4.7
Retail Trade	1.3	-1.1	2.4

Table 38. Massachusetts Top 5 Sectors increase in GRP

Sector	Berkshire County	Massachusetts	Difference
Information	3.9	6.8	-2.9
Finance and Insurance	8.8	6.7	2.1
Nondurable goods manufacturing	-3.1	2.8	-5.9
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	-0.9	2.6	-3.5
Utilities	14.3	2.4	11.9