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From: Berkshire Economic Development Corporation [engine@mainstreetmail.com]
Sent: Thursday, November 08, 2007 3:04 PM
To: Christina Barrett
Subject: Berkshire Blueprint e-Blast Update



This is the **Second Quarterly e-Bulletin** that will be communicated to 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:

- **Berkshire Angel Network** - The **Berkshire Angel Network** has been developed and its second event has been **rescheduled from September 18 to November 7**.
- **Entrepreneurs** - A Berkshire Blueprint entrepreneurs' focus group was held on **October 23** for a

half-day working session aimed at developing a more dynamic, collaborative and responsive support system for entrepreneurship and innovation in the Berkshire Region. This group will also be bringing many of the Berkshire Blueprint initiatives into focus in an effort to make **connections between investors, entrepreneurs, and industry clusters**.



Internal and External Marketing Campaign

- **Regional Marketing and Public Relations Campaigns** - The BEDC has continued with an extensive regional marketing campaign. The promotional efforts having yielded earned media feature articles in **Site Selection Magazine, New England Developments, and Economic Development America**. Advertisements promoting the Berkshires are running in *Berkshire Living Magazine, Berkshire Business Quarterly, Business Xpansion Journal, and Global Corporate Xpansion Magazine*. **A highly-targeted list of more than 1,200** potentially expanding companies as well as site selectors and corporate real-estate executives has been developed. Each will

continue to receive **direct mailings and monthly e-blasts** promoting our region, its activities and other newsworthy information. Other targeted marketing initiatives include the third publication of the **Berkshire Employment Outlook publication with over 70,000 copies** to be distributed in November 2007.

- **Communicating the Berkshire Blueprint** - Communicating both the Berkshire Blueprint and the update of its progress is an important component of the roll-out. During this quarter, the Blueprint will have been present to the **Berkshire Entrepreneurs Network, Guidance Councilors Association, Williamstown Chamber of Commerce, Berkshire Taconic Foundation 20th Anniversary Gathering, the Berkshire Leadership Program**. Additionally, this quarterly bulletin is being distributed to **several thousands of addresses** in the county and is **reprinted** each quarter in the **Berkshire Business News**.
 - **Benchmarks** - The Berkshire Blueprint **“Measuring for Success” report card** has been completed and is in the publication process. The report card, measuring **15 key indicators**, will be used on an ongoing basis to measure the performance of the regional economy. The **public release** of the benchmarks is slated for **early December**.
 - **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 the **best branding practices from other regions around the world** and to establish a re-branding process that will **incorporate stakeholders from throughout the county**. The next meeting of the working group has not yet been set.
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Develop Regional and Cluster Institutions for Collaboration

- *Support of Berkshire Creative* - Massachusetts Cultural Council awarded a **\$100,000 matching grant** for Berkshire Creative for which the BEDC will act as a fiscal agent. This grant will support the ongoing projects under the newly formed Berkshire Creative

Economy Council, signaling the project's move into full implementation phase.

Berkshire Creative [working groups](#) are actively exploring the creation of a **Berkshire Biennale, Berkshire Design Showcase, “Design It Here, Make It Here” campaign, the Berkshire Film and Media Arts Commission**, and other initiatives outlined in the Berkshire Creative Economy Report.

Berkshire Creative is also excited to welcome **Helena Fruscio as the full time project coordinator** for Berkshire Creative to manage council activities, offer creative input to working groups and provide administrative support for the project. Her office is located within the offices of the Berkshire Chamber of Commerce in Pittsfield, enabling her to work closely with the staff of the BEDC.

Other Berkshire Creative Updates:

SPARK! Networking for Berkshire Creatives The kick-off of event at the Mahaiwe Theater in Great Barrington with 150 attendees provided a glimpse into the depth and diversity of the Berkshires' creative economy.

Berkshire Creative was asked to participate in the Merrimack Valley Cultural Economic Development Forum in Lowell.

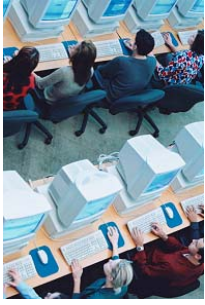
2007 National Conference on the Creative Economy hosted by the Fairfax County Economic Development Authority in Fairfax attended by Helena Fruscio, project coordinator for Berkshire Creative. Also at this conference **North Adams Mayor John Barrett III** participate in a panel discussion entitled How Creative Communities Can Help Build Diversified Local Economy.

