

2015 ANNUAL REPORT

GREENE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TOURISM AND PLANNING

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

- **Quantum Fund Loan Activity:** There were a total of 90 grants/loans in the portfolio as tracked through our Grant Management Tracking System (GMS) at the close of the 2015 fourth quarter.
 - New Loan activity in 2015 from the county's Quantum Fund leveraged private dollar investments totaling \$5,270,000 pledging 18 new full time equivalent jobs. The Quantum Fund loaned a total of \$275,000 to six businesses. A loan and re-financing package for Scribner's Catskill Lodge, LLC. was completed, allowing the county to be repaid on all old loans with the previous owners and providing new financing for the redevelopment of the strategic property in the Village of Hunter. Microenterprise loans ranged from a loan for 394 Main, a new restaurant on Main Street, Catskill; Verdigris Tea, also on Main Street, Catskill; Kaaterskill Liquors in Tannersville; Homage Restaurant Group in Athens for a new French restaurant. Additionally, Honey Hollow Brewery was approved for funding and is pending. In comparison to 2014 loan portfolio activity, one additional loan was made. While \$190,000 less funds were dispersed from the Quantum Fund in 2015 than 2014, private investment increased by \$3,990,000, largely due to the Scribner's Catskill Lodge acquisition.
 - No resolutions were filed in 2015 that would have required legal action by the Greene County Legislature for loans in default. In 2014, one resolution was adopted by the Greene County Legislature to commence legal action.
 - Five Greene County loan recipients paid their loans in full: Freehold Country Pub; Edwin Dipold – Valley View Maple; Mountain Tees (disaster loan); Freehold Furniture; Scribner Hollow Lodge; Scribner Hollow Lodge (disaster loan).
 - Four Greene County loans were finalized after legal action concluded: River Street Bakers; 2351 Route 145 – Lawyer's General Store; Athens on the Hudson; and Cameos. Two additional loans were finalized with the owners making on-going settlement payments: Sirius Dog Food; and Mountaintop Greene.
- **Direct Economic Development Projects (CDBG):** The Department completed a \$266,000 grant from the NYS Office of Community Renewal (OCR) on behalf of Ferguson Enterprises, the plumbing/HVAC warehouse that is nearing completion in Coxsackie. Twenty-five jobs were pledged for the CDBG project, and Ferguson documented over 100 positions created. The CDBG grant was part of a State-led investment package that attracted the Virginia-based company to Greene County. The Department is expecting that the State will do the monitoring and final close-out of the grant in 2016.

- **Infrastructure Grant:** The Department obtained a 2014 CFA Capital Region Economic Development Council grant administered through Empire State Development (ESD) for \$37,500 to conduct an infrastructure study. The study began in 2015, with the selection of Delaware Engineering as the consultant. Tasks completed to date include capacity analysis of the sewer and water treatment plants throughout the county; an inventory of publicly owned property; and an inventory of potentially available sites around the county with public infrastructure as potential development sites that can be used to attract new businesses and business expansions.
- **Microenterprise Grant:** The Department obtained a new 2014 CFA Capital Region Economic Development Council Microenterprise Assistance Program grant for \$200,000, administered through the NYS Office of Community Renewal (OCR) for small business development. Eight grants and grant/loan combinations will be made to businesses, with an emphasis on Main Street businesses and targeted business sectors. Projects approved for funding in 2015, included: 394 Main, a new restaurant on Main Street Catskill; Kaaterskill Liquors in Tannersville; Homage Restaurant Group in Athens; and Verdigris Tea, also on Main Street Catskill. Two Microenterprise Assistance Program training classes were also held, with 20 current and potential entrepreneurs in attendance.
- **NYS Direct Economic Development Projects (CDBG):** The Department continued to work with two businesses that received CDBG economic development funding from the New York State Office of Community Renewal (OCR). In 2014, monitoring was conducted by the OCR for New York Spring Water economic development project. In 2015, final close-out requests were submitted. While no significant issues were found by the State, the Department is waiting for the State to provide the final close-out certification. The Department expects to receive final close-out of New York Spring Water in 2016. In 2015, the Department submitted final close-out requests to OCR for the Ferguson economic development project. The Department is waiting for OCR to conduct the required monitoring and anticipates the final close-out certification for Ferguson in 2016.
- **NYS Microenterprise Grant Projects (CDBG):** In 2011 the county was awarded \$200,000 for Microenterprise grants to businesses from New York State Homes and Community Renewal (HCR). In 2012, the Department worked to originate eight grants and grant/loan combinations to businesses in Catskill, Cairo, Coxsackie, Durham and Hunter. Eleven new jobs have been pledged as part of the projects. Final disbursements of the grant/loan combination funds were made in 2013. Monitoring by OCR occurred in 2014. The Department submitted final close-out requests. The Department anticipates final close-out certification in 2016.
- **Microenterprise Training:** The Department also continues to maintain a close relationship with the Columbia-Greene Counties Workforce Development Office. Greene County serves on the Board of Directors, acts as the Corporate Secretary, and Chairman of the Business Services Committee. The Department also participates in the larger eleven county Capital District Workforce Investment Consortium, and works with both the New York State Small Business Development Center (SBDC) in Albany and with the Mid-Hudson SBDC, as they cover the Mountaintop.

