

2023-2027 Berkshire County

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy



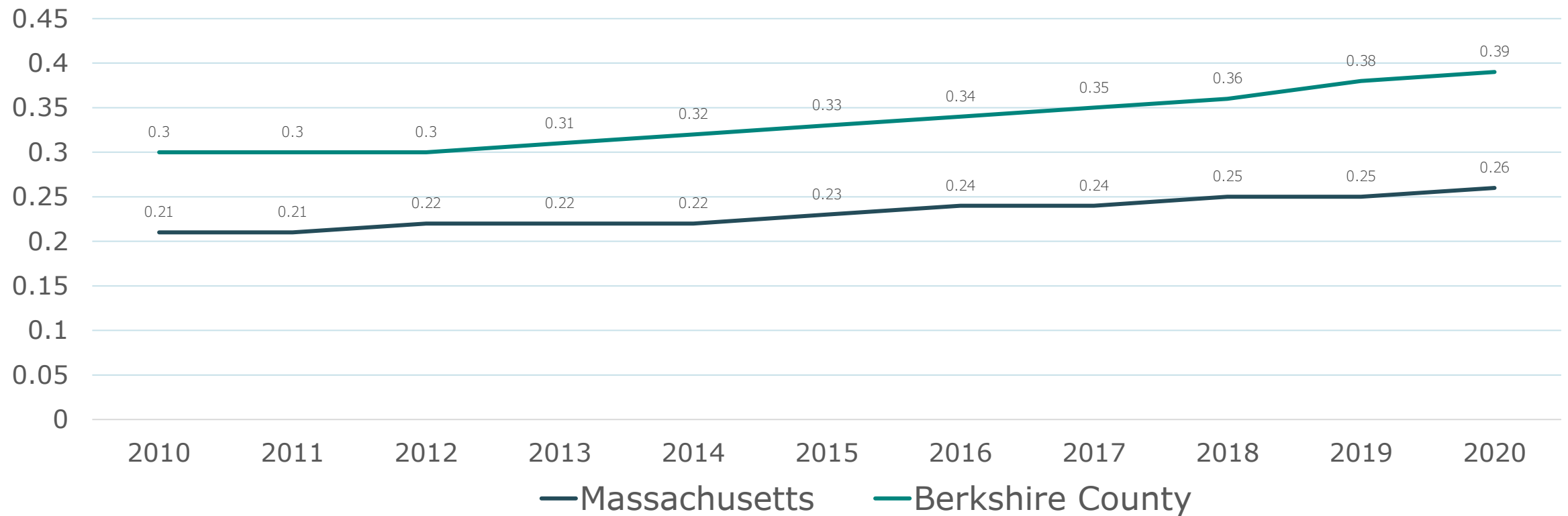
BRPC



Summary Background

Old Age Dependency Ratio

65+ cohort : 15-64 cohort

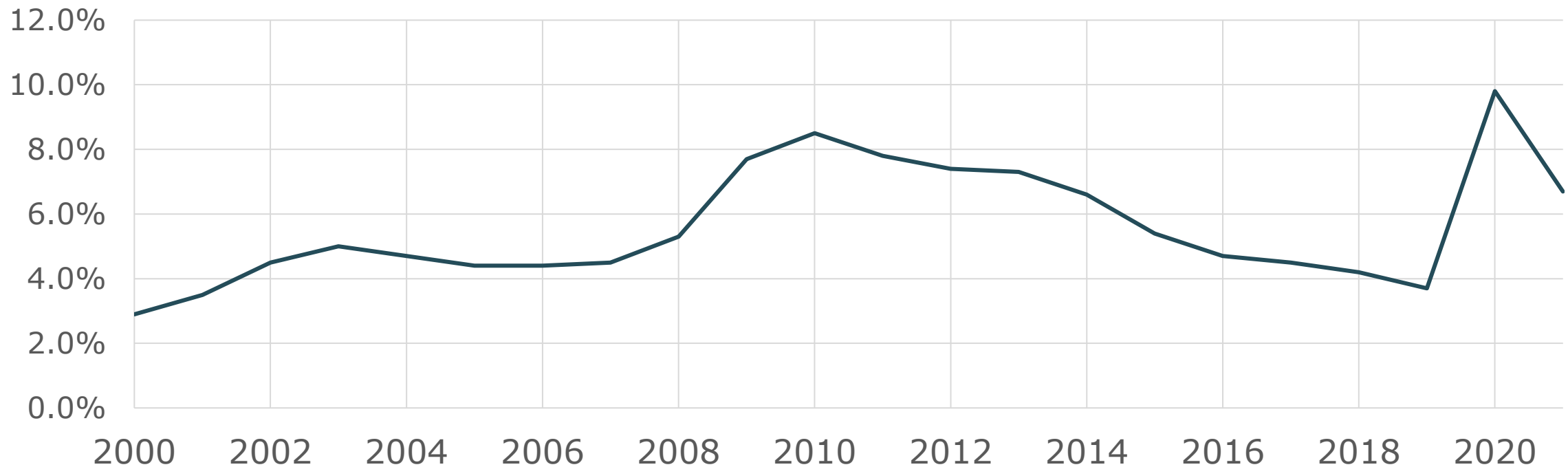


Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates (2010-2020), Table S0101

Summary Background

Unemployment Rate

Berkshire County Unemployment Rate, 2000 - 2021

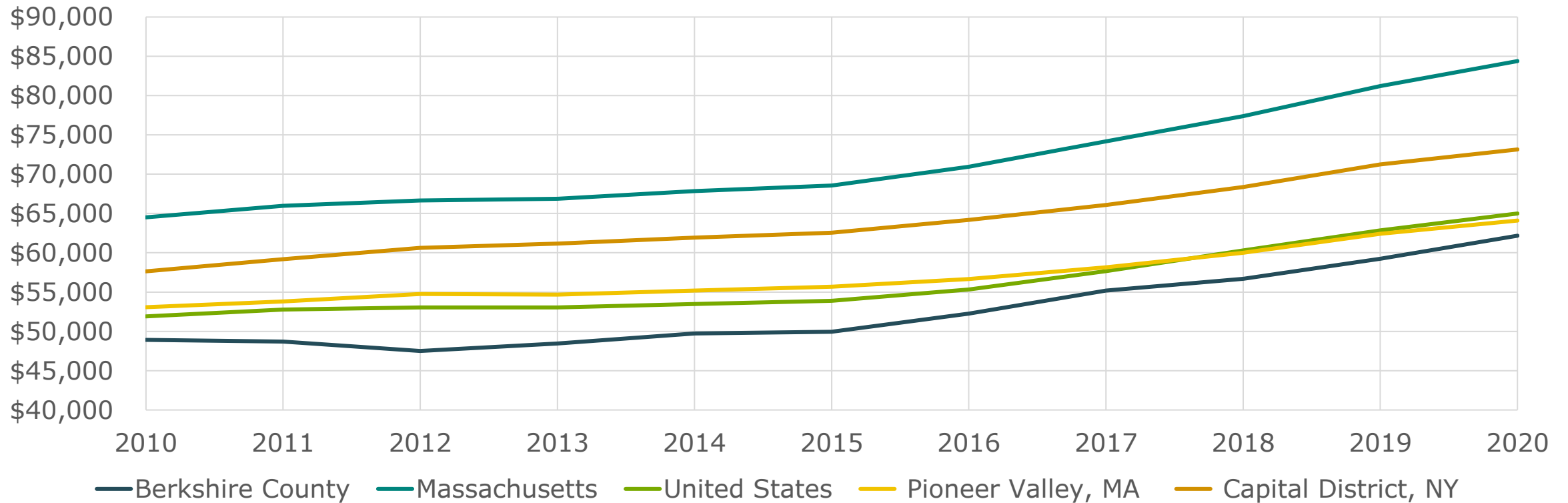


Source(s): MA Dept. of Unemployment Assistance, Labor Market Information.

Summary Background

Median Household Income

Median Household Income, 2010 - 2020



SWOT Analysis

Strengths

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

SWOT Analysis

Weaknesses

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

SWOT Analysis

Opportunities

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

SWOT Analysis

Threats

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

Vision Statement

*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.*

2023-2027 CEDS Goals

1. Healthy People
2. Resilient Communities
3. Future-Ready Workforce
4. Strong Business Environment
5. Robust Infrastructure

Action Plan

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	Alignment
Expand collaboration among regional economic development practitioners to offer technical assistance to businesses	1Berkshire, MSBDC, PERC, Chambers, BBEC, Blackshires	Berkshire Blueprint 2.0 (1Berkshire)
Improve new-business onboarding coordination in the region through collaborative and comprehensive services	1Berkshire, PEDAC, PERC, local Chambers and business associations, municipalities	Berkshire Blueprint 2.0 (1Berkshire)
Establish and grow business incubator programs and facilities	Berkshire Innovation Center, BAMTEC, BBEC, Blackshires	Berkshire Blueprint 2.0 (1Berkshire)
Expand access to capital for small businesses and entrepreneurs	PERC, Local lenders, especially CDFIs (GFCU, Common Capital)	
Facilitate expansion of emerging industry clusters in the region	1Berkshire, PEDAC, PERC, MassHire	Berkshire Blueprint 2.0 (1Berkshire)
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, PERC	

