

2012 ANNUAL REPORT

GREENE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TOURISM AND PLANNING

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- **Quantum Fund Loan and Grant Activity:** Loan activity in 2012 from the County's Quantum Fund leveraged private dollar investments totaling \$1,366,106, pledging 8 full time equivalent jobs. The Quantum Fund loaned \$205,000 to four businesses ranging from assisting with purchase of Gavin's Irish Country Inn, Inc., Durham; assisting C.A. Albright of Hannacroix with new equipment; assisting the Catskill Mountain Twin Peaks in Tannersville with equipment, furnishings and fixtures for a start up café and coffee roasting business; for Sirius Dog Food Company in Catskill with new equipment; and new funding for Wolfgang Brandl, Catskill, a wholesale specialty food company, to reopen. There were a total of 93 grants/loans in the portfolio as tracked through our Grant Management Tracking System (GMS) at the close of the 2012 fourth quarter.
- **Direct Economic Development Projects (CDBG):** The Department developed, wrote and completed a successful CDBG application on behalf of New York Spring, Inc., a spring water bottling manufacturing facility located in Halcott. The business received a combination grant/loan award in the amount of \$264,000 pledging 23 full time equivalent jobs. The NYS award was made in the 2011 competitive funding round but the loan closed and the project was completed in 2012.
- **Microenterprise Grants:** The County was awarded \$200,000 for Microenterprise grants to businesses from New York State Homes and Community Renewal (HCR). Eight grants and grant/loan combinations were made to businesses in Catskill, Cairo, Coxsackie, Durham and Hunter. Eleven new jobs have been pledged as part of the projects, which were awarded in 2012 and are now being implemented.
- **Microenterprise Training:** The Department held three small business training seminars during the year, attracting over 40 current and potential entrepreneurs. The Department also continues to maintain a close relationship with the Columbia-Greene Counties Workforce Investment Office, as well as participation in the larger Capital District Workforce Investment Consortium.
- **Buy In Greene, Think Big:** The County's Buy Local program is in its fifth successful year. The campaign actively promotes buying local with a 5% discount card incentive that is accepted at participating businesses. By the end of 2012 the program had over 125 participating businesses and over 3,000 card holders. The website www.buyinggreene.com had over 26,000 visits during the 2012 year. The main advertising campaign focuses around the back to school and holiday season. We produced two flyers this year corresponding with those two shopping seasons. They were inserted in local papers, with a distribution of approximately 10,000. In addition, a coordinating Eblast is emailed to over 2,000 recipients. Buy In Greene has been represented at the "Buy Local Expo" sponsored by Greene and Columbia County Chambers of Commerce for the past 5 years. In 2012, attendance exceeded 800 people with over sixty vendors.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT:

- ***Main Street Revitalization Program (County):*** The County concluded the special Disaster MSRP in 2012, using funding provided by the Greene County Industrial Development Agency (IDA). A total of \$100,000 was disbursed using the MSRP, allowing the County to provide assistance to businesses in flood-ravaged communities more quickly than any other agency.
- ***Disaster Grants (County):*** The County was awarded \$500,000 in funding from the New York State Office of Community Renewal (OCR) for disaster relief. A total of \$286,000 in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and \$214,000 in New York Main Street (NYMS) was received from OCR. Twenty CDBG projects were completed in Prattsville, Windham, Hunter and Catskill, while 16 NYMS projects received funding in the same communities. The Disaster Grant program concluded in early 2013. The County also administered \$450,000 in disaster funding from the Catskill Watershed Corporation (CWC), for which 31 awards to businesses in Watershed Towns were made.
- ***Agriculture and Community Recovery Fund Farm Grants:*** The County was awarded over \$50,000 in funding through a special allocation from the New York State Office of Community Renewal (OCR) to assist farmers with losses caused by Hurricane Irene. The County made 10 awards of funding to nine farms throughout the County, in communities from Coxsackie to Prattsville.
- ***Disaster Reimbursement Project (County):*** The County contracted with OCR to administer over \$8.8 million in CDBG funds which will allow the State to be reimbursed for the cost of providing the local share for the cost of FEMA projects resulting from Hurricane Irene. The County has begun working on this project, which not only involves the County projects, but projects in every municipality except the Town of Athens.
- ***Other Disaster Projects:*** The County was involved in the startup administration of the Prattsville special disaster grant of \$500,000 for housing and economic development, as well as working with projects in Prattsville and Lexington that were funded in the New York State Consolidated Funding Application round.
- ***Main Street Revitalization Program (State):*** The Department concluded assistance to the Heart of Catskill Association (HOCA) with the implementation of two New York Main Street Grants (NYMS), a streetscape project for the parking lots on Bridge Street and Main Street and funding for Creekside Restaurant. The Department is also working with the Town of Prattsville and the Village of Hunter on the implementation and completion of New York Main Street projects.

