

## Summary Notes, Columbia Economic Development Corporation Public Meeting

Friday February 26, 2016

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Tony Jones, CEDC Chair, welcomed attendees.

Mike Tucker, President and CEO of CEDC, provided an overview of CEDC's activities and the plans for developing a strategy with public input.

Mary Ellen O'Loughlin, Independent Management Consultant, reviewed the agenda for the Public Meeting, supported by a Powerpoint presentation. Mary Ellen presented a synopsis of current state. After the demographic presentation she facilitated the public discussion.

Victoria Storrs, Independent Economic Development and Public Finance Consultant, presented an overview of the County's demographics, supported by a Powerpoint presentation.

### **Public Discussion – Major Themes and Ideas**

*Regulatory Process in the County and State is a challenge.* Local boards were said to be slow and poorly trained, performing uneven and un-strategic reviews. Having no countywide plan or process is viewed as a negative. State grants are onerous to comply with. In addition to regulatory concerns, community skepticism about economic development in general was suggested as a challenge

*Infrastructure Already Impeding Growth and Workforce Attraction.* Lack of broadband was cited as an impediment to business growth, entrepreneurship, expansion of the Creative Economy, and attracting/retaining young people. Insufficient water/sewer capacity was said to be causing denial of projects already.

*Education and Workforce not well integrated.* Concerns were expressed about the quality and variety of K-12 education, particularly as a draw for young families. Desired: pipeline 1) connecting students to career options before they go to college so they see what they can come back to and 2) pipeline connecting non-college bound students to careers.

*Housing costs too high but resources exist.* Young people in particular need housing in line with their incomes. "Wonderful old buildings" from industrial era could provide opportunities for housing.

*Tourism assets underutilized.* There was a strong sense that valuable assets such as natural beauty, the river, and expanding food/beverage trails in the region are not readily accessible or even marketed to visitors. There is no recreational access to the river from Hudson, no transportation outside of Hudson for visitors who come by train, no late train for dinner visitors to return to NYC, no support such as brochures for Hudson businesses who act as natural ambassadors, and no "visitor kiosks" at common entry points.

*Hospitality Services Limited.* There is a limited number of beds, fewer with handicapped access, and too many two-night stay requirements. Weekday visitors are few, and visitors wishing for longer stays run out of activities.

*Opportunities exist in Creative Economy and Agriculture.* Connecting farms to table, bringing in young people for environmental initiatives and to work the land, expanding role of creative industries.