



## Economic Development Objectives

The [2023-2027 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy \(CEDS\) for Berkshire County](#) has as its foundation a Vision Statement, centered around our People, Community, and Economy:

*"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."*

From this, the CEDS identifies Goals (see sidebar) and corresponding objectives to further economic growth and well-being in our region. The following represent the **most critical objectives** from the CEDS:

- Expand the Regional Housing Rehabilitation program, including façade improvements at residential properties
- Expand broadband access to the underserved
- Explore Shared Services opportunities to attract and retain municipal staff
- Sustain the Berkshire Funding Focus initiative to support Berkshire County entities in securing grant funds
- Invest in vibrant, safe, and walkable downtown commercial districts, with a focus on vacant storefronts and wayfinding
- Advance the goals of the Tech Impact Collaborative to support and grow our tech-enabled workforce
- Establish a Revolving Loan Fund for small businesses
- Support emerging business incubator programs/facilities
- Improve the region's electric distribution system to accommodate increased demand
- Advocate for increased rail transportation to and from the region (East-West, Berkshire Flyer)

## GOALS

The 2023-2027 CEDS for Berkshire County provides the following Goals as a framework for prioritizing Economic Development efforts in the region over the next five years:

1. **Healthy People**  
Foster the wellbeing of all residents by ensuring affordable and equitable access to food, housing, education, and healthcare.
2. **Resilient Communities**  
Equip our municipalities to serve their constituents, steward resources, and manage governance effectively.
3. **Future-Ready Workforce**  
Prepare our workforce through a lifespan approach to education, training, upskilling, and career versatility.
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.
5. **Robust Infrastructure**  
Prioritize improvements to critical elements of economic prosperity and resilience, including transportation, utilities, and communications.

### High Priority Projects listed in the 2023-2027 CEDS

The 2023-2027 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for Berkshire County identifies nearly 50 "Priority Projects," all of which stand to have a substantial impact on our region if brought to completion. Categories include:

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

The complete list, including project descriptions, is available [HERE](#) (beginning on page 91). BRPC has selected just fourteen – two from each category – to highlight below as examples:

Farmland Access and Conservation (Countywide)

Shared Cold and Freezer Storage Facility (location/s TBD)

Berkshire Cottages at 100 Bridge Street (Great Barrington)

White Terrace (Pittsfield)

Adventure Trail Design and Engineering (North Adams)

Adams Theater Redevelopment (Adams)

North Adams Public Safety Complex (North Adams)

Columbus Ave/Summer St Parking Garage (Pittsfield)

VIM Berkshires Facility Expansion (Pittsfield)

BRPC Brownfields Program (Countywide)

Waverly Mills/Spinning Mill Redevelopment (Adams)

Eagle Mill Redevelopment (Lee)

Berkshire Innovation Center 2.0 (expansion south and north)

BFMC+ (Lenox)

### Considerations

Many of the Priority Projects, as well as critical Objectives listed on page 1, may be eligible for federal or state grant funding. However, most grant programs will require a 1:1 match commitment for an application to be competitive. Increased coordination among applicants, agencies, funders, and legislators could improve the rate of investment in Berkshire County.

### Resiliency Recommendations

The 2023-2027 CEDS process afforded BRPC the opportunity to develop an in-depth Resiliency planning "chapter", which takes a deeper dive into steady-state and responsive strategies for improving our region's ability to avoid, withstand, and recover from future economic disruptions, whether they come in the form of public health crises, national and global market shifts, or natural disasters.

#### ***High priority recommendations:***

##### **People**

Expanding food access options for those who do not qualify for SNAP but are food insecure.

Connect residents with financial literacy education to help establish a practice of saving.

##### **Community**

Increase Chapter 90 and PILOT funding for infrastructure maintenance and upgrades.

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

##### **Economy**

Offer training to at-risk employers and assist with continuity and resiliency business plans.

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

### **MORE INFORMATION:**

Economic Development Program  
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