- ***Business Retention and Expansion (BRE), Technical Assistance:*** Business retention and expansion is a primary task. Staff meets and/or talks with existing business owners on a regular basis to determine needs and whether we might assist them. Staff also assists businesses with grant applications they are submitting to the state or federal government and that have to be submitted by private parties. Staff responds to inquiries from businesses and works closely with the county IDA in this regard. Staff manages the Revolving Loan Portfolio, tracks monthly payments, prepares quarterly financials, tracks delinquent payments and works with loan recipients that are delinquent, and coordinates necessary actions with the bank, the Quantum Fund Committee and the County Attorney.

- ***Interaction with Local Business Organizations:*** Department staff supported the activities of the Tourism Advisory Committee and the newly-formed Business Advisory Committee. Both Committees provide industry feedback and support for the Department’s tourism and economic development programs. The Department also works closely with the Greene County Chamber of Commerce and local Chambers and business organizations to meet the needs of businesses in the county.

- ***Business Attraction Program (Buy In Greene, Invest in Greene):*** In 2014, the county expanded the Buy In Greene initiative from a “Buy Local” only campaign to include a new and exciting component, “Invest In Greene; Cool Places, Abundant Spaces, New Faces”. Also in 2014 the Business Advisory Committee (BAC) was formed. This new marketing campaign uses digital advertising, social media, Google Adwords and pay per click advertising to attract new and expand existing business to our downtowns, thereby creating more opportunities for consumers to shop locally. After several months in the planning stage we launched the newly revised Buy In Greene/Invest in Greene website at the end of 2014. In 2015, together with the Greene County Chamber of Commerce, staff visited businesses and business owners throughout the county to familiarize them with our program and sign up their business to the website. Additionally, staff attended Business After Hours events along with monthly Chamber meetings both regionally and locally. We maintain a close partnership with the Greene County Chamber of Commerce and together we worked the county promoting and creating awareness of our new brand and program.

In 2015 the Legislature allocated the Buy/Invest In Greene program dedicated funds which enabled us to grow and expand the program throughout the year in the following capacity.

- ***Website upgrades*** enabled us to become a mobile adaptive site which allows viewing on all platforms of electronic devices, i.e. tablets, smart phone, and IPads. It also enabled us to continually update and improve the website throughout the year.

Together all of our advertising efforts have resulted in an increase of our monthly website visits more than five times the average since January 2015. Total website sessions were up over 300% for the year. Most of our major increases in our stats were driven by Pay Per Click advertising and Social Media outreach. Our total web traffic views went from a range of 1667 visits in January to 6806 visits in December, representing a monthly average of 4,100

visits and a total yearly count of almost 50,000. Contributing factors being our Home Page Take Over advertising for Black Friday and Small Business Saturday, along with our Fall and Holiday shopping campaigns.

- **Social Media** campaign has been cost effective and has leveraged our ability to connect with our target audience. We post and blog on all of our social media networks, Facebook, Twitter, Linked In, Google Plus, Pinterest and YouTube anywhere from 3-6 times a week promoting local business news and highlights that are relevant to the consumer, business owners and investors. This has gained us almost 4000 Facebook “Likes” and at times more than 30,000 “Reaches” to people during some weeks depending on the post. Our social media following was also up over 300% for the year.

- **Digital Advertising** campaign for “Investors” target the Metro NY area, NJ, CT, Hudson Valley and the Capital Region, while campaign targets for “Consumers” target Greene and Columbia Counties, and the Hudson Valley and the Capital Region. The advertising campaign consists of banner ads, display advertising, sky scraper ads, and home page takeover advertising.

- **Consumer Outreach** A large part of our website success was our “Starting a New Business” Landing page, this page offers a downloadable Ebook with pertinent business information. People can download this additional information but need to provide us with their email address and phone numbers. That allows us to contact the future business owner personally so we can help with their small business needs, whether it’s creation of a business plan, financing or looking for a possible location. The Ebook wasn’t offered until mid-year, but received 153 downloads for the year about starting a small business. Our consumer outreach has also encouraged 156 local businesses to sign onto our Buy In Greene Invest In Greene database bringing the total to over 1013 business listed.

In addition we create three E-newsletters every month targeting the consumer, investor and business prospects that are emailed to more than 2100 people within our database, including all legislators and employees. Throughout the year almost 400 new prospective businesses have signed up for our newsletter, an increase of over 130% from the previous year and more than 1440 consumers have signed up for that newsletter from 2014, a 150% increase.

