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THE BERKSHIRE BLUEPRINT

2.0

A Shared Economic Vision
and Plan for Action

In 2007

the Berkshire Economic Development Corporation launched the Berkshire Blueprint. This summary brought together a curated set of research and materials with the goal of initiating work towards sustained economic growth across the Berkshires.

Ten years later, in 2017, 1Berkshire, the Berkshire's Regional Economic Development Organization, undertook the task of creating the Berkshire Blueprint 2.0. Through the execution of 18 months of interviews, research, data collection, and analysis, the Berkshire Blueprint 2.0 offers a strategic imperative and lays out the new narrative of the Berkshire economy.

This action-based plan outlines the present state of the Berkshire economy, and aims to guide the region forward through the activation of key partnerships in coordination with 1Berkshire, to provide sustained energy, resource support, and strategic alignment of various regional economic hubs.

Through identifying areas of needed attention, leveraging the significant investment already occurring across the region, and pairing those

with existing and potential programs and initiatives, the Blueprint itself focuses on five primary economic clusters.

These clusters include:



ADVANCED MANUFACTURING



CREATIVE ECONOMY



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE



HEALTHCARE



HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM

These five primary clusters comprise central and cornerstone economic growth areas in the region.

Several cross-cutting themes were also identified through the blueprint process, each of which has a reach beyond the five clusters and speak to the needs of the region's economic development system. By including these challenges and opportunities, the impact of the Blueprint extends to every corner of the Berkshires and offers a path to grow and bolster a thriving economy.

1BERKSHIRE

+ THE BERKSHIRE BLUEPRINT 2.0

The Berkshire Blueprint 2.0 is comprehensive, 1Berkshire-facilitated, community-driven strategic imperative that offers the regional economy a roadmap to economic growth and prosperity. By laying the renewed groundwork for sustained action and activity, 1Berkshire will work with and support partners from across the region to enact effective and measurable steps to continue to advance the Berkshires' positive trajectory.

THE NEW BERKSHIRE NARRATIVE

The Berkshire Blueprint 2.0 moves beyond setting the stage for broad economic development in the region and instead approaches the regional imperative through the lens of the new narrative about the region. While the Berkshires still face significant opportunities for improvement, the contemporary narrative drawn from investment and growth is resoundingly positive. With nearly \$1 billion of regional investment in the past 3 years, the introduction of new job growth, and significant growth in the economic impact of the tourism and hospitality industry, the Berkshires are on the rise.

The identification of this new narrative is paramount to driving the strategic actions amongst the economic clusters and the broader cross-cutting themes to ensure the current growth is sustained and improved upon. Additionally, through the months of research, over 100 interviews, and numerous focus groups, the identification of the most significant clusters of economic growth helped to give a structural framework of partnership to the Blueprint action planning.

ACTION STEPS

Because the Berkshire Blueprint 2.0 is designed as a strategic plan for actionable outcomes, 1Berkshire, along with their consultants, developed several broad action steps to apply to each of the five Economic Clusters.

- 1 // Create** a unified and effective leadership team
- 2 // Adopt** a clear set of strategies directed at strengthening each cluster
- 3 // Establish** a set of defined roles and responsibilities for organizations in the system
- 4 // Initiate** a culture of systems performance

THE CLUSTER MODEL

Approaching economic development systems using a cluster model allows the Berkshire Blueprint to have central yet collaborative structural support that gives significant attention to key growth areas while also allowing existing or future industries to receive the needed attention they deserve. The five focused clusters outlined in the Blueprint each offer key facets to the regional economy that raised them to a priority level. These include:

- Achieved Economy of Scale
- Boosting Innovation
- Stimulating Entrepreneurship
- Improving Employment Opportunities

**\$1 BILLION IN
INVESTMENTS OVER
THE PAST 3 YEARS**

FOCUSED AND BROAD APPROACHES

The Blueprint acts in both focused and broad ways to impact the regional economic system. By focusing on the five clusters in industry-specific ways, it gives intimate attention to opportunities for significant growth. In addition, by addressing several cross-cutting challenges that impact all industry in the region, the Blueprint helps to lay the framework and improved landscape for all existing and potential industries. The initial cross-cutting challenges identified include:

- Broadband Access and Infrastructure
- Energy Costs
- Population Limitations
- Transportation Accessibility
- Workforce Development

FOCUS AREA #1

Defining Clusters

An industry or economic cluster is a group of interdependent companies, organizations, and institutions in a geographic region with common or complementary interests that have reached sufficient scale to develop specialized expertise, services, resources, suppliers, and labor.

**National Governors Association*

Successful clusters grow over time, most often driven by entrepreneurship and innovation, and are strengthened by the support and technical services of an effective economic, workforce, and business development system. For the Blueprint, the five defined clusters were identified as priority due to their proven ability to hit on four core components:

1 // Achieving economies of scale as businesses associate and cooperate to identify common cluster needs and leverage opportunities to develop new products, pursue new markets, and share non-proprietary information and technologies.

2 // Boosting innovation, both intentional and unintentional, formal and informal (“knowledge spillovers”), that lead to new technologies or enhanced techniques.

3 // Stimulating entrepreneurship whereby opportunities are more transparent, role models more visible, and opportunities to supply, compete, or complement become more available.

4 // Improving employment opportunities whereby clustered firms tend to attract and compete for similar talent, pipelines develop between schools and businesses, and community- and school-based “grapevines” quickly circulate information about job openings, career opportunities, and workplace conditions, which leads to higher incomes and career advancement.

Additionally, each cluster identified represents an economic sphere of influence that offers high levels of:

- Economic and Employment Impact
- Potential for Sustainability
- Innovative Capacity
- Recognized Niche
- Local Leadership

Through defining these clusters in the regional economy, a segmentation can occur that allows for specialized focus on given economic sectors, while allowing for cross-cutting themes to be addressed across and between the clusters and permitting additional economic growth opportunities to filter into the mainstream of the economic development system of the region.

**ADVANCED
MANUFACTURING
PRODUCES A GROSS
REGIONAL PRODUCT
OF \$917,000,000**

FOCUS AREA #2

Each of the five defined clusters offer unique segments, activities, challenges and assets that speak to specialized action steps.



CLUSTER 1

ADVANCED MANUFACTURING

SEGMENTS

- Production / Engineering Systems
- Advanced Materials
- Defense Armaments
- Medical and Life Sciences
- Plastics

ACTIVITIES

- 3.3% job growth since 2010
- Significant market growth of core firms
- Intentional investments in training
- Industry-led best practices dialogue

CHALLENGES

- Attracting and retaining talent
- Gaps in skill-to-job alignment
- End of the Berkshire Applied Technology Council
- Overabundance of industry advisory groups
- Rising energy costs
- Decreased level of innovation capacity amongst smaller firms compared to large historic ones

ASSETS

- Highest value added to the regional economy with a gross regional product of \$917M
- Strong job multiplier ratio of 4.8 to 1
- Comparatively high and competitive wages averaging \$72,477
- Opportunities for local supply chains
- Berkshire Innovation Center

ACTION STEPS

- 1 // Position** the BIC as a leader for innovation within the cluster
- 2 // Develop** a strengthened local supply chain
- 3 // Build** a formal peer-to-peer BMP learning network
- 4 // Strengthen** the relationship between Education and Manufacturing



CLUSTER 2

CREATIVE ECONOMY

SEGMENTS

- Visual Arts and Fine Crafts
- Performing Arts
- Literary Arts, Design
- Film and Media
- Culture Museums and Heritage

ACTIVITIES

- 9.5% job growth since 2010
- Significant concentration of creative employers (62% higher than National concentration)
- Rapid emergence of northern Berkshire County
- Growth of major cultural institutions
- Market adoptions by creative enterprises
- Establishment of key initiatives for sustained growth

