

Greylock Region Economic Summit | Greylock Economy Working Group <http://www.greylockcreative.org>

Greylock Mill | Thursday, August 11, 2016

Over 60 individuals gathered at the Greylock Mill in North Adams, Mass. on Aug. 11, 2016 to network, share knowledge and ideas, and create next-step action plans. The three-hour event was convened by [The Greylock Independent](#), with the help of the owners of the Mill. We took the working and informal title, "The Greylock Economy Working Group." Northern Berkshire Community Television pitched in by taping and editing a video archive of the gathering. Watch: <http://www.willinet.org/content/greylock-economy-working-group>

Using "open-space" technology, we asked this convening question: ***What's possible if we balance idealism with practical ideas to make good things happen, and to make sure that a good economy works for all of us?***

Krystal Henriquez, a 2016 *summa cum laude* arts-management graduate of the Massachusetts College of Liberal Art, watched the video and viewed the materials created by participants before, during and after the circle-round discussion and breakouts.

What follows is her summation of opening questions and visions expressed during a full-circle opening discussion in which each participant spoke, followed by Henriquez's attempt to assemble by logical topics, other ideas expressed during the video- and audio-recorded sessions – and by those who couldn't be present but had something to offer in another form.

WHAT'S NEXT – TOPICAL FOLLOWUP MEETINGS

The Greylock Independent plans to schedule followup public sessions on many of these topics, to permit fleshing out of the ideas and questions, and to bring additional people into the discussion who might not have been present on Aug. 11.

QUESTIONS/VISIONS DURING THE OPEN CIRCLE-ROUND DISCUSSION

- Work to promote high-tech, IT and industrial development
- Put more efforts toward growing and existing businesses
- Develop small businesses that encourage innovative and environmentally friendly technology
- Create an action plan to get more foot traffic in downtown North Adams
- How can we put efforts toward having Berkshire regions act as one?
- What can we do to sustain a large family dairy farm?

- How can we network with those who want to establish the Greylock region, as an ideal location that could be utilized, in particular, as gathering area for the Appalachian Trail and Long Trail for through hikers and families?
- How can we bring in more Millennials to fill in the Berkshire County age-gap?
- How can we re-populate the Berkshire County by approximately 1,000 net-new people per month, which would be approx. 200-350 people in Adams-North Adams-Williamstown -- to help stabilize the declining population?
- Can we create a locally based venture-capital fund to connect local investors with local businesses?
- How do we create a regional approach to broadband access for all across Berkshire County?
- How can we encourage and support small businesses in the area that are new or established?
- How can we connect agricultural operators to both retail and restaurant businesses?
- What are concrete and creative ways we can approach increasing the population in the Northern Berkshires to enhance the quality of life?
- How can we restore a shared economy so as to strengthen establishments already in place?
- How can we put a focus on deteriorating real estate to bring in developers to improve that real estate to help population and foot-traffic in downtown spaces?
- What can we do to increase wages for the younger generations so that they can afford to stay here?
- How can we support our local news media?
- In response to the population decline, should we consider opening our doors in the Greylock region to refugee resettlement?
- How can we take inspiration from or utilize the information from the Regenerative Design Group in Greenfield (<http://regenerativedesigngroup.com>), the Conway School of Design (<http://www.csld.edu/>), Real Pickles (http://www.realpickles.com/products_kraut.html), and the South River Miso Company (<http://www.southernrivermiso.com>)?
- How do we connect student learning with business through cooperative ventures?
- How can we attract advisors for small businesses that have the potential for starting up in area?
- A vision: New businesses should always be situated in existing buildings, especially ones that need to be rejuvenated, and in other previously blighted spaces. They should not impose machine noise, air or water pollution on the neighborhoods they enter. They should be linked by pleasant, safe bus, bicycle and walking routes through downtown for workers and customers.
- Create education workforce retraining and develop apprenticeships in new technologies and Internet skills.
- Engage the younger generation and give them ownership and responsibility to our cities and towns and allow them to work together in collaborative settings to offer the feeling of importance and of feeling needed. These factors will help create the desire to stay in the area.
- We should use services of academics with town planning, research and economic development.

TOPICAL IDEAS FROM GENERAL AND BREAK-OUT SESSIONS

High-Tech / Emerging Technologies

- Apply to become a part of The North America Tech Hub Network created by Google. This program provides financial support and the best of Google's resources to startup communities that equip and nurture entrepreneurs.
Link: <https://www.googleforentrepreneurs.com/>
Our competitive edge is that we can register and apply as the Greylock region and have the potential to be the first hub that isn't just one town.
Why? The promise of Google providing resources, mentoring, infrastructure and a brand name that people recognize would give the confidence for Millennials to make a home in a new place. If the Greylock region were identified as an entrepreneurial hub, it could be the tipping point to invest in a new life and move here.
More information: <https://www.googleforentrepreneurs.com/startup-communities/> Learn about networking through the Google for Entrepreneurs Exchange program:
<http://www.gfeexchange.com/about/>
Action: Who is willing to take this on?

