



Choose Columbia  
Columbia Economic Development Corporation

# 2016

## **STRATEGIC PLAN**

### Executive Summary

# A bridge to our past. A gateway to our future.

Columbia County is a special place—a place where neighbors still greet neighbors, where a helping hand is only a household away, and where generations have built their lives and families. It's a destination known for its natural beauty and cultural and historic spaces. Most of all, it's home to small, close-knit communities filled with talented, hard-working people.

Columbia County is also a place where things happen. Located in a regional high-tech ecosystem, our communities house thriving precision manufacturing and agricultural businesses and one of the nation's highest concentrations of creative economy workers. To see it in action, look no further than the expansion of Hudson Valley Creamery in Livingston, the development of the Sunstream solar farm in Greenport and the growth and success of local entrepreneurs like Beth's Farm Kitchen in Stuyvesant. This is positive momentum.

But the global economy is challenging communities like ours to find new ways to promote and sustain economic growth and job creation, and there's work to be done to ensure long-term quality of life for our residents. The strategic plan outlined on the following pages is the result of a yearlong process undertaken by the Columbia Economic Development Corporation (CEDC), which included organizational restructuring, economic and demographic research, and outreach to county residents, businesses, government, education, and not-for-profit stakeholders and partners. The goal? To establish priorities, strategies, and measurable initiatives that promote economic growth in this vital county.

## **KEY AREAS OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITY:**

- Agricultural Business
- Arts and Culture
- Tourism and Recreation
- Hospitality
- Creative Economy
- Manufacturing and Technology
- Small Business
- Not-for-Profits
- Health Care & Housing
- Financial & Professional Services

## **THE STRATEGIC PLAN ANSWERS FOUR CRITICAL QUESTIONS:**

1. Where are we now?
2. Where are we headed?
3. Where do we want to be?
4. How do we get there?



# PILLAR ONE

## Entrepreneurship & Innovation

CEDC will create and foster an entrepreneurial ecosystem that promotes establishment, growth and long-term success of small business.

**Objective: Connect new and existing small businesses to needed information resources.**

- Create and maintain an online gateway for business information and contacts.
- Engage prospective and existing business owners to discover information and networking needs.
- Promote and operate micro-business seminars and an allied technical assistance program.

**Objective: Retain and support existing small businesses.**

- Provide “concierge” services to businesses needing regulatory help or aid negotiating local, regional, state, or federal programs designed to support business.
- Raise awareness of existing CEDC & SBA revolving loan programs and establish annual goals by loan sector and dollars loaned.
- Engage existing businesses to identify CEDC support opportunities that leverage sector strengths and address individual business needs.

**Objective: Advance projects currently approved and underway.**

- Hudson Valley Creamery
- Goat Genetics
- Ginsberg’s
- Catamount Resort Development

**Long-Term Objective: Advocate for potential and existing projects.**

- Develop criteria to maximize number of successful Regional Council Awards and Community Development Block Grants.
- Raise profile of existing local businesses that exemplify positive social impact.
- Develop objectives and criteria for CEDC grant funding or investment capital to support projects.

# PILLAR TWO

## Infrastructure

CEDC will collaboratively champion rural and main street infrastructure expansion by leveraging private and public partnerships.

**Objective: Initiate a collaborative countywide effort to expand broadband access.**

- Prioritize identified countywide broadband infrastructure needs with supportive rollout plan articulating targeted funding sources.
- Quantify and secure administrative and financial resources for execution of plan.
- Cultivate partnerships to support execution of plan.

**Objective: Leverage existing commercial and manufacturing structures to create “shovel ready” sites.**

- Compile comprehensive inventory sites available for use.
- Develop an inventory preparation, expansion and market plan.
- Define and market available Commerce Park sites in collaboration with site individual owners.

**Objective: Develop cooperative strategies to attract investment in business infrastructure.**

- Partner with public sector to identify municipal infrastructure improvement needs.
- Collaborate with municipalities and business owners to identify infrastructure barriers to business success.
- Leverage and develop policies designed to encourage increased infrastructure investment.

