

Developing a Roadmap



for our Future

Greene County, New York

Comprehensive Economic Development Plan



An Open Process for Community Participation

Project Team

Steering
Committee

Tourism
Subcommittee

Planning &
Infrastructure
Subcommittee

Surveys

Residents

Businesses

Visitors

Public Input & Interviews

Businesses

Property
Owners

Chambers
of Commerce

Tourism
Operators

Regional Economic
Development
Organizations

Regional Workshops

Mountaintop

Valley Towns

Historic
River Towns

Communications & Outreach

Web Site

Media Releases

Municipal
Workshops

Key Stakeholder
Presentations

Greene County
Comprehensive Economic Development Plan

Why Does Greene County Need A Comprehensive Economic Development Plan

Why do we need this? What does it mean to me? Will my children be able to find meaningful jobs here? These are some of the most common questions we are asked. The answers are not always simple, but this plan is unquestionably smart for our county because it puts in place detailed policies and programs that can help:

- Create higher skill and higher wage jobs
- Increase income levels
- Stabilize and diversify the economy
- Improve our overall quality of life
- Reduce negative impacts on the environment
- Coordinate the economic development efforts of multiple organizations
- Allow access to state and federal funding

Defining Our Vision

Today, Greene County is a community in transition. We stand at the crossroads of our future. Following the economic challenges of the last few decades, county residents are entering the 21st century committed to achieving a delicate balance between fostering the right kind of economic growth and preserving the county's natural beauty and rural/small town character. Our Comprehensive Economic Development Plan presents a vision of Greene County a decade or more into the future and charts the course we need to take to get where we want to be.

Laying the Groundwork

Knowing that our county needed a clear vision and plan for economic growth that could be embraced by our communities for the next 10-20 years, the Greene County Legislature initiated an all-encompassing Comprehensive Economic Development Plan in 2005. Greene County Planning and Economic Development spearheaded development of the plan with the support of its GreeneBusiness partners – the Greene County Industrial Development Agency and Greene County Chamber of Commerce.



Fostering Balanced Economic Growth Preserving our Rural Character

Following a nationwide search, the county selected a team of some of America's leading economic development consulting firms to complete the plan. Their professional expertise, coupled with broad-based community participation, enabled development of an in-depth plan over the past two years that:

- Analyzes local economic conditions
- Identifies problems and opportunities
- Defines the vision and goals of the community
- Outlines strategies to accomplish these goals
- Establishes program priorities for implementation

Hundreds, if not thousands, of Greene County residents, business owners, municipal officials, community leaders and others were engaged in the process. You can be certain that we listened to and heard what you said and that this plan represents a true consensus about our future.

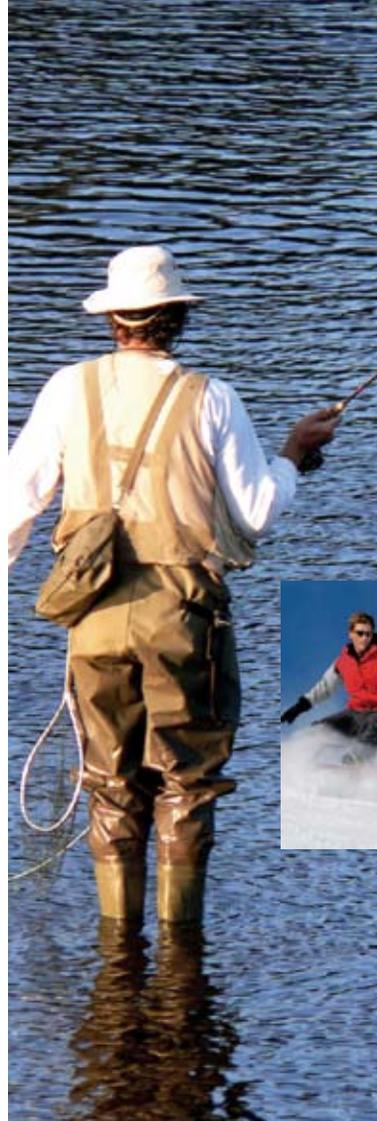
Setting the Course

An Overview of 7 Key Milestones

Business Development and Target Industry Attraction

To improve the quality of job opportunities and our long-term economic health, Greene County should work to attract a mix of large and small companies. We need to pursue a “balanced portfolio” of diverse businesses while recognizing that our three regions have different characteristics that make them appropriate for different types and scale of businesses. With that in mind, we believe Greene County is well-positioned to attract businesses in the following target industries:

- **Traditional Manufacturing** – Food processing, printing, plastics and rubber
- **Advanced Manufacturing** – Fabricated metals, medical devices, electronics
- **Emerging Technologies** – Nanotechnology, energy production, biotechnology
- **Technical/Professional Services** – Back offices, financial services



Tourism Enhancement

As the largest industry in Greene County, tourism is key to our economic growth. We clearly benefit from our proximity to the New York metropolitan area and abundant outdoor recreational opportunities, but we face mounting challenges with changing trends in the travel industry. Families no longer come to the Catskills for weeks or months at a time and many of our lodging facilities and

their programs are outdated. Likewise, there is an overall lack of retail and dining options.

