

# 2017 ANNUAL REPORT

## GREENE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TOURISM AND PLANNING

### ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT:

- **Quantum Fund Loan Activity:** There were a total of 61 active grants/loans in the portfolio as tracked through our Grant Management Tracking System (GMS) at the close of the 2017 fourth quarter.
  - **New Loan activity in 2017** from the county's Quantum Fund leveraged private dollar investments totaling \$1,322,538 (well over a million dollars more than 2016) for the creation of 6 new full time equivalent jobs. The Quantum Fund loaned a total of \$100,000 to two businesses, Nordic House Owner LLC, for a new hotel and glamping facility in Windham and Jagerberg LLC, a new German restaurant and beer hall in Hunter. Additionally, new grant and loan activity from the 2017 Microenterprise Program assisted seven businesses for the creation of 8 new full time equivalent jobs. The Microenterprise Program loaned a total of \$125,000 to Westkill Brewery in Westkill, Climax Cooperative in Climax, Hearthstone Care in Catskill, Winkles Bakery in Catskill, Tan 255 in Coxsackie, and both Quantum fund recipients mentioned above.
  - In comparison to 2016 loan portfolio activity, while the same amount of Quantum fund loans were made, \$30,000 more in funding was dispersed. Over the last three years, the interest in larger loans from the Quantum Fund has decreased, largely due to low interest rates available from commercial lenders and the availability of loans and grants from our Microenterprise Program. As interest rates start to rise, we are seeing more interest in our loans. Large development projects, such as Ferguson, Crossroads Brewing, the Lumberyard, and Foreland Catskill are eligible to receive grants directly from New York State economic development programs through the Regional Economic Development Council and the RestoreNY program. On the other hand, the origination and approval of loans/grants through our Microenterprise Program grants from New York State remains strong and is growing. This is largely due to our Buy/Invest in Greene business advertising and the increase of small entrepreneurs in the market seeking start-up capital.
  - No legal action on Quantum fund loans was required in 2017.
  - Sixteen Greene County loan recipients paid their loans in full: Zoom Flume (Durham); Fitness Concepts (Windham); Michael Hawksby (Durham); Intelligent Technology Solutions (Coxsackie); Christman's Windham House (Windham- disaster loan); GNH Lumber Inc (Windham – disaster loan); Legg's Garage (Tannersville - disaster loan); Mill Rock Restaurant (Windham - disaster loan); New York Spring Water (Halcott – disaster loan); O'Hara's Garage (Prattsville – disaster loan); Story's Nursery (Freehold – disaster loan); Waterpoint (Catskill –

disaster loan); Windham Hardware (Windham – disaster loan); CA Albright & Sons (Hannacroix); Pete’s Contracting (Catskill); Nina’s Last Chapter (Lexington).

- **Direct Economic Development Projects (CDBG):** In 2017 the Department completed and closed out a \$266,000 grant from the NYS Office of Community Renewal (OCR) on behalf of Ferguson Enterprises, the plumbing/HVAC warehouse which is now completed and operational. Funds were distributed primarily for equipment and fixtures. Twenty-five jobs were pledged for the CDBG project, and Ferguson documented over 100 positions created.

The Department also closed out an open economic development grant with New York Spring Water, a state of the art water bottling plant located in Halcott, NY. The grant was part of the funding package for the construction and development of the facility.

- **Restore NY Grants:** The Department and the Industrial Development Agency partnered with the Town of Catskill to obtain \$250,000 in funding from Round 4 of the New York State Restore NY Communities Initiative. The grant is providing funding to demolish the dilapidated former Quality Inn building and redevelop the site with modern lodging and restaurant opportunities. The project will generate additional traffic and revenue due to its position at a key gateway to the County.

In February of 2017, the Greene County Legislature authorized the Department to enter into a professional services contract with Towers Hall Hospitality Management Consulting to conduct a hotel feasibility study for the reuse and development of the Quality Inn property. Results from the study were favorable, demonstrating strong demand for the development of one or more hotels in the Exit 21 Thruway location, and confirming the demand to support an upper-midscale hotel with 80 plus hotel rooms. In September of 2017, the Greene County Legislature authorized the sale of the Quality Inn property to the Greene Land Development Corporation. The Department is partnering with the Greene LDC and IDA in the demolition and redevelopment of the site.

The Department also worked with Sister Properties LLC and the Village of Catskill to apply for \$1 million dollar grant in Round 5 of the Restore NY Communities Initiative for the redevelopment of 111 Water Street into FORELAND Catskill, a multi-purpose building for the creative economy including a restaurant, event space, offices and loft/creative spaces. The total project is estimated at \$4.5 million and anticipates job creation in the 30-50 range. During the preparation of this report, funding for this project was announced by the Governor on March 26, 2018 in the amount of \$1 million dollars.

