

RALPH BRILL ASSOCIATES

THE UNHEALTHY BERKSHIRES



PLEASE TAKE THIS SERIOUSLY

THE AMERICAN RED CROSS LEFT
THE BERKSHIRES ON 8 APRIL 2016.
OTHERS WILL BE FOLLOWING.



T H E R O A D , - W I N T E R .

Currier and Ives

This is the image of The Berkshires that the Politicians, Chambers of Commerce Officials, Berkshire Health Managers, etc. want its Visitors and The World to see and feel about our 946 Square Miles.

The Reality is quite different. It is called Camouflage. If you have the chance, visit the Williams College Museum of Art's current Exhibition: NOT THEORIES BUT REVELATIONS. This is a very fine Exhibition of the Paintings of Abbott Handerson Thayer – a New England Artist active in the early 1900s who among other subjects explored what animals do to conceal themselves in nature and what man could learn from these observations to conceal himself in various situations. The Berkshires being a Very Cultured Center has learned how to Conceal Itself From The Casual Viewer – just as Thayer's *Male Wood Duck* does so well in his Painting at WCMA.

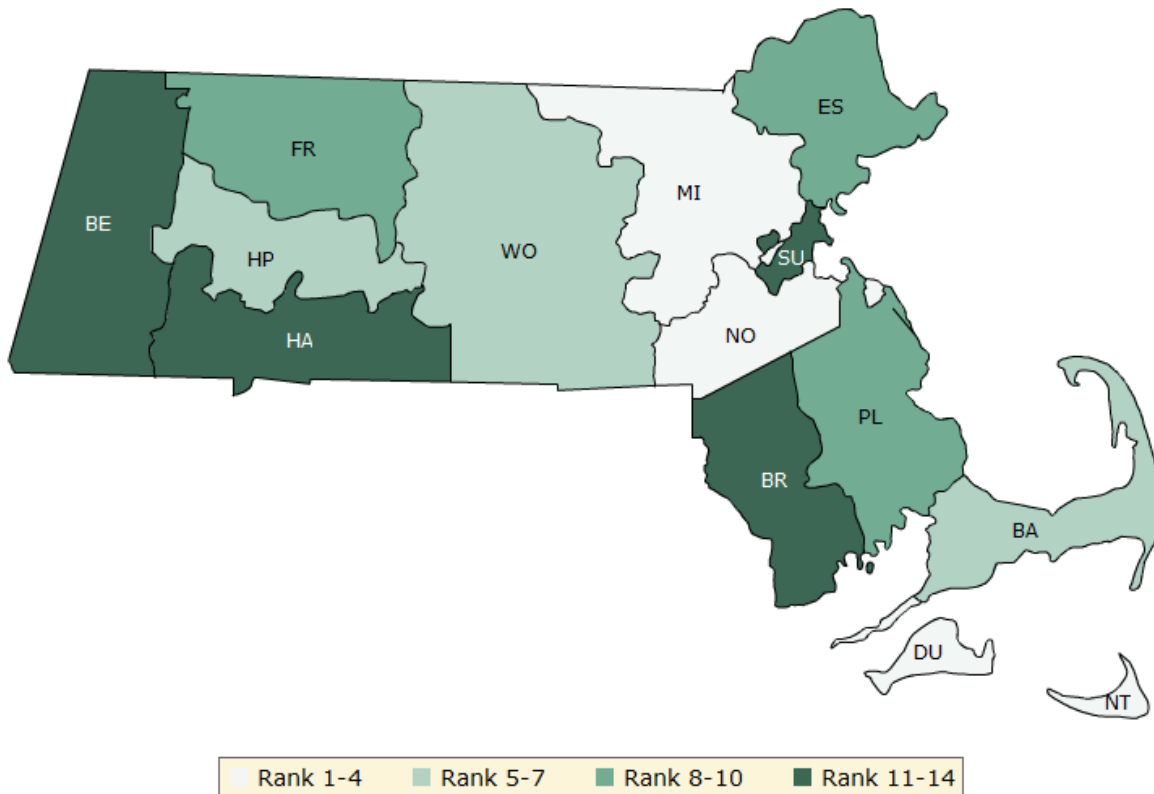
The Reality is that **The Berkshires is Not Well**. It has among the **Highest Unemployment in the Commonwealth**. It has among the **Highest Suicidal Hangings in the Commonwealth**. It has among the **Highest Teenage Pregnancies in the Commonwealth**. It has among the **Highest Food Insecurity Rate in the Commonwealth**. It has among the **Highest Rate of Premature Deaths in the Commonwealth**. It has among the **Poorest Air Quality in the Commonwealth**. How could this be? **The Berkshires Look So Beautiful**.

