

Greene County Comprehensive Economic Development Plan



I. Introduction

A Plan for Economic Development

A Comprehensive Economic Development Plan is the result of a local planning process designed to guide the economic growth of an area. Developed with broad-based and diverse community participation, the plan analyzes local economic conditions, identifies problems and opportunities, defines the vision and goals of the community, outlines the strategies to accomplish these goals, and establishes program priorities for implementation.

A successful economic development planning process should lead to the establishment and implementation of detailed policies and programs that result in the creation of higher-skill, higher-wage jobs; increased income levels; a more stable, diversified economy; and an overall improvement in the quality of life – without causing a negative impact on the environment.

The Greene County Comprehensive Economic Development Plan presents a vision of the County and its economy 10-20 years into the future, and charts the course we need to take to achieve that vision. Today, Greene County is a community in transition. Following the economic challenges of the last few decades, the County and its residents are committed to maintaining a delicate balance between fostering the “right” kind of economic development and preserving the County’s natural beauty and rural/small town character. We want good jobs for our children, but not at the expense of our quality of life; we want economic growth, but it must be slow, steady, *planned* growth. Consequently, this plan advocates a balanced approach to economic development that is appropriate to Greene County and aligns to its defined vision of the future.

For the Greene County Legislature, this plan is essentially a policy document that will enable County leaders to prioritize and direct the investment of Greene County’s fiscal and personnel resources as they relate to economic development. The plan will specifically impact the activities of the County’s two economic development organizations – the Greene County Department of Planning and Economic Development, and the Greene County Industrial Development Agency.

Why Plan for Economic Development?

Having a strategic plan for economic development is beneficial because it:

- Builds consensus about the major issues and themes affecting the local economy;
- Outlines the steps to be followed for a community to achieve its goals;
- Promotes the efficient use of limited resources;
- Improves coordination of programs and activities as well as communication between the various groups and organization involved in the practice of economic development;
- Increases public awareness of economic development through citizen involvement;
- Strengthens the community’s competitiveness, making it more attractive to potential business investors than a community without a plan; and
- Encourages community leaders to think about the future, looking ahead to opportunities and potential methods to take advantage of them.

- Adapted from Mike D. Woods and Gordon Sloggett, “Strategic Planning for Economic Development in Rural Areas and Small Towns of Oklahoma,” Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Fact Sheet No. 859.

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PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Greene County identified a number of questions to be answered by the Comprehensive Economic Development Plan, including the following:

- **Vision** – Based on consensus, what is the preferred vision for Greene County five, ten, and twenty years into the future?
- **Goals & Objectives** – What initiatives should the County continue to pursue, refine and/or establish for the river, valley and mountaintop areas to achieve a shared economic vision?
- **Targeted Industries** – What industries or types of facilities should Greene County target, where should those facilities be located and what can the County do and/or offer to attract them?
- **Business Retention** – What programs or policies can the County offer to further support and strengthen its existing businesses, including small start-up companies?
- **Workforce** – What are the skills, education and training required by existing employers and potential target industries in Greene County?
- **Land Use** – How can municipalities in the County provide for economic development in designated areas without sacrificing community character? What efforts are needed to provide adequate infrastructure for growth?
- **Telecommunications** – What is the existing telecommunications infrastructure in the County, and where and how should the telecom capacity be improved?
- **Tourism** – What travel trends are impacting the County's tourism industry? Who is visiting Greene County and why? What can the County do to strengthen tourism and increase visitation and spending?
- **Capacity** – What planning, economic development and other skills and expertise are needed for the County to maintain its momentum and pursue its plan?
- **Implementation** – What entity is responsible for each initiative, what will it cost and when will it be accomplished?

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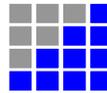
Laying the Groundwork

Recognizing the need for a clear vision and plan for economic development over the next 10-20 years, the Greene County Legislature initiated the Comprehensive Economic Development Plan in 2005. The Greene County Department of Planning and Economic Development (hereinafter GCDPED) subsequently issued a Request for Proposals for qualified consultants to coordinate and provide for the development of the plan.