- **Buy Local Events:** Attended two Buy Local Expos, one in Columbia County at the Basilica Hudson, the other at the Historic Catskill Point, in Catskill. Buy/Invest in Greene collateral were distributed at both events. These expos are co-sponsored by the Greene & Columbia County Chambers of Commerce.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT:

- ***Disaster Grants:*** Greene 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 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. 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. While the grant funds have long since been disbursed, the reporting function is still active and the Department will continue to track and monitor these grants until such time as the State performs its closeout and monitoring procedure.

- ***Disaster Reimbursement Project:*** In 2013, the county contracted with NYSOCR to administer over \$8.8 million in CDBG fund payments directly to the impacted local municipalities 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 Department has been working on this project as a conduit for OCR, which not only involves the county projects, but projects in every municipality except the Town of Athens. The contract for this program runs through 2017 and remains open.

- ***Technical Assistance:*** The Department provides support for other agencies and organizations in their efforts to apply for funds, including Catskill Mountain Housing Development Corporation, Greene County Council on the Arts, Not-For-Profits, foundations, local businesses and organizations. The Department also closely partners with the Greene County Chamber of Commerce to deliver services to the community.

- ***Craft Beverage Trail:*** The Department has been instrumental in the creation of the Catskills Beverage Trail, which has now been formed and beginning the State designation process. The county also wrote a grant application for advertising and marketing funds for the Trail, which is currently pending at the State for funding. The Trail consists of five breweries, one winery and one tasting room, with potential additional members joining as the number of producers expands. Great Northern Catskills tourism is also involved with enhanced advertising and marketing for the members of this growing sector of our economy.

- ***Microenterprise CDBG CFA Grant:*** The Department applied for a \$200K Capital Region CFA Grant under the Community Development Block Grant Program administered through the NYS Office of Community Renewal. The grant was designed to provide direct financial assistance in the form of loans and grants to small businesses in downtown and targeted industry sectors, aligning with our Buy/Invest in Greene objectives. Small businesses make up the majority of the business activity in the county. This grant was not selected for funding by the Capital Region Economic

Development Council as the county is currently administering a 2014 Microenterprise grant with funds remaining to be allocated.

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 2015, the Department assisted with the review of 48 projects (up slightly from 45 projects reviewed in 2014). In addition, the Department hosted 2 training sessions for county and local planning boards, assisting with municipal training credits, including programs on: *Local Government Organization and Roles of Public Officers, Wind Energy Regulation, and Solar Energy Regulation* on May 27, 2015 and *subdivision and site plan review* on October 5, 2015. The Department also coordinated the annual CPB Ellen Rettus Planning Achievement Awards with 2 recipients receiving recognition at the November meeting of the County Legislature, including: Aaron Flach in the Community Design and Improvement/Community Revitalization category for the renovation of the "Kennedy House" at 154-160 Mansion Street Coxsackie, and Ferguson Enterprises in the Economic Development category for the recently constructed Ferguson Enterprises Distribution Center.

- ***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 2015 review 61.97 acres were added to the district, which now totals 39,571.78 acres. During the 2014 review 933.72 acres were added to the district and in 2013 296.49 acres were added.

- ***FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant (Buyout) Program:*** The Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) provides funding by the federal government for the acquisition of properties that are located in flood-prone areas and demolition of flood-damaged structures thereon by local governments. FEMA reimburses 75% of all eligible costs including pre-flood fair market value, appraisal, title report, survey, recording fees, boundary survey, environmental site assessment, demolition, and site restoration, with the remaining 25% accounted as the non-federal cost share, the responsibility either born by the Town and/or the landowner, or with special CDBG funds also provided by the State. NYS Office of Emergency Management is the contracting entity with FEMA and NYSOEM sub-contracts with Greene County. Greene County SWCD is performing the day to day functions of the program. Twenty-two properties in eight towns across the county have closed and been demolished. The largest and most involved property remains and is expected to close on March 30, 2016 with demolition completed by June 30, 2016. Demolition took place within three months of the closings and all properties have been restored to their natural floodplain state

permanently removing any flood hazard. Some towns will use the vacant parcels to develop small parks where feasible, and with FEMA approval, others will be left fallow never to be developed. The Department is the signatory on the contracts and assists the SWCD with requests for proposals, procurement compliance and contractual requirements. The program was on-going in 2015 with full completion expected in 2016.

- **Broadband Support and Development:** Greene County has taken an active approach to address the Unserved and Underserved households, businesses and institutions in the county. Starting in the summer of 2010, the Greene County Legislature authorized the Department of Planning and Economic Development to commission a County Broadband Plan with ECC Technologies. Since that time, Greene County has been working with Local Broadband Providers, providing assistance with mapping, grant writing services and general support. Also in 2010, Greene County partnered with Mid-Hudson Cable to submit an American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Round 2 Broadband Initiatives Program (BIP) through the Rural Utility Service (RUS), for last mile fiber for several towns in Greene and Columbia Counties. While the grant was awarded, it was ultimately declined by MHC due to prevailing wage, MWBE, and make ready requirements.