Don't take my word for it. Review the just published (16 March) 2016 COUNTY HEALTH RANKINGS as prepared by the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute. For the past few years, The Berkshires has appeared as among the **Unhealthiest Counties in the Commonwealth**. In 2016, we appear in 11th place out of the 14 Massachusetts Counties.

Not a good image for Tourism. But, we can't solve these deep problems for the Resident Populations without confronting these Facts. **We have become quite expert at the Camouflage Technique**.

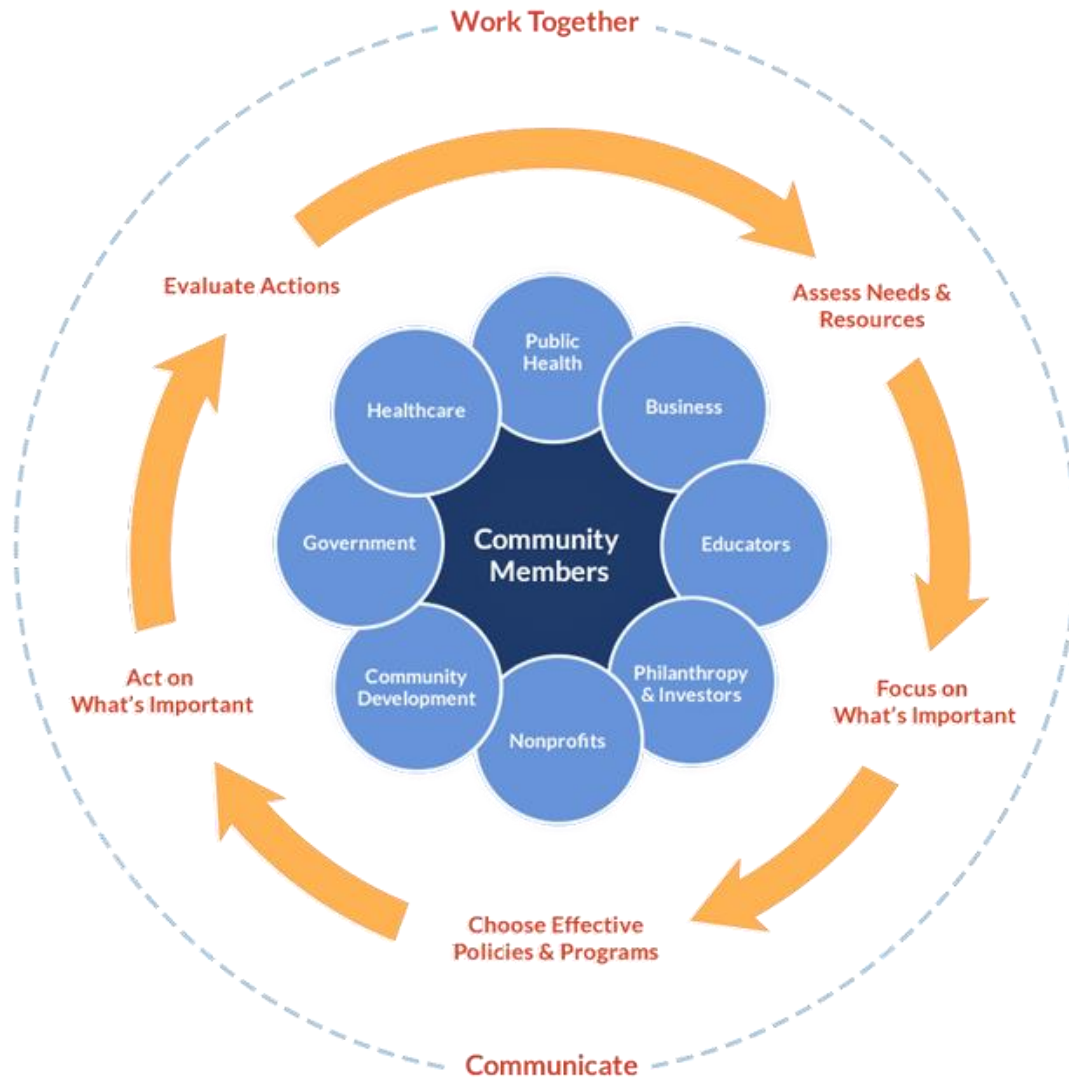
If you are a Millennial considering Working for General Dynamics, would you focus on their North Carolina Campus or their Pittsfield Campus? General Dynamics claims that they need to hire about 200 Engineers and Project Managers in Pittsfield and are having Major Problems in this regard. Maybe, these Millennials and others are reading these COUNTY HEALTH RANKINGS as part of their research? Our Politicians can be proud that during their watches, **More Good Full Time Jobs Have Left The Berkshires**. There may be More Seasonal Tourists Though? **Making Beds and Serving Coffee are our future at \$10.61 ph**. That's our Workforce Solution. The rest is White Noise. Meanwhile, Thousands of Good Jobs are being created in NY's Capital Region. Why can't we see ourselves as a Valid Suburb and figure out how to capture some of those Jobs for our Residents?

