

# YEAR TWO



## KEY PRINCIPLES

The plan is based on several overarching principles that provide the foundation for realizing the vision.



Invest in strategies that support the retention and creation of “opportunity jobs”



Ensure public accountability in plan implementation by reporting back on progress



Prioritize investment in redevelopment activities, including industrial, commercial and residential projects



Leverage the County’s position as a regional partner



Invest in development that increases the tax base of Berks County



Recognize and support the growing diversity of the Berks community

# BUILD

**GOAL:** To encourage industrial and commercial redevelopment and support land development that increases the tax base.

## Broadband Education

Berks County Intermediate Unit (BCIU) Digital Navigator program  
Berks Community Health Center (BCHC) Self-monitoring blood pressure  
Connections Work Digital Literacy Upskilling and Training

## Supporting Smart Growth

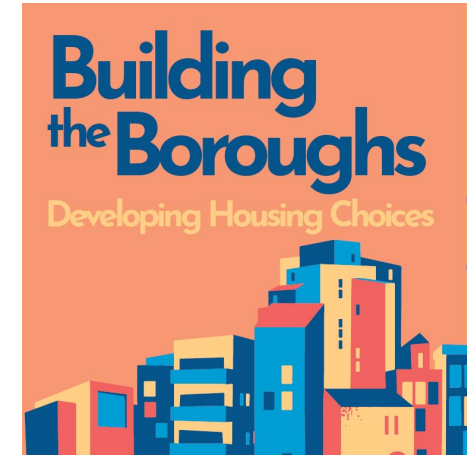
Joint Comp Plans  
Joint Zoning incentive program

## Supporting agribusiness industry growth

Growing Berks: Agriculture's Economic Impact and a Roadmap for Its Future to be completed end of 2024

## Infrastructure Fund

This loan fund (available to municipalities and authorities) will be administered by the BerksIDA and supports infrastructure projects in designated and future growth areas.



**Growing Berks:**  
Agriculture's Economic Impact and a Roadmap for Its Future

Research Provided by ACDS, LLC  
J. PHILIP GOTTWALS, ANNA JENSEN,  
HILLARY KRUMPRICH



# BUILD

**GOAL:** To encourage industrial and commercial redevelopment and support land development that increases the tax base.

## Year 2

### Supporting Passenger Rail Expansion

Inter-municipal collaboration continues with the Corridor ID Program funding and a Transit Oriented District (TOD) overlay surrounding the train station location.

### Positioning the Airport as an Economic Development Asset

Reading Regional Airport Authority purchased and consolidated fixed based operations – now known as Reading Aviation.



# Small Business & Entrepreneurship

**GOAL: Support Small Business and encourage Entrepreneurship to enable the creation of high-growth ventures, main street amenities, and wealth-building for residents.**

## Access to Financial Resources

### Microloans

Barrio Alegria - 16 loans - \$46k and facilitating credit repair (underway)

### Microgrants

FLIC -\$100k (completed)

Berks LaunchBox - \$125k (underway)

## Buy Local

250 + farms and farm businesses are listed on the Grow Together Local Food Map found at [GrowtogetherBerks.com/directory](http://GrowtogetherBerks.com/directory)



Catapallo VR CEO Kryn McClain accepts check from the O'Pake Institute and Berks County Commissioners.

**GROW TOGETHER**  
BUY BERKS. SUPPORT FARMS.



# Talent & Economic Mobility

**GOAL:** Invest in the county's greatest asset – its people – by supporting structures to connect residents to opportunity jobs so that they may more fully contribute to and benefit from the Berks County economy.

## Invest in and support workforce readiness and upskilling initiatives

- Hi-SET graduates = 47
- Youth Re-entry grant
- RMCTC stipends

## Support businesses in recruiting talent

- Meet Greater RDG brand is being more broadly deployed as a talent attraction AND retention tool, with the new National Talent campaign, there are 70 candidates in the pipeline.
- PA CareerLink 2 Job Fairs in 2024 = 3,000+ jobseekers connected with 120 + different employers



A proud partner of the American Job Center network



# Placemaking

**GOAL:** Invest in and highlight community assets that provide access to a variety of arts, culture, greenspace, and recreation opportunities for all residents and future residents.

## Public Spaces, Trails, and Community Recreation

\$225,930 allocated to date for 11 projects

+ \$3.22M previously allocated for 12 projects

## Commitment to Main Streets & Commercial Districts

Customized data is being provided to support Main Street events, programs, and business attraction.



# Housing

**GOAL:** : Address the county's needs for new housing and redeveloped housing that is accessible and attainable.

## Whole Home Repair

139 projects have been completed to date.

## Housing Development - Redevelopment

- BCRA - \$1M
- Purchase and entitle the former Exeter Promenade
- Rehabbing blighted units
- In-fill development



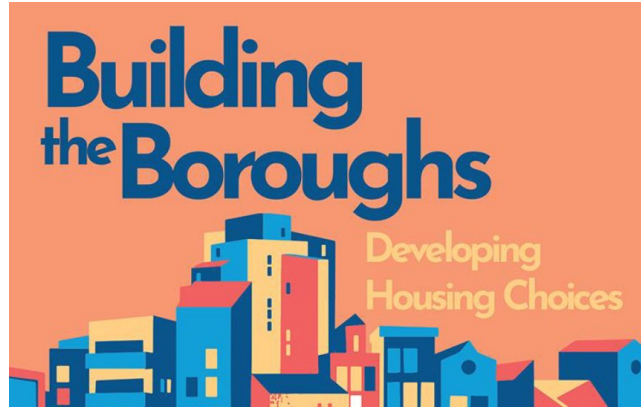
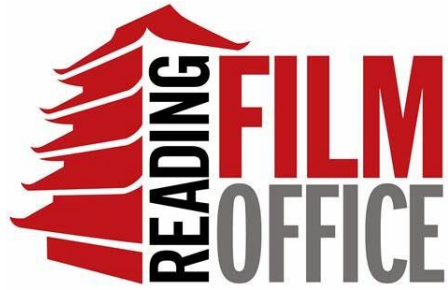
2,800+ units approved in the Housing Pipeline