Failing to have one of the county's Local Providers commit to available broadband grant funding programs through NYS or the Federal broadband programs, Greene County solicited providers interested in partnering with the county to develop one or more grant applications. Hudson Valley Wireless, a Wireless Internet Service Provider in the Capital Region, responded to the solicitation. In 2014, the Greene County Legislature authorized the county to enter into a public/private partnership with HVW for the submission of a joint grant application to the NYS Broadband Grant Program for a fixed base point-to-point and point-to-multipoint wireless system throughout the county, utilizing both public and private towers and municipal assets, and including a benefit to the county's emergency communications systems. While the grant was reviewed by the Capital Region REDC and the NYS Broadband Office, it was not awarded. The Governor's New NY Broadband Program was announced and none of the grants that had been submitted were acted upon.

Also during this time, a Local Provider just outside Greene County, Margaretville Telephone, and the Town of Lexington approached the county for assistance in addressing the Unserved Households in Lexington. The Town of Lexington has formed a Broadband Committee and initiative to attract a provider to the Town. With assistance from the county, the Committee has surveyed local residents, held workshops, forums and festivals to gain support for the initiative. Margaretville Telephone, located just outside the county, already providing internet services for the Greene County Town of Halcott, supported with a prior grant from the NYS Broadband Grant Program, has expressed interest in submitting an application under the New NY Broadband Grant Program. Unfortunately, at this time, the Census Blocks covering Lexington are part of the Verizon (CAF) territory and are therefore "ineligible" for submission in Phase I of the new program.

Greene County has also been working with all of the Local Providers in the county, and with the announcement of the New NY Broadband Program, the county has formed a Consortium of Local Providers, which meets on a monthly basis to share expertise and issues facing the county and the

providers. Local Providers from surrounding counties with interest in serving the county's market have also joined the Consortium. The county is providing mapping, technical services, and is acting as the catalyst for broadband development. At the most recent meeting, the Consortium reviewed the New NY Broadband Program Guidelines and the county is preparing an official response to the Broadband Program Office (BPO) seeking clarification of several issues and identifying obstacles in preparing applications in rural, low density counties. The Consortium is evaluating opportunities for private-to-private partnership applications as well as public-private applications, utilizing all available technologies, both wireline and wireless.

Greene County has afforded itself every opportunity provided by the state and the NYS Association of Counties to participate in the broadband economy, attending every broadband summit and workshop. The county has worked very closely with Senator Amedore, Assemblyman Lopez and Congressman Gibson on our issues.

- ***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 CFA process and is partnering with the Village of Catskill to construct a waterfront trail along the Catskill Creek from the Uncle Sam Bridge to the Catskill Mountain Railway Bridge. The project is estimated to cost \$1.2 million, of which \$600,000 will be provided through the NYSDOS grant. 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 \$7 million cost of the Central Hudson Brownfield Cleanup). The Village of Catskill has also agreed to contribute \$50,000 in grant funding from their Catskill-Olana Mitigation Fund. In 2014, the Department and its consultant completed initial concept design work. Tasks completed included facilitation and coordination of meetings with the walkway committee and village officials to review walkway trail alternatives, completion of multiple walkway and streetscape concept layouts and trail routing, multiple meetings with landowners and village officials, and completion of cost estimates. Landowners along the trail were contacted by the Village to secure the necessary easements along several private properties. After two landowners declined to provide easements, an alternate trail location was designed and presented to the State and Village. In late 2015, the final location of the trail and the application of the match was approved by the NYS Department of State and the Village of Catskill. In 2016, walkway construction documents, will be prepared, final surveying will be completed for the easements, environmental review will be conducted, permits will be secured, and bids will be released.

- ***New York State Open Space Plan/Advocacy for Tourism Based Recreation/Advocacy for Access and Safety Improvements at Kaaterskill Falls:*** The NYSDEC and Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Places work with regional advisory committees to prepare the NYS Open Space Plan. The plan is updated every three years and serves as the blueprint for the State's land conservation efforts and was last updated in 2014. The Department serves on the Region 4 Advisory Committee (Region 4 includes: Albany, Columbia, Delaware, Greene, Montgomery, Otsego, Rensselaer, Schenectady and Schoharie Counties). As a result of the department's involvement and advocacy,

critical language was added to the Plan's Region 4 report relating to tourism development and marketing, including specific references to the Hudson River School Art Trail and Kaaterskill Rail Trail and a policy recommendation to "integrate open space protection with natural resource-based tourism by including a strong commitment to marketing and promotion, strategic planning, and staffing to meet the needs of local communities" and "attention to development and maintenance of recreational infrastructure, such as parking, multi-purpose trails, overlooks, and unified signage" in Unit Management Plans, the Catskill Park Access Plan, and related documents. The Department also assisted the County Administrator and County Legislature in 2015 in urging NYS DEC to take action to implement safety improvements along the Kaaterskill Trail and Falls. In 2015 (and we believe in strong part a result of the county's advocacy) a newly amended Unit Management Plan recommended extensive trail safety improvements at Kaaterskill Falls and construction began on a new overlook trail and viewing platform. The new observation platform and trail are completed and will be open to the public in 2016.