Our plan seeks ways to address these weaknesses, as well as to cultivate our rich arts, historic, cultural and natural resources to attract more visitors year-round.

Enhancing our Tourism Appeal Nurturing Existing and Small Businesses

While some of these target industry sectors, such as manufacturing, already have a presence in Greene County and can be pursued immediately, attracting others such as leading-edge technology companies and financial service back offices, will take time and enhancements in the local labor force to become a reality.

Developing small businesses – including value-added agricultural industries – is equally important to the economic vitality of Greene County. We will continue to nurture and support our existing businesses and entrepreneurial start-ups through our Microenterprise Assistance Program, Quantum Fund and other programs to help them stay and grow in the county.

Land Use and Regional Planning

Balanced growth and preservation are paramount to Greene County residents. We must take great care in allocating our land, because we simply do not have unlimited land suitable for development. Toward that end, the county now has a detailed plan for industrial park development and how our new Empire Zone fits into that plan. County officials also understand the environmental constraints associated with development, especially the need for habitat and wetlands protection and storm water management and mitigation. In addition, communities must understand the choices they make for development. Housing options, for example, must be carefully considered to achieve balance between what is needed for our workforce and what may be able to produce revenues for our communities.

Keeping Greene County’s image burnished as a good place to live, work and play is fundamental to our economic health. As a result, smart growth concepts, design standards and the appearance of community gateways should be given careful attention by all of our towns and villages.

Workforce Development

For Greene County to be successful in attracting our targeted industries, we must be able to offer a workforce with the skills and education that 21st century companies need. Our research shows that the most important initiative the county can undertake to attract technology and knowledge-based companies is to encourage a portion of the future labor force to focus on math, sciences, engineering and information technology. Toward that end, we will be working with the local high schools and colleges to help meet the workforce needs of Greene County's target industries. We also plan to develop partnerships with educational institutions to provide industry-specific workforce training programs.

Quality of Life

While Greene County offers its residents an enviable lifestyle by many measures, we need to allocate resources for catalytic projects that will continue to enhance our quality of life and amenities available to attract employers. Among multiple initiatives the county will explore are:

- Increasing social, cultural and recreational activities and networking opportunities for young adults
- Developing year-round indoor and outdoor recreational facilities
- Building outdoor recreational trail systems
- Encouraging development of Main Street shops and other retail establishments
- Promoting the development of new affordable housing in appropriate locations
- Attracting new health care facilities, especially in the mountaintop communities

Infrastructure and Facilities Development

In order to compete in today's fast-paced global business environment, Greene County must do its best to have the infrastructure and facilities in place to attract the kind of businesses we want to create good jobs for generations to come. Top priorities in our action plan call for us to:

- Seek funding to pursue "shovel ready" status for our industrial parks and to plan additional sites in designated industrial development areas
- Maintain an inventory of vacant commercial and industrial buildings and sites
- Identify sites that could provide affordable, flexible space for small and start-up businesses
- Continue to improve road, rail and river transportation
- Improve the capacity and condition of our water and sewer systems



Connecting Ourselves to the World

Educating our Workforce for Tomorrow Developing Infrastructure to Compete

Telecommunications

Greene County's location in "Tech Valley" gives us a strategic advantage in attracting technology-based businesses, but our telecommunications infrastructure must be enhanced to capitalize on this inherent strength. Although we have made good strides in recent years, too many connectivity gaps still remain – both in terms of Internet and cell phone service.

We will be taking aggressive steps to find funding and partners to improve coverage in underserved areas and to provide high-speed Internet access county-wide. Additionally, we will work toward establishing wireless access in all downtown commercial districts and coordinate with the New York State Office of Technology to initiate participation in the Statewide Wireless Network. Connectivity is critical to our future.



Taking the Road Ahead

Now that the Greene County Legislature has adopted this Comprehensive Economic Development Plan, the real work begins. We have a detailed action plan spelling out specific initiatives and priorities with a responsible lead agency named for each step. It also spells out the organizational structure and marketing tactics we need to implement in order to execute the plan properly. In some cases, the plan reinforces and formalizes a path we are already on; in other cases, it suggests slight adjustments in direction.

It is imperative that we all start pulling together to implement this plan successfully. No single municipality, organization, company or individual can do it alone. We must recognize and embrace that three very diverse regions comprise Greene County, but we must set aside our differences and understand that broad-based support of this plan will provide better opportunities for all of us. If we stay the course, Greene County has a bright future indeed on the road ahead.

– Wayne C. Speenburgh, Chairman
Greene County Legislature

Pulling Together as One County

Improving our Quality of Life Attracting Good Jobs for our Children

Acknowledgements

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