Priority Projects

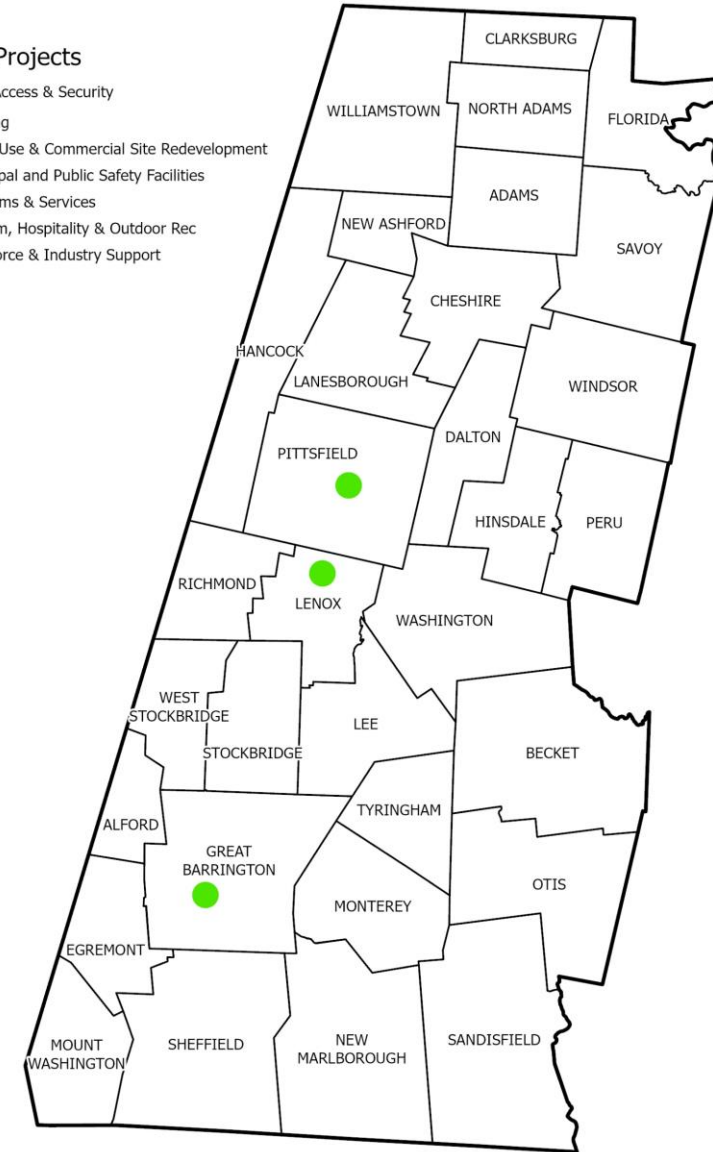
- Food Access & Security
- Housing
- Tourism, Hospitality & Outdoor Recreation
- Municipal and Public Safety Facilities
- Programs & Services
- Mixed Use & Commercial Site Redevelopment
- Workforce & Industry Support

Food Access & Security

- Berkshire Grown's Farm to Food Access Program
- Farmland Access and Conservation (BNRC)
- Shared Cold and Freezer Storage Facility (1Berkshire & BAV)