- **Town of Prattsville CDBG Disaster Services for Medical Facility:** In September of 2017, the Greene County Legislature authorized the Department to contract with the Town of Prattsville to assist with the Town’s project to construct a medical facility on lands already acquired and improved by the Town with infrastructure to support the capital project. The Governor’s Office for Storm Recovery requested that Greene County Economic Development and Planning assist the Town with program delivery and administration of the project. In 2017, the Department assisted the Town with the release of a Request for Proposals to solicit interest in a medical provider to staff and operate

the facility. The Town was successful in receiving a proposal from Bassett Health Care which was approved by GOSR as a responsive bidder. Contractual agreements are being prepared to secure the provider once the facility is constructed.

- **Infrastructure Grant:** The Department previously obtained a CFA Capital Region Economic Development Council grant administered through Empire State Development (ESD) for \$37,500 to conduct an infrastructure study. Tasks completed included capacity analysis of the sewer and water treatment plants throughout the county; inventory of publicly owned property; and inventory of available sites around the county with public infrastructure as potential development sites that can be used to attract new businesses and business expansions. The project is complete and in 2017 the Department successfully closed out the grant with the State and its findings are now being used for several economic development initiatives.

- **Microenterprise Grant (CDBG):** Greene County continued the implementation of its 2016 Microenterprise Assistance Program in 2017, with two training classes held that attracted almost 20 current and potential entrepreneurs, and the award of six MAP grants to West Kill Brewing (Lexington), Climax Cooperative (Coxsackie), Hearthstone Care LLC (Catskill), Tan 255 (Coxsackie), Nordic House LLC (Windham) and Jagerberg Alpine Restaurant and Beer Hall (Hunter). Greene County has received Microenterprise funding four times since the State re-booted the program in 2011, with State funding received in 2011, 2012, 2014 and 2016. Greene County is one of the most active communities in Microenterprise development in the New York State Office of Community Renewal service area, and has assisted several hundred entrepreneurs in the 20-year history of the MAP.

- **Capital Region Economic Development Grants (CFA's):** The Department assisted Catskill Mountain Housing Development Corporation (CMHDC) with the development and successful application for \$300,000 in funding through the NY Main Street program, which provides assistance for façade and interior space improvements in designated Main Street target areas. In a typical year, fewer than 25% of proposed NY Main Street projects get funded. Approximately 10 buildings in target areas in the Village of Catskill on Main Street and West Bridge Street will receive funding. The grant was the largest award that Greene County received during the 2017 CFA round, and marks the fourth time that the Village of Catskill has received NY Main Street funding since the program's inception in 2004. Since NY Main Street began, Greene County has received ten grants, the second-most among the eight counties of the Capital Region.

The Capital Region Economic Development Council was named in the 2017 Regional Economic Development Competition as a Top Performer. Four additional projects enhancing economic development were awarded in Greene County: Thomas Cole House received \$52,000 for a celebration of the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Thomas Cole's arrival in America; The Village of Catskill received \$85,000 for the preparation of a Local Waterfront Revitalization Program; Columbia-Greene Community College received \$50,330 for a transportation training program; and Thomas Cole and Olana received \$225,000 for marketing of the Hudson River Skywalk.

- **Workforce Training Partnerships:** The Department maintains 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.

The Workforce Development Office (WDO), located at Columbia-Greene Community College, is delivering programs, such as: On the Job Training, Enhanced Career Services, Dislocated Worker Programs, and programs for job applicants, such as computer skills, resume writing and review services. The WDO also organizes Career Fairs, and regional cooperative workforce preparedness programs oriented towards high school students targeting job opportunities in Greene County and the Capital District.

In 2017, WDO staff met with 887 new registrants, 750 new unemployment insurance claimants, provided some form of services to 1,872 persons, had 805 participants in career workshops, and 1626 visits to their resource room. Of this total, in Greene County there were 419 new registrants and 22 active youth in training preparation programs. Additionally, 120 persons were enlisted in Metrix Learning (A program run by NY Wired for Education designed to deliver comprehensive workforce development solutions, such as skills gaps and career pathways), and 61 people in other training and skills development courses in just the last half of 2017. For the WDO fiscal year (7-01-2016 to 6-30-17), Metrix saw 343, and other training services saw 144. WDO staff participated in at least sixty direct marketing efforts.

- **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. 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.

- **Business Attraction Program (Buy In Greene, Invest In Greene):** [www.buyingreene.com](http://www.buyingreene.com). In 2017 the Legislature allocated the Buy In Greene, Invest In Greene program a one hundred and sixty five thousand dollar budget an increase of 37% over the 2016 budget, which enabled the Department to expand the program throughout the year with an increase in measurable results.

- **Website Updates and Traffic:** Total website traffic from December 2016 to December 2017 saw a 2% year over year increase from 66,314 to 67,650. The total page views remained the same as 2016, but still exceed over 100,000. Our desktop views remained the same for 2017 at 28% and our mobile device usage has decreased from 64% usage to 53%, but our tablet usage has more than doubled from 8% in 2016 to 19% in 2017. This

information still confirms the shift away from desktop usage. Another direct influence on the search figures is the use of voice activated mobile devices through Siri, Alexa and Ask Google.