[Visit Berkshire Creative's new website.](#)

- *Berkshire Plastics Network* - The Berkshire Plastics Network is now taking the final steps at re-forming. With now **two Network meetings under their belt, a new steering committee is in place** and is planning a series of membership meetings. A number of critical business issues will be addressed as this organization is strengthened. The Plastics Network steering committee has already provided **valuable assistance** in shaping critical strategy on related Blueprint initiatives such as the formation of the **Berkshire Energy Strategy**. [Click here.](#)

Many of the plastics companies which make up the unique plastics industry cluster in the **Berkshires** will have **company representatives** attending and/or participating in the **K Plastics trade show in Dusseldorf Germany** during the week of **October 22**. Berkshire Economic Development president Tyler Fairbank attended in affiliation with the Massachusetts Office of International Trade and Investment. In addition to Tyler's business development mission, he brought information about the unique plastics cluster in the

Berkshires to this event, the largest and most important trade show in the worldwide plastics industry.



Align Education and Training Programs with Cluster Needs

- **Project HEALTH** - The BCREB has secured and began to implement project HEALTH (Helping Employers Access Labor Talent in Healthcare) which is developing a solid career pathway for healthcare workers. Seven people are currently enrolled in training . The BCREB has assisted several companies in obtaining Workforce Training Fund grants totaling \$220,000. The region is working on a WIRED strategy to assist high technology and manufacturing companies with their needs. The region is applying for additional resources to start a SIMS lab for area healthcare providers. A Workforce Development Blueprint which determines the region's critical and emerging industries will be completed in January 2008.

- **Implementation of middle/high school work-based learning initiatives** - The Connecting Activities Internship Program has now developed **75 high school** quality internships; the BCREB implemented a summer youth program for **30 at-risk youth**; career **pathway opportunities offered to 50 youth**; Project Reconnect attracted more than 100 youths to reenter education, training and employment opportunities; Teacher Externships were provided to 12 educators in environmental studies; and the BCREB has assisted in the preparation of a STEM career day in November.

- **Support of and /integration with regional initiatives (Blueprint/Compact)** - The Regional Employment Board provided resources to create a new regional internship structure; conducted annual workforce needs assessment; participated in periodic leadership meeting with BEDC/Chamber/Compact.

- **Support the Compact Initiatives** - The Berkshire Compact for Higher Education efforts continued over the summer and impressive work plans have been implemented to achieve the goals of this county- wide effort.

The final report from the UMass Donahue Institute is nearing completion. A draft of the report, outlining recommendations regarding the delivery of our K-12 public education system, has been shared with the Berkshire County Superintendents' Roundtable. This report will provide for an informed discussion on **school district organization** and highlights key lessons from research literature and selected data sources.

Action plans to expose our county students to higher education opportunities early in their academic careers are in place for the fall. **Middle school students from Conte in North Adams, Adams, and Mount Greylock are scheduled to visit MCLA's campus over the next month. McCann's 9th grade class will visit in late November** and two third grade classes are being scheduled for late fall as well.

A **county-wide survey of 6-12th graders** regarding their attitudes on education and aspirations is **completed**. The "My Voice" tool was administered late last spring and over **6,000 student** surveys have been collected. An aggregate report of the county-wide data is being prepared and will be utilized in upcoming compact meetings to determine strategies on how to best raise the aspirations of our students.

A plan to connect the educational institutions to employers includes two **workshops at MCLA and BCC**. On October 30, members of the **Chamber's Berkshire Young Professionals addressed MCLA students** to inform them as to the employment opportunities in the County for young professionals. A spring program is planned at Berkshire Community College as well. Also, a plan is being developed to better connect employers with training programs in the County as well as to develop a structure to **streamline the internship programs** in the County.



Invest in High Quality Infrastructure

- **Develop Regional Broadband and Wireless Access** - During the past quarter the BEDC and the Berkshire Chamber of Commerce participated in many discussions regarding infrastructure issues, particularly as it relates to broadband coverage in the Berkshires. **Governor Deval Patrick** has just **filed a \$25 million bond bill** to make targeted **investments in broadband infrastructure** in Massachusetts communities without high-speed Internet access. The legislation calls for the **creation of a Massachusetts Broadband Institute** within the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative. The Institute will administer the new **Broadband Incentive Fund**, capitalized by general obligation bonds, to invest in publicly owned broadband infrastructure and partner with private firms to connect the **Commonwealth's 32 unserved communities by 2010**.

- **Energy Policy** - The BEDC and the Berkshire Chamber have been working on the difficult issues surrounding increased energy costs and their effect on local business and industry and economic development in the region. The BEDC and the Chamber have developed short term and long term strategies to address this issue including:

- Having a place at the table during future rate setting hearings to ensure that **fair and equitable electric costs** are distributed between the business and residential community.
- Keeping the **business community informed** along the way and to ensure some of the hearings take place in Berkshire County so the business community can be heard.
- Creating a **buying consortium** to stabilize electric rates.
- Chamber sponsored **forums** for members to learn more **about energy efficiency and conservation** programs offered by utilities in Western Massachusetts.
- Identifying ways to **utilize renewable energy sources** as well as develop methods for creating energy within the state.
- Working with legislators and the administration to **develop a long-term energy policy** with the State that stabilizes and reduces energy costs in Western Massachusetts.

[Click here for information on the Berkshire Energy Strategy](#)

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.

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