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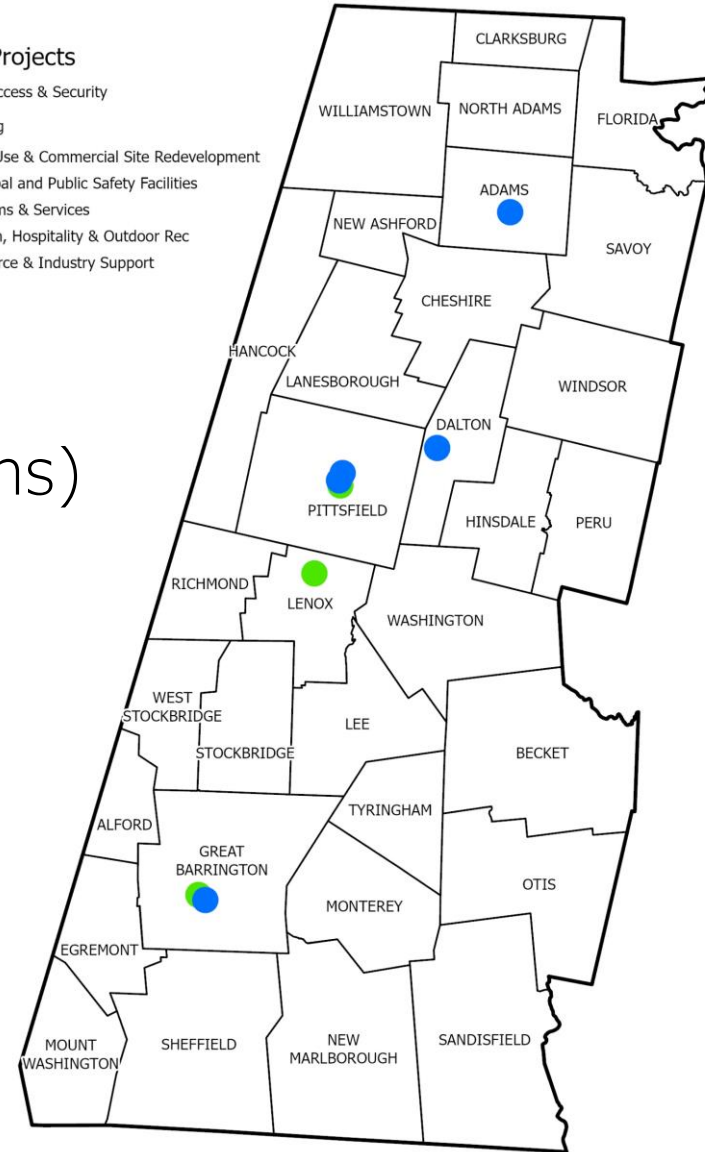


Housing

- Community Center Redevelopment (Adams)
- Union Block Redevelopment (Dalton)

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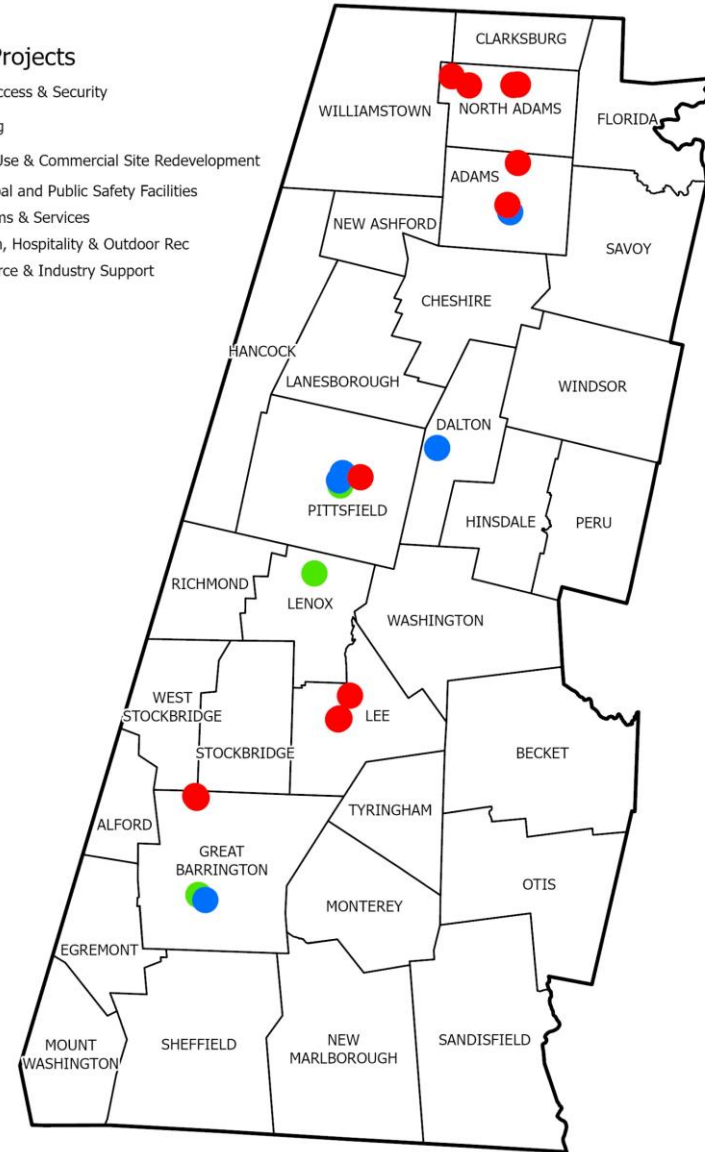