- **Catskill Park Coalition and Advisory Committee:** The Catskill Park Advisory Committee was formed in 2015 by the Catskill Center for Conservation and Development and the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference in consultation with the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation. The Committee is comprised of a group of local governments, institutions, not-for-profits, corporations, businesses and organizations that represent the various communities and users of the Catskill Park, the Catskill Watershed, and the NY State Forest. The purpose and mission of the Committee is to provide assistance, advice and guidance to the NYSDEC, the NYC Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and other land managers. The Chairman of the Greene County Legislator appointed the Greene County Planning Director to represent Greene County on the Committee which meets monthly. There are a wide variety of topics and sub-committees that address issues regarding Unit Management Plans, stewardship resources, financial resources, legislative issues, state rules and regulations, research, and economic impacts.

In 2015, the Catskill Park Coalition and Advisory Committee was instrumental in requesting and receiving a State Legislative Initiative in the amount of \$500,000 from Senators Seward and Amedore to support funding for an economic impact analysis to quantify the recreational benefits to the Catskill Park, including Mountain Biking, and for several small capital projects improving access points to the NYS State Forest. Also in 2015, the Catskill Park Coalition organized the Catskill Park Coalition Day at the State Capital to raise awareness of the needs of the Catskill Park. The Coalition also organized a grass roots campaign for a legislative request of \$4 million dollars for the inclusion of a dedicated funding line for the Catskill Park as part of the State Environmental Protection Fund. In 2015, the Greene County Legislature adopted a resolution in support of the EPF Funding request. The 2016 State Budget did not include the dedicated EPF funding.

- **Hudson River Skywalk:** In 2015 the department secured \$124,250 in NYS DOS LWRP funding for a gateway and pedestrian improvement design for the Hudson River Skywalk. The project will study ways to make a physical trail connection to the Rip Van Winkle Bridge, strengthen the connection with the Thomas Cole National Historic Site, Olana State Historic Site, and the Village of Catskill's historic downtown and waterfront. In addition, an economic impact analysis and market study will

be completed to determine potential tourism visitation and revenue gains in promoting the birthplace of the Hudson River School of Art. The project is being done in Partnership with Thomas Cole, Olana, NYS Bridge Authority, Village of Catskill, Town of Greenport, and Columbia County.

- ***Big Valley Trail Breakers Snowmobile Club:*** In 2015 the Big Valley Trail Breakers Snowmobile Club (Club) asked Greene County to become the Local Sponsor of the Club under the NYS Snowmobile Grant Program. Participation of the county and the Club in the NYS Snowmobile Grant Program allows the Club to access funding for trail development and maintenance, currently around \$3,000. Greene County provides no direct funding; rather state grant funding for the program comes from NYS snowmobile registration fees. The funds are provided by the state to the Club, via the local sponsor per the terms of the program. The Big Valley Trail Breakers is organized as a Not-For-Profit 501(c)(3) with approximately 100 members. Their snowmobile trail goes through Halcott, Lexington, and Prattsville and connects to Delaware County in Roxbury allowing access to the NYS Trail Network.
- ***Catskill Brownfield Opportunities Grant with Greene IDA:*** Department staff attended meetings and served on the Village of Catskill Brownfield Opportunity Area Committee. The NYS DOS grant project is designed to consider the development potential of several properties in the Village. The project is being administered by the Greene County IDA in partnership with the Village of Catskill and will continue in 2016.
- ***Greene County Solar Project:*** Department staff conducted the SEQRA environmental review of the 2.5 MW Photovoltaic Solar Array System constructed by Solar City for the property behind the Greene County Office in Cairo. Department staff worked with the County Attorney, Solar City Representatives and Delaware Engineering to prepare environmental review documents, resolutions, findings, and attended meetings of the Greene County Legislature Public Works Committee.