- **Social Media:** The social media campaign is cost effective and has leveraged our ability to connect with our target audience. The Department continues to post and blog on all of our social media networks, Facebook, Twitter, Linked In, and Google Plus, promoting local business news and highlights that are relevant to the consumer, business owners and investors. Our social media campaign again resulted in tremendous growth of 33% year over year and has now reached over 10,000 followers. A majority of our Facebook followers are women in the 45 to 54 age range. In July we changed our original Twitter campaign to gain followers and direct users to the landing page for the small business eBooks. This helped increase our followers from 800 to over 1,400.
- **Digital Advertising:** Our campaign continues to target the Metro NY area, NJ, CT, Hudson Valley and the Capital Region. The advertising campaign consists of banner ads, display advertising, and sky scrapers ads. Our seasonal consumer engagement supported by digital and social media posts resulted in over 39,000 sessions in 2017, which reflects a 56% increase over 2016. On a monthly average the website receives over 1400 clicks from advertising.
- **Print Advertising:** The Department continues to support the Greene County Chamber with ad placement in the annual directory promoting our Buy & Invest campaign. Holiday seasonal ads were placed with Columbia Greene Media in print, and online banner ads with HudsonValley360.com. In addition, holiday ads were placed in the Greene County Pennysaver, promoting small business local shopping. Ads throughout the year were also placed in the Chronogram Magazine which featured an article on Catskill's Main Street, and the Hudson Valley Cider Guide featuring Micro-brewery, Micro-distillery's and Cider businesses on the rise.
- **Radio Advertising:** Radio advertising was placed during the holiday buying season with The Cat 98.5 "Avoid the Malls and Stay Small Jingle" and the WRIP 97.9 "Give the Gift of Greene".
- **Business Attraction Marketing:** In 2017 the Department continued to use the inbound marketing software "HubSpot" allowing us to engage and track consumer and business interaction in response to our advertising. At the end of 2017, our advertising resulted in over 500 business downloads versus 296 downloads in 2016. These are highly qualified inquires of people specifically interested in opening businesses. Each interaction is recorded and funnels the site visitor through a sequence that captures and delivers specific prospect information and allows us to personally follow up with them regarding their small business needs. Whether it's the creation of a business plan, financing, or looking for a possible location, the prospective business owner is contacted first through a series of emails, and

then personally to arrange a meeting with the development “team” to discuss our loan programs, answer any questions they may have, and arrange for site visits of properties. We make sure they are aware of our loan programs and advise on access to state grants and resources. This concierge service has proven to be a valuable resource. A large part of our website success is our lead generating landing page “Starting a New Business”; this page offers a downloadable Ebook with pertinent business information. The results of our ongoing marketing and campaign efforts have resulted in over 70 direct meetings with businesses, with 25 new or expanded businesses established within the County. In addition, many of these businesses have also participated in our loan programs.

In 2017 the Department created a new eBook “Emerging New Business Categories, Positioned for Growth in Greene County”. This is a creative and informational eBook that touches on basic facts about Greene County, the types of business that we want to attract and the opportunities that Greene County offers for new and emerging business. The targeted business sectors within the Emerging New Business eBook fall into three major categories: *Value-Added Producers & Manufacturers*, *Remote Consultants & Technology Developers* and contributors to the *Creative Economy*. This new campaign was launched at the end of the year and published online in the beginning of 2018. We continue to offer three additional eBooks “Starting a Small Business in Greene County, NY”, “Starting a Microbrewery in Greene County, NY” and “The Time is Right to Start a Micro Distillery in Greene County, NY”. At the end of 2017, we had 344 “Starting a Small Business” downloads, 66 “Micro-brewery” downloads and 40 “Micro-distillery” downloads.

In addition to the original eBooks, we offer a three phase step by step support guidance series on starting a small business which are only accessible once they have downloaded one or more of the three original eBooks. At the end of the year we had a combined total of 52 downloads for all three phases.

The Department continues to use content marketing and sends out three E-newsletters every month, targeting the consumer, investor, and business prospects. There are over 4,000 businesses in the county with over 1,000 directly participating and listed in the Buy/Invest in Greene database. The E-newsletters are sent to our database of almost 1600 Greene County businesses, elected officials, foundations, not for profits and others that have opted to receive our E-newsletters. In addition, the E-newsletters are also sent to our database of over 1700 consumers that have signed up to receive information about the program. Our recent efforts with the Invest In Greene advertising has developed into a database of over 800 prospective business owners or entrepreneurs potentially looking at opening a business in Greene County.

The Department continues to populate the “Success Stories” page of the website with up to date and relevant stories that are happening around the County. There were a total of 16 stories created and supported by social media posts and E-newsletters this year. A couple examples of the “snowballing effect” of our success stories through our Facebook and social

media channels are: “Tiny Is The New Huge”, about the Tiny House resort in Cairo which reached over 2500 people (with 25 shares and 62 direct clicks to our success story web page); and “The Return of a Thriving Greene County Mountain Community” about the revitalization of Prattsville since hurricane Irene reaching 2200 people (with 31 shares and 222 clicks directly to the story on our website). Our stories not only speak about economic relevance, but also tourism related projects. The story about “Road Trip Masters visits Scribners Catskill Lodge”, and other Mountain Top venues, had a reach of 4000 people with 35 shares and 64 direct clicks to the story. These are just a few examples of the content that’s within our success stories webpage. Our overall read from our success stories saw a 34% increase over 2016.

