

II. Strategic Action Summary

The Washington County Local Development Corporation (WCLDC) is a not-for-profit corporation that was formed in 1985 to administer the County's economic development programs. The WCLDC is an economic resource for existing businesses in Washington County and those seeking to locate within Washington County. The WCLDC, in concert with numerous public and private-sector agencies and organizations, as well as many local financial institutions, works to provide free, confidential business development assistance in the areas of financing, site selection assistance, taxes, utilities, labor force, transportation and coordination.

The preparation and completion of Washington County's Economic Development Plan is, in part, a reflection of the need for organized economic growth in the County. As stated previously, the goals of the WCLDC are to create and retain jobs, strengthen the economy, and to increase the taxable value of real property. As a result, the WCLDC is an essential component of the oversight and implementation of the County's Economic Development Plan.

Purpose of the Strategic Action Summary

This summary is to be used by the WCLDC as part of its ongoing review of the Washington County Economic Development Plan. The Strategic Action Summary can be used as a tool for WCLDC to utilize as part of their efforts and to ensure consistency with the overall goals of Washington County. In addition, the WCLDC, as part of its implementation efforts, also provides a wide consultation with various economic organizations, partnerships, businesses, communities and individuals to ensure a greater ownership of the implementation of the goals, strategies and actions identified as part of the County's Economic Development Plan.

The Strategic Action Summary also ensures better recognition of the predominant issues of Washington County, as mainstreamed throughout the document. This negates the need for a separate strategy and encourages integrated strategic thinking for the whole of Washington County. In addition, the summary is more focused on action and reduces the perception of a "wish list" agenda. The purpose of this summary is to encourage a better focus on a smaller number of high-level, evidence-based strategic priorities.

Expected Outcomes & Review

As part of the public outreach efforts, an attempt was made to identify the key priorities for action that best reflect the community's concerns and desires. The summary is intended to provide clearer roles for organizations, with improved guidance and demonstrable association with the overall goals, strategies and actions for the Economic Development Plan. In addition, the summary develops a greater focus on delivery and monitoring, including a framework created that will enable the WCLDC to effectively support the delivery of, and efficiently monitor progress towards achievement of targets.

Washington County's Vision

Washington County is committed to developing a prosperous and economically friendly environment for current and prospective businesses and residents, while preserving the rural qualities that make Washington County unique. Washington County is dedicated to providing retention, expansion programs and attractive incentives for businesses, strengthening the quality of life, and providing a full range services.

Achieving the Vision

Monitoring and reporting against delivery of the strategies of the Economic Development Plan will show measurable results associated with the business community, industrial sectors, tourism, and sustainability associated with infrastructure and energy efficiencies. Increases in income, earnings and productivity will serve as economic indicators and will demonstrate success.

Washington County is highly regarded for the outstanding quality of its environment. Preservation of productive agricultural lands will also demonstrate success in preserving the resources and quality of life that enhance Washington County. Economic growth is achieved within environmental limits and the protection of key agricultural and environmental resources is critical to the success of Washington County.

Future investment in infrastructure and technology will allow Washington County to compete successfully within the greater regional economy. Implementation of the plan will assist residents and the workforce of Washington County to fully realize their potential by achieving higher skills enabling them to access better quality employment and earnings.

Washington County and the region are at a turning point. The County can either continue an economic development path that has brought about positive growth, or it can commit to making substantive changes to move to the next level by building upon previous studies, task forces, and discussions. Feedback received throughout the development of this plan indicated that Washington County's goal should be to build a sustainable, high-performance economy that produces better opportunities for future generations, while protecting the quality of life that has attracted the County's residents and businesses. This high-performance economy will:

- Be more balanced and resistant;
- Create a more reliable, sufficient and growing tax base; and
- Support a vibrant business climate that enables businesses to be more efficient and increase their value.

There are a number of challenges facing Washington County. Some are specific to Washington County, while others are inherent to any economic development pursuit and require collaboration and planning to overcome. Building a competitive economy requires long-term investments, both financial and human.

Given limited resources, Washington County must focus and prioritize its efforts to deliver the desired results.

