

# **Berkshire Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)**

## **What is the CEDS?**

The U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) requires the region to have an *ongoing economic development planning process* to maintain eligibility for EDA funding within the region.

According to EDA guidelines, eligibility for funding consideration requires

- A continuous planning **Process**;
- A **CEDS Committee** representing the entire region and diverse in its members' backgrounds and the interests represented;
- A **Document** detailing the strategic planning process undertaken by the Committee and updated annually as the Committee evaluates regional priorities and actions.

## **Regional Benefits from the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Process**

- 1) Ongoing and inclusive *process*, bringing together the public and private sectors, agencies, and individuals representing the region's economic stakeholders from workforce advocates to industry leaders and community groups.
- 2) An annually updated analysis of our region's economy and demographic data, identifying key economic issues and opportunities, actions, partnerships and resources to proactively meet economic challenges facing our region.
- 3) Development of a comprehensive list of economic development initiatives and clearly defined regional priorities, enabling projects, regardless of whether they are just a concept or are ready to build, to move towards implementation with regional consensus and support.
- 4) Regional eligibility for EDA funds for economic development public works grant funding, technical assistance funds, and revolving loan fund capitalization, and opportunity for local and regional partnering in support of other funding opportunities.
- 5) An enhanced opportunity for the staffs of economic development related organizations in the region to get to know each other's mission and goals, work together, and collaborate.

## **How does the CEDS Process & Role differ from other regional economic development groups?**

As a *comprehensive strategy*, the CEDS documents goals and priorities affecting all aspects of economic development, including workforce development, regional housing needs, and infrastructure improvements, as well as straightforward economic development projects.

### **The CEDS Committee:**

- **Has the specific responsibility to establish a prioritized list of key physical projects that will enhance the region's economy.**
- Relies on the input and participation of existing organizations with specific roles in economic development areas to provide key insights, and define relevant issues, goals and priorities as part of the CEDS process.

**Key partners and schedule on next page** —————>

**Schedule and Time Commitment:**

Rich Vinette has agreed to serve as CEDS Committee Chair for 2004. Rich is Executive Director of the Lee Community Development Corporation and a Board member of the Pittsfield Economic Revitalization Corporation.

The CEDS document update is expected to take about 2½ to 3 months.

- Committee will meet 5-6 times (or about every two-three weeks) during that period at a time and day meeting the needs of the large majority of committee members.

(CEDS 2001 Committee met mid-afternoon during the week – about two hours.)

- Following submittal of the CEDS document to EDA for approval, we will go to scheduled committee meetings quarterly for the purpose of monitoring and collaborating on project development, and reassessing regional needs, goals, and priorities.
- Committee will be staffed by planners from BRPC.

Please note that --

- Failure to maintain a regional process has resulted in substantial EDA criticism following submission of previous documents: OEDP (1993), CEDS 2001.
- Those lapses have also blocked EDA consideration of projects important to the region (most recently, the gravel pit project put forward by the City of North Adams and prioritized by the CEDS Committee in 2001).
- Decreases in funding available both for organizational support and for specific projects make it increasingly imperative that regional organizations show that their specific programs and initiatives fit together within a regional economic development framework.

**Committee Roles and Responsibilities**

There are a handful of primary roles that the Committee is expected to take on:

- 1) Refine the region’s economic development VISION.
- 2) Review background material on the region’s economic condition and ensure that it captures the most important economic development issues, challenges and opportunities.
- 3) Review the various economic development initiatives underway across the region and evaluate their contribution in moving the region towards the agreed-upon vision.
- 4) Review whether the needs of all segments of the region’s population are being represented and met, including existing underserved income, or racial and ethnic groups, or new immigrant groups (increasing Hispanic/Latino population).
- 5) Establish clear regional priorities by prioritizing the proposed projects and initiatives, both for EDA funding and for implementation through other means.
- 6) Establish a reasonable mechanism for measuring progress towards improving the regional economy.
- 7) Maintain an ongoing involvement with the CEDS process to ensure continuous discussion and coordination of regional economic priorities and projects.

**Key Regional Economic Development Groups**

