



2023-2027 CEDS

Berkshire County, Massachusetts

Submitted to U.S. Economic Development Administration on December 15, 2022



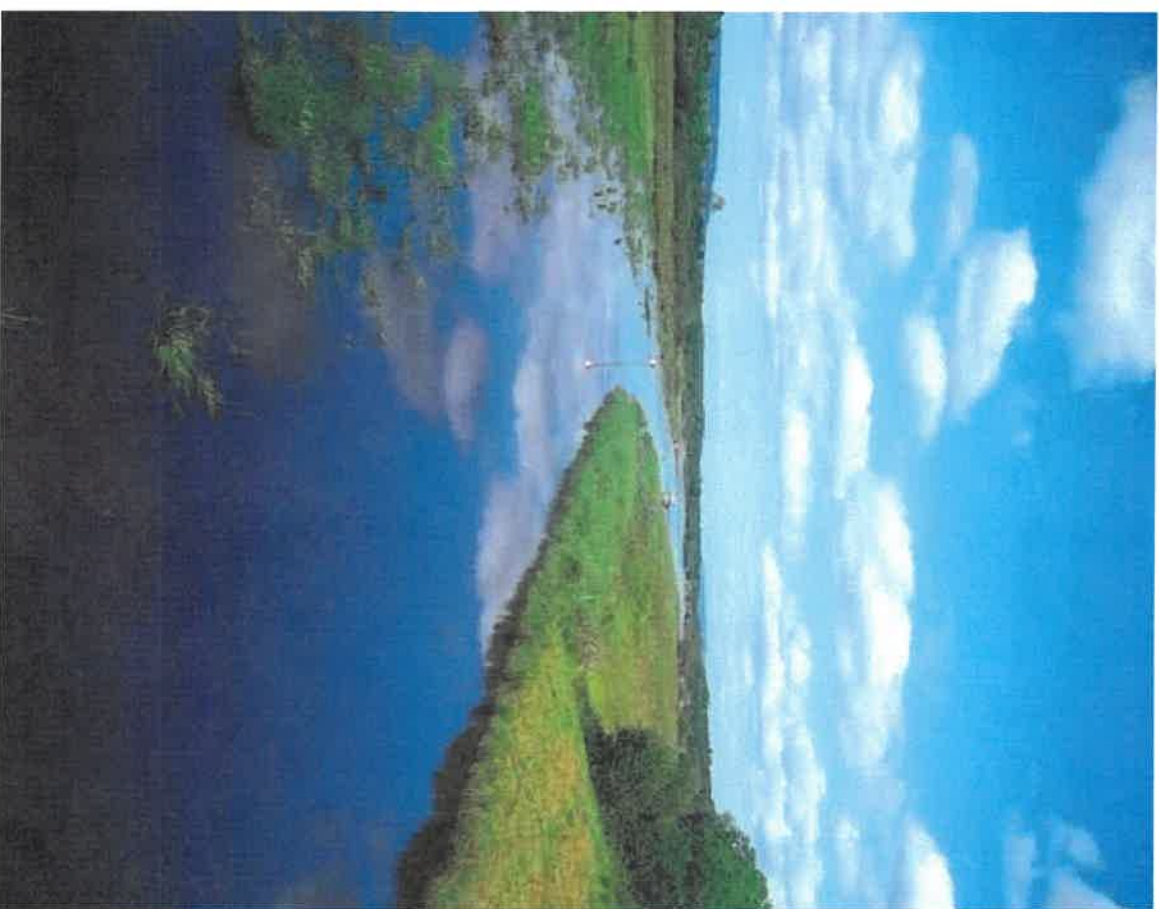
Berkshire County's 2023- 2027 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Overview + Resiliency

What the CEDS Tracks BRPC

- **Regional Economic Conditions and Trends**
- **SWOT Regional Analysis**
- **Strategic Action Plan based on SWOT**
- **Performance Measures to Evaluate CEDS Implementation and Impact**
- **Economic Resilience Assessment (Planning, Information Networks, Pre-Disaster Recovery Planning, Resilience Measures)**