In 2017, the Department launched the designated town web pages for Prattsville and the Historic River Towns Corridor (Coxsackie, Athens, New Baltimore) to showcase their uniqueness and business opportunities. The other town pages were created in 2016, and in 2018 we’ll complete the Greenville page. These pages are composed of a brief description of the town, its demographics, a map of the downtowns areas with current business listings and available space listings for new and existing business opportunities, and a downtown map linking to featured businesses. Also included are additional links to pertinent information like, Google Map, Zillow, Yelp, and the Greene County interactive web map. We highly promote these featured town pages via our Facebook and social media ad campaigns.

- **Second Homeowners Campaign:** Phase II of the Second Homeowner campaign was launched in 2017. The campaign was a direct result of the Second Homeowner survey that was completed in 2016. In 2017, we created a direct mail campaign “You Don’t Know Greene.com” (YDKG) and mailed a postcard to 7,000 second homeowners whose primary residence is located outside of Greene County. A direct landing page was created to capture their email addresses, but also inform them of our business programs, what we’re doing to attract new visitors and services the County offers to our communities. This campaign resulted in 789 visits directly to the YDKG landing page, 229 continued to the Invest in Greene page from a link on YDKG, 119 people visited the Great Northern Catskill from a link on YDKG and 149 went to the Greene Government site from a link on YDKG, along with 29 people signing up for our eNewsletter.

- **Interaction with Local Business Organizations:** Department staff supported the activities of the County’s Tourism Advisory Committee and Business Advisory Committee. Both committees provide industry feedback and support for the Department’s economic development programs. The Department also worked closely with the Greene County Chamber of Commerce and local Chambers and business organizations to meet the needs of businesses in the County. Additionally, staff attended business-after-hours events, business ribbon cuttings maintaining a close partnership with the Greene County Chamber of Commerce jointly supporting, promoting and creating awareness of Buy/Invest In Greene.

- **Craft Beverage Trail:** The Department has been instrumental in the creation of the Catskills Beverage Trail, which has now been officially designated by New York State. The Department also wrote a grant application in partnership with the Greene County Chamber of Commerce which was awarded \$38,000 for advertising and marketing funds for the Trail and its six member businesses. The Trail currently consists of four breweries, one winery/tasting room, with potential additional members joining as the number of producers expands. The Department is actively marketing for additional breweries and distilleries. The Great Northern Catskills of Greene County continues to provide advertising and marketing for the Trail. The Department met with three new potential craft beverage companies in 2017 with all three anticipated to come online in 2018.

## **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 2017, the Department assisted with the review of 52 projects (up from 46 projects reviewed in 2016). In addition, the Department hosted 2 training sessions for county and local planning boards, assisting with municipal training credits, including programs on: *Community Design Tools*, *Special Use Permits*, *Record Keeping and Update on Proposed SEQRA Changes* on April 26, 2017 and *Planning Board Overview and Zoning Board of Appeals Overview* on October 30, 2017. The Department also coordinated the annual CPB Ellen Rettus Planning Achievement Awards with five awards presented at the Legislature's November meeting to Windham Mountain Resort, The Windham Area Recreation Foundation, Round Top Mountain Biking Association, Hunter Foundation Inc. and the Royce Family Fund, and the Village of Tannersville in recognition of each group's respective efforts to promote mountain biking in the region through the development of mountain biking trails and the promotion of the sport.

- **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 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 2017 review 104.42 acres were added to the district, which now totals 39,686.8 acres. (During the 2016 review 10.6 acres were added to the district and in the 2015 review 61.97 acres were added.)

- **Broadband Support and Development:** The New NY Broadband Program, officially launched on January 8, 2016. The state program guidelines envisioned three rounds of funding with the goal of providing broadband to every resident of the state by 2018. Since the launch of the program there have been three rounds of grant solicitations and three rounds of awards, one in 2016, one in 2017 and the 2018 award was made in the spring of 2018. Throughout the program the Department has



worked with the County Real Property Tax Office which produced extensive broadband coverage maps which were made available to County Legislators and local elected officials.