TOURISM:

- ***Greene County Tourism Destination Marketing:*** Greene County Tourism, as the County's Destination Marketing Organization (DMO), along with our Agency of Record, Adworkshop, developed and executed an integrated marketing campaign that uses the latest 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 shift from traditional media to the use of public relations, digital media, and particularly social media tools, Greene County Tourism continues to lead the way with a more aggressive marketing plan, including:

- **Digital Marketing** (Website Content Updates, Organic Search, Search Engine Optimization, SEO/SEM, Pay-Per-Click Campaigns, Social Media, External E-blasts with growing database of people wanting more information on Greene County);
 - **Paid Media** (Print Advertising, Radio, Summer & Winter TV, Broadcast Production including Winter and Spring Photo/Video Shoot);
 - **Public Relations** (Press Releases, Pitches, Placements, Travel Writers, Targeted E-blasts, Internal Communications E-blasts with Tourism Businesses);
 - **Marketing Collateral** (Travel Guide, Adventure Map, Campaign Creative Templates);
 - **Consumer and Group Market Travel Shows;**
 - **Mobile Tour;**
 - **Participation in ILNY Tourism Regions** (Hudson Valley Tourism – HVT; Catskills – CATS; ILNY State Website).
- Greene County Tourism executed two photo and video shoots to help capture media for broadcast and advertising purposes. The first shoot was held for one-day in the spring with a focus on Beverages. The second shoot took place in two days in the summer with a focus on motorcycling, specifically showcasing three new motorcycle route rides in Greene County. Footage from the motorcycle shoot was used to develop a video, advertising imagery, as well as a motorcycle brochure guide.
- With the combination of webpage optimization, via authoritative content and SEO (search engine optimization) press releases, visits to www.greatnortherncatskills.com increased by 45.7% (445,456 vs 305,764). This substantial increase is due in part to the update of the website to an adaptive responsive site in May 2014.
- Public relations and direct marketing in 2015 resulted in the distribution of 8 Pitches in prestigious publications, such as *Examiner*, *NYtimes.com*, *NYMag.com*, and *Huffington Post*. Press releases and pitches resulted in 453 sessions overall on the GNC website which is 683% more than last year. Additionally, Greene County hosted 14 media, five more than 2014 and seven more than 2013.
- Greene County Tourism, in partnership with the Greene County Chamber of Commerce, held the 2015 Orville Slutzky Tourism Seminar in May at Villa Vosilla where about 100 local businesses learned about the county's Destination Marketing Programs. They also had an opportunity to learn about Digital Marketing from our agency of record, AdWorkshop and how they can leverage the Greene County Tourism office. The entire event was followed with a business after hours sponsored by the Greene Chamber of Commerce.

- Attending shows is an important method to showcase Greene County as a four season destination, to distribute travel guides, and capture names for the database. In 2015, GC Tourism attended or partnered with Greene County businesses or the ILNY CATS Region to attend 19 travel shows (consumer, motor coach/group business) where over 4,500 qualified names were captured and added to our email database.

- New in 2015 was the participation in New York Welcomes You, Mobile Visitor Center Road Show. This allowed Greene County to be 1 of 15 areas promoted at 12 events and shows, throughout the northeast, where over 500,000 potential visitors attended.

- Marketing support was provided to events and festivals throughout Greene County via paid media, website, social media, press releases, etc. The Tourism Office provided logistical support for over 10 events/races, such as, coordination of support meetings with municipality/agency connections, volunteer recruitment, and liaison support with the event promoters. The Department spent additional time in 2015 working with Townsquare media on the Mass Gathering Permits for Taste of Country and Mountain Jam. The Department has also been working with the promoter of the Greyfox Festival on cellular and broadband connectivity at the festival.

- The Historic Catskill Point has seen an increase in traffic as well as revenue. There were nine visits from vessels and cruise lines, thirty events, including weddings, and three bass tournaments that took place at the Point which generated over \$50,000 in revenue, similar to 2014 sales. The Point continues to be booked consistently each year. The Tourism Office oversees all public events at the Historic Catskill Point.

- **Tourism Advisory Committee:** The Greene County Legislature continues to support the Tourism Advisory Committee (TAC), which is comprised of 10 Tourism businesses and organizations. The TAC continues to build industry support and awareness, and provides industry specific input on advertising and marketing. In 2015, all 10 members of the Committee were reappointed. The TAC met on a monthly basis, assisted the Department in the development of the 2015 Destination Advertising and Marketing Campaign and the TAC Priority Action Plan. Extensive performance based reporting is provided to the TAC and the Legislature in the form of bi-weekly public relations reports and Google analytics, a bi-annual report, and an end of year report.

- **TAC Priority Action Plan:** The Tourism Advisory Committee endorsed a Priority Action Plan, which was developed to enhance specific campaigns, as follows:
 - New campaigns were launched to include the promotion of craft beverage destinations, motorcycling and mountain biking / cycling in Greene County. In addition funds were used to promote the UCI Windham World Cup and other cycling events. Total visits / sessions to the Motorcycle Page, Beverage Page and Mountain Biking / Cycling Page were 1,891 total page views on the Beverage page; 2,952 total page views from Motorcycling, 9,234 total page views Mountain Biking/Cycling.