CHALLENGES

- Engagement of local residents
- Overcoming perceptions to showcase economic importance
- Sustaining organizational support
- Diversity of cultural institution and creative enterprise needs
- Housing for seasonal employment
- Transportation

ASSETS

- Diverse business establishments
- Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation and MCLA institutional support
- Existing collaborative relationship across the county

ACTION STEPS

- 1 // Organize** convening of the major cultural institutions
- 2 // Develop** an intensive business resources awareness campaign
- 3 // Expand** the Assets for Artists program
- 4 // Provide** support for BIC and the Creative Commonwealth Initiative
- 5 // Reconvene** the Creative Resources Conference
- 6 // Create** partnership between the BIC and the creative community



CLUSTER 3 FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

SEGMENTS

- Farming
- Value-Added Farm Products
- Restaurants
- Food Service Providers
- Food Distributors

ACTIVITIES

- 4% job growth since 2010
- Strong growth in retail and dining operations
- Growth in the number of regional farms and farmed acreage
- Recognized convergence with other key industry clusters
- Trend towards local food focus

CHALLENGES

- Costly farmland
- Gap in knowledge and capacity of farmers
- High seasonal market swings
- Underdeveloped markets
- Infrastructure bottlenecks

ASSETS

- Development of new initiatives helping to bring products to market
- Growing network of emerging capacity
- Recognized importance as part of regional identity
- Existing organizations targeting high-impact funding sources to support initiatives for growth

ACTION STEPS

- 1 // **Expand** food processing and distribution capacity to grow markets
- 2 // **Build** best-in-class food and farm-to-table training centers
- 3 // **Spark** the next generation of entrepreneurs and social innovation in the farm/food business
- 4 // **Build** the Berkshire brand as destination for food, culinary, and farm-to-table authenticity



CLUSTER 4 HEALTHCARE

SEGMENTS

- Hospitals and Hospital systems
- Offices of doctors
- Medical groups and outpatient services
- Rehabilitation and long-term care organizations
- Home health services

ACTIVITIES

- 3% job growth since 2010
- The largest single industry cluster in terms of employment (11,417 jobs)
- 50% higher concentration of healthcare businesses compared to nation
- Increase in home health and outpatient care services

CHALLENGES

- Berkshire Health Systems' central presence
- Shifts in service and strains on growth
- Cost of services and new models
- Challenges of information management
- Changes in employment structures
- Multitude of health and wellness agencies

ASSETS

- Strong training backbone across region
- Numerous partners supporting workforce development
- Berkshire Innovation Center

ACTION STEPS

- 1 // **Create** a county-wide health program to solve common workforce issues
- 2 // **Explore** healthcare innovations and new markets in partnership with the Berkshire Innovation Center

**BERKSHIRE FARMS
SOLD A MARKET VALUE
OF \$22,468,000 IN
PRODUCTS IN 2012**



CLUSTER 5 HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM

SEGMENTS

- Lodging
- Food-related
- Nature and Recreation
- Health and Wellness

ACTIVITIES

- 6.3% job growth since 2010
- \$517 million spent by tourists in 2017
- Increased connectivity between cluster and other industrial clusters
- Increased density of employment opportunities
- Significant investment in new and updated hospitality properties
- Growing outdoor recreation and four-season experiences
- Increased cooperation between entities along brand consistency

CHALLENGES

- Strains on small businesses
- Wage and job security concerns
- Gap in education and training
- Transportation and housing
- Persisting seasonality of region
- Limitations of state-level support
- Competition from neighboring regions
- Lagging industry cooperation

ASSETS

- The peripheral impact that cluster has across region
- Untapped new markets
- High income visitor profile (\$100,200 median income)
- Growing health and wellness as destination driver
- Robust Berkshire brand for travelers

ACTION STEPS

- 1 // **Invite** and encourage the leadership base and industry hub to focus on common internal business issues
- 2 // **Invest** in training, job design, and retention
- 3 // **Explore** new funding sources and partnerships

BLUEPRINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

COMPOSITION

CLUSTER HUB
LEADERSHIP

REGIONAL
STAKEHOLDERS

EDUCATION +
TRAINING LEADERS

ELECTED +
MUNICIPAL
LEADERS

RESOURCE
FACILITATORS
+ PROVIDERS



RESPONSIBILITIES

- Act on cross-cutting issues
- Advocate for action and resources
- Interpret data and outcomes
- Allocate Blueprint resources to partners
- Track and report actions and impact
- Strategic collaboration implementation
- Create cross-function and cross-cluster networks



REPORTING

ONGOING
BENCHMARKING

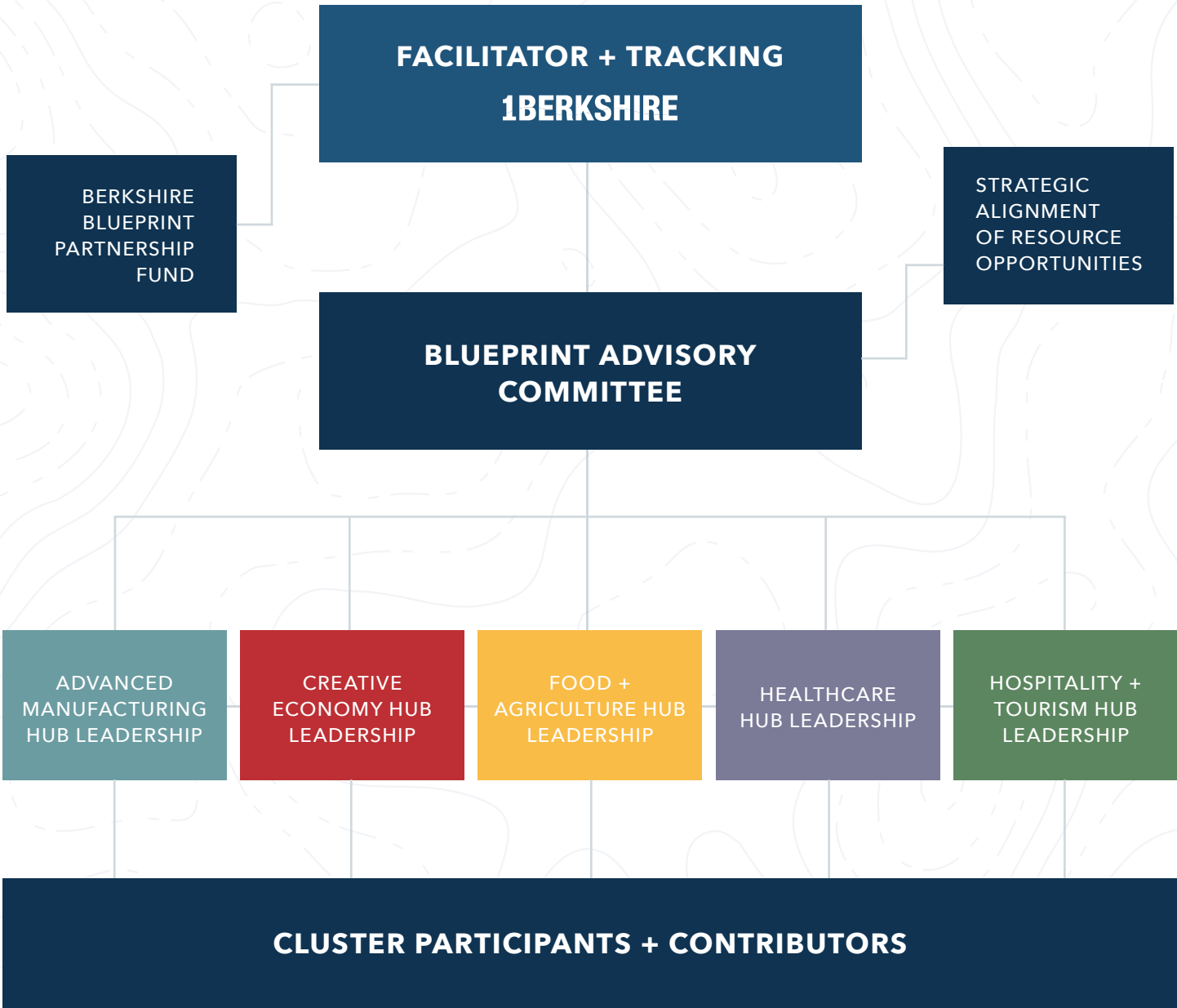
ANNUAL
FOLLOW UP
REPORTS

FOCUS AREA #3

Organize Cluster Leadership Hubs & Support

For each of the clusters to achieve meaningful growth and sustained momentum, the leadership model needs to be built and facilitated in a way that allows 1Berkshire to track and support each

cluster while maintaining ownership by the cluster experts and members. This is achieved through a collaborative hierarchy of leadership hub entities and cluster organizers that work to focus on the particular hub, while also acting as the advisory board that works to address the cross-cutting issues and provide ongoing reporting.



FOCUS AREA #4

Explore Other Clusters & Economic Activity

While the work of the Blueprint is initially designed around the focus of the five central clusters, emerging cluster activities should be continually tracked and integrated accordingly. These emerging trends and clusters will be identified through working with partners both in a proactive way, and organically as they arise. Utilizing the Blueprint Advisory Committee, 1Berkshire will seek regular updates regarding new cluster opportunities. Potential sources of emergent cluster awareness include:

- Programs of the Berkshire Innovation Center
- Lever's work with high-growth enterprises
- New science centers at both Williams College and MCLA
- Co-working spaces including Cloud85, Framework, and The Werkshires
- Analysis and potential build-out of the local supply chains for existing and future companies
- Entrepreneurial spin-offs that could develop peripherally to larger manufacturers and anchor institutions

FOCUS AREA #5

Enhance the Economic Development System