Mixed Use & Commercial Site Development

- Curtis Fine Paper Redevelopment (Adams)
- Dowlin Building Redevelopment (North Adams)
- Western Gateway Urban Heritage State Park (North Adams)

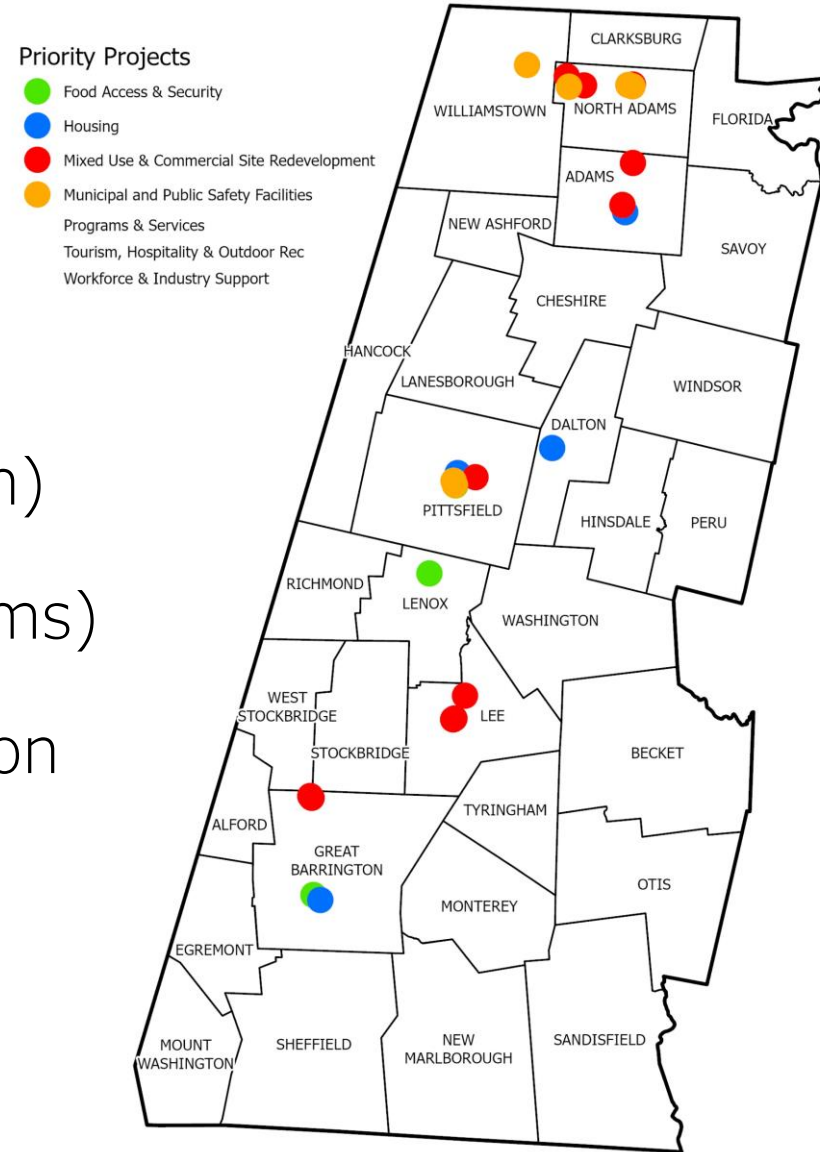
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Municipal & Public Safety Facilities

- Williamstown Fire Station (Williamstown)
- Harriman and West Airport (North Adams)
- Hoosic River Flood Control Modernization (North Adams)
- North Adams Public Safety Complex