Infrastructure

- Develop high-speed Internet by bringing fast broadband to the Greylock region.
Why? Broadband support will become an asset to the community by attracting hi-tech companies, and more settlers to the area who currently view this as a barrier to this region or who depend on broadband access in their profession.
Links: <http://greylockindependent.com/2016/06/favorite-economic-development-idea-williamstown/>
<https://theberkshireedge.com/broadband-high-speed-internet-coming-to-a-rural-town-near-you/>
<http://berkshireplanning.org/reports-and-documents/broadband-maps>
Action: Further research on costs, appropriate infrastructure for implementation and on town-specific needs and resources in making this venture possible.
- Enable faculty entrepreneurs to establish businesses in the area and support this by enhancing data transportation.
Links: <https://greylockcreative.wordpress.com/2016/08/10/ideas-enabling-faculty-entrepreneurs-and-data-transportation/>
<https://greylockcreative.wordpress.com/2016/08/11/an-idea-for-developing-the-greylock-region-research-and-development-in-environmental-technology/>
Why? Our area offers a unique opportunity to be in close proximity of Williams College, enabling college faculty entrepreneurship as small businesses seek out entrepreneurs wanting to establish a small business that could research and develop innovative environmental technologies. This would have the potential to be integrated into local classrooms as

environmental science and technology training programs.

Action: Who is willing to take this on?

Development

- In response to the population decline, we begin a program that is designed to grow and support the economy by following the model of “2 Degrees Portland” from Portland, Maine. “2 Degrees Portland is a network of people who want to sustain and grow the city's economy by welcoming creators, innovators, entrepreneurs, and thinkers to the area — a sort of 21st-entury welcome wagon.” This could potentially be “2 Degrees North County” or “2 Degrees NoCO” or “2 Degrees Greylock”

Why? By hosting people to our area and bringing them to local treasures and events with the intention of exemplifying the assets of this community, we can see real results in an increase in population.

Link: <http://www.liveworkportland.org/connect-visit/2-degrees-portland>

Action: Email Ricco Fruscio to see what you can do to help this program move forward. With some sponsorship already in line, we need more supporters and those willing to take action to join this venture and bring it to fruition. (rfruscio22@gmail.com)

- Representatives from the three towns of the Greylock Region will convene regularly to facilitate honest conversations after identifying a set of collective goals and values to try and deal with the issues and stigmas we live with.

Why? Our region would benefit from a unified branding and effective flow of communication plan. This will help ideas and initiatives move forward that will assist in strengthening the economy and interpersonal relationships.

Action: Create a taskforce of representatives -- for example, individuals from the Chamber of Commerce or educational workgroups -- from each town that means once a month to engage in think tanks. William Kolis has offered his space for meetings to accommodate up to 40 people at the now-closed Firehouse Café in Adams. Address: 47 Park Street, Adams.

- Begin planning and research in development strategies. Use services of academics with town planning, research and teaching in regional economic development and provide projects for scientists and developers.

Greylock Region Branding and Marketing

- There is power and strength in marketing as a county rather than as separate towns. The Hoosic River Valley goes through the entire Greylock valley. With the proper verbiage, we can use that as a hook.
- Change the narrative when talking about an evolving economy. We are not editing our past; we are creating our future.
- Promotional ideas and assets:
 - The Greylock region as a place for development
 - Destination for weddings year-round
 - We are an hour away from Albany, N.Y.

A marketing focus on Millennials that capitalizes on the assets of the Berkshires

Why? In response to the population decline and struggling economy, stronger Greylock region branding could increase foot traffic in our downtown areas and could help Millennials and newcomers navigate a possible future here.

- Capitalize on popular culture: J.K. Rowling's announcement that the America school of wizardry, Ilvermorny, is located on the top of Mount Greylock.
Link: <https://www.bostonglobe.com/arts/books/2016/06/28/rowling-unveils-another-school-magic-berkshires/blm0yCq6FLSV8kVAYHr16L/story.html>
- Action: Research articles and popular culture to determine exactly what features put cities and towns on the "Best of" lists. What is attracting people in their 20's and 30's to move to an area? Take this information and market region as a place that does have or is working on having those aspects.