The goal of the endeavor, as described in the RFP, was to “identify and create an economic development program for adoption by the Greene County Legislature and to create community support for such a program. A related goal is to meet the requirements of both the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration for compliance with the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs) program and the Governor’s Office for Small Cities so that Greene County will have access to the programs administered by these two agencies.”

CONSULTANT TEAM

Following a nationwide search, the Greene County Legislature selected a team of consultants to complete the Comprehensive Economic Development Plan.



camoin associates
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Camoin Associates of Saratoga Springs, New York was designated as the lead project consultant. Perhaps most recognized in Greene County for the preparation of the County’s Empire Zone submission and funding applications associated with the Save-A-Lot and Serta facilities, the firm is also known for its experience in economic development strategic planning, economic and fiscal impact assessment, and the administration of small business development programs, including the Greene County Microenterprise Assistance Program.



The other members of the initial consultant team were Moran, Stahl & Boyer and Saratoga Associates. With over forty years of experience, Moran, Stahl & Boyer is a nationally recognized site location and economic development consulting firm that has assisted clients with identifying and strategically locating corporate headquarters, regional offices, manufacturing operations, data centers and distribution facilities. With a client list that reads like a “who’s who” of American industry, MS&B has worked with Fortune 500 companies including Corning Incorporated, AT&T, Colgate-Palmolive, Federal Express, and Lucent Technologies, to name a few. The firm has successfully leveraged its site selection expertise to provide economic development consulting services to clients across North America. In this capacity, the firm has assisted counties and regions in targeting companies and industries that can potentially leverage local community resources.



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Recognized throughout the northeast, Saratoga Associates offers expertise in land use, environmental assessment, and industrial and business park design. With a clear understanding of the land use regulatory environment and infrastructure conditions that must be in place for economic development, Saratoga Associates has assisted communities and developers across New York State and elsewhere with the planning, design and construction of industrial, business and technology park developments.



The Project Team was later joined by E.M. Pemrick and Company, a consulting firm established by the departing project manager at Camoin Associates. E.M. Pemrick and Company combines technical expertise in economic development, market analysis, and community planning with a commitment to enhancing the vitality and success of client communities. The

firm was primarily responsible for assisting the project team in completing narratives, developing goals and objectives, compiling and expanding on the recommendations, and preparing the final report.

PROJECT ADVISORY TEAM

Knowing that Greene County needed a clear vision and plan for economic growth that could be embraced by the local communities for the next 10-20 years, the Greene County Legislature initiated



an all encompassing Comprehensive Economic Development Plan in August of 2005. Greene County Department of Planning and Economic Development spearheaded development of the Plan with support of its Greene Business partners – the Greene County Industrial Development Agency and Greene County Chamber of Commerce. The GreeneBusiness Partnership was created

by the Greene County Legislature to provide a coordinated venue for economic development. The Greene County Soil and Water Conservation Committee and Cooperative Extension of Greene County also made substantial contributions to the Plan.

PROJECT SPONSORS

Greene County enlisted support for the Economic Development Plan from multiple channels. Project sponsors included the Greene County Legislature, the Greene County Industrial Development Agency, the Greene County Chamber of Commerce, the Hudson River Valley Greenway Communities Council (more commonly known as the NYS Hudson River Greenway), NYS Economic Development Department



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(more commonly known as Empire State Development) and Central Hudson Gas & Electric. The Greenway committed \$25,000 in grant funding. In addition, at the 2005 project kick-off meeting, State Senator James L. Seward presented County leaders with a \$50,000 legislative initiative award to assist in the preparation of the plan.

