

Christina Barrett

From: Berkshire Economic Development Corporation [engine@mainstreetmail.com]
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To: Christina Barrett
Subject: Quarterly e-Bulletin Berkshire Blueprint



After nearly two years of extensive work, on March 9, 2007 the Berkshire Blueprint was launched as the roadmap for the expansion of the Berkshires' economy for a sustainable prosperous future.

March 9 marked the transition from **“planning”** to **“doing.”** As was noted at that event **“now it’s all about execution.”** Over the past several months, the Berkshire Economic Development Corporation (BEDC), Berkshire Chamber of Commerce, Berkshire County Regional Employment Board (BCREB), Berkshire Creative, Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, Berkshire Visitors Bureau, Lee Community Development Corporation (CDC) and the Southern Berkshire Chamber of Commerce have all taken on pieces of the Berkshire Blueprint. Additionally, **more than one hundred volunteers** are now working in groups or on committees to advance **14 action items** outlined in the Berkshire Blueprint. We continue to work to encourage even more organizations, municipal entities and volunteers to get involved. As you will see below, **tremendous progress has been made in just a short period of time.**

This is the **first Quarterly e-Bulletin** that will be communicated through our network of stakeholders to keep the community at large updated as to the progress of the Berkshire Blueprint's vision and execution.

The Vision for the Berkshire Region

Be a dynamic, creative, competitive economy

- A magnet for entrepreneurs and business leaders.
- Vibrant - a well-connected community supporting growth across industries.
- Focused - A nexus for a variety of firms and industries.
- Connected to metro areas providing a source of suppliers, capital and customers.
- High-quality communications infrastructure enabling access to global business partners.

Key Issues

- Support entrepreneurship and innovation.
- Launch internal and external marketing campaigns.

- Develop regional and cluster institutions for collaboration.
 - Align education and training programs with cluster needs.
 - Invest in high-quality infrastructure.
 - Stabilize and reverse population loss.
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ACTIVITIES UPDATE

Supporting Entrepreneurs and Innovation:

- **Angel Network** - A Berkshire Blueprint team, including Eric Bruun, David Crane, Tyler Fairbank, Nancy Fitzpatrick, Mark Gold, Matt Harris, and Laurie Norton Moffatt have been successful in forming an Angel network for the region. A pilot event was held in April with several entrepreneurs presenting their concepts to potential investors. The event was successful and **each venture has already received investment commitments**. As a result, one venture has already **expanded operations in the Berkshires**. The working group is continuing to fine tune the details of the Berkshire Angel Network and is planning to conduct its first formal Forum on September 18, 2007.
 - **Entrepreneurial Support in the Berkshire Region** - The BEDC, the Berkshire Chamber of Commerce, Lee CDC, Southern Berkshire Chamber of Commerce and a Berkshire Blueprint team of Ozzie Alvarez, Dave Bruce, Louanne Harvey, Sharon Palma, Michael Supranowicz, and Rich Vinette have been working to bring together a comprehensive report on the entrepreneurial landscape in the region and take aim at improving support systems to encourage and sustain innovation and the process of bringing ideas to market. Preliminary work in this area is **assembly of the current entrepreneurial support organizations**, such as Berkshire Enterprises, Berkshire Entrepreneurs Network, Chambers of Commerce, and Business support groups as well as some selected entrepreneurs for a strategic meeting in **late October in order** to plan for a dynamic restructuring of the entrepreneurial support system.
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Internal and External Marketing Campaign

- **Regional Marketing and Public Relations Campaigns** - The BEDC has undertaken an extensive regional marketing campaign. **312 articles** have been placed in local, regional, national and international media delivering more than **50 million impressions**. Advertisements promoting the Berkshires are running in *Berkshire Living Magazine*, *Business Xpansion Journal*, and *Global Corporate Xpansion Magazine*. **A highly-targeted list of more than 1200** potentially expanding companies as well as site selectors and corporate real-estate executives has been developed. Each have received **direct mailings and monthly e-blasts** promoting our region, its activities and other newsworthy information. Other targeted marketing initiatives include the **Berkshire Employment Outlook publication with over 70,000 copies** distributed in May 2007.
- **Communicating the Berkshire Blueprint** - Berkshire Blueprint teams took to the road soon after the event at the Colonial on March 9, 2007 and communicated the Berkshire Blueprint initiatives and action plan to specific groups throughout the county. Presentations, forums and briefings have been conducted through the **Berkshire South Community Center, Lee, Lenox, Southern Berkshire, and Stockbridge Chambers of Commerce**, as

well as the **Superintendent's Roundtable**, various **not-for-profit boards of directors**, and routine updates to the **legislative delegates and state-level officials including Governor Deval Patrick**. Communication continues to be ongoing to other organizations and municipal entities through the county.