2016 COUNTY HEALTH RANKINGS



Prepared by the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute

The University of Wisconsin is interested in “Building a Culture of Health: County by County.” This County Health Rankings & Roadmaps Project is funded by The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Funding is there to work with the hundreds of Counties in the U.S. to answer questions about these Rankings and to gain strategies of how to advance from the Lower Rankings to the Healthier Rankings. Free Seminars and Webinars are available. Contact 608.265 8240. Will any Berkshire Politician, Hospitalist or Community Leader attempt to help The Berkshires break out of this Unhealthy County Designation – not to be seen or understood by Outsiders? Probably not! **Camouflage and Currier and Ives still rule.**



What will it take to get from 11th Place out of 14 in 2016 to 8th Place in 2018? In my mind, it will take Jobs, Telemedicine, and Coordination. Right now, there are Meaningful Skilled Individuals and Healthcare Providers in Separate Silos. That needs to change. Right now, the emphasis is on Low Wage Entry Jobs to satisfy the Hospitality and Part Time Tourism Trade. This is Not A Healthy Economy. Businesses need to be Created and Expanded in order to offer Meaningful Full Time Employment to the Many Thousands and Support Healthy Families in The Berkshires. A Living Wage in The Berkshires is \$26.00 ph. Very few get this. Employers are

complaining about how Poorly Prepared Many Of Their Entry Level Workers Are. Are Our Schools To Be Blamed?

Maybe it is the Air Quality?

It is true that the Gated Community of MASS MoCA may bring in more than 130,000 Visitors per year with their Expansions. It is true that Thomas Krens' Railroad Museum may bring in more than 100,000 Visitors per year if built. It is true that the Northern Berkshire Politicians and Community Leaders have a Smile these days, but the reality is that once the Construction Phases are complete, there will be only a handful of Good Jobs. **The North Adams Unemployment Rate will still be at 8.2% If Locals Remain Untrained And Excluded From This Progress.**



It is true that more than 50,000 Visitors a year come to Kripalu, Canyon Ranch, Kushi, Eastover, etc. to learn about Healthy Eating, Yoga, and Mindfulness. These Visitors pay more than \$1,000 each to gain this knowledge. Yet, the 50,000 Surrounding Berkshire Population is among the Unhealthiest in the Commonwealth! Over the past four years, I have been trying to figure out a way for The Berkshires to benefit by being Neighbors with this Special Wellness Knowledge Base.

Wouldn't it be great if The Berkshires were selected in 2018 as being among the Healthiest Counties in the Commonwealth with some of the Healthiest Employers? Guaranteed, that would attract Thousands of Millennials and others to Move In. The Tourism Offices need to Rethink Their Mandate.