Sample Sheffield Assets

- Oldest town in the Berkshires – strong sense of history – one of the most scenic in the Commonwealth
- Average earnings and per capita income per year higher than County average (2021). Low unemployment rate (3.1% - 2021). Overall high educational attainment level
- Balanced population (Gen Z, Millennial, Gen X = 1,747 / Baby Boomer = 1,571)
- Schenob Brook wetland complex (one of the most unique unspoiled ecosystems in the world) / Pollinator-Friendly Community
- Strong sense of community (Berkstock Festival, Dewey Hall)



Sample Sheffield Challenges



- 77% of residents who rent paying 30%+ of income for rent (202 units).
- 49% of homeowners paying 30%+ of income for home-related monthly costs.
- Jump in tax bill in 2023 from \$4,794 in 2022 to \$5,173
- Outdated Master Plan (2005)
- Climate change threats impacting roads and agricultural economy
- Lack of affiliation with a regional transit authority

SHEFFIELD MASTER PLAN VISION: 2005 - 2014

The rural beauty and character are maintained and enhanced, and agricultural heritage is promoted and kept vital.

Unique and special natural resources are protected through wise stewardship, which encourages the creation of compatible recreational and economic opportunities.

Historic and cultural buildings and landscapes are preserved and enhanced in a setting where housing and business development are attractively sited following a traditional New England pattern.

Housing is available in a wide range of types and price ranges.

Existing compatible businesses, economic opportunities, and entrepreneurial development are available, supported, and encouraged. Current technologies are available to businesses and residents and energy efficient practices are promoted and embraced.

Essential municipal facilities and services, such as schools and a broad transportation network are provided at the highest quality and affordable to all members of the local community.

CEDS VISION: 2023 - 2027

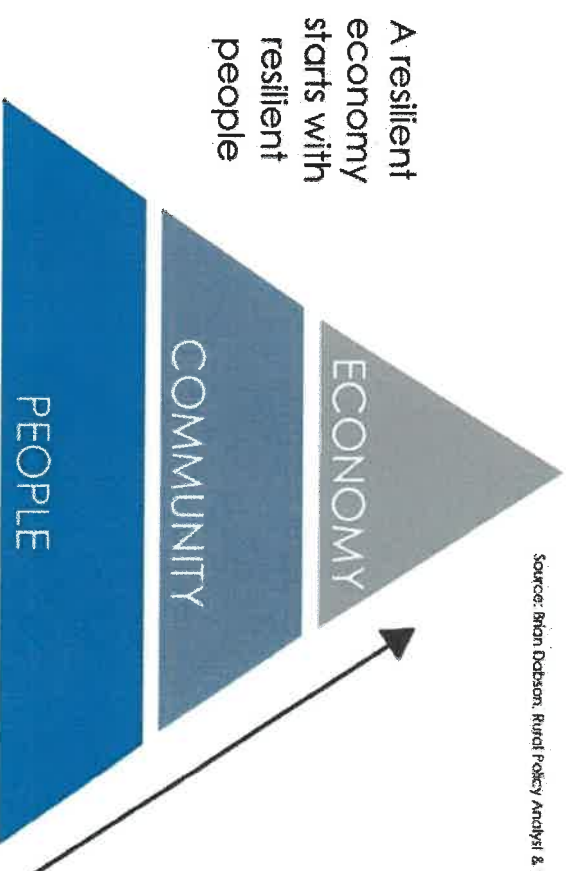
Berkshire County will be sought after as an affordable, inclusive, and safe place for people of all ages and backgrounds, offering a high quality of life and abundant employment opportunities. Our community will nurture and support each other, prioritizing equitable access to education, healthcare, and 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.

Resiliency Framework



People-Community-Economy is the framework BRPC is using to organize the resiliency section, informed by rural economy researcher Brian Dabson.