- **Benchmarks** - The Berkshire Chamber of Commerce, BEDC, Berkshire United Way, and Northern Berkshire United Way have established a methodology for data collection and reporting on the **13 Success Measures** identified in the Berkshire Blueprint. These measures are in the areas of Business Climate, Community, Environment, Innovative Capacity, Population Change, Prosperity, and Skilled and Educated Workforce. This process utilizes the infrastructure already in place for **Berkshire Navigation** and will **go live in September**.
- **Establish Berkshire Brand** - The BEDC is spearheading an effort that will leverage and expand the existing strength of the Berkshires' brand. Preliminary work has begun to evaluate **best branding practices from other regions around the world** and to establish a re-branding process that will **incorporate stakeholders from throughout the county**.

Develop Regional and Cluster Institutions for Collaboration

- **Plastics Network** - The BEDC has, with the help of Don Rochelo and Carl Olson, put together an initial gathering of regional plastics firms to take place on **July 18, 2007** at SPICE Restaurant. The group will explore strategic steps needed to revive the Berkshires Plastics Network.
- **Support of Creative Berkshires** - The Berkshire Creative Economy Project has become a key cluster institution for collaboration between the various sectors and industries involved in the creative economy. Under the leadership of co-chairs David Crane and Eugenie Sills, the Berkshire Creative Economy Council, known as **Berkshire Creative**, has begun implementation of the Mt. Auburn Associates plan presented on March 9, 2007. Working groups are actively exploring the creation of a **Berkshire Biennale**, **Berkshire Design Showcase**, **“Design It Here, Make It Here” campaign**, and other initiatives outlined in the Berkshire Creative Economy Report. The BEDC is actively supporting Berkshire Creative's efforts and serving as fiscal agent for its grant funding.

Align Education and Training Programs with Cluster Needs

- **Workforce Development Issues** - The Berkshire County Regional Employment Board is operating in alignment with the Berkshire Blueprint and has taken on 3 action items.
 1. *To articulate and coordinate key workforce development programming* – On June 13, 2007 the BCREB secured a Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund award of **\$500,000 for Project HEALTH** (Helping Employers Access Labor Talent in Healthcare). This grant allows for attraction of new employees into healthcare as well as a continuation of career ladder development for healthcare and incumbent worker training. Through the Workforce Training Fund, the BCREB has assisted in generating **\$278,854 for Engineering; \$245,302 for**

Retail; \$233,970 for Healthcare; \$71,000 for Utilities; and \$33,300 for Finance during FY2007.

2. *To organize and implement middle/high school work-based learning initiatives* – During FY2007 the Connecting Activities Internship Program provided structured **internships to 600 students; Job Shadowing** activities provided to **1200 students; Career Fair** activities to **1200 students. STEM** (science, technology, engineering, and math) activities provided to **175 students. Career Ladder** programs provided to **50 students.**
3. *To support/integrate with regional initiatives (Blueprint/Compact)* – Provided resources to create a new **regional internship structure**; conducted annual **workforce needs assessment**; participated in periodic leadership meetings with BEDC/Chamber/Compact.

- **Support the Compact Initiatives** - The successful implementation of the Berkshire Compact for Higher Education continues to be of highest priority for the regional agenda. The Berkshire Blueprint and all its affiliates are working to actively support the Compact. **More than 50 community members** representing key area employment sectors have committed their time to this important county-wide initiative over the past year. Many activities have been developed as part of this effort to raise the aspirations of our residents to view 16 years of education or training as the norm. Some of the accomplishments include a **survey of grades six through twelve across the county** to assess student attitudes and future goals; an analysis of the K-12 demographics across the County has also occurred; **the pursuit of internship models to emulate**; and activities directed at County college graduates to consider employment in the Berkshires. A major focus over the past year has been the development of the “**Berkshire Passport**”, a plan to improve area residents' access to education through a series of activities and experiences. Entering into **Phase III**, the Compact's next steps include implementing these strategies and developing measurements of success.

Invest in High Quality Infrastructure

- **Develop Regional Broadband and Wireless Access** - During the past quarter the BEDC and Berkshire Chamber of Commerce participated in many discussions regarding infrastructure issues, particularly as it relates to broadband coverage in the Berkshires. These discussions included a face to face discussion with **Governor Deval Patrick**, participation in the **Broadband Roundtable with Lieutenant Governor Timothy Murray on April 20**, face to face discussion with the **Secretary of Housing and Economic Development Daniel O'Connell**, ongoing discussions with the **legislative delegation**, and active discussion with the leadership of **Berkshire Connect**. The broadband and wireless issues in the Berkshires have been identified as one of the highest regional priorities. Monies for the deployment of a solution are currently being negotiated as part of the state's latest bond issuance.

Stabilize and Reverse Population Loss

- **Census Project** - The Berkshire Regional Planning Commission has begun preliminary work to ensure an accurate census count in 2010. Interns will be engaged to count residences in areas of the Berkshires that are often miscounted.

Please forward this bulletin to your colleagues and contacts, let them know about the progress we've made and the continuing commitment to action we all have expressed in the Berkshire Blueprint.

[For more information on any of the initiatives, click here to visit our website or contact the BEDC directly.](#)

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