- On August 3, 2016, Round 1 awards were announced by Governor Cuomo in the City of Hudson, with officials from Columbia and Greene in attendance. Statewide, over \$51 million in grants were awarded to 14 broadband providers. Two Greene County broadband providers received almost \$10 million dollars, just over 19% of the statewide grant pool. State Telephone Company, received \$8.7 million, the second highest award in the State, which will allow the company to expand into medium and rural density parts of the County with fiber to the home that it would otherwise not have been able to afford. Coverages are being expanded to portions of Coxsackie and Athens with this grant award. Mid-Hudson Data Corporation received \$1 million dollars allowing the company to expand service through fixed based, point-to-multi-point, wireless technology. Coverages are being expanded to portions of Prattsville, Ashland, Windham, Durham and Greenville.
- On February 28, 2017, Round 2 awards were announced for the Capital Region. Two Greene County broadband providers were awarded grants totaling \$2.6 million dollars. Mid-Hudson Data Corporation received almost \$200,000 to provide service to portions of Catskill and Cairo. Margaretville Telephone received \$2.5 million to provide service to portions of Lexington, Jewett and Halcott.
- On February 1, 2018 the New NY Broadband Program announced the 3<sup>rd</sup> and final round for the Capital Region. Three local providers were awarded funding, a portion of which will be used to serve communities in Greene County: Mid Hudson Data Corporation received \$4.47 million dollars; Margaretville Telephone received \$4.87 million; and Hughes Network Systems, LLC received over \$15 million to deploy a new satellite technology, with a small number of census blocks to be served in the Town of Hunter.
- **Catskill Creek Waterfront Walkway CFA:** The Department completed work administering a \$600,000 grant from the NYS Department of State to construct an \$850,000 waterfront trail along the Catskill Creek from the Uncle Sam Bridge to the Catskill Mountain Railway Bridge. The grant was combined with \$200,000 from the Catskill–Olana Mitigation Fund, which had been dedicated for downtown and waterfront development in the Village of Catskill. In addition, the Village of Catskill contributed \$50,000 in grant funding in support of the project. The project is a catalyst for new development in the *Restaurant, Brewery and Performing Arts District*. In 2017, walkway construction was completed (on 8/31/17) and closeout documents and a final grant payment requests were submitted to NYS Department of State (on 11/13/17).
- **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 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 Legislature 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.

- **Hudson River Skywalk:** The Department secured \$124,250 in NYS DOS LWRP funding to design a walkway from the west side of the Rip Van Winkle Bridge to the Thomas Cole National Historic Site (Skywalk Phase 1). In 2016, the Department secured an additional \$875,000 from the NYS DOS to construct the walkway from the west side of the Rip Van Winkle Bridge to the Thomas Cole National Historic Site (Skywalk Phase 2). The grant also provides funding to the NYS Bridge Authority for viewing platforms on the Rip Van Winkle Bridge. In 2017, the NYS Bridge Authority completed work on the viewing platforms. The Department began Phase 1 design work on the walkway trail connection from the Thomas Cole National Historic Site to the Bridge with approximately 75% of the design development documents completed. In addition, an economic impact analysis and market study was completed to determine potential tourism visitation and anticipated revenue 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, Columbia County and Scenic Hudson.

- The Economic Impact Analysis found that the Hudson River Skywalk will enhance the local tourism industry by attracting new visitors that will spend money at local businesses, which will generate additional economic benefits throughout the two counties. Additionally, the Skywalk will generate new annual revenues for both counties in the form of sales tax and other tax revenues. The key findings of the analysis are summarized as follows:

- The Skywalk is expected to have total annual visitation of between 100,000 to 150,000 users annually, representing between 47,000 and 82,000 new “visitor days” in the two-county region.

- New visitor spending generated by the Skywalk in the two-county area is expected to be approximately \$4.53 million annually at local businesses, including restaurants, hotels and lodging businesses, grocery stores, and other businesses.

- The analysis found that the Skywalk will generate approximately 66 new jobs in the two-county region. Of these jobs, 11 are projected to be created “indirectly” as new visitor spending circulates throughout the local economy.

- New visitors to the Skywalk will also generate new wages and earnings for people working in the two-counties. Every \$100 in new tourism spending will create \$39 in new earnings for workers in the two-county region. Overall, \$1.7 million in annual earnings will

be created by the Skywalk, a portion of which will then be spent in the local economy generating additional economic benefits.

- As new visitor spending circulates throughout the local economy it will generate additional economic impacts. For every \$100 in new tourism spending, an additional \$16 in economic activity will be generated in the two-county region.
- The Skywalk will generate municipal revenues to both Greene and Columbia Counties through increased sales tax and other revenues. The Skywalk is expected to generate over \$270,000 in new tax revenues for Greene and Columbia Counties (combined).
- The economic impact to New York State is estimated to be 30 new jobs, \$1.1 million in annual earnings, and \$2.9 million in annual sales as a result of out-of-state visitors.
- **Big Valley Trail Breakers Snowmobile Club:** The Big Valley Trail Breakers Snowmobile Club (Club) partners with Greene County as 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 annual 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. The program continued in 2017 with the Department facilitating contract renewal with the Trail Breakers and application to the NYS Snowmobile Grant Program for trail funding.

