

**2017 Annual President’s Report**

**Executive Summary:**

2017 was a strong year for Columbia County’s economy, and Columbia Economic Development Corporation (CEDC) is proud to have made progress on many initiatives that contributed to increasing growth and prosperity. The County continues to register the lowest unemployment rates in New York State and has had seen an influx of both private sector and public investment. Building on CEDC’s 2016 Strategic Plan, we have accomplished a great deal to further position Columbia County as an attractive destination for workers, businesses and investment.

One of the biggest highlights of the last year was the City of Hudson’s being selected by Governor Cuomo as the Capital Region’s 2017 Downtown Revitalization Initiative winner, which promises to leverage $10 million in state funding while attracting millions more in private sector investment. CEDC is proud to have partnered with the City and Hudson Development Corporation (HDC) in developing a successful application, and we continue to play an active role in the implementation of the funding.

Hudson’s emergence as a premier destination in Upstate New York is only made stronger by exciting economic development opportunities throughout the county. In 2017, CEDC led initiatives to create new and sustained economic growth through expanded broadband access, emphasizing workforce development and education, spotlighting the County’s creative economy, and providing technical assistance, loans and other related services to businesses looking to locate and expand here.

CEDC’s successes could not be possible without its dedicated board of directors, staff and members. We have continued to work closely with the County Board of Supervisors, who provide significant financial support, along with our state, federal and other local elected officials.

Included in the following report is a comprehensive review of CEDC’s major activities during the last year, many of which we look forward to continuing to work on in 2018.

**Strategic Plan Update:**

Throughout 2017, CEDC continued to make progress on each of the four pillars identified during the process of formulating its 2016 Strategic Plan. Selected accomplishments from this year that address each strategic pillar include:

Entrepreneurship & Innovation:

* Conducting a MicroBusiness Seminar Series, which graduated 11 individuals who are starting or expanding businesses in Columbia County.
* Continuing to provide small business financing to 17 companies through CEDC’s County Loan and US Small Business Administration’s Micro Loan programs.
* Providing free technical assistance to 60+ small business owners in Columbia County.

Infrastructure:

* As Columbia County’s designated Broadband Coordinator, CEDC staff attended multiple public hearings and meetings, and served as a resource hub, for broadband expansion in the County.
* Continuing to work on securing funding to address wastewater treatment issues relating to the County Commerce Park.
* CEDC received a $12,500 matching grant from the Hudson River Greenway to study the feasibility of the Albany Boston Rail Trail.
* CEDC serves on City of Hudson Mayor’s Housing Task Force and we continue to work with the Columbia County Social Service Commissioner on county housing issues.

Quality of Life and Sustainability:

* Hosted a Creative Economy Forum; spotlighting arts, culture and tourism, which is one of Columbia County’s strongest economic sectors and one that leads to a higher quality of life.
* Partnered with Hudson Opera House on Visitors Survey funded by I Love NY.
* Partnered with the City of Hudson and HDC on the Hudson DRI Application; providing staff support on DRI Local Planning Committee. Partnered with HDC to lead the Hudson DRI Public Engagement Workgroup.
* CEDC was appointed by the Board of Supervisors to coordinate the Energize NY PACE funding program for the county.

Workforce and Education:

* Creating a Board Workforce and Education Committee to provide a clearer focus on the importance of an educated and well-trained workforce.
* Participating in regular Roundtable meetings with representatives of various county businesses, the Chamber of Commerce, BOCES, School Superintendents, Workforce NY and Community College to address Workforce Development and Education issues.
* Piloting a Junior Leaders Summer Camp in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce.
* Leading discussions with partners and stakeholders on a possible “Fabrication Manufacturing Cluster” workforce training initiative.

**Board of Directors:**CEDC’s dedicated Board of Directors had a productive year driving the initiatives of the organization. The full Board held ten meetings; the Audit and Finance Committee met four times; the Executive Committee met two times; the Governance and Nominating Committee met two times; the Loan Committee met eight times; and the new Workforce and Education Committee met three times. Members of the Board attended countless other meetings and events as representatives of CEDC throughout the year.