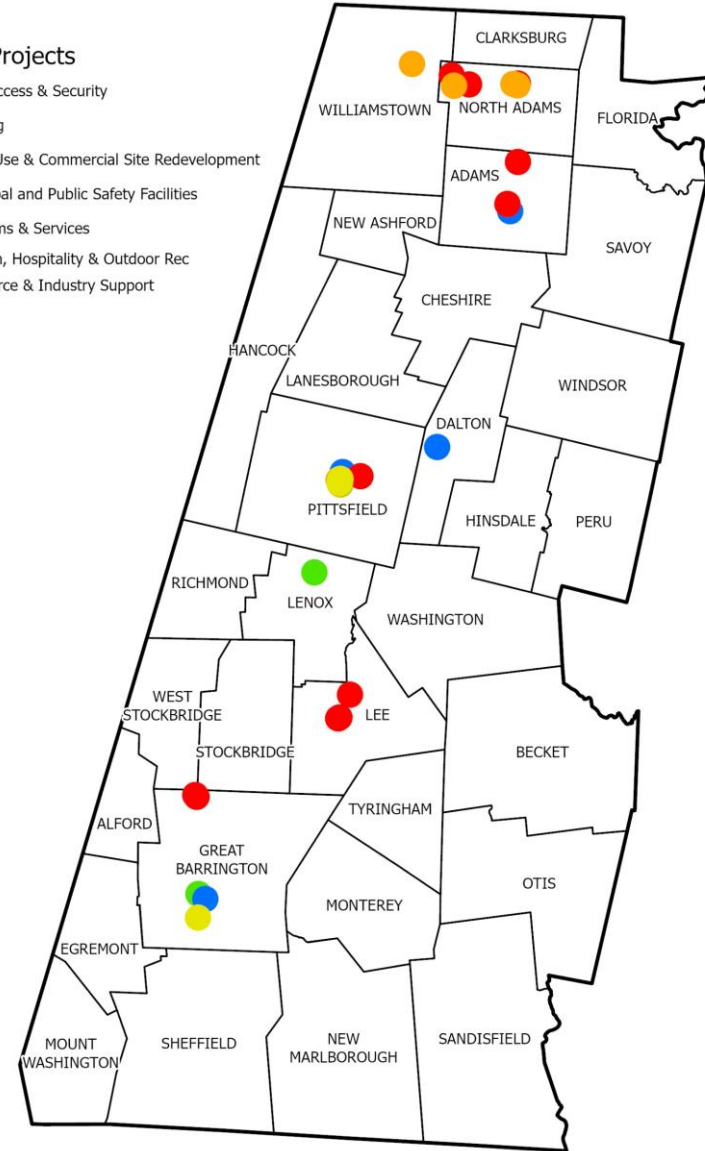


Programs & Services

- Volunteers in Medicine - Berkshires Facility Expansion (Great Barrington)

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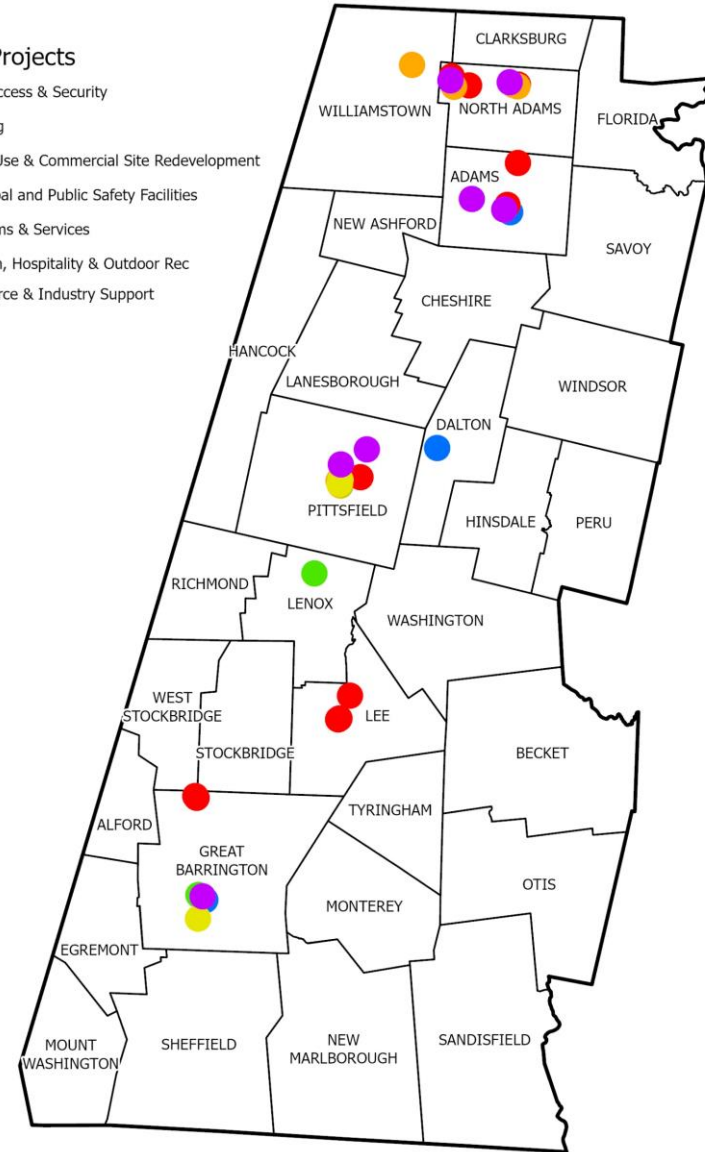