3,200 units built since 2021





# Funding and Activity Highlights

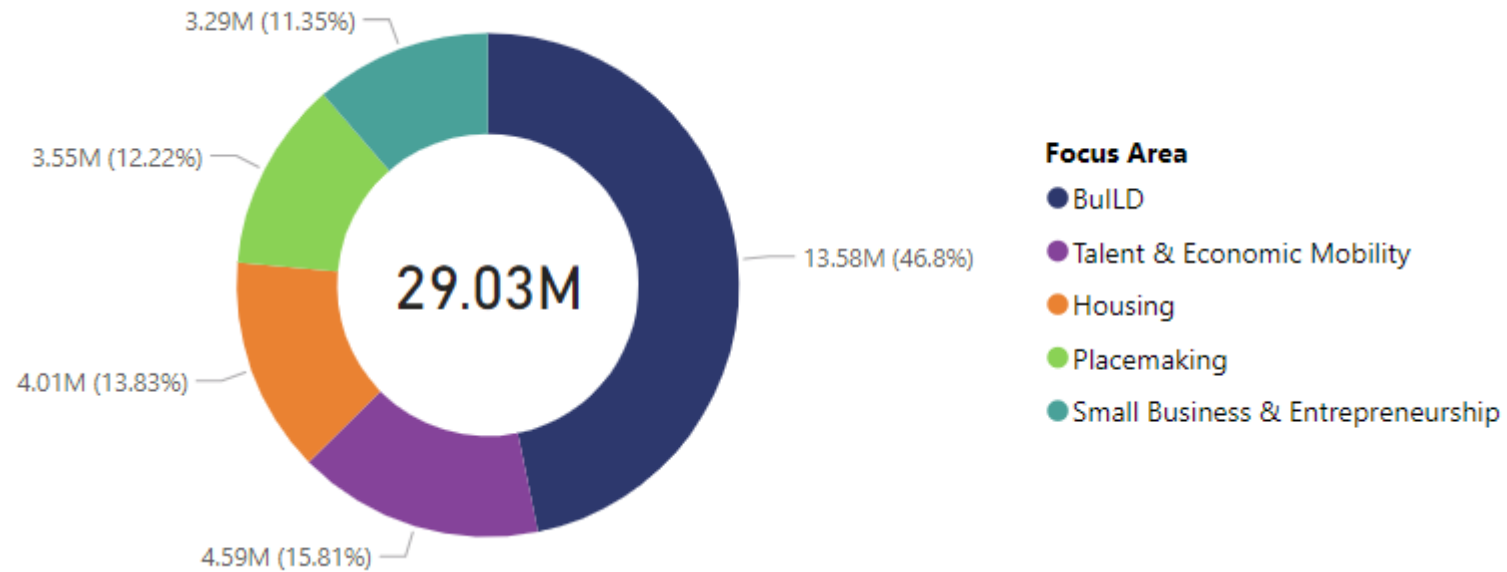


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# Success

## Implementation Funding: IMAGINE Berks Years 1 & 2





**\$29+ Million**

Since the launch of the plan in 2022, over \$29 Million in federal, state, and local funding has supported the plan's implementation




**Key Metrics 2024**

**SMALL BUSINESS & ENTREPRENEURSHIP**



Grants Funded: 32  
Grant Amounts: \$2K-\$5K

Microloans Funded: 16  
Average Loan: \$2,875




**\$170,000**

**HOUSING**

**3,200+** Housing Units Built Since 2021

**2022-2024 HOUSING PIPELINE**

|                |              |
|----------------|--------------|
| Apartment:     | 1,345        |
| Townhouse:     | 724          |
| Single Family: | 553          |
| Mobile Home:   | 165          |
| Semi-Detached: | 94           |
| <b>Total:</b>  | <b>2,881</b> |



**TALENT & ECONOMIC MOBILITY**

Youth Reentry **\$800,000**



HiSET **48** Graduates

PA CareerLink

**2,800+** Job fair attendees



**PLACEMAKING**

11 Park and Recreation Projects **\$225K+**

**The HUB by BCTV**



**2K+** Stories Published  
**567K** Unique Visitors to Website  
**27K+** Hours Watched Online


**BUILD**

Since 2022, BCPC reviewed **24.1M+ SF** of Proposed Commercial Development

**\$433M+** Increase in Assessed Value from 2021-2023

**Assessed Value Increase**

|              |              |
|--------------|--------------|
| Industrial   | 6.43%        |
| Commercial   | 6.04%        |
| Agriculture  | 1.36%        |
| Residential  | 0.76%        |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>1.23%</b> |




## Looking Ahead to Year 3

- Rolling out **Growing Berks**
- Berks County **Comprehensive Plan Update** begins
- **Infrastructure** Fund is launched
- **Broadband** - what's ahead for Berks County
- Increased **collaboration** and support for our Boroughs and City



[IMAGINEBerks.org](https://IMAGINEBerks.org)