Source: Brian Dabson, Rural Policy Analyst & Researcher





**Goal #1:
Healthy
People**

**Goal #5: Robust
Infrastructure**

**Goal #2:
Resilient
Communities**

**Goal #4:
Strong
Business
Environment**

**Goal #3: Future-
Ready
Workforce**

CEDS Goals 2023-2027



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CEDS SWOT Analysis

Strengths

Agricultural Heritage
Brand Identity
Collaborative Approach
Cultural Amenities
Educational Institutions
Outdoor Recreation
Redevelopment Potential

Weaknesses

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

Opportunities

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

Threats

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

Sample CEDS Objectives



PEOPLE

- Expand Regional Housing Rehabilitation program, incl. façade improvements at residential properties
- Expand broadband access to underserved

COMMUNITY

- Explore Shared Services to attract + retain municipal staff
- Invest in vibrant, safe, and walkable downtown commercial districts, with focus on vacant storefronts and wayfinding
- Advocate for increased rail transportation to + from the region (East-West, Berkshire Flyer)

ECONOMY

- Redevelopment of former mill sites
- Sustain Berkshire Funding Focus to support Berkshire County entities secure grant funds
- Establish Revolving Loan Fund for small businesses

Four Resiliency Questions



1. What are the current strengths- weaknesses- opportunities and threats facing your town?
2. How resilient are/were your town's PEOPLE-COMMUNITY-ECONOMY ...
 - a. pre-pandemic?
 - b. during the pandemic?
 - c. currently + in the next 5 years
3. What are your recovery-related concerns for your town and the county as a whole?
4. What solutions do you think will best address those concerns?



Sample Resilience Risks: People



Critical Health and Mental Health Resiliency Challenges: People			
Health / Mental Health Challenges	Berkshire County	Massachusetts	% Difference
Heart Disease: Annual Death Rate per 100K	291.1	254.4	13.45%
Cancer: Annual Death Rate per 100K	152.9	146.9	4%
Opioid-Related Overdose: Death Rate per 100K	48.1	32.6	38.41%
Suicides per 100K	17.4	10	54%
Adult Obesity	27%	25%	2%
Excessive Drinking	26%	24%	2%
Adult Smoking Prevalence: *2nd highest in MA	19%	14%	5%
Diabetes Prevalence: *2nd highest in MA	10.70%	8.40%	2.30%

Sources: Berkshire Health System's 2021 Community Health Needs Assessment: www.mass.gov/doc/opioid-related-overdose-deaths-by-city-town-november-2021/download /



Sample Resiliency Risks: Communit



- **Climate Change**
- **Towns w/o Master Plans**
- **Towns w/o Hazard Mitigation Plan**
- **Towns w/o Green Communities**
- **Need to Attract New Residents and Businesses**
- **Need for More Affordable Housing**
- **Need for Walk-Bike Downtowns**
- **Need for Affordable Childcare**
- **Difficulty Attracting Municipal Staff and Volunteers**



Sample Resilience Risks: Economy

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- Lack of Business Diversity
- Need for Support for Women-, Veteran-, Minority-Owned Businesses
- Over-Reliance on Businesses in At-Risk Sectors (See *Future of Work*)
- Lack of Sufficient Broadband/Cellular to Support Remote Work
- Insufficient Planning for Supply Chain Disruptions
- Lack of Protection from Cyberthreats or Climate Change Shutdowns

Sample Resiliency Recommendations



People

- Expand food access for food-insecure/non-SNAP eligible.
- Connect youth with financial literacy education.

Community

- Increase Chapter 90 + P.L.O.T for infrastructure maintenance + upgrades.
- Update and improve municipal regulations to reduce the 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 expansion of CVTE, upskilling, and reskilling programs to prepare students for well-paying jobs in industries resistant to economic shocks.

What's Next?



Annual Updates to
Assess Progress



Follow-Up on Priority Projects



Continued Conversations with
Municipal Stakeholders



Learn More About the CEDS

Visit: <https://berkshireplanning.org/initiatives/berkshire-comprehensive-economic-development-strategy-ceds/>

www.berkshireplanning.org



Thank you!

Questions? Email

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