PLANNING:

- ***Greene County Planning Board (CPB):*** The Department provided staff assistance to the CPB, including arranging for meetings and assisting in the review of Planning and Zoning Referrals from local municipalities. In 2012, the Department assisted with the review of 50 projects. The Department hosted 2 training sessions for County and local planning boards, assisting with municipal training credits, including: Introduction to Subdivision and Land Use Tools for Walkable Communities on May 23rd and Zoning Board of Appeals Overview and Site Plan Review on November

1st. The Department coordinated the annual CPB Ellen Rettus Planning Achievement Awards with 4 recipients receiving recognition at the December meeting of the County Legislature.

- ***Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board – Annual Agricultural District Review:*** The Department worked with the County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board and county and state agencies to facilitate the annual landowner inclusions to the Agricultural District. The statewide agricultural district program includes a combination of landowner incentives and protections, including protection against overly restrictive local laws, protection against private nuisance suits involving agricultural practices, protection against eminent domain takings, and preferential real property tax treatment (assessments based on agricultural value of land rather than commercial value). During the 2012 review 355.6 acres were added to the district, which now totals 38,279.6 acres.

- ***Catskill Downtown and Waterfront Plan – Streetscape Project:*** The Department used \$45,000 in matching funding from the NYS Department of State Local Waterfront Revitalization Program to survey and design streetscape enhancements on Main Street from just west of Bridge Street to Bronson, and on Bridge Street from Main to West Main Street. Grant funding also supported design work for the Catskill Creek Boardwalk/Walking Trail and an engineering survey of the Black Bridge.

- ***County-wide Rails to Trails Project:*** The Department is using \$118,000 in Federal Stimulus FY2010 funding through the NYS Department of Transportation to complete a Countywide Rails-to-Trails/Trail Based Tourism feasibility study. The study will provide an inventory and analysis of key trail related historical, cultural, natural and recreational resources; address engineering and environmental issues; consider potential linkages and partnerships; and outline implementation and funding strategies. In partnership with the County Highway Department, the study will be completed in 2013.

- ***GIS and Graphic Design Services:*** Many of the departmental projects require GIS and graphic design support. Major projects supported by GIS services include the Annual Agricultural District Review, the Main Street Revitalization Program, and various Tourism advertising/marketing projects. Besides supporting the departmental applications, we also provided data and mapping services to departments, municipalities and various agencies throughout the county.

- ***Greene County Emergency Services Interoperable Radio Communications Capital Project:*** The County is evaluating a major upgrade of its emergency services radio dispatch system including equipment upgrades and tower siting to improve system coverage and reliability. The first step is to site a tower on Windham Mountain to be funded by an existing grant (NYS Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services Office of Interoperable and Emergency Communications). The Department is supporting work to complete an environmental review and permitting for the radio communications tower on Windham Mountain, including assisting in securing services of an engineering firm to secure permits and complete work.

- ***Greene County Downtown and Waterfront Enhancements CFA:*** The Department secured \$600,000 in funding from the NYS Department of State through the Capital Region economic

Development Council Consolidated Funding Application process to complete enhancements and a portion of a waterfront trail loop in and adjacent to the county office parking lot and along Water Street from the county parking area to Bridge Street. The project is estimated to cost \$1.2 million, of which \$600,000 will be provided through the CFA. Greene County has \$600,000 in matching funds in place to contribute to the project, including \$200,000 from the Catskill–Olana Mitigation Fund, which has been dedicated for downtown and waterfront development in the Village of Catskill. The remaining \$400,000 will be from in-kind services (as part of the \$5 million cost of the Central Hudson Hudson Brownfield Cleanup).

