



THE BERKSHIRE BLUEPRINT

A Shared Economic Vision and Plan for Action

**2.0 SUMMIT
BRIEFING**

JANUARY 2020

The Berkshire Blueprint 2.0 Advisory Committee Summit was held on November 22nd, 2019. This summit was the first of its kind, bringing together the full advisory committee of the Berkshire Blueprint 2.0 to convene around updates, and to provide feedback and insight about areas of needed focus. These summits will be conducted twice annually in order to ensure accountability and tracking of Blueprint aligned activities and strategies throughout the Berkshires. This briefing is the product of the November 22nd summit, and is meant to act as a contributing document to the Blueprint 2.0 implementation process. The Berkshire Blueprint 2.0 full report and executive summary remain the primary document when it comes to the strategic imperative for economic development in the region, and our hope is these update reports will act as an ongoing mechanism for keeping the implementation relevant, trackable, and comprehensive.

1BERKSHIRE ACTIONS SINCE LAUNCH

Following the launch of the Blueprint 2.0 in February 2019, 1Berkshire began to take in feedback and new connections from across the region. This information has helped to create a more comprehensive advisory committee, has contributed key participants/stakeholders in the individual areas of focus, and has provided significant regional commitment realization both in terms of time and dollars invested. 1Berkshire remains a facilitator and tracking partner, as well as acting as a connective tissue and partnering stakeholder support.

CLUSTER ACTIVITIES



ADVANCED MANUFACTURING

- With the Berkshire Innovation Center coming online, initial tenants have begun planning their operations in the facility, including notably: EMA and Milltown Capital (Action 1).
- MassHire Workforce Skills Cabinet is working to better link education, economic development, and manufacturing (Action 4).



CREATIVE ECONOMY

- Initial cluster leadership facilitation has begun around organizing specialized convenings of creative stakeholders (Action 1).
- Connective tissue development between C4/BCAN/BRAINworks efforts of regional cultural interconnectivity (Action 4).
- Shakespeare and Company RFP process for future economic development.
- Lenox Cultural District was designated.
- Thaddeus Clapp House opened.
- Northern Berkshire Artists Meetups began to be held quarterly starting in February 2019 (Actions 1 & 3).



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

- Focus on growing the capacity of food processing in the region has led to grant applications and research efforts through Berkshire Agricultural Ventures. (Action 1).
- Berkshire Agricultural Ventures has been established as a CEDS priority project (Action 3).
- Berkshire Food Co-op opened, and Wohrle's established their "100 Mile Aisle" (Action 4).



HEALTHCARE

- The United Way, in coordination with Team RE3ET hosted an Idea Jam focused on workforce demands in the healthcare industry. This brought together stakeholders from across the region to brainstorm and find ways of creating new workforce pipelines in the industry (Action 1).
- Community Health Programs, in partnership with Berkshire Health Systems and Fallon Health, launched their mobile unit in fall 2019, improving access to care, education, and services.
- MCLA Radiology Program is launching (Action 1).
- Berkshire Health Systems initiated support efforts for the Brien Center Recovery Home.



HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM

- 1Berkshire has begun a visitor economy research project for ongoing data collection (Action 3).
- Berkshire Community College Hospitality Fast Track program launched (Action 2).
- A ski collaborative to support marketing and reach for the winter outdoor recreation economy has been established (Action 2).
- The Lodging Tourism Fee is scaling into a region-wide program to help better promote the Berkshires to key markets (Actions 1 + 2).
- 1Berkshire facilitated PR Convenings of hospitality and tourism industry participants to develop deeper understanding of needs, opportunities and ways to promote the narratives of the Berkshires externally (Action 1).

CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

BROADBAND AND TECHNOLOGY INFRASTRUCTURE

Energy Costs

- Ongoing resiliency planning, efforts and initiatives have been underway, especially in Pittsfield and North Adams with state MVD program support.
- Additional development of wind farm arrays, growing the region's renewable energy capacity.

Population

- 1Berkshire, Berkshire Regional Planning Commission and MassHire Berkshire Workforce Board collaborated to conduct the 5 year out follow-up survey of the Berkshire County workforce. The key information from this survey will come out in January 2020.
- The 1Berkshire jobs thing has continued to show a positive impact in the efforts of employers to collectively draw an increased candidate pool from outside the region to help fill the numerous well paying positions across the Berkshires, with over 2,000,000 digital impressions, 73,000 site visits, and 36,000 users in the first year alone.