In order to support a thriving economic ecosystem, two critical systems must receive meaningful attention and focus to leverage assets, overcome challenges, and create broad-reaching positive growth. These systems are a talent development system, and a business and entrepreneurial support system.

FUTURE & EMERGING CLUSTER PIPELINE OPPORTUNITIES

INDIVIDUAL + ORGANIZATION INPUT

MAJOR BLUEPRINT PARTNERS EXAMPLES INCLUDE:

- Berkshire Innovation Center
- Lever / Cloud85, Milltown Capital / Framework
- Higher Education Institutions
- Major Cultural Institutions

BLUEPRINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

TALENT DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM

The creation and sustained activity of a talent development system would leverage the identified cluster business needs, numerous talent assets, and opportunities and challenges that exist in both the clusters and broader economic development system to help support actions that contribute to positive growth.

BUSINESS NEEDS

- Drawing in new outside talent and growing the local talent pool from those who are unemployed or underemployed
- Creating an improved level of “stickiness” to retain the region’s young talent in jobs and careers locally
- Supporting a system that promotes both the job experiences and the general quality of life in the region
- Streamlining of recruitment efforts at all levels of career opportunities
- Centralization of coordinated efforts for engaging education and training institutions, and a consolidation of redundant efforts

OPPORTUNITIES

- Berkshire Business Interns regional programming
- MassHire Berkshire Workforce Board’s connective work with youth and career opportunities
- McCann Technical School and Taconic High School’s co-op and work-based learning opportunities

ASSETS

- Berkshire Innovation Center
- MassHire Berkshire Workforce Board and Career Center’s numerous programs
- Educational institution facility updates at MCLA, Williams, and Mount Greylock and Taconic High Schools
- Existing training programs at McCann Technical School and Taconic High School
- The Economic Prosperity Impact Council’s work
- The Workforce Skills Cabinet collaborative approach and state-level support
- Berkshire Education Task Force
- Berkshire United Way’s “Matchmaker” grant
- 1Berkshire Berkshire Leadership Program and Youth Leadership Program