## **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.

In 2017, tourism advertising efforts continued with an integrated content marketing strategy and the launch of our new tag line, "It's a World Away... and Closer Than You Think." With the use of the same tactics as in 2016, and the addition of Influencer Marketing, an aggressive marketing plan was executed, including:

- **Digital Marketing** (Content Strategy, Website Updates, Organic Search, Search Engine Optimization (SEO) / Search Engine Management (SEM), Pay-Per-Click (PPC) Campaigns, Social Media;
- **Paid Media** (Print Advertising, Radio, Summer & Winter TV, Broadcast Production);

- **Public Relations** (Press Releases, Pitches, Placements, Travel Writers, Influencers, Targeted E-blasts, Internal Communications E-blasts with Tourism Businesses);
- **Marketing Collateral** (Travel Guide, Adventure Map, Beverage Logo & Rack Card, Motorcycle Guide, Dining Guide, Golf Brochure);
- **Consumer and Group Market Travel Shows;**
- **Participation in ILNY Tourism Regions** (Hudson Valley Tourism – HVT; Catskills – CATS; ILNY State Website).
  - With the combination of webpage optimization, via authoritative content and Search Engine Optimization (SEO) press releases; visits to The Great Northern Catskills.com increased by 50.96% (724,706 vs. 480,054).
  - Public relations generated over 2,700 sessions to our website from top placements like NYUpsate.com, EscapeBrooklyn.com, HVTMag.com, and InSytle.com
  - Greene County Tourism, in partnership with the Greene County Chamber of Commerce, held the 2017 Orville Slutzky Tourism Seminar in May at Windham Mountain Resort where about 80 local businesses learned about the county’s Destination Marketing Programs. They also had an opportunity to learn about the Mountain Bike grant, trail expansion and campaign. 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 2017, Tourism attended or partnered with Greene County businesses or travel regions in 15 shows (consumer, motor coach/group business). Over 7,200 qualified names were captured and added to our email database; as well as over 6,200 travel guides were distributed. One show resulted in the connection with Road Trip Masters, where Greene County was featured in a 2018 show series on Discovery’s “Destination America”.
  - In 2017 Greene County was a participant in New York Welcomes You, Mobile Visitor Center Road Show. This allowed the County to be 1 of 17 areas promoted at 20 events and shows throughout the northeast, where over 500,000 visitors were in attendance. Greene County was a featured placement on the branded vehicle that travelled over 100,000 miles throughout the Northeast. Through this program over 3,150 travel guides were distributed.

- Marketing support was provided to events and festivals throughout Greene County via paid media, social media, website content, 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 Tourism Office is an acting Film Office assisting all types of film crews with logistical support like scout location, lodging, food, road closure, etc. In 2017 over 7 films received assistance from the Film Office.
  
- The Historic Catskill Point had a decrease in event bookings as well as revenue. After close to two decades of operating the Point as an event facility the Codes Division of the New York State Department of State required the county to reapply for its occupancy rating. In an effort to secure the new occupancy classification the Tourism Office took the lead, with support from Delaware Engineering, to develop and complete all permitting requirements necessary to operate for the 2017 season. The occupancy for Warehouse Building decreased from 500+ to a maximum occupancy of 299. The installation of a dry standpipe and a hard wired smoke/fire alarm system enabled the county to open for the 2017 season. The County also has a pending variance application with the state for the use of portable bathroom facilities. The NYS Code requires each building to have indoor bathrooms. The Warehouse Building has never had indoor bathrooms as it is a rustic, seasonal, un-insulated building. There were 18 events held that generated over \$23,000, which is about \$10,000 short of budgeted revenue. This shortage is due to events cancelling as we could not guarantee occupancy until May 12, 2017. In addition to events, sixteen vessels and cruise lines docked at the Point which generated over \$10,000; almost doubling that of 2016 sales.
  
- The Tourism Office is an active member on various boards throughout the Catskill Park, such as, Mountain Clove Scenic Byway, Kaaterskill Clove Working Group, and the Catskill Park Advisory Committee. The Mountain Clove Scenic Byway Committee and the Kaaterskill Clove Working Group provide resources for promoting scenic byways in the Catskill Park. The Catskill Park Advisory Committee brings together multiple local, regional and state representatives to streamline communications regarding events, initiatives, safety and other topics within the Catskill Park.
  
- **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 2017, 9 of the 10 members of the Committee were reappointed. Sadly, Suzanne Oldakowski, co-owner of the Bavarian Manor Inn and Restaurant passed away suddenly. Sue was a founding member of the Greene County Resorts and Hospitality Association and one of

the strongest champions of tourism in the County. The TAC met on a monthly basis and assisted the Department in the development of the 2017 Destination Advertising and Marketing Campaign. 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.

- **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 the Travel Hudson Valley website and is officially designated by ILNY as part of the Catskill Travel Region, represented by Catskill Area Tourism Services (CATS) through VisittheCatskills.com. CATS is a regional Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) representing four counties that comprise the region. Greene County is the CATS President for calendar years 2016 and 2017. 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. In partnership with ILNY, the CATS region received additional exposure through Thrillist, Beautiful Destinations, Influencers, and PR through Finn Partners.