Transportation

- Completion of the Berkshire Flyer 2.0 branding study produced a high quality brand to be utilized to support the pilot of a rail program from NYC to Pittsfield.
- The region received nearly \$400,000 to support the development of the Berkshire Flyer pilot program.
- Continued work by representatives of the region on the East-West Rail committee has helped to reach a critical point of potential model selection.
- 1Berkshire's Transportation Strategy Committee convened in May has entered into a contract with a consultant to conduct a feasibility and design study for a Transportation Management Association for the Berkshires.

TALENT DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM

- Berkshire Bridges ERN program development to support small-medium sized businesses in their retention efforts is now underway.
- The jobs thing has developed into a powerful tool for recruitment to the region, helping to bring quality talent to over 200 positions.
- MassHire Berkshire Workforce Board has launched their career pathway trees for several key sectors, providing visual representations and guidance for people seeking careers of value and purpose.
- Monument Mountain Regional High School has launched their Innovation Pathway program to help bridge the local skills gap.
- The BerkHires Welcome Packet program will be launching in 2020 to help provide welcome packet materials to potential recruits and new hires coming to work in the Berkshires from other areas.

BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURIAL SUPPORT SYSTEM

- EforAll Berkshire County launched a three-year pilot, equating to a \$1,000,000 investment in developing entrepreneurship with a specific goal of helping underrepresented populations create their own businesses.
- LEVER has grown their competition series and held their first Intrapreneur Challenge and Summit.
- 1Berkshire began holding Economic Impact Site Visits with visits to Crane & Co. and Shakespeare & Co as a means to showcase economic opportunity and growth to key stakeholders.
- Three businesses were selected to participate in the Inner City Capital Connections program, after being nominated by regional leadership, to help them grow and scale their ventures.
- Numerous programs have developed and grown, including Entry to Entrepreneurship and Tech Stars StartUp Weekend, to help inspire and catalyze entrepreneurial opportunity growth.

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SUMMIT MODEL

The Berkshire Blueprint 2.0 is a living program that will continue to hold summits of the advisory committee twice per year to keep existing and emergent needs and opportunities in focus. Several emergent themes arose in November's summit.

EMERGENT THEMES OF NEEDED ATTENTION AND ACTION

Workforce Housing

- The Berkshires need an improved stock of workforce housing to support the existing population, and to help bolster efforts in recruiting new individuals to the region to live and work. This is a key cross-cutting issue that requires significant and timely attention and action.

Diversity and Inclusivity

- In all efforts region-wide, a renewed and strategic focus on improving diversity and inclusivity initiatives is needed. This will help to support underrepresented populations, provide individuals resources to start and grow businesses, and bolster supports that enhance retention of diverse populations within our regional ecosystem.

Broadband, Technology Infrastructure and Energy Costs

- While identified in the Blueprint itself, these cross-cutting issues around technology infrastructure and energy costs remain challenges that require increased attention and focus from advocacy and resource alignment perspectives.

Increased Employee Supports

- A significant number of points and concerns align with an increased need for added effort to attract, retain, and support employees beyond normal salary and benefits. Some examples include referral programs for transportation and resource access, early childcare assistance, and programs to support individuals with aging parents and dependents.

Business Transition Support

- While supports have grown significantly for entrepreneurs and startups, there remains a lingering and growing need for resources to be established and marketed to businesses looking to expand, improve, and eventually transition to new ownership in a sustainable manner.

NEXT STEPS

ADVOCACY AND STATE INITIATIVE ALIGNMENTS

- Partnerships for Growth, the Commonwealth's new economic development plan, identifies infrastructure as a cross-cutting principle, and specifically calls for additional investment in transportation and improving transit outside of the inner core (i.e. the Boston metropolitan area). The ongoing work to explore the feasibility of a Transportation Management Association aligns with the Commonwealth's policy objective.
- The same principle in the state's plan directly refers to the need for parts of the Berkshires to have additional broadband capacity. Expanded connectivity initiatives at the municipal level are moving forward in some Southern Berkshire towns, and the Commonwealth's 2020 budget features funding for Pittsfield to explore the feasibility of becoming a municipal broadband provider.
- Partnerships for Growth also identifies as a strategic goal "Enabl[ing] entrepreneurs and small businesses, especially those owned by women, immigrants, veterans, and people of color, to access affordable capital, space, technical assistance, and other resources." A constellation of local programs and agencies, including the Berkshire County regional office of the Massachusetts Small Business Development Center, EforAll Berkshire County, and 1Berkshire, provide support to entrepreneurs and small businesses, and through referrals to state and quasi-public agencies and resources, can help expand this access.
- The recently-announced Moving Forward Framework Federal Infrastructure Bill lays the groundwork for new resources and opportunities for technology infrastructure, transportation connectivity, existing infrastructure improvements, and manufacturing support. All of this aligns with the Blueprint 2.0, which opens the door to collective advocacy as this bill moves through the House of Representatives.

1BERKSHIRE