



BRPC

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

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**Berkshire County
Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee
Agenda
February 15, 2023 | 1:00 PM**

This will be a **Virtual Meeting** as allowed by Ch. 20 of the Acts of 2021 suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c.30 sec.20.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88588153003?pwd=aUZWVkw4OXg4NkhqdHI2Zko1OXB0dz09>

Meeting ID: 885 8815 3003

Passcode: 520015

One tap mobile

+16465588656,,88588153003#,,,,*520015# US (New York)

Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/u/kxunmBAeb>

1. Call to Order
2. Approval of Minutes from December 14th, 2022
3. 2023-2027 Berkshire County CEDS
 - a. EDA Acceptance Letter – February 2nd, 2023
 - b. Public Roll-Out
 - i. **2-page summary** - attached
 - ii. **ArcGIS Story Map** – view draft [HERE](#)
 - iii. **Berkshire Magazine guest article** - submitted
 - iv. **Canva video “trailer”** - view draft [HERE](#)
 - v. **Press Release** for general distribution - pending
 - vi. **Public presentations** - TBD
 - vii. **Spanish translations** – in progress
 - c. Annual Progress Report - #1 due early 2024

4. Adjournment

Next Meeting – April 19th or May 17th?

City and Town Clerks: Please post this notice pursuant to M.G.L. Chapter 39, Section 23B

Please Note:

For information regarding postponements or cancellations on the day of a scheduled meeting, please call Berkshire Regional Planning Commission at (413) 442-1521, x5



CEDS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

December 14, 2022

Committee Members Present

George Ambriz, Berkshire Community College
Roger Bolton, Williams College (Retired)
Mike Coakley, City of Pittsfield
John Duval, Town of Adams/BRPC Commission Chair
A.J. Enchill, Berkshire Black Economic Council
Keith Girouard, Massachusetts Small Business Development Center Network
Kyle Hanlon, BRPC, CEDS Chair
Lesley Herzberg, Berkshire County Historical Society at Arrowhead
Ben Lamb, 1Berkshire
Laurie Mick, PERC
Chris Rembold, Town of Great Barrington
Debra Sarlin, Berkshire Community College
Shannon Smith, Berkshire Agricultural Ventures
Ben Sosne, Berkshire Innovation Center

Committee Alternates Present

Kevin Pink, 1Berkshire

Not Present

Jim Lovejoy, Town of Mt. Washington
Paul Mattingly, MassHire Workforce Board
Mike Nuvalle, City of North Adams
Ian Rasch, Alander Construction

BRPC Staff Present

Laura Brennan, Economic Development Program Manager
Wylie Goodman, Senior Economic Development Planner
Tom Matuszko, BRPC Executive Director

Guests Present

Sharon Gregory, Great Barrington resident
James Garzone, Great Barrington resident
Lucy Hamann, 1Berkshire Economic Development Associate

I. Call to Order

Kyle H. called the meeting to order at 1:01 p.m. Kyle H. then conducted a roll call of CEDS Committee members.

II. Approval of Minutes from October 26, 2022

Chris R. moved to approve the minutes. Keith G. seconded. The minutes were approved.

III. Comments from the Public

There were no comments from the public.

IV. 2023-2027 Berkshire County CEDS

Laura B. explained the purpose of reconvening the group to review the final draft along with a short list of changes since the CEDS was presented to the Commission on November 17th. The Distress Map is one of the more important updates that had been on hold awaiting new information (pg. 16). Other edits were more text-related. The list of changes by category was provided to Committee members by Laura B. prior to the meeting, along with a list of photos included in the final document. Chris R. suggested adding photo credits for images included on the cover page. Wylie G. suggested adding the phrase “transit-oriented development” under Resiliency Recommendations (pg. 76).

- **CEDS Committee Final Endorsement**

A.J. Enchill had a question about business incubators and partners listed on page 47 and the status of the project(s). Laura B. explained that progress would be tracked in annual reports and entries in the Objectives area are kept purposefully vague until details about progress on projects are understood in subsequent years. Laura B. explained that objectives are not necessarily linked to Priority Projects nor are there specific submissions from different entities. Partners are free to state in the next or subsequent years that progress has or has not been made on an Objective or Priority Project or that an initiative has been terminated. Laura B. explained the next steps after the meeting including sending the report to EDA for their approval and social media and public outreach. The funded project will wrap up in March 2023. We will share social media and other public roll-out examples at the February meeting. If the budget allows we would like to create a digital Executive Summary (equivalent to 6-10 pages on paper) to make the report more accessible to the public. Wylie G. will likely present again to town Select Boards and potentially the Pittsfield City Council.

Keith G. made a motion to endorse. Ben L. seconded. Through a roll call vote, the *2023-2027 CEDS* was endorsed by the CEDS Committee.

V. Adjournment

Keith G. made a motion to adjourn. Chris R. seconded. Through a roll call vote, the meeting was adjourned. The meeting adjourned at 1:29 pm.

Next Meeting – Wednesday, February 15, 2023, @ 1 pm.



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
Economic Development Administration
Philadelphia Regional Office
Robert N.C. Nix Federal Building
900 Market Street, Room 602
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19107**

February 02, 2023

Thomas Matuszko, Executive Director
Berkshire Regional Planning Commission
1 Fenn Street, Suite 201
Pittsfield, MA 01201

Dear Tom,

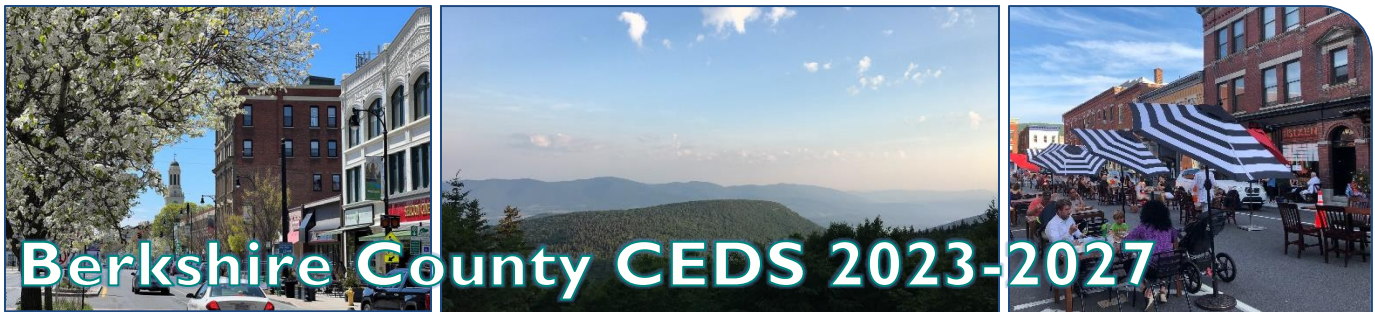
Thank you for the recent submission of your CEDS document. EDA appreciated the opportunity to review your CEDS document for the period of January 2023 through December 2027.

We are pleased to inform you that EDA's review of your CEDS document and process align with the regulatory and programmatic requirements and your CEDS has been accepted by EDA. The priorities and focuses outlined within your CEDS document will help form the foundation of how EDA reviews applications for Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance Programs from your region.

We greatly appreciate the work of the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission and CEDS Committee to develop this innovative, regionally-driven economic development strategy. EDA looks forward to continuing to work with you to help support the goals and priorities outlined in your recently submitted CEDS.

Sincerely,

Debra Beavin
Economic Development Representative Philadelphia
Regional Office



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
lbrennan@berkshireplanning.org