STEERING COMMITTEE AND SUBCOMMITTEES

A Steering Committee for the project was appointed by the Greene County Legislature. The composition of the Steering Committee was based in part on the requirements of the U.S. Economic Development Administration for the CEDS program, which calls for a committee representing “all major interests of the community to ensure that viewpoints of all components of the community are considered and to take advantage of local skills and resources in program formulation and implementation.”

The Steering Committee included representatives of municipal government, businesses in various industry sectors (e.g., manufacturing, retail, tourism), finance, professional services, health care, education, community-based organizations, foundations, and others (see table below). The Greene County Legislature also appointed representatives of state and regional economic development organizations, state elected representatives, funding agencies, and the local workforce investment office as *ex-officio* project resources.

Steering Committee	
Name	Affiliation
Sean Byrne	Hunter Foundation
James Campion	Columbia-Greene Community College
Dr. Kathleen Farrell	Catskill Central School District
Dan Frank	Greene County Industrial Development Agency
Tom Fucito	Greene County Chamber of Commerce
Richard Gangi	American Trim Manufacturing
Don Gibson	The Bank of Greene County
Dr. Steven Hassett	EmUrgentCare
Ted Hilscher	Hilscher & Hilscher
David Louis	Supervisor, Town of New Baltimore
Rob Megnin	Hunter Mountain
Tom Poelker	Community of Windham Foundation
Patty Stockman	Executive Connection
M.A. Tarpinian	Cairo Chamber of Commerce
Karen Deyo	Greene County Legislature
Keith Valentine	Greene County Legislature
William Lawrence	Greene County Legislature

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Steering Committee	
James Van Slyke	Greene County Legislature

The GCDPED hosted Steering Committee meetings approximately once every six weeks, providing an opportunity for members of the Project Team to present findings and facilitate discussion. Committee members were kept apprised of project progress between meetings, particularly as the team completed data collection and focused on completing narrative sections of the plan.

The County Legislature also appointed two subcommittees – Tourism, and Planning and Infrastructure – to provide technical support and assistance to the Project Team in specific areas of the plan. The Tourism Subcommittee assisted in the design and distribution of visitor surveys and took a lead role in refining the tourism enhancement component of the Economic Development Plan. The Planning and Infrastructure Subcommittee focused on the use of planning principles for future economic development in the County and refined the industrial site and facilities, land use, and telecommunications components of the plan.

	Name	Affiliation
Tourism Subcommittee	Walt Birmann	Rainbow Resort & Golf
	Brian Christman	Christman's Windham House & Golf
	Bernadette Gavin	Gavin's Golden Hill Resort
	Elizabeth "Betsy" Jacks	Thomas Cole House
	Ed Kerrigan	Zoom Flume Water Park
	F. Eugene McGrath	Greene County International Golf Association
	Rob Megnin	Hunter Mountain
	Suzanne Oldakowski	Bavarian Manor; Greene County Resort & Hospitality Association
	Chuck Tomajko	Fairlawn Inn; Hunter Mountain B-n-B Association
	Kirt Zimmer	Windham Mountain
Planning & Infrastructure Subcommittee	Helen Budrock	Catskill Center for Conservation and Development
	Nevin Cohen	Topology, LLC
	Jerry Cunningham	Greene County Farmland Protection Board
	Wayne Deyo	Greene County Planning Board
	Mark Evans	State Telephone
	Sal Santo	Santo Associates Land Surveying & Engineering PC
	Andy Turner	Cooperative Extension of Greene County
	Rene Van Schaack	Greene County Soil and Water Conservation District



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Public Participation Process

From project initiation, Greene County and its Project Team recognized the importance of a high level of community involvement in the development of the Comprehensive Economic Development Plan. The team wanted to make sure that residents, business owners, elected/appointed officials, and other stakeholders were involved in the identification of issues, concerns and opportunities as well as in discussion and consensus building around proposed plan recommendations. Effective public input is critical to the successful adoption and implementation of the plan.

The public participation plan offered a range of opportunities for people to participate in the planning process at varying levels of involvement. The process was open to everyone with a stake in the outcome of the Comprehensive Economic Development Plan regardless of income, age, race, employment status, or other factors.