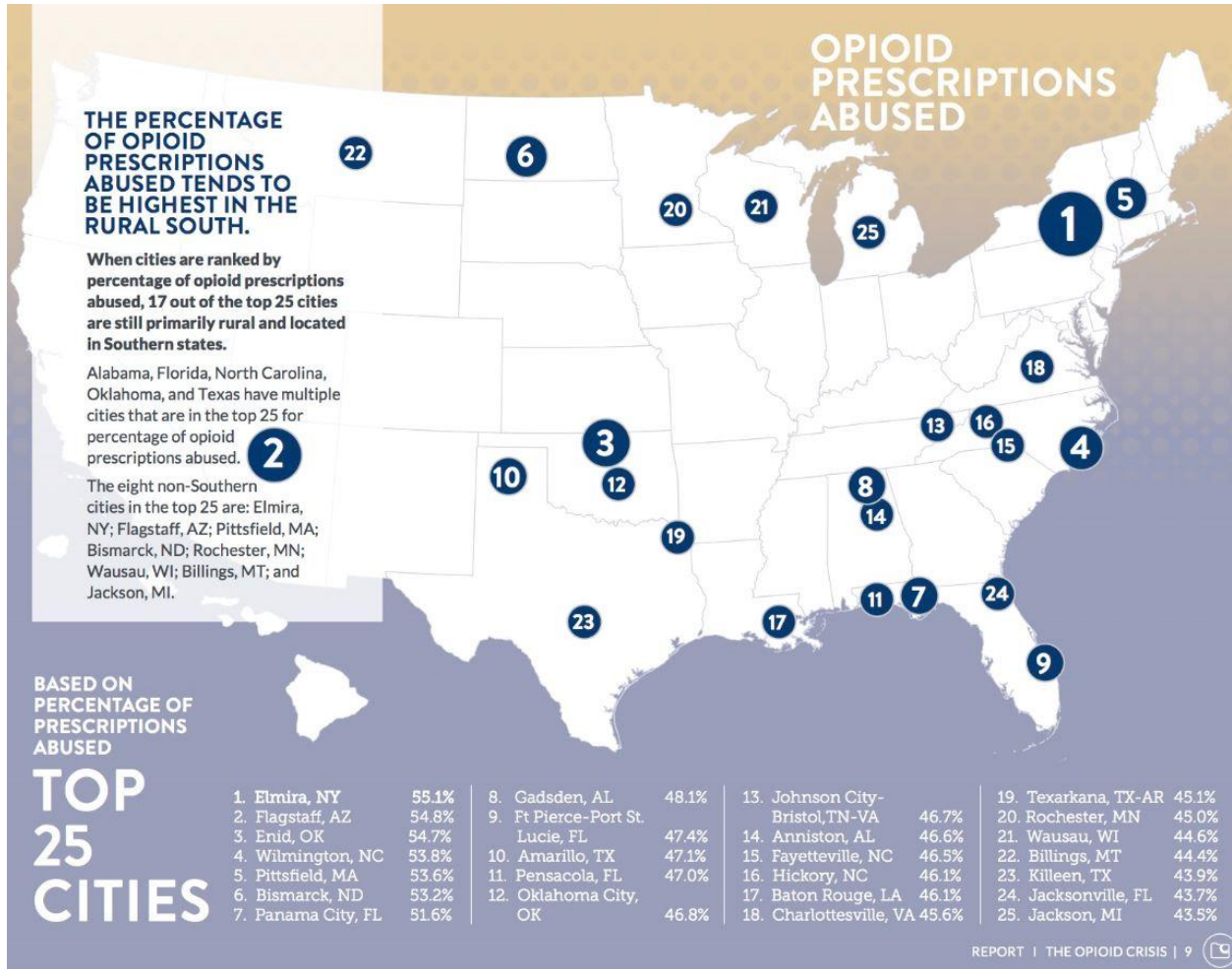
It is true that while our Politicians, Community Leaders and Economic Development Leaders were eating their spaghetti dinners – Thousands of Jobs have been lost including the North Adams Hospital, Colonial, Nuclea Lab, Price Chopper, Old Country, Red Cross, etc. and soon Sabic. This Lack of Good Jobs is a Big Part of the Stress and Unhappiness Factors and Low Health Rankings of The Berkshires. The GE Dumpsites and the Escaping Gas from the Proposed Pipeline won't help the 80,000 Future Residents either.

As a County, we have No Leadership – just Fiefdoms. That's one of the reasons we have trouble making Improvements. Even the Best Red Cross Band-Aid Won't Fix These Problems. Maybe if Abbott Handerson Thayer was still around, he might design a Large Band-Aid to help Camouflage our Significant Problems that Aren't Being Addressed Properly At This Time?

Maybe, have Senator Benjamin Downing invite Boston's The Chorus Foundation for a Berkshire County Problem Solving Tour?

MORE BAD NEWS FOR THE BERKSHIRES.

On 20 April 2016, publicly traded Castlight Health, Inc. released their report which shows that The Berkshires is this Country's No. 5 Center in Opioid Prescription Abuse. As Castlight Health advises Major Corporations on Health Data that affects Corporate Location Decisions, this will carry some weight for many years.



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