



Mid-Hudson
Regional Economic
Development Council



STATE OF THE REGION:
MID-HUDSON
2023 STRATEGIC PLAN



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Message from the Regional Co-Chairs



Dear Governor Hochul,

On behalf of the Mid-Hudson Regional Economic Development Council (MHREDC), we are pleased to present to you the 2023 MHREDC Strategic Plan Update.

As a testament to your leadership, the Mid-Hudson region has generated nearly \$6.1 billion of economic activity and is projected to create and retain over 46,000 jobs as a result of the Council's work during Rounds I through XII of the Regional Economic Development Council Initiative. We are happy to report that 88.3% of 1,136 projects awarded are complete or progressing.

This year, the regional councils were tasked with reviewing and updating their strategic plans to address the most timely and critical issues affecting their region's economic futures. The MHREDC, through our partner, Hudson Valley Pattern for Progress, has worked tirelessly to develop this comprehensive strategic plan, highlighting the challenges the Mid-Hudson region faces, as well as providing a guide to viable solutions to those challenges.

Through various outreach efforts with many regional stakeholders, as well as the gathering of essential economic and regional data, the MHREDC has developed a new vision and set forth a set of six goals that we believe will address our identified challenge topic for this year's Strategic Plan Update: People and Talent Attraction and Retention.



Dr. Marsha Gordon



Dr. Kristine Young

In closing, we hope this report provides you with a clear vision on the state of the Mid-Hudson region, as we further develop our vision to build stronger, more vibrant communities. Our Council is very excited about the work ahead and we look forward to continuing our collaboration with New York State.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marsha Gordon".

Dr. Marsha Gordon
Co-Chair, MHREDC
President & CEO, Business Council of Westchester, Inc.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kristine Young".

Dr. Kristine Young
Co-Chair, MHREDC
President, SUNY Orange

PART ONE

Executive Summary & Progress



The Mid-Hudson Regional Economic Development Council (MHREDC) is proud to share its latest strategic plan, which aims to stimulate the economy, expand the number of well-paying jobs, and support vibrant community centers throughout the seven-county region comprised of Dutchess, Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Sullivan, Ulster, and Westchester counties.

The priorities, strategies, and goals outlined in this report were informed by the input of nearly 500 people throughout the region, including civic leaders, industry experts, nonprofit agencies, and members of the public who expressed a deep interest in the future of their communities. Council members reviewed hundreds of ideas from public input sessions and focus groups, along with written feedback, to ensure that our updated plan is grounded in strategies that are relevant, timely, and actionable.

Our public outreach for this plan served as a reminder that the Mid-Hudson region is home to some of the most diverse people, places, and professions anywhere in New York. Our region is home to Fortune 500 companies and small family-owned shops and farms. Our neighbors live along busy streets in bustling cities, and they also live on mountain byways in deeply rural towns. Our diverse economy includes commuter train lines, manufacturing lines, and sap collection lines that harvest syrup from maple trees.

As a result, the visage of economic development and community vibrancy looks very different depending on what corner of the Mid-Hudson region you call home. That diversity is reflected in our strategic plan, which outlines priorities that are relevant to every kind of business and community.

For example, the plan calls for continued investments in infrastructure, housing, and cultivating an ample workforce – civic challenges that run common throughout the Mid-Hudson

region. Our strategies also recognize the importance of agriculture, tourism, manufacturing, TV and film production, biotech, innovation and research, and other industries that align with the economic strategy of the region.

The plan also recognizes that the Mid-Hudson region is brimming with challenges and opportunities, many of them stemming from the changing contours of our economy and workforce. Many statistics show that we are a region in transition as our workforce starts to feel the effects of changing demographics, a wave of retirements, and the region's complicated housing crisis. Recent survey data from the New York State Department of Labor found another shift: job seekers now care more about schedule flexibility than pay raises. Economic opportunities also abound. Many of our downtowns are riding a wave of reinvestment, and industrial parks have found new life through adaptive reuse. Private businesses in the region have expanded, while tourism destinations continue to attract an influx of people that drive the region's economy.

All these factors – challenges and opportunities alike – affect the strategic plan for economic prosperity in the region. By updating this strategic plan, the Council will focus on solutions and investments that will help resolve our challenges, capitalize on our opportunities, and improve the economic vibrancy of the Mid-Hudson region.

State of the Region

The Mid-Hudson region is home to approximately 2.4 million people who live in diverse communities that include urban centers, historic hamlets and villages, and rural towns. The region comprises a workforce of approximately 875,000 people, including 735,000 who work for privately held companies, and roughly 140,000 who work for local governments, schools, authorities, and other public employers.