- ***Catskill Creek Stormwater Retrofit & Shoreline Stabilization Project:*** Greene County will use \$60,000 in matching funding from the NYSDEC Water Quality Improvement Program (“Non-Point Source Abatement and Control Projects”) to retrofit the County’s lower municipal parking area to include bioremediation of stormwater runoff and to stabilize the eroding shoreline using techniques that will produce a naturalized (softened) shoreline along 3000 linear feet of the Catskill Creek. Greene County Soil and Water Conservation District is administering the grant and is currently working on a final design for the project. The Department is coordinating the project with other related projects in and near the county parking area. The project is planned to be completed in the spring/summer of 2013.
- ***Hazard Mitigation Flood Buyout Program:*** Assisted the County Administrator and Soil and Water Conservation District to administer the FEMA Hazard Mitigation Flood Buyout Program, with the department acting as contact signatory and Soil and Water handling day-to-day contact with landowners. The program is on-going in 2013 and will provide funding to purchase flood prone properties from willing landowners.

TOURISM:

- ***Legislative Support and the Tourism Advisory Committee:*** The Greene County Legislature created a new Economic Development and Tourism Legislative Standing Committee to increase focus and attention to the tourism industry and the important contribution it makes to the Greene County economy. The Legislative Standing Committee appointed the Tourism Advisory Committee (TAC) in August of 2012, which is comprised of 10 Tourism Businesses and Organizations. The TAC was charged with building industry support and awareness, and providing industry specific input on advertising and marketing.
- ***TAC Priority Short Term Action Plan:*** The Tourism Advisory Committee was also charged with creating a Prioritized Short Term Action Plan, which was developed and presented to the Legislature and approved as the TAC 90 Campaign. The TAC 90 Campaign identified the following prioritized campaigns to be executed in 2013:
 - Destination Weddings Campaign encourages couples to have their wedding in the Great Northern Catskills of Greene County and make an adventurous vacation of it for their guests.

- Adventure Passport Phase II campaign brings more awareness to all the adventurous things there are to do in Greene County with Buy One Get One Free at our adventure attractions.
- Additional Funds for TV Summer campaigns will drive more families to stay in the Great Northern Catskills this summer and enjoy a real mountain adventure with lots of attractions, events and lodging choices. The Summer Campaign drives people to request a Travel Guide and Adventure Passport BOGO free card. The Winter campaign, which ran from December 17 through February 4, urged visitors to sign up for the Adventure Passport and get BOGO free ski and ride deals.
- **Greene County Tourism Destination Marketing:** In addition to TAC funds for prioritized projects, Greene County Tourism, as the County's Destination Marketing Organization (DMO), along with our Agency of Record, Adworkshop, developed an integrated marketing campaign that uses new industry tools to help advertise and market the county as a tourism destination. The DMO serves as a coordinating entity effectively bringing together tourism businesses and diverse community stakeholders to attract visitors.
- As the trends in tourism advertising continue to go from traditional media to the use of public relations, digital media, and particularly social media tools, Great Northern Catskills of Greene County is leading the way with a more aggressive marketing plan, including:
 - Advertising and Marketing (Paid Media, Pay Per Click, Travel Guide)
 - Public Relations (Press Releases, Pitches, Placements, Travel Writers, Targeted Eblasts, Internal Communications Eblasts with Tourism Businesses):
 - Social Media (Facebook, YouTube)
 - Key Words and Search Engine Optimization/Marketing SEO/SEM, domain Authority, Domain Names
 - Adaptive Web Production and Mobile Site
 - Broadcast Television Production
 - Consumer and Group Market Travel Shows
 - Adventure Passport BOGO
 - Participation in ILNY Tourism Regions (Hudson Valley Tourism – HVT; Catskills – CATS) ILNY State Website
- With the combination of web page optimization, via authoritative content and SEO (search engine optimization) press releases, visits to www.greatnortherncatskills.com increased by 27%, our domain ranking increased substantially respective to the four counties that make up the in the Catskills and the Regional CATS website. Additionally, keyword rankings were number 1 for Catskills Events, Catskills Outdoor, Catskills Family Friendly, Catskills Attractions, Catskills Vacation, Catskills Festivals, and Catskills Museums. Also of importance, since the launch of our mobile site on May 25,

2012, there have been 65,449 unique visits to the mobile website www.m.greatnortherncatskills.com.

