MetroCommon × 2050
Policy Recommendations

Equity of Wealth and Health
Grow local businesses and explore the role of large employers
**Strategy 1**
Strengthen and diversify the local supply chain to promote local and regional economic resiliency.

- **Action 1.1:** The Commonwealth’s Economic Development districts should develop a resiliency implementation strategy to complement the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). This should happen in coordination with regional workforce development blueprints spearheaded by the MassHire Workforce Boards.

- **Action 1.2:** Increase supplier diversity on yearly and multi-year contracts from government and anchor institutions, with a goal of at least ten percent of business and government contracts going to minority-owned businesses in five years. Municipalities and the Commonwealth should be required to score bids more highly if they include participation from a subcontractor or contractor of color. These changes must be accompanied by training and technical support for businesses of color so they are able to respond to larger contracts.

- **Action 1.3:** Authorize public banking in Massachusetts and incentivize municipal investment in local financial institutions.

**Strategy 2**
Facilitate creative use of land to support emerging business sectors and respond to the new economic reality.

- **Action 2.1:** Combat commercial vacancy by rezoning to incentivize the creative redevelopment of downtowns, business districts, and commercial spaces. Establish more flexibility in zoning for multiple uses, and limit the number of districts zoned solely for commercial use while mitigating potential residential and commercial displacement and ensuring walkability and accessibility. Consider allowing publicly-owned buildings to be rented by local businesses at reduced rates.

- **Action 2.2:** Provide additional financial resources and technical assistance to accelerate the creation of additional cultural districts and bolster the creative economy. Involve creative entrepreneurs in the redesign and revitalization of cultural districts.

- **Action 2.3:** Reduce barriers to local community-based food production and agriculture. Change local zoning to facilitate local agricultural production on land, rooftops, and underutilized open space; and adopt Right to Farm bylaws, which “encourage the pursuit of agriculture, promote[...] agriculture-based economic opportunities, and protect[...] farmlands within the community by allowing agricultural uses and related activities to function with minimal conflict with abutters and town agencies.”

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1 [http://www.pvpc.org/sites/default/files/files/PVPC-Right%20to%20Farm%20Bylaws.pdf](http://www.pvpc.org/sites/default/files/files/PVPC-Right%20to%20Farm%20Bylaws.pdf)
Strategy 3
Increase the percent of local ownership and business ownership by people of color by increasing funding for business support and development and decreasing the cost of doing business.

- **Action 3.1:** Promote economic resiliency in a changing economic landscape by providing resources for businesses to transition employee-centered business models, such as cooperatives or employee stock ownership plans (ESOP). Increase funding for the Massachusetts Center for Employee Ownership to expand technical assistance offerings.

- **Action 3.2:** Create a technical assistance program designed to help small businesses adapt to changing business and customer landscapes. Prioritize technical assistance for small businesses owned by people of color and non-English speakers. Include assistance in creating an online storefront, digital marketing, and social media communications.

- **Action 3.3:** Create a student debt relief program for entrepreneurs. Tie relief to certain metrics or milestones completed by new businesses participating in supportive programming.

- **Action 3.4:** Decrease the cost of doing business by streamlining licensing and permitting. Provide small business owners resources to navigate these processes. Municipalities should conduct an audit of the licensing and permitting process to determine which requirements or processes can be consolidated or potentially eliminated.

- **Action 3.5:** Increase income limits for the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) to expand program availability to more small business owners.