Business Financing

- Establish a locally focused venture-capital fund
- Support the growth of established businesses
- Develop later-stage funding, such as an operating capital or investments to grow or expand businesses
- Work with local banks to create more small investments instead of fewer and larger investments
- Establish a local investment club and encourage local mentors to participate
How: The Franklin County Community Development Corporation has a seed capital fund that the Greylock County can use as a model.
Action: Contact Amy Shapiro, <https://www.linkedin.com/in/amybshapiro>
- The Chamber of Commerce should sponsor events educating businesses on making transitions within their business, such as transitioning from founder to next generation, and provide information on how to exit a business.
Action: Identify businesses that may be looking to change hands
- Challenge companies to identify their partners and businesses that they are reaching out to in their community.

Why? Making this challenge can encourage companies to fund local projects, such as student community activities. Dury High School did this and succeeded with Cascade Supplies in funding artwork for the building's windows.

Action: Challenge your local businesses and outside corporations

Trades & Professional

- We need to hire expert marketing consultants and professionals in business management, attract employers who respect the environment and pay fair wages, bring low-income residents into the discussion, and aim for workforce development.
- Improve our county health facilities to attract development. Bring to the table issues of equity in health care, social justice and of public, global health, particularly women's health.
- We need more than tourism promotion, we need to encourage movement from cultural destinations to local businesses, encourage innovative small manufacturing facilities and small environmental businesses like commercial composting and a permaculture-based landscape and design. Example: Regenerative Design Group in Greenfield (<http://regenerativedesigngroup.com>)
- Hire a full time economic development/marketing expert for the area.

Tourism, Hospitality & Entertainment

- Explore a partnership with Jacob's Pillow for summer dance programs in the Greylock Region.
- Collaborate with nearby ski/winter resorts to foster winter visitors to the region through cross-promotional efforts. There are a variety of suitable housing options available to individuals and families of all ages and incomes for vacationing and over-nights.
Action: Create Greylock Region packages at a variety of price points and offerings that include housing, admissions to cultural outings, and discounted rates for shopping and eating in downtown areas.
- Utilize Main Street vacancies in North Adams for seasonal pop-ups that would occur year-round.
- **Why?** The idea is that activity creates activity. Pop-ups can serve a number of businesses. For example, vendors can test markets before taking next steps. **Action:** Mayor Alcombright is currently working on regulatory issues regarding seasonal pop-ups. This will be pursued and go through city government.

Agriculture

- Local dairy farmers need to expand their businesses. We should promote our area as a model for a green community with strong links to local farms
Why? Food tourism, especially the food culture of Western Mass., and food production are the drivers behind sustainable growth.
Action: Develop an agricultural training program with farms in area and possibly with McCann Technical High School, to attract young entrepreneurs.

Real Estate & Land Use

- Develop innovative housing programming. Hartford, Conn., has programming allowing young couples to buy homes for a minimal cost and bring them up to code
- within a set amount of time so that the initial loan for buying the home is forgiven.
Why? This type of programming and support could be enough to provide a significant increase in population over duration of years.
- **Action: A handful of artists should come together to sign a 12-month lease in a downtown vacancy to act as a co-op space.**

Environment & Recreation

Our outdoor assets can translate to jobs

- We've recently been designated as an Appalachian Trail (AT) Community. How can we capitalize on this and on those using Long Trail? Can we create a shared equipment or shared bicycle system? Can showers be offered to thru hikers on the Redwood property?
Why? The traffic from people dropping off or picking up the hikers from the AT, the Long Trail or Mahican Mohawk could present opportunity. Promote staying over, enjoying cultural events while dropping off. Businesses along the trails also offer reduced tabs for hikers who would take advantage of this.
Action: Business take the lead on creating organized hikes for overnight and daylong trips year-round.
- Unite with representatives from other countries to organize a hiking trip or other outdoor recreation and then to cultural institution.
Why? This will help increase tourism and foot traffic and help promote the quality of living in the Greylock Region.
- Hostelries could offer fishing weekend.
Why? Fishing could be a major outdoor activity, with the Hoosic one of the few cold-water fisheries in southern New England — and under far less pressure than the better known Battenkill or Deerfield. Guiding services are already available, but limited sources of equipment.

Arts, Culture & Creative

- Establish an artist retreat center to follow the model of McDowell Colony and many others.
Links: <http://www.macdowellcolony.org>
<http://www.artistcommunities.org/residencies>
Why? The arts economy is strong in this region and is often used to enhance and broaden the Berkshire experience, such as through film, higher paying jobs in the arts economy, and training of college interns and arts-management students. This is a place where mid-career artists can live and exhibit. Capitalizing on our assets is one of the best ways to strengthen our economy.

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