

# **BERKSHIRE CEDS** REGIONAL STRENGTHS & WEAKNESSES

THE COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR THE BERKSHIRES

## **REGIONAL STRENGTHS**

### **Business Environment/Workforce Development**

- Market incorporating some higher paying, technologically advanced jobs
- Economic development is being approached on a more “regional” basis
- Many home-based businesses in the region
- Talents coming from increasing numbers of immigrants
- Plastics community growing consistently
- Berkshire Connect
- Cultural & Recreational Tourism sector is large and growing (RCC)
- Strong rate of traded cluster establishment formation (RCC)

### **Regional Resources/Services**

- Many second homeowners
- Pristine, natural surroundings
- Real estate values lower than rest of State/United States
- Sense of safety and security
- High quality of life
- Good educational system
- Broad, high quality higher education infrastructure

### **Social/Political**

- The region’s youth
- Entrepreneurial spirit
- Return of intellectual capital and people from previous generation(s)
- Increased collaboration between the public and private sectors
- Renewed interest in downtown centers
- Sense of safety and security
- Residents are more bullish about the area
- Economic development is being approached on a more “regional” basis
- High quality of life
- Highly talented professionals, in many fields, attracted to region’s quality of life, many as second home owners (RCC)

–Sources: 2001 CEDS; Governor’s Berkshire Regional Competitiveness Council (RCC)

**See next page for Weaknesses...**

## **REGIONAL WEAKNESSES**

### **Business Environmental/Workforce Development**

- The nature of jobs has changed and we need more qualified people to fill those jobs
- Not enough professional jobs to keep people
- Lack of young professionals who appreciate what the region has to offer. Consequently, talent goes elsewhere
- Challenges in taking care of the elderly and filling health care positions in general
- Concentration of jobs with a couple of large employers (RCC)
- Disproportionate share of economy in clusters that are losing national share/shrinking (RCC)
- Employment growth slower than state, national average (RCC)
- Relatively few academic or corporate patenting entities (RCC)
- Small population is perhaps insufficient to provide “critical mass” for traded cluster growth (RCC)
- Need to eliminate redundancy and lack of focus in existing industrial worker training efforts (RCC)

### **Regional Resources/Services**

- An older housing stock
- Inadequate transportation network
- Lack of developable land
- Real estate market has not transitioned into one that encourages investment
- Challenges taking care of elderly and filling health care positions in general
- Lack of a university
- Small geography, historically isolated by Berkshires and Hudson River [presumably isolated from Connecticut and Hudson River valleys?] (RCC)
- Urban blight issues – housing vacancies, impact on livability (RCC)
- Lack of affordable/desirable housing constrains business development (RCC)
- High land costs
- Second home market consuming housing stock (RCC)
- Underutilized housing stock in urban areas – units [?], neighborhoods, and schools not desirable (RCC)

### **Social/Political**

- Negativity and inadequate communication of “good” news in the area
- Resistance to change
- Unevenness from community to community
- Lack of young professionals who appreciate the area
- Sense of political divisiveness/decisiveness
- Lack of a university
- Loss of population & workforce (RCC)
- Perception that neither local leaders nor state leaders have articulated a clear, or at least unified strategy (RCC)
- Many related entities, but no development organization or development plan for the entire region (RCC)
- Smaller share of region’s adult residents hold college-level credentials than state average (RCC)
- 30% high school drop out rate (RCC)
- Pittsfield is not sufficiently associated with innovation, growth, culture and family life (RCC)
- Declining homeownership rate (RCC)
- Obsolete subdivision regulations (RCC)
- Permitting not “user friendly” (RCC)
- Communities concerned about impacts resulting from new people, need for services, and implications for town character (RCC)

–Sources: 2001 CEDS; Governor’s Berkshire Regional Competitiveness Council (RCC)