CHALLENGES

- Lack of trained and available talent for specific available positions
- General talent shortages in all clusters at varying career levels
- Critical future skill and soft skill needs across all clusters
- Slow growth of regional population and an aging workforce
- Relatively low available labor force participation (63.6%)
- Disproportionate credential programs focusing on healthcare and not on other cluster sectors
- Relative to other regions, fewer job training and occupational certificate programs outside of K-12 and post-secondary education systems
- Lack of consistent strategic implementation and communication amongst businesses in industry clusters
- Concerns related to employee retention, job security, and income levels
- Technical training gap in the southern portion of the county

ACTION STEPS

- 1 // Establish and coordinate ongoing workforce-business partnerships through the cluster hubs and connectors
- 2 // Build even more intensive and broad-based internship, apprenticeship, and career awareness, exploration and immersion opportunities
- 3 // Extend career and technical education to southern Berkshire County
- 4 // Build stronger supports that lead to economic security for front-line workers and support the workforce needs of Berkshire businesses to retain employees and provide good jobs
- 5 // Launch coordinated new hire recruitment initiative for Berkshire businesses that curates jobs and attracts candidates to fill job openings
- 6 // Build forums for continuous learning and innovation for talent development practice

BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURIAL SUPPORT SYSTEM

The creation and sustained activity of a Business and Entrepreneurial Support System would leverage existing organizational capacity, technical assistance resources, financial institutions, and networks to supply businesses at all levels and scales with needed tools for sustained success.

ORGANIZATION EXAMPLES

- 1Berkshire & The Massachusetts Small Business Development Center - Provide free and ongoing guidance and support to new and existing businesses
- LEVER & Milltown Capital - Provide financial, space-based, and technical support to entrepreneurs and startups
- Berkshire Agricultural Ventures & Pittsfield Economic Revitalization Corporation - Provide significant technical support and conduits to access financial resources
- Local Chambers of Commerce - Provide networking opportunities with sub-regional entrepreneurial peers
- Framework, Cloud85 and The Werkshires - Provide co-working spaces for entrepreneurs and startups.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Networking and mentorship opportunities such as 1Berkshire's Berkshire Starts programming
- Potential growth of existing pitch and business competitions across the region such as Lever's Arts Enterprise Challenge
- Updated and new space for occupation by businesses
- Groups such as the Economic Development Practitioners Group and Small Business Forum creating conduits for cross-venture communication

ASSETS

- Existing programs and resources available to startups and new entrepreneurs in key hubs throughout the county
- Emerging funding pools to supplement conventional lending mechanisms
- New rental developments in Pittsfield, attracting increased market rate renters
- Berkshire Innovation Center

CHALLENGES

- The intersection of the "historic perspective" and the "new perspective" around the economy
- A sense of "local-only" protectiveness; reluctance to embrace opportunities coming from outside the Berkshires
- The dispersed and relatively small scale of the regional market
- Splintered resource pools without clear curated points of access and entry
- Lacking a clear referral system to resources and networks
- No official business accelerator programs that are based in the county
- Most real estate options don't allow for creative financing and renovation
- Limited access to specialized financing like CDFI, DCD, and USDA funds
- Dispersed organization and focus spread across a breadth of groups and organizations without a comprehensive overarching management core
- Specific gap in startup support in particular areas of the county

ACTION STEPS

- 1 // Define and communicate roles and responsibilities as far as "leaders" and "navigators" to create improved transparency and metric tracking
- 2 // Support startups and entrepreneurs through long-term strategies, allocation of resources, and integration of key partners in a full-county approach.
- 3 // Strengthen referrals for small and mid-sized businesses to increase access to critical resources and opportunities
- 4 // Enhance real estate deals through the growth of more "red carpet" teams across the region, coordination of local leads between municipalities, and creative strategizing with landlords and developers
- 5 // Recruit and support new businesses through a county-wide strategy and a clear "business friendly" approach that is responsive to business needs and involves both the public and private sectors
- 6 // Look to alternative capital providers and navigate collective opportunities that offer the highest impact
- 7 // Acknowledge and embrace a regional economy that acts cooperatively and collectively to "cross-promote and support" instead of "silo and compete". An annual "Berkshire County Conveners for Growth" conference would support this transition, while also providing an opportunity for organizations to check in on Blueprint objective progress, explore trends and opportunities, and support existing businesses.