Guiding Principals

Nine key principals have been identified and are designed to increase the long-term sustainability of Washington County's economy and assure for continued success. These nine key principals were utilized in the development of the action plan and will be instrumental in its implementation. Together these principals, with the established action plan, will create a high-performance economy and overcome the challenges facing the County.

These nine guiding principles are:

1. **Long-term strategy drives short-term actions.** Although the plan will identify the long-range goals for Washington County, it will be built on successfully accomplishing measurable short-term actions.
2. **It's about better, not just bigger.** The goal is to restructure the relative mix or concentration of the economy toward higher-value activities, so that the economy gets better by upgrading what it already has instead of merely attracting more.
3. **The plan must be focused to achieve maximum impact.** Rather than trying to be all things to all people, Washington County has identified a manageable number of actions that create substantial economic impact. The County's priorities do not exclude or replace local or community specific ones.
4. **Significant improvements in infrastructure, energy costs and fiscal policies are required.** The current limitations of these key foundations impede Washington County from being competitive. Unless they are addressed, the County's economic growth will be limited.
5. **The identity for the Washington County must be realistic.** The identity will be based on current strengths/assets and the industries in which Washington County either has or can build a competitive advantage.
6. **What gets measured, gets done.** Implementation of the plan will be carried out by the best-suited organizations at the right level. This may include multiple departments, agencies, non-for-profits, municipalities, etc. Each has a critical role in successfully implementing this plan. WCLDC, in concert with Washington County, will monitor the implementation of the Strategic Plan. The effectiveness with which each step of the plan is executed will be measured and evaluated to ensure that Washington County is making progress towards its goal.
7. **Success requires everyone's strategic help throughout Washington County.** Both the public and private sectors have roles in supporting and executing the plan and must be held specifically accountable. Government's role is to establish a stable and predictable macroeconomic environment

and to improve the quality and efficiency of economic foundations; the private sector will add value by building broad-based collaboration to ensure that resources are leveraged and connected.

8. **Set priorities.** Trying to do everything for everyone ensures that efforts are diluted to the point of being non-effective and that the economy’s identity becomes “fuzzy.” To get the most return, Washington County should focus on a shortlist of priorities. The strategies and actions identified for the County will be categorized as short-term, mid-term, long-term or ongoing to assist the County with prioritization. Should funding or available resources become available earlier, these priorities are flexible and can be shifted to maximize results for the County.

9. **Provide funding.** A plan for obtaining the needed resources will be developed in connection with the action plan and will include:

- An inventory of current total resources (regional and local) expended on attraction, expansion and start-up activities;
- Determination of the aggregate required to fund the above (based on existing resource commitments, peer region support for similar efforts, and an evaluation of specific goals/tasks in the plan); and
- Identification of funding gaps. Funding will be provided by federal, state, county, and local sources as well as the private sector. Per project funding will be determined on a project-by-project basis.

Economic Development Goals

An attempt was made to identify goals that best reflect the community’s concerns and desires. With the feedback received, the goals were finalized and further tailored to better reflect the County’s desired vision of the future. The achievement of these key goals will provide the ultimate aims for economic success in Washington County, including competitiveness and sustainability. These goals are discussed in detail in the subsequent Chapter.

Priority Goals, Strategies & Actions

Goals, strategies, and actions were developed to identify specific ways the County, its municipalities, businesses, educational institutions, and entrepreneurs can approach future development decisions. These strategies were developed through an extensive public participation process, with some overlap of goals and strategies into multiple categories. As a result, it was necessary to identify the key strategies that are necessary to ensure the success of the Washington County Economic Development Plan. These key strategies are intended to provide maximum impact, while providing a manageable action plan to create a substantial economic impact for Washington County. The complete list of goals, strategies and actions identified for Washington County are detailed as part of Chapter III.

The following are the key strategies and actions identified by Washington County. High priority actions are indicated with an “*”.