- **Regional Roundtable Host (CATS):** In March of 2017 Greene County attended the annual CATS Legislative Roundtable Discussion which was held in Sullivan County at Bernie's Holiday Restaurant in Rock Hill. 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 Program, Regional Economic Development Council Tourism Grants, the New NY Broadband Initiative, minimum wage changes, and the growing usage of AirBnB as a booking tool in the sharing economy.

- **Capital Region Economic Development Council (CFA) – CATS Tourism Grant:** In June of 2017, Greene County Tourism was authorized by CATS and the Greene County Legislature to submit a regional CFA grant application to the ILNY Empire State Development, Market New York Program, in the amount of \$100,000 on behalf of the Catskill Travel Region to execute an advertising campaign focusing on outdoor recreation, attractions and events through the use of "Virtual Reality Videos". The grant application was not selected for funding by the Regional Economic Development Councils for Round VII funding.

- **Economic Impact of Tourism:** The 2016 Economic Impact Study was prepared by Tourism Economics for ILNY. The report highlights key economic trends and data for the State, Catskills Travel Region and Greene County (2017 report not released until 2018).

- New York State's tourism economy expanded in 2016 with 2.7% growth in traveler spending, reaching a new high of nearly \$65 billion – 22% above the state's pre-recession peak set in 2008.
- Tourism is the 4<sup>th</sup> largest employer in New York State.
- Tourism generated income grew by 4.5%.

- The top five traveler generated income by industry in 2016 included: Lodging, Restaurants, Business Services, Air Transport, and Recreation.
  - While traveler spending rose across all regions in 2016, the strongest gains were experienced by the Central NY (6.4%), Catskills (5.3%) and Thousand Islands (5.0%) regions.
  - Tourism in the Catskills is a \$1.2 billion industry, an increase of 5.3% versus year ago.
  - Tourism in the Catskills supported 17,822 jobs, 15.5% of all employment in the Catskills. Greene County is the most dependent with 21.2% of all employment sustained by visitors. The state average is 8.3% (1-12)
  - Tourism spending rose by 4.2% in Greene County from \$151 million to \$158 million ranking second in growth amongst the Catskill counties (Sullivan 8%, Ulster 4.1% and Delaware 2.3%).
  - Were it not for tourism-generated state and local taxes, the average household in Greene County would have to pay an additional \$1,096 to maintain the same level of government revenue.
- **Mountain Bike Adventure Trails and Ride Center CFA Grant:** The Department applied for and was awarded 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. Execution of the campaign took place in 2017 where the Mountain Biking hub website landing page was the 3rd most viewed page and the top entrance path on the website. The mountain biking map was viewed 1,282 times and there were 32 sign-ups for e-newsletters from users that entered the website on a biking related page. The Albany Ad Club is part of the premier competition for advertising excellence conducted by the American Advertising Federation. Greene County Tourism won a Silver Addy Award for its mountain biking video "Ride Greene County" in the category of Branded Content and Entertainment for on-line Film.
- **Tourism Legislative Initiatives:** In December of 2017, the Greene County Legislature passed a resolution opposing the NYS Labor Department's proposed scheduling rules of the minimum wage order (call-in pay). The Greene County Legislature and the Tourism Advisory Committee both received comments from Greene County tourism businesses that it would have a negative impact to their businesses.

## **TRANSPORTATION:**

- **Greene County Transit System:** The Department administers the county's public transportation system in coordination with the Department of Human Services. Greene County has a continuing agreement with the NYS Department of Transportation for funding to operate Greene County Transit (GCT). These funds are made available to the County through the Federal Transit

Administration (FTA) and administered by the NYSDOT, as formula grants for rural areas (Sections 5310 and 5311). The State program provides funds to the County for operation, capital assistance and mobility management. On June 1<sup>st</sup> of 2016, the County contracted with The Arc of Ulster-Greene to operate the Greene County Transit System for service as a public mass transit route deviation system, meaning it operates on defined fixed routes but will deviate from the fixed route on a limited basis with prior notification. Funds from the FTA provide subsidies for operational costs, including a mobility manager, and costs for the acquisition of capital expenditures, such as buses.