FOCUS AREA #6

Addressing Cross-Cutting Issues

While much of the planned work of implementing the Berkshire Blueprint relies on the five central clusters, there are a number of cross-cutting issues that impact the region at large, including all clusters. Considerable work has already been undertaken on many of these issues, but continued regional advocacy and creative thinking are still needed to overcome unique local issues.

BROADBAND

Consistent access to high-speed broadband internet has long been a challenge in Berkshire County. Recently, actions from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts have supported the work of bringing all communities in the Berkshires up to an equitable standard of broadband access and internet speed. Integrating fiber-based internet throughout the region supports both residents and businesses and acts as a resource for recruitment and retention of key demographics.

Further advocacy and work is still needed, especially for residential access. Using case studies of successful integration in the county such as the gigabit-level internet at the 47 Railroad development in Great Barrington may also provide models for other communities and businesses.

**AS OF 2018, < 1% OF
BERKSHIRE COUNTY
RESIDENTS HAD GIGABIT
INTERNET ACCESS,
WHILE 85% HAD 100 MB
BROADBAND ACCESS**

ENERGY COSTS

New England energy costs are significantly higher than they are in other regions of the country, with research indicating a rate 56% higher than the national average. With the retiring of regional power plants, lack of new plant construction, high cost of fuel distribution and a limited pipeline infrastructure, the Berkshires face significantly higher energy costs compared to other areas of the country and the Commonwealth.

These high costs are challenging for industrial and commercial employers who utilize large amounts of energy, which jeopardizes their competitiveness in the market. Some progress has been made in Massachusetts through the joint advocacy of government leadership and the business community, helping to mitigate some proposed rate hikes.

While power plants have been decommissioned, opportunities for increased wind, solar, and hydroelectric power do exist. Creative options to combat disproportionate energy rates include actions such as potentially creating economic development electricity rates for regions like the Berkshires and other areas economically lagging behind the Commonwealth.

Additionally, with limited representation of the Berkshires on the Western Massachusetts Industrial Group, there is an untapped opportunity to pursue further engagement in advocacy with neighboring counties as well in this work. Regional unity and advocacy from the business community and on the part of elected officials is critical to continued mitigation of expensive energy prices.

**AS OF 2017, 68% OF
THE ELECTRICITY IN
MASSACHUSETTS
WAS PRODUCED BY
BURNING NATURAL GAS,
EXACERBATING THE
PROBLEM OF A LIMITED
SUPPLY**

POPULATION

Regional population loss has been a persistent issue for decades in the Berkshires. 1Berkshire's Berkshire Initiative for Growth (BIG) began to lay groundwork for recruiting and retaining individuals to the region to curb this trend. While portions of the report were implemented by 1Berkshire, a number of components were laid out as the responsibility of other members of the regional business community to integrate and apply actions for positive population growth.

Yet to be fully realized, the recommendations of the BIG offer additional mapping strategies that should be adopted across the current and potentially emergent clusters. Modeling after communities like Tulsa, Oklahoma, the development of strategic programming to retain "in-migrants" with post-secondary degrees and technical skills training could offer an opportunity to retain and expand the Berkshire youth and millennial populations. Between outward recruitment of individuals into the region, and comprehensive, high-touch strategies to retain members of the regional community, future work could help to halt and reverse population decline in Berkshire County.

TRANSPORTATION

The movement of people and goods throughout and beyond the region has been a long-standing and region-wide issue. Gaps in first/last mile public transportation services, inadequate evening bus service, a lack of coordination of private/public transportation assets, and challenges of getting to and from employment reliably are some of the consistent challenges around transportation in the region.