Greene County's goals for public participation included:

- Providing opportunities to share information about the process and plan with all segments of the County;
- Ensuring that all planning decisions were open to public comment;
- Encouraging quality decision-making about economic development;
- Developing a shared vision for Greene County's economic future; and
- Facilitating an effective dialogue between County leaders and citizens regarding economic development.

Greene County established the following opportunities for public participation in the economic development planning process:

Committee Structure

As previously described, Greene County established a committee structure to guide the planning process. It included a project steering committee with broad-based community representation, and two subcommittees to provide technical support and assistance in the areas of tourism, and planning and infrastructure.

The steering committee met on a regular basis to review and comment on components of the draft Comprehensive Economic Development Plan; discuss issues raised in the context of public meetings, interviews, and surveys; assist in the development of the vision statement, goals, and strategies; and provide general direction to the Project Team. A professional web site specifically for this project was also developed as part of the public participation plan, providing a clearinghouse for posting

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meeting dates, draft chapters, committee members, opportunities for public participation, on-line surveys and other documents of regional interest, at www.greenebusiness.com.

Project Kick-Off Meeting

Greene County held a project kick-off meeting on August 2, 2005 at the Emergency Operations and Training Center in Cairo for the Committees, Greene County Legislature, Project Team, regional partners, funding agencies, state elected officials, and interested persons to learn about the economic development planning process and to meet the Project Team. Members of the Steering Committee, GreeneBusiness Partnership, and the County Legislature were also in attendance. The meeting was announced at www.greenebusiness.com, and notices were mailed to local media outlets.

Community Survey



A brief online survey was conducted early in the planning process to obtain broad public input on economic development issues in Greene County. Participants were not required to provide their name and address, but were asked to indicate where they resided so that their comments could be sorted by subregion (river, valley, and mountaintop). The survey was made available at www.greenebusiness.com. Every household in Greene County was mailed a card, providing information about the plan and describing opportunities to participate. Results were made available for public review once tabulated, and are included in the Stakeholder Feedback section of this plan.

Business Survey

A survey of Greene County employers was conducted to solicit input on the issues, needs, and concerns of local businesses and identify potential actions that should be considered to address these concerns. The business survey was made available for completion at www.greenebusiness.com. Paper copies of the survey form were available upon request to individuals without Internet access via the Greene County Chamber of Commerce. As with the community consumer preference survey, results of the business survey were made available for public review once tabulated, and are included in the Stakeholder Feedback section of this plan.



Interviews

The Project Team conducted a series of interviews with a variety of stakeholders in Greene County. These included individual employers, major property owners, utility providers, business organizations

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and chambers of commerce, regional economic development organizations, lodging operators, etc. The interviews provided an opportunity to discuss County strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats from an economic development perspective and were also used by the consultants to solicit information for various components of the Comprehensive Economic Development Plan.

Regional Public Workshops

A series of public workshops was also held to educate and inform participants about the findings of the resource assessment, answer questions, and generate discussion about opportunities for economic development in Greene County. One workshop was held in each of the County's three subregions: the Historic River Towns meeting was held in the Catskill High School, the Valley Towns meeting was held in Cairo at the County's Emergency Operations and training Center, and the Mountaintop Towns meeting was held at Hunter Elementary School. The results contributed to the foundation for developing goals and objectives for the plan. All meetings were announced at www.greenebusiness.com and notices were mailed to local media outlets for possible coverage.

Review of Draft Documents

Draft plan documents prepared by the Project Team were posted at www.greenebusiness.com for public review and comment, as appropriate. In addition, copies of the draft and final Comprehensive Plan Economic Development Plan were made available for public review at the Greene County Department of Planning and Economic Development.

Ongoing Activities

Greene County maintained a web site that provided ongoing information on the Comprehensive Economic Development Plan and process. It included the project schedule, meeting dates and times, press releases, survey results, maps, draft documents, and occasional announcements. It also included a mechanism allowing the public to submit feedback on any aspect of the plan or planning process.

