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A beacon for Pittsfield

Berkshire Bank and the Wright Building transformation

By Anthony Duval, The Berkshire Eagle
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Financed by Berkshire Bank and built by Allegrone Companies, the newly revitalized Wright Building will bring a mix of clean, livable apartments and active retail spaces to the heart of Pittsfield.

MARC J. WRZESINSKI — EAGLE CORRESPONDENT

On North Street in downtown Pittsfield, a historic structure is quietly stepping into a new chapter. Once dimmed by years of underuse, the Wright Building is undergoing a revival — its upper floors being transformed into fresh, modern apartments. Down below, newly polished retail storefronts will stand ready to invite tenants and foot traffic.

The project is part of a broader vision, one shaped not only by economic development goals, but by personal investment and enduring relationships. For **Berkshire Bank**, which helped finance the redevelopment, the Wright Building isn't just another transaction. It's a reflection of the institution's longstanding commitment to Pittsfield's past and its future.

"This project brings clean, livable apartments to North Street. That alone makes a real impact," says Matthew Emprimo, Senior Vice President of Commercial Banking for Berkshire County and Vermont, a senior commercial lender who's spent nearly three decades with the bank. "It's rewarding to see something come full circle — to take an underutilized building and help breathe life back into it."



"You can walk down the street and point to places and businesses where we helped make something happen. It really means something to see that kind of impact, right in your own community."

Matthew Emprimo

Senior Vice President

Commerical Banking for Berkshire County and VT

Berkshire Bank

The street and the surrounding downtown has long been a focal point for Berkshire Bank. Projects like the Wright Building serve as reminders that the bank's role in Pittsfield is personal, rooted and ongoing.

Building with intention

The Wright Building project is a collaborative effort led by Allegrone Companies, a developer with a strong local track record and 25-year banking relationship with Berkshire Bank. Berkshire Bank supported the project with a loan and also invested in historic and housing tax credits to help make the renovation possible.

Emprimo and Berkshire Bank provided similar financing packages to the Allegrones in 2013 when they redeveloped the Howard Building and in 2015 when they redeveloped the Onota Building, both in downtown Pittsfield.

"It's about more than bricks and mortar. It's about creating something lasting for Pittsfield," says Lou E. Allegrone, Principal at Allegrone Companies. "Our partnership with Berkshire Bank has allowed us to preserve the historic character of these structures while bringing new life to the community."

Pittsfield has spent the past decade chipping away at the long shadow cast by deindustrialization. Projects like this one are part of a broader effort to stitch together walkability, historic character and livability into a new urban identity.

For Emprimo, this kind of work isn't just professional; it's personal. Emprimo has been with Berkshire Bank for 27 years, grew up in Southern Berkshire County, and now lives there, but has spent much of his career servicing clients in Pittsfield and throughout the Berkshires. He has worked directly with developers, business owners and nonprofit leaders across the Berkshires and in Vermont. His approach is rooted in relationships, many of which span decades and multiple projects.

“Success in this job is about trust,” he says. “You develop relationships and you grow with them. The deals get more complex, but the people stay the same. That’s what makes it satisfying.”

Over the years, Emprimo has worked on everything from small business loans to large-scale tax credit deals. But what motivates him isn’t just the numbers, it’s the outcomes.

“You can walk down the street and point to places and businesses where we helped make something happen,” he says. “It really means something to see that kind of impact, right in your own community.”



“Our regional model preserves local decision making with loan approvals by local colleagues and an even quicker response time. Customers will continue to see the exact same smiles and receive the same high quality service from the local bankers they deal with today.”

James J. Morris IV

Regional President

Upstate NY, Southern VT and Berkshire County, MA

Berkshire Bank

Familiar faces. Trusted advice.

In late 2024, Berkshire Hills Bancorp, the parent company of Berkshire Bank, announced it will merge with Brookline Bancorp in a union that will double its size and bring a new name to the organization, Beacon Bank. The name represents guidance, strength and a promise of stability — core principles that Berkshire upheld for generations. And while the name is changing, the team the community has come to know and trust remains the same. But according to Emprimo and other leaders, the future isn't about growing distant from Pittsfield, it's about anchoring even deeper into the communities the bank serves.

“While the growth allows us to bring additional products and programs to this community, it is our commitment to a regional operating model that has us most excited,” said James J. Morris IV, Regional President upstate New York, Southern Vermont and Berkshire County, Massachusetts. “Our regional model preserves local decision making with loan approvals by local colleagues and an even quicker response time. Customers will continue to see the exact same smiles and receive the same high quality service from the local bankers they deal with today.”

Scale without sacrifice is at the heart of how Emprimo sees the future. The merger brings expanded lending capacity, enhanced technology and a wider array of products and services. Together, the combined bank can offer more to more clients.

“We’ve always tried to have big bank resources with small bank attention,” Emprimo says. “That’s been our mantra for years. And now we’ll be in an even better position to live up to that.”

The bank is already known for supporting complex financing structures, including interest rate swaps, tax-exempt bonds and the purchase of historic and low-income housing tax credits. These tools, once the province of large urban institutions, are increasingly important for regional development efforts, especially in communities like Pittsfield.

Still, Emprimo understands that change can raise eyebrows. But to him, the faces behind the brand are what truly matter.

“I’m a modest person. I don’t love being in the spotlight,” he says. “But I think it’s important that people know — I’m still here. So are the many long-time employees who’ve helped build this bank’s reputation such as Deb Clark, Portfolio & Administrative Manager; Rebecca Sorrentino, VP, Relationship Manager; Anthony Segala, VP, Investment Advisor; and Kevin O’Donnell, VP, Financial Advisor. That’s not changing.”

The work of Berkshire Bank Foundation, under director Lori Gazzillo Kiely, will also continue to play a vital role in the community. Grants, sponsorships and community investments — all will remain part of the bank’s mission.

“Our philanthropic work is part of who we are,” Emprimo says. “We’ll keep supporting the community like we always have. If anything, our broader reach could mean even more impact.”

Beyond the numbers

For Emprimo, the Wright Building project stands out not because of its size or complexity, but because of what it represents. “It’s a reflection of all the values we talk about,” he says. “Community development, long-term investment, relationships. That’s what gets me excited about the job.”

He also speaks highly of the developer, Allegrone Construction, which has worked on other local revitalization projects. Asked whether the Wright Building is a model for the bank’s future lending approach, Emprimo doesn’t hesitate. “Absolutely. We’ve had strong years here in commercial lending, and demand in 2025 and 2026 is stronger than ever. We’re not slowing down, if anything we’re re-energized.”

And while **Berkshire Bank** is evolving, Emprimo emphasizes that customers will still see the same people, hear the same voices and feel the same presence. “It’s still us and we’re staying the course. We’ve been here over 175 years, and we plan to keep showing up — lending, investing, partnering. Just like we always have.”

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