- Greene County Transit submitted the annual 2017-2018 Consolidated Funding Application. It is anticipated that the County will be eligible for \$367,000 of FTA funding through this program.
- Greene County Transit ordered three buses in September of 2017 intended for replacement and rotation as well as the planned addition of a new transit route to Columbia-Greene Community College, the Columbia Memorial Hospital and other stops as may be determined. The County took delivery of the buses in February of 2018.
- Greene County Transit has now operated for a full calendar year under the new system with The Arc of Ulster-Greene as the operator. GCT is currently operating five daily routes, two additional routes once a week to the mountaintop towns, and a midday shuttle that circulates throughout the Village of Catskill three times a day. In 2015 the transit bus provided a total of 5,098 rides. In 2016, as the public learned about the new routes, the ridership increased to 8,513 rides. In 2017, the ridership increased to 9,958, representing 7,752 regular route trips and 2,386 shuttle trips.
- Greene County Transit and the Greene County Mobility Manager have established a plan for modification of the current routes, which require approval of the NYSDOT and are limited to once every six months. Planned changes include:
  - Purple Route to offer transfer at 3 locations in Catskill and 1 in Cairo (now STOA Eligible)
  - Orange Route to expand with an earlier start time to include new stops at the New Baltimore and Malden Rest Areas which provide opportunities for access to connections to Albany County and Ulster County. Malden stop may offer UCAT transfer in the future.
  - Green Route to expand service to include General Public and adding 11 new stops in Coxsackie/Athens and 2 new transfer points within the system(now STOA Eligible)
  - Brown Route to expand to include 2 housing developments in Cairo, 1 in Acra, a transfer point in Cairo, and additional access to GCMH, Hannaford Plaza, Stewarts & Travel Center
  - White and Red Routes which serve the mountaintop communities to be modified as a new loop through the mountain communities. Previously the Windham loop had service one day a week and the Hunter Loop had service one day a week. The loops have been incorporated into a mountain loop now providing service 2 days each week. Stops to be added in Prattsville, Ashland, and Lexington. Prattsville stops may provide future opportunities to connect with Schoharie County Transit.
  - Yellow – The Catskill Shuttle will have increased service hours.



- **Establishing New Transportation Advisory Board:** In October of 2017, the Greene County Legislature established a new County Transportation Advisory Board (TAB) and appointed member organizations. The TAB meets quarterly and was charged to enhance the access of all people in rural areas to health care, shopping, education, employment, public services and recreation; assist in the maintenance, development, improvement and use of public transportation in rural areas and population centers; encourage and facilitate the most efficient use of Federal, State and Local funds used to provide passenger transportation in non-urbanized areas through the coordination of programs and services; improve the delivery of transportation services for target populations; encourage cooperation and coordination among transportation providers; increase efficiency and service by coordinating with regional entities to create a seamless transportation system; provide for the participation of private transportation providers in non-urbanized transportation to the maximum extent feasible; and to advocate for consistent, predictable funding levels that will sustain public transportation long-term.

### **CAPITAL PROJECTS, COUNTY WEBSITE:**

- **Greene County Government Website:** The Greene Government website is an adaptive responsive website that is optimized for mobile traffic and provides a modern user friendly platform for users to engage county departments and agencies information. Traffic to the Greene Government website increased by 1,978 visits from 175,668 in 2016 to 177,666 in 2017. Unique visitors to the site increased by 312 from 106,793 in 2016 to 107,105 in 2017. Desktop traffic decreased by 6,806 or 6.2%. The decrease is offset by the increase in mobile traffic and tablet usage, mobile usage increased by 8,199 visits or 15.4%, and tablet usage by 585 visits or 5.0%. The County's website features a News & Updates section that spotlights current government related happenings. During 2017 the Department posted 27 news and press posts to the sight. These ranged from the County Legislature supporting a resolution in support of ride sharing in Upstate New York, to ground breaking announcements regarding various infrastructure improvement projects, to Greene County honoring our service men and women by providing complimentary rides on Veteran's Day on Greene County Transit. In addition to the news and press posting, 12 various legal notices and RFP's announcements were posted, along with 4 communicable disease awareness posts. The Department oversees the website contract, and works closely on the content management strategy and communications calendar with KathodeRay Media, the County's Advertising and Marketing Agency for both the County Website and the Buy/Invest in Greene Business Attraction program.
- **New Greene County Jail:** The Department worked with the County Administrator, County Attorney, County Treasurer, and three professional consultants, Delaware Engineering, SMRT Architects, and The Pike Company, in the preparation of an application for funding to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development for the proposed Greene County Jail. The USDA Rural Development Community Facilities Program offers direct loans and loan guarantees to develop or improve essential public services and facilities in rural communities. Projects eligible for USDA funding, include a wide range of municipal buildings including correctional facilities. The Greene County Legislature authorized the application in March of 2017. The USDA preliminary

application was submitted in phases as progress on the design development and cost estimates proceeded. The initial application was submitted to USDA on June 30<sup>th</sup> 2017. USDA Rural Development notified the County in March of 2018 that the USDA was ready to proceed with approval of the final application and obligation of funds. On March 21, 2018, the Greene County Legislature authorized the Chairman of the Greene County Legislature to complete the final submission of the application to obligate funds for the project. On the following day, March 22, 2018 the documents were executed to secure and reserve \$51,418,000.00 at an interest rate of 3.5% with a maximum repayment period of 30 years pending final approval of the project by the Greene County Legislature.

- ***New Greene County Municipal Parking Lot – F (aka Poplock):*** The Department worked with Delaware Engineering, Kaaterskill Engineering, Greene County Buildings & Grounds, Greene County Highway Department, and the County Attorney in the planning, design, environmental review, surveying, and local permitting with the Village of Catskill for the installation of the new 28 vehicle parking lot. The project included site grading, construction of a retaining wall, and installation of lighting, landscaping, guardrails, paving and striping.