Industrial Sector Development

- Action 1.1.3* Recruit business and services to compliment the industrial and business sectors growing in the County and region. For example, promote the County as a regional center for agricultural supply, support services and processing. Recruit manufactures to compliment existing industrial sectors and utilize local materials, for example wood furniture factories. The forestry and logging industry is performing very well within Washington County and wood-product manufacturers may be well suited for the County. Promote more handcrafting/ high-end products rather than assembled products to compliment the existing industrial sectors and utilize local materials.
- Action 1.1.6 Work with the Industrial Development Agency (IDA) to acquire additional properties for development. Advertise and market the existing sites such as the Airport Industrial Park sites.
- Action 1.1.10 Foster technology-based efforts that capitalize on the State’s superior system of public and private colleges and universities.
- Action 1.2.1 Promote a broad-based, diversified economy. Industrial diversity has been shown not only to spur productivity and innovation, but also result in local businesses having easy access to resources and services needed for production.
- Action 1.3.2 Continue to provide planning guidance to towns and villages to assist with the adoption and implementation of land use policies to strengthen municipal economies and preserve resources. Ensure that industrial development will occur in areas where the land is physically adequate to support it; where it will be compatible to the land uses surrounding it (especially agricultural uses); and where logistical concerns such as adequacy of infrastructure, are amenable to industrial development.

Agricultural and Forestry Development

- Action 2.1.2* Target the County’s economic development efforts towards the agricultural sector. Agriculture should be fully integrated into the County’s economic development policy and all significant public investment and economic development initiatives should be considered for their potential effects on agriculture.
- Action 2.1.5 Work with the Cornell Cooperative Extension and the Washington County Farm Bureau to encourage local farmers to participate with the “With Pride from Washington County” program to enhance individual marketing efforts.
- Action 2.1.6* Action 2.1.6 Pursue non-dairy agriculture markets for new growth. The County must support and assist local farmers in site identification, land assemblage, and funding research to ensure that such facilities become a reality. Encourage the development of agribusinesses within the County. In agriculture, agribusiness is a generic term that refers to the various businesses involved in food production, including farming, seed supply, agrichemicals, farm machinery, wholesale and distribution, processing, marketing, and retail sales. Agribusiness

- refers to the range of activities and disciplines encompassed by modern food production.
- Action 2.1.10 Fully support the Agricultural Economic Development Specialist position in Washington County.
- Action 2.2.7 Continue to support the countywide Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Program through the Agricultural Stewardship Association. Institute a transfer tax to fund the PDR Program.
- Action 2.2.9 Encourage local communities to enact zoning, subdivision review, cluster subdivision regulations, scenic ridgeline protection overlays, and other land use regulations to preserve agricultural lands.

Small Business Development

- Action 3.1.2* Maintain and expand the countywide entrepreneur assistance program to assist existing and new business ventures in developing effective marketing programs. Continue to assist existing businesses in identifying and pursuing appropriate funding and grant opportunities, as well as advising businesses on local regulations, acting as their advocate, and providing other types of assistance. Expand training and loan programs to increase opportunities for businesses located in County.
- Action 3.2.1 Develop an online, countywide interactive GIS, including links to environmental regulations, zoning, and development review criteria for each municipality. Develop a database of vacant buildings that are suitable for rehabilitation as a bed and breakfast, motel, and/or hotel for visitors to Washington County. Market the database to site selectors to foster economic development.
- Action 3.3.7 Work with the Workforce Investment Board to improve and expand their ability to service the business community throughout Washington County.

Downtown Revitalization

- Action 4.1.1* Prepare a Main Street Revitalization Strategy incorporating the Four Point Approach¹ established by the National Trust for Historic Preservation:
- Action 4.2.1 Continue to encourage property and business owners to invest along Main Street to improve the aesthetic appeal. Address issues such as vacant or dilapidated buildings, broken or boarded up windows, unscreened dumpsters, uninviting fencing and building facades, cluttered sidewalks, and unattractive signs.
- Action 4.3.1 Encourage and assist municipalities in establishing regulations that encourage mixed-uses along the County's Main Streets. Encourage buildings to provide housing above retail spaces along the Main Streets to create street life, pedestrian traffic and a sense of vitality. Rehabilitate existing spaces above first floor commercial and/or retail spaces to create attractive housing opportunities.

¹ The Professional's Guide to the Main Street Approach, National Trust's National Main Street Center 2000.

