

Greene County Comprehensive Economic Development Plan



II. Vision Statement and Goals

Introduction

The vision statement, goals and objectives were initially developed by the Project Team based on the extensive input received during public meetings, in responses to the resident and business surveys, and from discussions with Steering Committee and subcommittee members and other County stakeholders. The findings of each chapter of the plan also contributed to the development of goals and objectives.

The draft vision statement, goals and objectives were then reviewed, added to, and refined by the members of the Greene Business Partnership before being finalized in conjunction with the project Steering Committee.

Vision Statement

The vision statement is designed to answer the question, “Where do we want to be in the next ten to twenty years?” It serves as the overall foundation for the economic development plan. Greene County’s vision for economic development is presented below.

Today, Greene County is a community in transition. From the economic challenges of the last few decades, the County is entering the twenty-first century with a unique array of opportunities, capitalizing on its scenic beauty, low cost of living, and access to transportation routes; its historic and economic ties to the Capital Region, the Catskill Mountains, and the Hudson Valley; its proximity to the New York City metropolitan area; and the dreams and desires of its inhabitants. The description below presents a vision of Greene County ten or twenty years into the future:

The Greene County economy is characterized as balanced, healthy, and diverse. It encompasses large and small companies, tradition and innovation, locally-owned and new to the area. The County has established a balanced portfolio of businesses critical to future economic growth. Quality employment opportunities are available in a range of strategic and targeted industries, including technology and other knowledge-based sectors; an increasing proportion of residents are able to work locally due to growth in the number of higher-paying jobs and professions. Greene County has a thriving small business sector, and a culture of entrepreneurship that has existed from its earliest days.

Greene County has been successful in achieving what some refer to as “the delicate balance,” fostering the right kind of economic development while preserving the county’s unique quality of life and sense of place through model land use regulations and sound development principles. Development is directed primarily to existing village centers and

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major transportation corridors, allowing economic growth to occur without sacrificing Greene County's natural beauty and rural/small town character. The County has created appropriate "shovel-ready" sites with Empire Zone designation for new and expanding businesses to occupy, while setting aside adjacent land for environmental, habitat, and open space protection.

Recognizing the importance of a skilled and educated workforce, Greene County works closely with local educators and the business community to ensure that educational opportunities for children, youth, and adults are all first-rate. Local school districts encourage students to explore career choices in high school, facilitating their ability to participate in an increasingly diverse service and knowledge-based economy. Columbia-Greene Community College and Questar III have access to state-of-the-art equipment, and maintain effective programs that address ongoing skills training needs and prepare individuals for jobs in identified strategic and targeted industries, working in partnership with County economic development officials to implement the County's adopted Economic Development Plan.

Tourism is a significant contributor to the Greene County economy and remains its core identity and sense of place. Stimulated by private investment in regional tourism destination facilities, resorts and attractions, newly renovated lodging facilities, historic and cultural sites, and the development of retail and dining amenities, tourism has become a year-round industry, generating substantial jobs and revenue for the County. Agriculture and forestry are also important to the local economy, producing a variety of quality products for local and regional markets, while serving as the basis for value-added processing and the development of small scale niche businesses.

Greene County's population comprises a mix of families that have resided here for generations and those who have relocated here because of its affordable housing stock, rural environment and ideal location; the owners of seasonal homes who have decided to live and work here year-round; and recent college graduates who have returned to the County to enter the workforce or start a business. Building on Greene County's cultural heritage, artists, performers and writers have become a major force in the local economy.

Towns and villages in Greene County are vibrant, attractive places in which to live and work. While each community is unique, each offers a diverse range of housing options, abundant opportunities for both indoor and outdoor recreation, and access to health care, shopping, and other amenities. Municipalities, residents and businesses take pride in making the County an attractive place to live and invest. Vacant structures in historic Main Street areas have been renovated and redeveloped into distinctive residential and

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commercial properties. Municipalities are served by reliable telecommunications infrastructure, facilitating work-from-home options as well as technology-related economic growth.

Greene County leaders recognize that the Historic River Towns, Valley Towns, and Mountaintop Towns each have their own assets and opportunities for economic development. Decision-making about land use and appropriate locations for development will continue to rest with local communities; partnerships between municipalities and the County, however, remain essential for planning and economic development.