CEDC welcomed two new members to the Board at the November 2017 meeting. Ruth Adams, the Executive Director of Art Omni International Arts Center, will add a valued perspective that represents Columbia County’s strong creative sector. Gary Spielman also joined the Board, bringing decades of experience in government and community work.

**Business Retention and Expansion:** CEDC staff met with more than 35 existing businesses throughout 2017 and fielded numerous other inquiries to help local businesses retain jobs and expand their operations. By providing local market information, business expertise, zoning and planning guidance and financing options, among other services, CEDC helped maintain job creation and retention as one of its core focuses throughout 2017.

**Marketing Activities:** CEDC continues to market Columbia County to businesses outside the County through advertising, trade shows and eMarketing, providing one-on-one site selection assistance and other economic development information. In addition, CEDC provides its members, as well as county stakeholders, with a monthly newsletter that includes updates on CEDC’s activities and other business related information.

**CEDC Loan Programs and Technical Assistance:** CEDC maintains a revolving loan fund that start-up and expanding businesses can access. In addition, CEDC administers the U.S. Small Business Administration’s (SBA) MicroLoan Fund providing loans to small, medium, and even large businesses. CEDC provides free Technical Business Assistance to prospective borrowers and other qualified businesses, including business plan development, marketing and other business-related services. Over 60 local businesses received technical assistance in 2017.

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| **CEDC 2017 Loans**  | **Loan Amount** |
| State 11 Distillery | $25,000 |
| Nick Jennings | $10,000 |
| Brown’s Custom  | $12,500 |
| Philmont Beautification  | $30,000 |
| Central Market  | $25,000 |
| Hudson Athens Retail Venture  | $25,000 |
| Copake General Store SUH6 Enterprises  | $25,000 |
| 41 Cross Street  | $75,000 |
| **2017 Total CEDC Loans**  | **$227,500** |
| **SBA 2017 Microloans** | **Loan Amount** |
| State 11 Distillery  | $25,000 |
| Nick Jennings  | $5,000 |
| Browns Custom  | $12,500 |
| Central Market  | $25,000 |
| Fox & Harrow  | $8,500 |
| A Green Beauty  | $5,000 |
| Hudson Athens Retail Venture  | $25,000 |
| Copake General Store SUH6 Enterprises  | $25,000 |
| Rockhoundzz  | $2,000 |
| **2017 CEDC MicroLoans**  | **$133,000** |

**MicroBusiness Seminar Series:** On October 31st, CEDC congratulated 11 individuals that completed its 2017 MicroBusiness Seminar Series. The Series included seven weeks of classroom training by accountants, attorneys, lenders and marketing experts.

**Gerald R. Simon Commerce Park:** CEDC continues to market and administer development sites in the County’s Commerce Park located at Rts 9H and 66 in the towns of Ghent and Claverack. CEDC worked with the County’s engineering consultant on planning and a CFA grant application in connection with a sewer line expansion project to replace the aged waste water treatment plant at the commerce park.

**Hudson Downtown Revitalization Initiative Winning Application:** As outlined above, in partnership with HDC, CEDC provided funding and staffing to the development of the City of Hudson’s Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) Application, which was selected as the Capital Region’s $10 million DRI winner. Governor Cuomo announced Hudson as a winner at Hudson Hall in July, and a Local Planning Committee has since convened to detail how the funds will be implemented. The winning application included exciting mixed-use development projects, infrastructure improvements, workforce training initiatives, and many other concepts designed to make Downtown Hudson more connected, livable, and tourist-friendly. CEDC continues to provide staff and other support, and it is anticipated that we will provide on-going assistance once the final allocations are announced in mid-2018.

**Expanding Broadband Access:** As Columbia County’s designated broadband coordinator, CEDC continued to provide mapping services to providers, businesses and residents. In addition, CEDC actively participated in public hearings throughout the year regarding investment in the County’s broadband infrastructure.

**New CEDC Website:** In December, CEDC completed a redesign of our website to provide its stakeholders with a modern, user-friendly and informative online experience. The new website includes an improved organizational structure, including a Public Document Room, a design that is adaptive to all devices, and it provides a stronger emphasis on marketing Columbia County to businesses seeking to relocate or expand.