Tourism, Hospitality & Outdoor Recreation

- Adams Theater Redevelopment (Adams)
- Wahconah Park (Pittsfield)
- Digital Tourism Office (North Adams)

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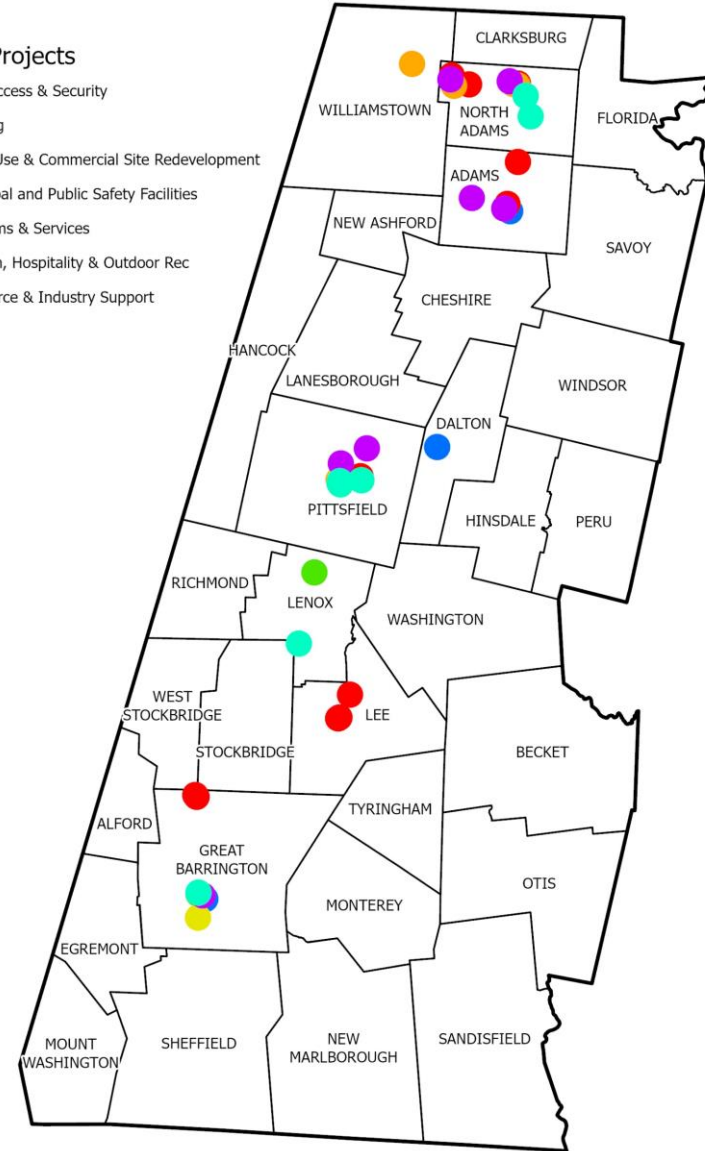


Workforce & Industry Support

- Berkshire Black Business & Entrepreneur Center (Pittsfield)
- Berkshire Innovation Center 2.0 (southern & northern BRK)
- CDCSB Small Business Assistance Program (Great Barrington+)
- Digital and Tech Enabled Economy (regional)