Initial groundwork under the leadership of Senator Adam Hinds through the creation of the Berkshire County Transportation Working Group (BCTWG), as well as a growing discussion of a Berkshire County Transportation Management Association (TMA) have both offered insight and potential next steps to address the gaps in transportation service.

While there is a significant amount of work still to be done, with initial funding pools secured through the Commonwealth, a clearly-recognized regional need, engaged partners, and a growing resource pool for acting on a comprehensive transportation strategy, efforts to improve the region's transportation infrastructure are underway.

**INITIAL STATE
FUNDING IN JULY 2018
HAS ADVANCED THE
REGIONAL DISCUSSIONS
OF FILLING THE RURAL
TRANSPORTATION GAPS**

CONCLUSION

It is no secret that the decades-long national decline of traditional manufacturing has had a deleterious effect on Berkshire County. The departures of long-time major employers such as General Electric and Sprague Electric devastated the Berkshire economy. For too long, the narrative has been that our best days were behind us, confined to faded newsprint and wistful memory.

That narrative is out of date. For several years, Berkshire County leadership has felt a sense of cautious optimism that the tide is turning. New buildings, businesses, and partnerships are springing up everywhere. With the knowledge that Berkshire County has seen \$1 billion in investment over the last three years, the writing is on the wall: the days of doom and gloom are over. The new Berkshire narrative is about growth and opportunity in a diversified regional economy, and there is room for everybody at the table.

Advanced Manufacturing, Creative Economy, Food and Agriculture, Healthcare, and Hospitality and Tourism: these economic clusters represent a significant portion of the economy, chosen because of their impact on the overall economy, sustainability, innovative capacity, recognized niche, and local leadership. These clusters have seen sustained growth, and the Blueprint looks to the clusters and their leadership to help steward continued progress. Other clusters will almost certainly emerge as similarly-impactful in the years to come. The cluster approach to Berkshire County's economic development offers a structure for benchmarking and sustained growth, which the Blueprint Advisory Committee and its partners can oversee and help to guide.

None of the progress highlighted above happened by accident; it has taken years of tireless efforts from countless individuals and organizations. Although so much work has been done, we still have plenty to do. Larger concerns around transportation infrastructure, population loss, energy prices, and wages and financial security still present as impediments to regional economic progress. However, these challenges are not insurmountable. As a county, we will develop solutions through cooperation between the public and private sectors, with support from the Berkshire legislative delegation and state and federal agencies; but success will require an all-hands-on-deck effort.

This collaborative effort will require local elected officials, executives, organizers, workers, volunteers, and private citizens to step up to the plate, and leverage their own spheres of influence for the collective good. Organizations can become part of this critical work by serving as cluster leaders, or if not serving as cluster leaders, relaying concerns, opportunities, needs, trends, and other critical data to cluster leadership, and collaborating within and between clusters. Individuals can get involved by taking advantage of opportunities to serve on boards, committees, or task forces that advance blueprint objectives.

Everyone can become a critical part of this important work by committing to collaborate to improve life in the region. If you have an insight, share it. If you need help, ask for it. If you have a great idea that needs support, seek out resources and partners. Together, we can accomplish so much more than we can alone. Here in the Berkshires, collaboration has always been our greatest strength, and if we can present a united front, it will carry us forward, together, to our best days yet.





Williams

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A special thanks to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the Berkshire County legislative delegation for their support of this project.

+ BLUEPRINT FUNDERS

This document would not exist without significant support from Berkshire County's business community. We specifically wish to thank the organizations listed above, whose steadfast support allowed us to conduct the countless hours of research, interviews, data analysis and aggregation, and ultimately the creation of this document. Their commitment to Berkshire County's continued economic development in comprehensive efforts like their support of the Berkshire Blueprint is an inspiration. We at 1Berkshire are honored to work alongside them to help build a brighter future for Berkshire County.

THANK YOU