**Workforce Development and Education:** 2017 marked the first year of the CEDC Board’s Workforce and Education Committee, which is discussing how to better facilitate collaboration between various organizations focused on the workforce pipeline in Columbia County. These discussions have led to early-stage planning of events and initiatives to take place in 2018 in partnership with the Chamber, Columbia-Greene Community College, Questar III BOCES, the Columbia Greene Workforce Investment Board, and the County’s six school districts. CEDC also partnered with the Chamber of Commerce to pilot a Junior Leadership Camp, which six local high school students completed over the summer.

**Job Recruitment Expo:** In late 2017, CEDC began planning a Job Fair series in partnership with Columbia-Greene Media, NY Works and Columbia-Greene Community College. Titled “Columbia County Recruitment Expos”, there will be events at CGCC in April and at a location to be determined in October that aim to revolutionize job-seeking and recruitment in Columbia County by expanding participation and providing access to an extensive marketing package for employers.

**Creative Economy Forum:** On December 8th, CEDC hosted over 200 attendees at Hudson Hall for “Columbia County’s Creative Economy: Arts, Culture, and Tourism Forum.” Leading experts in arts and tourism from Columbia County, the Capital Region and national organizations presented on their experiences and how Columbia County can leverage its strong creative economy for future economic development. The Keynote Speaker was Sarah Calderon, Managing Director at ArtPlace America, a national grant maker for art-based community development projects. Calderon was followed by a panel that was moderated by Upstate Alliance for the Creative Economy Director Maureen Sager and included Basilica Hudson Co-Founder Melissa Auf de Maur, CEO of Proctor’s Theatre Phillip Morris, and President of Audience Research & Analysis George A. Wachtel.

**Hudson River Skywalk:** The Hudson River Skywalk project connecting the Olana State Historic Site in Greenport to the Thomas Cole National Historic Site in Catskill has been the recipient of two state economic development grants and is scheduled to be completed in 2018. The 1.8 mile scenic pedestrian trail promises to bring increased tourism and economic activity to Columbia County in the coming years. CEDC has been an active partner throughout all phases of the project. The Governor included in his 2018 State of the State a third phase proposing that the State will reconstruct the current intersection of Route 23 and Route 9G in Columbia County into a pedestrian and bicycle friendly roundabout with a direct connection to Olana. Further, the State’s Empire State Trail, which is currently under construction, will provide pedestrian and bicycle friendly travel north from Olana and the Rip Van Winkle Bridge directly into the City of Hudson.

**Wick Hotel:** CEDC has worked with The Wick Hotel’s development team and stakeholders in the City of Hudson during the last two years to ensure a strong opening and start to their business. Also, CEDC, as the administrator of the Columbia County IDA, assisted The Wick with its IDA bond financing.

**Hudson Valley Creamery:** CEDC continues to work with Hudson Valley Creamery (HVC) on its plans to expand their artisanal goat cheese processing plant in Livingston and implement state economic development funding. The completion of HVC’s business expansion will bring new jobs to Columbia County’s agribusiness sector, continuing the County’s history of producing craft food.

**Hudson Hall Visitor’s Survey:** CEDC partnered with Hudson Hall to conduct a study on tourism in the City of Hudson, which has provided valuable insight to promoting the tourism sector in Hudson and the surrounding county. The data collected from the survey was presented at the December Creative Economy forum hosted by CEDC. The study was funded by the State’s I Love NY Tourism Marketing program.

**Rail Trail:** CEDC has participated in meetings throughout the year to expand recreational opportunities in Columbia County via the Empire Rail Trail initiatives which will contribute to higher quality of life for residents and increased tourism. Working with the Columbia County Land Conservancy, CEDC received a $12,500 matching grant from the Hudson River Greenway to study the feasibility of the Albany Boston Rail Trail

**Craft Beverages Industry:** CEDC has been working with a number of companies seeking to expand or locate in Columbia County in the craft beverages industry, which has been growing throughout Upstate New York. This industry is perfectly suited to thrive in Columbia County by complimenting its strong creative economy, tourism and agribusiness sectors.