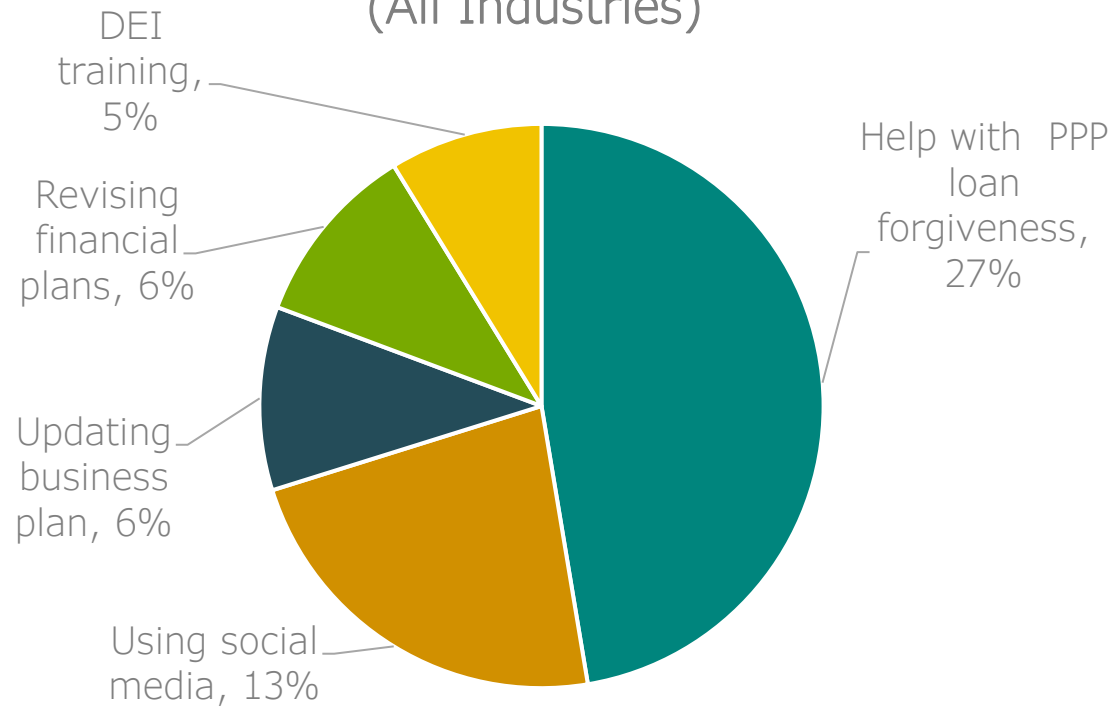
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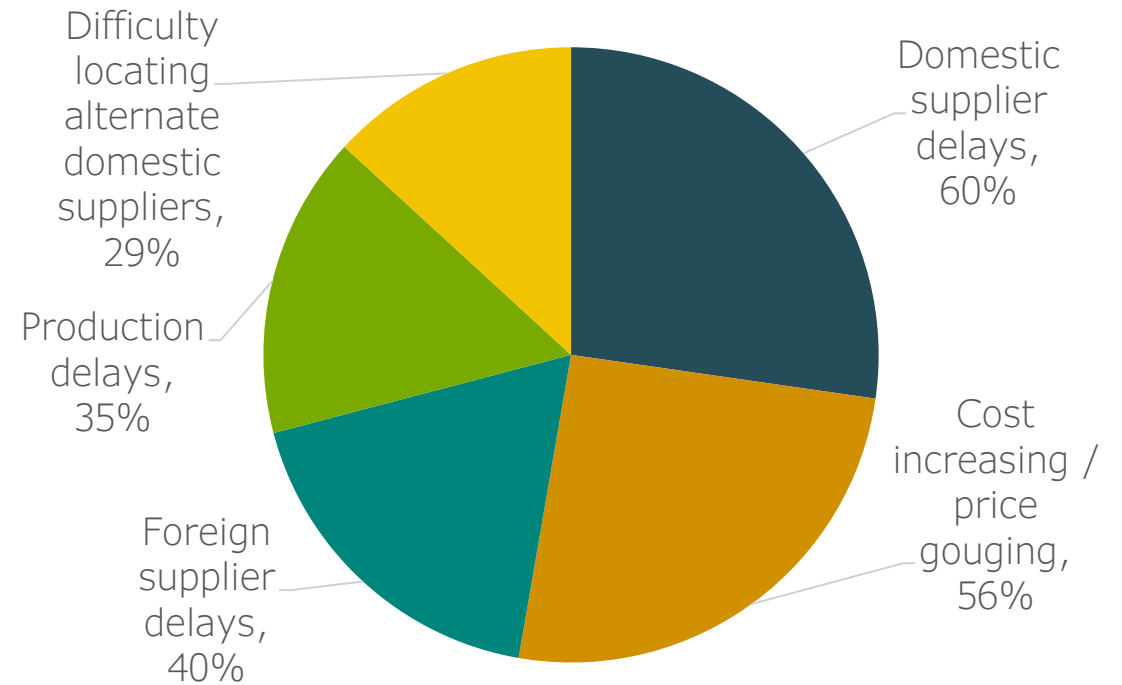


Resiliency Planning

Most Helpful Economic Assistance
(All Industries)



Supply Chain Challenges (All Industries)



COVID Addendum

Appendix F

- Unemployment rate worse than state/nation at onset
- Unemployment rate slower to improve over time
- Labor force change has been disproportionate in the Berkshires
- Loans and Grants of all sizes and sources have had an impact

Next Steps

- Make final updates to a Commission-endorsed document
- Submit Committee-approved final CEDS to EDA in December
- Public roll-out of CEDS content on social media, YouTube, etc.



Questions?

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www.berkshireplanning.org
[program/economic-development/](http://www.berkshireplanning.org/program/economic-development/)