- Public relations and direct marketing in 2012 resulted in the distribution of almost 20 SEO Press Releases accounting for thousands of media placements, in such prestige publications as AAA New York Car and Travel and National Geographic. Nine direct electronic eblasts via our Bronto email service were also distributed to almost 9,000 of our e-database subscribers to advertise specials, packages, and destination marketing information.
- Our primary tourism targets for 2012 included: Family Travel and Adventure; Golf; Fishing; Motorcycling; Winter Sports; Fall Travel; Arts, Culture and History; Events; and Destination Weddings.
- In response to the efforts of the TAC, GC Tourism created a new TV video advertisement to extend the summer media buy through the end of August. Additional funds were approved by the Legislature for the extended buy as well as the inclusion of NYC and local markets. GC Tourism also produced a Winter TV video spot with placement on the NYS Travel Plazas.
- Greene County Tourism, in partnership with the Great Northern Catskills Chamber of Commerce, held a fall 2012 Tourism Seminar in November at Windham Mountain where local businesses learned about the County's Destination Marketing Program, Social Media and Digital Advertising, the Importance of Event Based Tourism, and Case Studies on Staying Competitive.
- Attending shows is a great way to showcase the Great Northern Catskills of Greene County as a destination, to distribute travel guides, and capture names for the database. In 2012, we attended or partnered with Greene County businesses or the ILNY CATS Region to attend 15 travel shows (consumer, motor coach/group business) where over 3,500 qualified names were captured and added to our email database.
- The Historic Catskill Point has seen an increase in traffic as well as revenue. There were nine visits from vessels and cruise lines, eighteen events, including weddings, and seven bass tournaments that took place at the Point which generated about \$20,000 in revenue.
- **Regional Tourism Partnerships:** Greene County Tourism is designated by the Greene County Legislature as the Tourism Promotion Agency (TPA) for participation in the ILNY Regional Matching Funds Program. Greene County is a participating member of the ILNY Hudson Valley Travel Region found at www.travelhudsonvalley.com and is officially designated by ILNY as part of the Catskill Travel Region, represented by Catskill Area Tourism Services (CATS) through www.visitthecatskills.com. CATS is a Regional Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) representing the four counties that comprise the region. CATS uses Matching Funds from the Counties and ILNY to implement an annual marketing campaign inclusive of public relations, traditional and digital media, regional travel shows, and legislative action.
- **Capital Region Economic Development Council (CFA) – HVT, Inc. Tourism Grant:** Hudson Valley Tourism, Inc. was awarded a grant from NYSILNY - Empire State Development (ESD) in the amount of

\$300,000 to highlight the historic, cultural, culinary amenities and great outdoors that the Hudson River Valley has to offer as a means of attracting additional visitors and visitor spending. Greene County is one of the counties in the region that will benefit from the grant.

- **Capital Region Economic Development Council (CFA) – CATS Tourism Grant:** Catskill Area Tourism Services (CATS) submitted a grant application in the amount of \$200,000 for the Catskill Travel region to execute an advertising campaign focusing on outdoor recreation, attractions and events. Greene County, and its Agency of Record, Adworkshop, prepared and submitted the application on behalf of CATS. The application was not selected.
- **NYS Path Through History Program:** Governor Cuomo unveiled New York's new "Path Through History," Program, a statewide roadmap that ties historically and culturally significant sites, locations and events throughout the Empire State. The program is designed promote tourism and economic development in communities in every region of the state. GC Tourism is participating in the NYS Path Through History Project through the Capital Region Economic Development Council. GC Tourism has submitted its listing data of major attractions and has made recommendations for NYS Thruway signage. The PTH Committee has prepared a draft strategic marketing campaign which is currently being reviewed.

TRANSPORTATION:

- **Greene County Transit System:** The Department operates the County's public transportation system, supported in part by the NYS Department of Transportation through the State Transportation Operating Assistance (STOA) Program. Operation of the Greene County Transit System is currently provided by First Student, Inc. through an annual third party contract. The bus follows a route each day of the week providing service to different areas of the County, running from 9-5 while circulating a mid-day shuttle in the Village of Catskill. The majority of riders are senior citizens, whose fares are paid by the Office of the Aging; however it also serves the general fare-paying public. In 2012 the bus operated 248 days providing 5,272 rides which is an increase of 15.4% from 2011.

SPECIAL PROJECTS:

- **Sale of Certified Home Health Agency Operating Certificate:** Assisted the County Administrator and the Public Health Department with development of the Certified Home Health Aide (CHHA) RFP for sale of the CHHA Operating Certificate. The RFP was issued in 2011 with the project concluding in 2012.
- **Greene County Government Website:** Assisted the County Administrator with the development and implementation of a new website for the county www.greenegovernment.com. KathodeRay Media was the consultant used to design the site and work with the project team, which included the Office of the County Administrator and the Departments of Economic Development, Tourism and Planning and Information Technology. The project began in late 2012 and the site launched in April of 2013.