Berkshire BENCHMARKS

2017 Annual Report

Berkshire Benchmarks is a program of the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission that began in 2009 to:

- Provide a central data clearinghouse for regional data,
- Support contemporary initiatives through the preparation and presentation of data and analysis, and
- Track and report on a number of indicators of regional health and vitality.

The program consists of two components:
1. **Data Clearinghouse:** A searchable database of publicly available data points on the region and its municipalities.
2. **Regional Indicators:** Ongoing tracking and reporting on conditions in the region including environment, economy, and social indicators.

To date, the program has enjoyed the support of the Berkshire United Way, Massachusetts Department of Transportation, Berkshire Community Action Council, and the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation. In 2016 we are grateful for the continued support of Berkshire United Way, and the Massachusetts Department of Transportation .

Staff Contacts

Data Clearinghouse and Regional Indicators
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Berkshire Regional Planning Commission
The Berkshire Regional Planning Commission is the regional planning agency for the 32 municipalities in Berkshire County, MA. The BRPC supports municipal and regional initiatives through short- and long-range planning studies, staff support, and implementation activities related to economic development, transportation, zoning, brownfield assessment and cleanup, environment, historic preservation, municipal efficiency, health and wellness, housing, food security, and social equity.

WWW.BERKSHIREBENCHMARKS.ORG

DATA CLEARINGHOUSE

In 2017, the Berkshire Benchmarks program added over 7,500 data points, bringing our total to almost 80,000 data points. The notable addition to this year's data is the American Community Survey 5-year averages for 2012-2016. In addition, education and economic data was added to keep the data clearinghouse up-to-date. In 2016, there were nearly 1,200 visits to the website with over 770 using the data clearinghouse.

Data Clearinghouse Training
While the data clearinghouse is an open public resources that can be used by anyone, there are a few professional groups to whom this resource may be particularly valuable: non-profit agencies and municipalities. Both of these groups develop grants and proposals requiring a substantial amount of data about the region and topics on which the grant is focused such as affordable housing, economic development, early childhood education, youth programming, or health and wellness preventative programming. A one-stop-shop for regional data can make the most of resources and result in a stronger application by facilitating access to a wide range of data. Anyone interested in attending a free training should contact Mark Maloy (413) 442-1521 x29 or maloy@berkshireplanning.org.

REGIONAL INDICATORS

The regional indicators portion of the Berkshire Benchmarks program has two primary functions:

- **Regional Indicators:** A primary ongoing function of the program is to identify a specific set of data points that help gauge the relative health of the region in a number of areas. These include economy, environment, social, infrastructure, health, and mobility, among other topics.
- **Applied Analysis:** Staff develops tailored data analyses in the form of live presentations and reports to inform and support various community initiatives.

Over the course of 2017, these indicators were developed, but additional work needs to be done to get them online and updated in a consistent manner. This will allow the tracking over time to see how the Berkshires are doing as a region. In 2018 the first release of the indicators will occur.

Applied analysis was performed for the Berkshire United Way on a variety of subjects, as well as continued support for the Berkshire County Education Task Force, and continued analysis of the population trends within Berkshire County.

Financials

FY2017:
Berkshire United Way: $15,000
BRPC/MassDOT: $10,000

FY2018:
Berkshire United Way: $15,000
BRPC/MassDOT: $10,000

This funding allowed Berkshire Benchmarks to provide almost 335 hours of support in 2017 to the community by collecting, analyzing, reporting and presenting data.