- Destination Weddings Campaign encouraged couples to have their wedding in the Great Northern Catskills of Greene County and to make an adventurous vacation for the wedding party and guests.
- Mobile Tour promotion brought more awareness to all the adventurous things there are to do in Greene County as well as encouraging visitors to redeem distributed coupons at local establishments. Greene County ambassadors attended over 12 major events where visitors were provided discounts to local eateries and stores to redeem on their way home from the event.
- A continued investment in funds for Broadcast TV Summer and Winter campaigns drove more families to stay in the Great Northern Catskills of Greene County to enjoy a real mountain adventure with lots of attractions, events and lodging choices.
- **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) – Greene County Tourism Grant:** Greene County Tourism was awarded a grant from the ILNY, Empire State Development, Market New York Program, in the amount of \$150,000 for the Kaaterskill Clove – America’s First Vacation Destination: Building a National Awareness Campaign. The creation and implementation of a comprehensive advertising and marketing campaign to promote the Kaaterskill Clove Project is the first step to shift to the target segments of culture and heritage day-trippers and overnight stays from Albany and the Capital Region as well as NYC metro areas. The advertising and marketing plan included an adaptive website, digital advertising, social media advertising and Pay-Per-Click advertising. This project and grant application took months to develop with the support of several key partners and represents dozens of attractions and supporting tourism businesses. This grant was awarded in 2013, with the campaign execution in 2014-2015.
 - The digital media performance was almost three times the industry standard, which included display advertising that targeted the Metro NY area, along with Connecticut and the Mid-Hudson Valley.
 - Online banner ads with Hudson Valley Magazine and international display advertising, specifically in Great Britain.

- The pre-roll video's received a good click through rate, 220% above industry standards.
- Overall the Katterskill Clove Experience website saw a large increase in traffic throughout the duration of the campaign, with total unique page views over 55,000 with top visits from NYC, Washington DC, and London. The campaign represented 8.27% of the overall visits to the Great Northern Catskills of Greene County website for this period.
- **Capital Region Economic Development Council (CFA) – CATS Tourism Grant:** Catskill Area Tourism Services (CATS) has been awarded a grant from the ILNY, Empire State Development, Market New York Program, in the amount of \$270,000 for the Catskill travel region to execute an advertising campaign focusing on outdoor recreation, attractions and events. CATS, and its Agency of Record, Focus Media, prepared and submitted the application on behalf of CATS. Greene County is one of the counties in the region that will benefit from the grant. In 2014 CATS developed an RFP to secure an agency of record, where Adworkshop was awarded the bid. The grant was executed in 2015 with funds used to develop a new brand and supporting strategy, adaptive website and an integrated destination marketing plan.
 - Overall website sessions increased by 2.66% from date of launch versus prior year (8/4/2015-12/31/2015). During this period there were a total of 10,782 referrals from visitthecatskills.com to greatnortherncatskills.com. These visitors were interested in packages, were engaged with the content (less than 30% bounce rate) and had high pages per session (over 4 pages) meaning users were engaged with the content they are finding on the pages.
- **Member Item Award – CATS:** Catskill Area Tourism Services (CATS) has been awarded a member item through Senator Bonacic's office in the amount of \$100,000. With these monies we were able to leverage a program through ILNY and reach international travelers in Germany and Canada. The Germany buy took place in the fall of 2014 which generated over 500,000 impressions with a click through rate of 0.18% for the digital campaign and over 3% for the email campaign. The Canadian Spring 2015 buy generated over 500,000 impressions with a click through rate of 0.19% for the digital campaign and over a 10% open rate with a 2.3% click through rate for the email campaign.
- **Regional Roundtable Host (CATS):** In April of 2015 Greene County attended the annual CATS Legislative Roundtable Discussion which was held in Delaware County at the Andes Hotel. This meeting provided an opportunity to advocate on behalf of tourism before state lawmakers and regulatory agencies. Topics discussed included tourism funding with regards to the ILNY Matching Funds and the Regional Economic Development Council, minimum wage increase, the New NY Broadband Initiative, and the growing usage of Airbnb as a booking tool in the growing sharing economy. There were over 40 people in attendance, including Congressman Gibson, Assemblyman Lopez, Greene County Legislators, and representatives from tourism businesses from Delaware, Greene, Sullivan and Ulster counties.

▪ ***Economic Impact of Tourism in Greene County:*** The 2014 Economic Impact Study was prepared by Tourism Economics for ILNY. The report highlights key economic trends and data for the State and then does a region by region breakdown. For the Catskills Travel region a few PowerPoint slides were of significance:

- Tourism is most important for the Catskills and the Adirondacks.
- Tourism spending in the Catskills was over a billion dollars and grew by 2.6%. The Adirondacks also grew by 3.0%.
- Tourism spending in Greene County was up again in Greene County by 4.1%, increasing by \$6.1 million, from \$148.6 million to \$154.7 million.
- All four Catskill Counties were up, with Greene ranking second at 4.1%; Delaware first at 5.8%; Sullivan third at 2.5%; and Ulster fourth at 1.7%. In 2013, Greene and Ulster were up, and Sullivan and Delaware were down.
- Greene County continues to be first in tourism generated employment, with Greene County being the most dependent on tourism with 22.3% of all employment sustained by visitors.
- Tourism in the Catskills generated more than \$137 million in state and local taxes.
- Sales, property, and hotel bed taxes contributed more than \$75 million in local taxes.
- Were it not for tourism-generated state and local taxes, the average household in the region would have to pay an additional \$988 to maintain the same level of government revenue.
- ***Mountain Bike Adventure Trails and Ride Center CFA Grant:*** The Department applied for a \$100K Capital Region CFA Grant under the Market New York program. The CFA was designed to showcase Greene County as the Capital District's ride center for mountain bike enthusiasts. It included an aggressive advertising and marketing campaign directed at visitor traffic that normally goes to Vermont (Milestone Trail System and Kingdom Trails) for a recreational mountain biking experience to come to Greene County to ride the many trail locations like, Windham Mountain Bike Park, Windham Path, Roundtopia Trail System, Elm Ridge, Huckleberry Trail and Mt Pisgah. Unfortunately this grant was not funded.
- ***Greene County Gateway Welcome Signs:*** Recognizing the importance of the county and its identity as a tourism destination, the Department worked with the county's Agency of Record, Adworkshop, to design a four color tourism sign for the public to see when entering Greene County.

The sign “Welcome to Greene County, The Great Northern Catskills” was installed by the Greene County Highway Department at the entrance of major county and state highways.

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 GC Office of Human Services; however it also serves the general fare-paying public. In 2015 the bus operated 246 days providing 5,098 rides which was down 3.26% from 5,270 rides in 2014. Of the 5,098 rides provided, 3,358 were senior rides or 66% of the total. We continue to provide route deviation services with prior day notice at double the regular fare. The Department prepared and submitted the Annual 2015-2016 State Transportation Operating Assistance Application and the 2015 Annual State Operating Assistance Final Report. The yearly application entails: budget of expenses and revenues; statistical comparison of operations; public notice; third party operating agreement; and application and submission resolutions with the Legislature.

- ***Greene County Transit System, Coordinated Transportation Plan; Merger with Ulster Greene ARC:*** Every year the Department evaluates its transportation system in accordance with the State’s requirements for coordinated transportation planning. In 2015, the Ulster-Greene ARC and Greene County partnered to plan for a coordinated approach to public transportation. A merger of the existing Greene County public bus with the resources of UGARC’s transportation fleet allows the closing of service gaps and unmet needs for both agencies. The Department has met with UGARC and the NYSDOT over a series of meetings to map out a planned merger for integration of the two systems, with UGARC being the Third Party Operator. To date, Greene County and the Ulster-Greene ARC merger has accomplished the following: Amendment of the 2015-2016 5311 Application to provide for the additional state funding necessary for the operation of the new system; authorization from the Greene County Legislature to sign contracts to implement the merger; sole source procurement authorization from the NYSDOT to implement the county’s Coordinated Transportation Plan; and authorization from the NYSDOT for the UGARC’s Transportation Authority. The county continues to work with the UGARC and the NYSDOT to define routes, schedules, capital equipment and operational logistics for eventual merger which is planned for the second quarter of 2016.

SPECIAL PROJECTS:

- ***Greene County Government Website:*** Coordinated the development and implementation of a newly redesigned website for the county www.greenegovernment.com. The goal of the project was to have visitors to the Greene County website find information on county departments, programs

and initiatives in an easier and more intuitive manner. The site was built on an adaptive responsive platform enabling users to search with any device, whether desktop, laptop, tablet or mobile. 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 the fourth quarter of 2015 and will launch in the first quarter of 2016.

- ***Candyman Property and Parking Lot Redevelopment:*** The Department closed out the surplus property sale of the Candyman in 2014. Tasks completed included the solicitation of property purchase and development proposals, selection of the preferred purchaser, assistance to the County Attorney in developing the contract for sale (including appropriate contract terms and milestones for interior and exterior renovation work, site improvements), work with consultant, Elan Planning, to complete site concepts for the property and adjacent county parking area, work with Kaaterskill Associates to update the property survey, and resolutions with the County Legislature. The purchase was approved by the Legislature at its April 2014 meeting and the purchaser began work in the fall of 2014. The owner of the building completed a substantial amount of the building renovation in 2015 along with site improvements to the property in coordination with planned improvements by the county to its adjacent county parking lot. The County Highway Department and Buildings and Grounds completed the rehabilitation of the Candyman Parking Lot, including: installation of stormwater controls, paving, stripping, landscaping and a planned pocket park, which will be designed and dedicated in 2016. The project met its goal to identify and award the sale of the property to a developer to achieve the following: reduction of slum and blight; placing the property back on the tax rolls; providing opportunities for new businesses; job creation; and upgrade of county parking facilities.