**Farm-to-table Initiative:** CEDC worked with the Hudson Valley Agribusiness Development, the Berkshire Taconic Foundation and Hawthorne Valley Farms, along with several local school districts and other interested partners, on an application for New York State’s Farm-to-School grant program, which provides funding for initiatives to increase the amount of fresh local food included in school districts. While the application did not result in funding during this year’s round, Governor Cuomo has committed to doubling funding for the program in the upcoming year’s State budget and we are optimistic that Columbia County will be highly competitive in 2018.

**Ramboll Young Planners Summit in Hudson:** CEDC partnered with Ramboll Group to promote their annual Young Planner’s Summit in the City of Hudson. Ramboll is an international consulting company that works in the areas of buildings, transport, planning & urban design, water, environment & health, energy, oil & gas and management consulting. The summit trains young people in creating livable cities across the U.S. and highlighted Hudson as a city that is representative of many of the challenges and trends in planning throughout the country.

**Energize NY:** Columbia County became the 41st municipality in New York State to become a member of Energize NY, an organization that offers low-cost financing solutions to businesses seeking to implement clean energy sources. CEDC will be leading efforts to promote their PACE program (Property Assessed Clean Energy) and assist businesses and residential property owners with finding energy cost-savings.

**Regional Economic Development Council Round XII:** Columbia County enjoyed a strong showing in the 2017 Regional Economic Development Council’s competitive grant process, with 15 projects combining to receive nearly $3 million. CEDC actively assisted many of the applicants during the process, and will continue to help awardees and future applicants as needed. Three Columbia County projects were spotlighted by the Capital Region Economic Development Council in their annual progress report:

* **PGS Millwork, Inc.** was designated a regional priority project and received $300,000 to make improvements to their custom woodwork manufacturing facility.
* **The River House Project** received $225,000 to complete renovations that will contribute to further developing Columbia County’s strong creative economy by creating a workspace for creative professionals.
* **Digifabshop** received $500,000 to expand their business, which is already Columbia County’s largest advanced manufacturing employer.

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| **2017 CFA Columbia County Award Winners** | **Award** |
| 723 Warren St LLC | $120,000 |
| Basilica Arts Inc | $45,000 |
| Basilica Arts Inc | $75,000 |
| C0ARC Columbia County Chapter | $230,000 |
| Columbia Greene Community College | $50,330 |
| Columbia Land Conservancy | $51,776 |
| Digital Fabrication Workshop, Inc | $200,000 |
| Digital Fabrication Workshop, Inc | $300,000 |
| Hudson Mohawk Resource Conservation Development  | $500,000 |
| Hudson Opera House | $45,000 |
| PGS Millwork, Inc. | $300,000 |
| River House Project LLC | $225,000 |
| Shaker Museum Library | $49,400 |
| The Olana Partnership, Inc. | $420,000 |
| Thomas Cole Historic House | $225,000 |
| **Total** | **$2,836,506** |

**Key Partnerships:**

* **Center for Economic Growth:** CEDC has worked to improve its competitive position by aligning with and leveraging the Capital Region’s economic strategy. As a member of CEG and attending their events such as the 87/90 Semiconductor Summit in 2017, CEDC ensures that it stays actively engaged in regional economic development strategy and activities.
* **Columbia County Chamber of Commerce:** CEDC maintains a strong relationship with the Columbia County Chamber of Commerce through regular dialogue and meetings between the board and staff of each organization, in addition to working together on various collaborative initiatives.
* **Hudson Development Corporation:** Among many jointly supported initiatives, CEDC partnered with HDC to develop the winning Hudson DRI application in 2017 and continues to support the development of the implementation plan.
* **Hudson Valley Agribusiness Development Corporation (HVADC):** CEDC has a long-standing partnership of working together with HVADC to assist both existing agri-businesses and supporting policies and regulations that recognize and support New York State’s agricultural economy.
* **Professional Service Providers:** CEDC regularly discusses the County’s economic strategy with local bankers, realtors, developers, and engineers, etc. to better understand the needs of key industries to assist them in serving their business clients.
* **Utilities:** Reliable access to energy and electricity are among the most important factors for companies in the site selection process, and CEDC maintains relationships with National Grid and NYSEG to develop solutions for the County’s energy needs.
* **Other nonprofit organizations and associations:** CEDC seeks engagement on economic development initiatives and has partnered with many organizations throughout the County in 2017, including the New York Farm Bureau, New York State Economic Development Council, Columbia Land Conservancy, Hudson Valley Pattern for Progress, and the Berkshire Taconic Foundation, among others.