Additionally, Greene County produced media releases and distributed e-newsletters at key points to update the public about the planning process and provide information on relevant issues as needed.

The Organization of the Plan

The Greene County Comprehensive Economic Development Plan is organized into multiple sections or chapters, starting with this introduction. Subsequent chapters are described as follows:

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- **Chapter 2: Resource Assessment and Stakeholder Feedback** – The product of Phase I of the planning process, the *Resource Assessment* is designed to provide an initial understanding of the Greene County economy and its resources for business attraction, retention and expansion from the perspective of a site selection consultant. Chapter 2 also presents the results of *Stakeholder Feedback*: the surveys, interviews, and public workshops held to solicit input from local residents, businesses, municipal leaders, property owners, and other community members. Many of the issues raised in Chapter 2 are explored in more detail in later chapters.
- **Chapter 3: Target Industry and Resource Analysis** – Chapter 3 identifies potential target industries for Greene County, with information on the critical resources required to attract and support them, including labor, transportation, utilities, and site/facility options.
- **Chapter 4: Workforce Development** – Building from the resource assessment conducted in Phase I, Chapter 4 examines factors affecting the Greene County labor force, including the quality of schools, post-secondary and workforce training programs available, and the labor and educational requirements of target industries identified in Chapter 3. It also looks at best practices from other areas that could serve as models to enhance the supply of labor in the County.
- **Chapter 5: Small Business Development Programs** – This portion of the Comprehensive Economic Development Plan provides an overview of small and “micro” businesses and their importance to the Greene County economy. It assesses the programs offered by the Greene County Department of Planning and Economic Development and other organizations to support small business growth and development, and concludes with a discussion of business development activities in other, similar counties.
- **Chapter 6: Incentives Assessment** – In Chapter 6, current economic development incentives available in Greene County are reviewed and compared with those available in similar counties of Pennsylvania to determine the County’s competitiveness as a location for business.
- **Chapter 7: Industrial Sites and Facilities** – This chapter examines the characteristics of sites available for commercial and industrial development, primarily in the County’s existing business parks. It also provides a list of criteria that can be used to identify additional sites and make them “shovel-ready” to meet the future needs of target industries.
- **Chapter 8: Land Use Planning Analysis** – Chapter 8 provides an overview and analysis of the land use and regional planning context in which economic development in Greene County takes place, from the municipal, county, and regional plans and policies that determine how

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and where development may occur to the land use trends, environmental features, infrastructure, and zoning regulations in each of Greene County's towns and villages.

- **Chapter 9: Telecommunications Assessment** – This section of the Comprehensive Economic Development Plan focuses on the telecommunications infrastructure, capacity, and service available to support economic development and the overall quality of life in Greene County.
- **Chapter 10: Tourism Industry Analysis** – Like the small business sector, tourism has long been recognized as a significant contributor to the Greene County economy. Chapter 10 therefore presents a detailed analysis of the local tourism industry and its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, emphasizing the need to support and strengthen this industry as an ongoing strategy for economic development.
- **Chapter 11: Vision Statement and Goals** – The vision statement and goals represent the link between the findings and conclusions of Chapters 2 through 10 and the recommended actions in the subsequent chapter. The vision is an ideal of what Greene County should be in the future, and is intended to guide decision-making about economic development over the next ten to twenty years.
- **Chapter 12: Action/Implementation Plan** – Developed with substantial input from the Steering Committee, the Action Plan contains the final recommendations of the Comprehensive Economic Development Plan: the strategies, activities, projects, and programs that will allow Greene County to fulfill its goals and objectives for economic development and ultimately achieve its vision.
- The **Appendix** includes 11" by 17" maps referenced in various chapters of the plan; a Greene County marketing profile developed in conjunction with this project by Moran, Stahl & Boyer; and other support materials.