Goals and Objectives

The goals are based on the vision statement and are intended to provide specific direction for the development of strategies and actions.

Goals should respond to the analysis of existing conditions and the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats identified during the research process. According to the *Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Guidelines* from the U.S. Economic Development Administration, the goals should “reflect the desires of most area residents and should also be realistic and limited in number... The vision, goals and objectives will provide a framework for public and private decision making and serve as the basis for the formulation of the action plan.”¹

The Guide to Community Visioning recommends that broad goals be identified before moving too quickly to identifying specific projects: “This step in the process helps provide a tighter link between the vision and the action plan that will be developed. Without a set of goals... communities may identify specific projects that are not related to the vision established earlier in the process.”²

There are seven broad goals for the Greene County Comprehensive Economic Development Plan, the achievement of which will contribute to the County’s economic development.

¹ U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration. *Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Guidelines*, November 2002, p. 10.

² Gary Green, Anna Haines, and Stephen Halebsky. *Building Our Future: A Guide to Community Visioning*, University of Wisconsin-Extension, Cooperative Extension, 2000, p. 2-11 to 2-12.

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GOAL 1: BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT & TARGET INDUSTRY ATTRACTION

1. Expand the quantity and quality of employment opportunities through the development of a balanced, diverse, and year-round economy.
 - a. Promote the retention and expansion of existing businesses through regular outreach and access to financial and technical support.
 - b. Recruit businesses in identified target industries³ to diversify Greene County's economic base, create high-paying jobs, and enhance other community goals.
 - c. Attract a mix of strategic and targeted industries⁴ to Greene County's industrial parks and Empire Zones to spur new investment and job growth.
 - d. Continue to support entrepreneurship and small business growth as significant drivers of the County's economy.
 - e. Support collaborative efforts to foster economic growth within the Capital Region, Hudson Valley, and Catskill Mountains.
 - f. Continue to support agriculture as an important industry in Greene County and the region and encourage agricultural economic development.

GOAL 2: TOURISM

2. Generate long-term revenue growth in the tourism industry as a strategy for economic development.
 - a. Promote Greene County as a four-season vacation destination.
 - b. Support efforts to adapt tourism attractions, accommodations and services to the changing expectations and requirements of the marketplace.
 - c. Utilize the Internet more effectively to increase awareness of Greene County as a destination, transmit up-to-date information to potential customers, and provide opportunities for online booking and sales.
 - d. Cultivate the arts and history to extend the tourism season and take advantage of a market opportunity with the potential to increase visitation and revenues.
 - e. Pursue meetings, conferences, and conventions and cultivate the group tour market more aggressively.

³ Identified target industries include food processing, printing and related operations, plastics and rubber, fabricated metals and machinery, electronics components and equipment, medical devices, financial services, professional and technical services, and the emerging technologies of nanotechnology, biotechnology, advanced materials, renewable energy, and information technology.

⁴ "Strategic and targeted industries" are defined in Greene County's Empire Zone Development Plan.

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- f. Increase visitor counts during shoulder seasons through special events and trip packages.
- g. Develop a critical mass of retail amenities and services to satisfy visitor demand, potentially increase visitor expenditures, and enhance the economic impact of tourism on Greene County.
- h. Continue to create awareness of Greene County in overseas markets through regional marketing groups and partnership programs.
- i. Establish standard metrics and benchmarks with which to evaluate the performance of the local tourism industry, measure its economic contribution, and demonstrate the importance of the industry to government leaders.

GOAL 3: WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- 3. Develop a skilled and educated workforce that will meet the needs of existing businesses and emerging industries in Greene County.
 - a. Maintain effective programs and create new programs that address the ongoing education and life-long training needs of Greene County businesses and residents.
 - b. Continue to enhance the roles of Columbia-Greene Community College, the Workforce Investment Office, BOCES, local school districts, and other educational institutions in preparing students for today's knowledge-based economy and developing a competitive labor force.
 - c. Address the gaps in the educational and training system to respond to the needs and requirements of target industries such as food processing, printing, plastics and rubber, fabricated metals and machinery, electronics components and equipment, medical devices, financial services, professional and technical services, and the emerging technologies of nanotechnology, biotechnology, advanced materials, renewable energy, and information technology.
 - d. Highlight the positive aspects of Greene County's workforce and educational system.
 - e. Facilitate the development of business consortia that will allow businesses to collectively access training resources.
 - f. Identify and pursue new funding sources that support the educational and training needs of existing and emerging businesses in Greene County.