**Organizations Administered by CEDC:**

**Columbia County Industrial Development Agency (CCIDA):**

Board of Directors: Jim Mackerer (Chair), Sidney Richter (Vice-Chair), Bob Galluscio (Treasurer), Sarah Sterling (Secretary), William Gerlach, Brian Keeler, Carmine Pierro

The CCIDA actively promotes, encourages, attracts and develops job opportunities throughout the County. The agency offers companies comprehensive services including needs assessment, site selection, financial incentives, and access to other public-sector programs. CCIDA’s Board of Directors met five times during 2017. Among projects that CCIDA participated in, included development and/or expansions at The Wick, SunStream Solar and Architectural Cast Stone. As part of CEDC’s new website, new pages were created for CCIDA that include a better organized public documents page.

**Columbia County Capital Resource Corporation (CCRC):**

Board of Directors: Jim Mackerer (Chair), Sidney Richter (Vice-Chair), Bob Galluscio (Treasurer), Sarah Sterling (Secretary), William Gerlach, Brian Keeler, Carmine Pierro

Specifically designed to assist not-for-profits, the Columbia County Capital Resource Corporation encourages community and economic development by assisting not-for-profit capital projects with obtaining lower-cost financing. Using the CCRC as a tool, lenders receive financial benefits on loans they provide to qualified not-for-profits, thereby lowering the cost to the borrower. The CCRC Board of Directors met five times during 2017. CEDC staff began working on a plan to better promote CRC resources at the end of 2017. As part of CEDC’s new website, new pages were created for CCRC that include a better organized public documents page.

James Mackerer, a long-time CCIDA and CRC member, who also served on the CEDC Board as an ex-officio member, retired from in December. We thank Jim for his significant contributions in working to grow and expand businesses and job opportunities during his long tenure on all three boards.

**Hudson Industrial Development Agency (HIDA):**

Board of Directors: Tiffany Garriga (Chair), Thomas DePietro (Vice Chair), Heather Campbell (Treasurer), Tiffany Martin Hamilton, Pricilla Moore, Justin Maxwell.

The HIDA also actively promotes, encourages, attracts and develops job opportunities and economically-sound commerce and industry in the City of Hudson. The HIDA Board met six times during 2017. CEDC’s contract with the City of Hudson to serve as the administrator of HIDA was extended through December 2018. HIDA approved a PILOT agreement with Redburn Development for The Wick, which was incorporated into the CIDA’ project financing agreements. CEDC also updated and reorganized HIDA’s webpage on the City of Hudson’s new website, which launched in December.

**Conclusion:**

The first full year of executing CEDC’s Strategic Plan brought renewed focus and energy to fulfilling our mission of economic development and job creation. As our implementation strategies show, our mission is one that extends to a wide range of sectors and components of life throughout Columbia County. While collaborating among a diverse set of stakeholders and partners to improve the economy is challenging, it is critical to do so in the complex and competitive 21st century environment. CEDC continues to be the best positioned organization to facilitate this collaboration countywide.

The four pillars of the 2016 Strategic Plan provide a comprehensive framework for approaching economic development in this challenging environment, and the early results are showing results. We are increasingly being recognized by the Capital Region and New York State as an economy on the rise, which is demonstrated by the winning Downtown Revitalization Initiative application for the City of Hudson and the strong group of CFA project awards. With these highly publicized economic development wins in 2017, Columbia County benefits from increased awareness and the optimism that comes with new job creating and additional investment. New projects coming to completion in 2018 will ensure that this momentum continues to build.

In 2018 and beyond, CEDC is ready to lead in the process of continuously readapting Columbia County’s economy to maximize our competitiveness and create more good jobs for residents. The endeavor of developing a more innovative economy, a stronger workforce, modern infrastructure, and a better quality of life is unending. Our past and future successes would not be possible without the engagement of businesses, nonprofits, educational institutions, governments, and our residents. CEDC’s staff and Board are excited to continue the conversation of prosperity in Columbia County with our many partners and stakeholders and turning ideas into initiatives that provide tangible results for the community.