Workforce and Labor Force Training

- Action 5.1.4 Work with local businesses to identify or produce brochures about individual careers including any educational requirements for various business sectors.
- Action 5.1.6* Work with schools, local businesses, and the Adirondack Business School Partnership (ABSP) to provide opportunities for students to gain formal career awareness experiences through apprenticeships, work internships, Job Shadowing, and part-time employment.
- Action 5.2.5 Encourage local businesses to participate in the “Job Discovery” hosted at the Adirondack Community College each spring for region.

Tourism Development

- Action 6.1.3* Promote the future “Golden Goal” soccer facility.
- Action 6.1.6* Promote the two community visitor centers that highlight local and County historical, cultural, and recreational attractions. Staff the visitor centers to answer questions, promote tourism and facilitate reservations to the County’s events and services. Develop a mobile kiosk to drop off at events throughout the County.
- Action 6.1.8 Encourage tourism industries in the County to collect visitation data. Use this information to proactively build new resources to reinforce and increase visitation.
- Action 6.1.11 Tap into the regional tourism generated by Saratoga and Warren Counties. Market to “day trippers” by creating packaged tours throughout Washington County. Create incentives for tourists to stay; promote a “stay just a little bit longer” campaign. Encourage the development of bed and breakfasts and motel/hotel establishments to accommodate longer visits, in particular, establishments with a minimum of 30 beds.
- Action 6.3.2 Promote tourism in Washington County by packaging services and opportunities together.
- Action 6.4.1 Promote heritage tourism and agri-tourism themes focusing on the County’s existing agriculture and agricultural history. Encourage farmers to coordinate events to create a “farm tou” for seasonal products.

Infrastructure and Energy Services

- Action 7.1.1* Develop a consolidated, countywide water district to provide municipal water to municipalities such as the Towns of Kingsbury, Fort Ann, and Fort Edward, and the Villages of Hudson Falls and Fort Edward. The County should complete a feasibility analysis to determine appropriate locations, costs, and associated impacts of the expanded infrastructure.
- Action 7.1.2* Invest in appropriate infrastructure to best connect Upstate New York with a rapidly globalizing economy, including cheap, high capacity fiber-optic networks and cheap broadband access. Identify and prioritize areas to receive high-speed broadband access. Work with the State to identify and obtain funding to provide

- high-speed broadband access to the priority areas and ultimately throughout the County.
- Action 7.1.6* Work with the Canal Corporation, General Electric, and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to ensure the infrastructure constructed as part of the dredging operation is permanent. In particular, the access road to the dewatering facility should become permanent.
- Action 7.1.13 Integrate infrastructure planning at the County-level as part of the implementation of this Economic Development Strategy. Coordinate improvements with the Washington County Department of Public Works.
- Action 7.2.1 Explore biofuel as an alternative energy source. Biofuel is any fuel derived from biomass, typically plant matter such as corn, hemp, switchgrass or manure from cows. Biofuel is a renewable energy source, unlike other natural resources such as petroleum, coal, and nuclear fuels.

Creative Economy Development

- Action 8.1.5 Integrate the arts into community local economic development plans. Establish project partners with organizations involved with transportation, agriculture, parks and recreations, forestry, historic preservation, youth development, and education.
- Action 8.2.1 Engage artists, craftspeople, and musicians in planning and community building to strengthen and build the County's creative economy.

Promotion and Collaboration

- Action 9.1.1 Promote the "With Pride from Washington County" program designed to promote growers and retailers with goods and services from and within Washington County. Encourage businesses to use the logo as part of their labels and other promotional materials to identify products and services that meet the program's standards. Encourage residents and businesses to buy local from growers and retailers utilizing the "With Pride from Washington County" logo.
- Action 9.1.2 Coordinate marketing, promotion, and outreach efforts of the County's Chambers (i.e. Adirondack Regional Chamber of Commerce, Cambridge Chamber of Commerce, Granville Area Chamber of Commerce, Greater Greenwich Chamber of Commerce, Salem Area Chamber of Commerce, and the Whitehall Chamber of Commerce), and other development organizations to strengthen and expand the business community.
- Action 9.1.7* Utilize DVD and CD-ROM package for attracting businesses as well as providing links for local and regional services such as the website with available property and buildings within Washington County.