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GOAL 4: LAND USE AND REGIONAL PLANNING

4. Preserve and enhance the physical and environmental characteristics that make Greene County a distinct and identifiable place, while providing for the needs of existing and prospective residents.
 - a. Encourage municipalities to utilize sound development principles to promote more densely settled development within existing hamlets and village centers where infrastructure can support growth and preserve the pastoral character of rural areas.
 - b. Develop educational materials and model zoning and regulatory tools such as conservation subdivision techniques, commercial design guidelines, and transfer of development rights that municipalities across the county could utilize.
 - c. Identify appropriate regulatory policies and tools to achieve desired community development as defined by each municipality in a countywide context.
 - d. Identify incentives and strategies to promote continued or enhanced investment in established communities and designated growth areas as outlined in adopted comprehensive plans.
 - e. Promote programs and policies to improve the general appearance of the County and prevent blight.
 - f. Support the revitalization of Greene County's downtowns and Main Street areas.
 - g. Continue to balance economic goals with strong land use policies and programs that promote and maintain the community's natural environment, quality of life, and rural character.
 - h. Assist local governments, planning boards and zoning boards to stimulate economic development and utilize sound development principles through the adoption of local comprehensive plans.

GOAL 5: QUALITY OF LIFE

5. Improve the quality of life in Greene County by upgrading and expanding community services, facilities, and amenities.
 - a. Support efforts to improve the quality, availability and accessibility of health care services.
 - b. Support efforts to improve the quality of school districts and better promote their successes to be competitive in the Capital Region.
 - c. Support efforts to develop recreational and community facilities where needed to provide four season recreational opportunities for residents, workers, and visitors.
 - d. Support efforts to increase shopping and dining options in appropriate areas in the designated hamlets and municipalities.

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- e. Promote the development of an array of housing options (affordable, special needs and senior, starter homes, and workforce housing) to meet the varied needs of residents and workers with respect to age, income level, tenure, and affordability.
- f. Improve the condition and supply of housing to respond to the needs of a demographically and economically diverse market.
- g. Develop catalytic projects that will enhance quality of life and spur economic growth in Greene County.⁵

GOAL 6: INFRASTRUCTURE AND FACILITIES DEVELOPMENT

- 6. Develop a steady supply of business and industrial land, sites and buildings that support the needs of existing and emerging businesses in Greene County.
 - a. Continue to pursue “shovel-ready” status for the Hudson Valley Business Park, the future Athens Industrial Park, and the future Catskill Industrial Park.
 - b. Identify additional sites appropriate for future business and industrial park development based on soils and topography, access to utilities, highway access, zoning, and other criteria.
 - c. Ensure an adequate supply of affordable flexible space for small and start-up businesses.
 - d. Encourage adequate infrastructure to support business expansion and new development opportunities.

GOAL 7: TELECOMMUNICATIONS

- 7. Support the creation of reliable, high-quality telecommunications infrastructure that meets the needs of existing and emerging industries in Greene County, ensures connectivity, and allows all communities throughout the County to participate in economic development.
 - a. Encourage current telecom providers to fill connectivity gaps and improve service to all areas of the County.
 - b. Extend wireless Internet technology to existing business parks, densely settled areas and Main Street areas, as well as mountaintop and rural communities that are currently underserved.

⁵ Examples of such projects might include a health care facility; a second-home retirement community; a business and industry center; a Culinary Institute of America (CIA) or Cornell Hotel School Extension Center that could serve as a teaching hotel and conference center; and/or a conference center with state-of-the art teleconferencing facilities on the mountaintop that could be operated in partnership with a CIA or a Cornell Hotel School Extension Center.

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- c. Continue to build partnerships with telecommunications providers and the State of New York and identify funding sources to help expand telecommunications infrastructure and extend service to currently underserved areas.