**Long-Term Objective: Be creative and collaborative in planning future projects.**

- Explore transportation ideas that enhance opportunities for employees and residents of all ages, as well as tourists visiting by train to access jobs, shopping, services, the arts, and cultural and recreational assets.
- Explore local desire for and possible siting of a “nameplate” hotel.
- Explore ideas for development of projects using the Hudson waterfront, including supporting or partnering with groups developing plans for projects.

# PILLAR THREE

## Quality of Life and Sustainability

CEDC will partner with public and private organizations to identify and support improvement and expansion efforts designed to improve quality of life.

**Objective: Strengthen Columbia County's economic health and competitive advantage by promoting and supporting aligned business activities.**

- Promote public spaces where people can connect to the outdoors, including outdoor recreational trails and the Columbia County Heritage Trails Network.
- Support and connect creative economy individuals and businesses with regional and local resources.
- Collaborate with Agricultural Businesses to identify opportunities for new and expansion projects.

**Objective: Support local town/village economic development efforts via collaborative activities.**

- Convene Main Street roundtable exchanges providing a forum to discuss issues of common concern.
- Develop a zoning and permitting map of the County that becomes a "Go where people want you and where it is sustainable" tool.
- Develop protocols to determine how best to support local economic development initiatives.

**Objective: Integrate 'smart' economic development into county and local level activities.**

- Identify sustainability issues and integrate sustainability thinking into economic development initiatives.
- Develop community relationships designed to actively engage and integrate residents into broader local and county opportunities.
- Interface with tourism initiatives to cross-promote County assets.

**Long-Term Objective: Promote Columbia County in a cohesive, consistent way.**

- Coordinate a countywide/agency-wide, marketing program.
- Create a consistent brand identity for Columbia County.
- Develop a Quality of Life dashboard to measure and showcase the County's assets and its growth through economic development efforts. supporting or partnering with groups developing plans for projects.



# PILLAR FOUR

## Workforce & Education

CEDC will facilitate networking and collaboration among the County's educational, business, and government institutions to stimulate purposeful alignment of educational offerings and business needs.

**Objective: Create an environment that leverages Columbia County's "education to workplace" pipeline.**

- Identify existing challenges and strengths of current education-workforce pipeline.
- Catalog, support, and expand existing internship and mentoring programs that link employers with the workforce.
- Define and support the creation of curriculum and training/trade programs that leverage local strengths to address local needs in targeted businesses, heritage and cultural, and non-profit communities.

**Objective: Increase skilled workforce.**

- Convene Columbia-Greene Community College, BOCES, and public school districts to define mutual educational challenges and opportunities.
- Catalog and promote available training programs to relevant county businesses.
- Identify skill gaps in local industry sectors and explore viable training solutions.

**Objective: Identify options to mitigate Columbia County's and the City of Hudson's limited workforce housing options.**

- Convene a forum to identify and define community housing needs.
- Identify possible funding sources to undertake a county wide housing gap analysis.
- Develop comprehensive plan with roadmap for housing and community partners, developers and site owners to implement recommended workforce focused housing expansion.

**Long-Term Objective: Attract a skilled, adaptable and inclusive workforce.**

- Commission an analysis of impediments to achieving a sustainable workforce.
- Address social issues through workforce development opportunities, not as charity.



# Looking forward to a revitalized Columbia County

Columbia County's future is bright. It's fueled by optimism, pride, and a solid belief in our people, products, and places.

This strategic plan builds upon the county's many successes and creates a roadmap for future job growth and increased economic prosperity. But it doesn't lose sight of where we've been and who we are. Columbia County's strategic plan aims to preserve deeply held traditions while keeping in step with a global economy driven by technological innovation.

We cannot be successful if we do not remain true to our character or positively impact the lives of our residents. To that end, we will work diligently to ensure that the tensions that often accompany growth do not result in social, educational or economic disparity among our communities.

After all, at the end of the day, sound economic development is about decent jobs, a better quality of life, and a plan for future generations that is as sure and strong as Columbia County itself.

To download a copy of the Columbia Economic Development Corporation's Strategic Plan Executive Summary, or to view presentation materials, meeting notes, survey results and other research and background materials, visit [www.columbiaedc.com/strategicplan](http://www.columbiaedc.com/strategicplan).

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