The region is home to numerous thriving industry sectors, including biotech and life sciences, TV and film production, distribution, agribusinesses, and the food, beverage and hospitality businesses that support our tourism sector. Healthcare, which remains the largest industry sector in the Mid-Hudson region, will likely continue to grow as our aging population in the region demands more medical services. The region's higher education institutions – totaling more than three dozen colleges and universities – also remains a strong driver of economic activity, civic engagement, and workforce support.

While we are proud of the businesses that have established themselves in the Mid-Hudson, we also recognize that our proximity to New York City has allowed many of our towns to remain as residential hubs for commuters who utilize mass transit to work in the metro area. In fact, the latest from the U.S. Census Bureau¹ show that 43 percent of people living in our seven counties work outside the region, including many who commute to New York City. An equal proportion, about 42 percent of our regional neighbors, work in the same county where they live.

Since 2011, total jobs in the region have grown by about 1 percent. Approximately 26,000 new jobs were added by private sector employers, while the ranks of public employees shrank by about 14,000. Some of the sectors that



Boscobel House and Gardens, Philipstown, Putnam County

have added the most jobs since 2011 include biotech and life sciences (+7,000), agribusiness (+2,000), distribution (+1,500), and the craft beverage industry (+900). Healthcare gained approximately 20,000 jobs over the past decade.

Job growth has been driven, in part, by an uptick in the number of companies in the region. There are about 77,000 public and private employers in the Mid-Hudson region as of 2021, according to state labor statistics. That number reflects about 3,200 more employers than our region had in 2011. As of October 2023, the unemployment rate in the Mid-Hudson region was 3.2 percent. A strong, steadily growing economy has pushed unemployment down to historic lows over the past two years.

¹ Data are from the 2021 American Community Survey 5-year estimates, the most recent data available from the U.S. Census Bureau.

Workforce

Although jobs have grown and unemployment remains low, the Mid-Hudson region is starting to feel the effects of a workforce shortage that is likely to worsen in the coming decades, making it a defining challenge for our region. The roots of our workforce stress lie in several demographic trends. This subject is explained in greater detail in the Challenge Topic section of this report.

The Mid-Hudson region is on a trajectory for population decline due to lower birth rates and outward migration. Annual births over the past 25 years are down by about 3,000, with some counties seeing their annual births drop by approximately 25-35% during that time. Additionally, the region has lost a net of 138,071 people to outward domestic migration from 1996-2021. In recent years, most people leaving the region are moving just over the border to neighboring states, or to southern states such as Florida and the Carolinas.

The COVID-19 pandemic hastened the retirement of many employees from the baby boomer generation, which comprises approximately 550,000 people in the region. The growing wave of retirements from the baby boomer population represents a huge challenge of succession planning for the region, along with ensuring there is an ample quantity of workers to fill jobs and meet the demand for goods and services throughout the Mid-Hudson region.

This three-pronged challenge – lower birth rates, outward migration, and a growing wave of retirements – has exerted significant stress on the regional workforce. That stress is being felt by practically every industry sector in the region. This has forced employers to cut services, hire contract workers from outside the region, or pay signing bonuses to attract employees with higher pay. Workforce shortages often put upward pressure on wages because employers are competing for labor from a shrinking pool of candidates. Some economic experts fear that our demographic changes might also cause the liquidation of certain small businesses, especially traditional Main Street businesses, such as diners, dry cleaners, and auto mechanics, which were owned by baby boomer entrepreneurs who cannot find an obvious successor to own and run their companies.

The evidence is supported by data. Our regional population ages 25-44 comprises 576,587 people, while those ages 45-64 include 658,995 people. The older half of our potential labor pool outnumbers the younger half by 91,408 people. Functionally, that means for every retiree who leaves our workforce, there is only a fraction of a person to replenish that retiree from the younger end of the population. The number of infants, children, and teenagers in the region shrunk by more than 20,000 people from 2010-2021, indicating that our workforce shortfalls will likely worsen in the coming decades unless our demographics are altered by significant changes in birth rates, domestic migration, or immigration.

The structural incongruity in the labor pool is a significant challenge and a threat to the future of economic development in the Mid-Hudson region, as companies generally invest and thrive where there is an ample supply of well-trained workers.



ESD Commissioner & CEO, Hope Knight, The Mechatronics Lab at DCC @ Fishkill, Dutchess County



City of Port Jervis, Orange County

Housing

Our workforce shortage is inextricably linked to the regional housing crisis. The housing crisis in the Mid-Hudson region has many dimensions, but housing availability and affordability are the two most salient.

Over the past five years, the median price of a home in the Mid-Hudson region has increased by as much as double in some of our counties. Most counties have seen their median sale price increase by 40-70%. That surge was largely driven by the migration of people from the New York City metropolitan area into the Mid-Hudson during the heart of the COVID-19 pandemic. Federal migration data show that a net of approximately 60,000 people moved from New York City into the Mid-Hudson during those years. Many people flocked north in search of less density and paid substantially more than the asking prices for single-family homes.

According to Out of Reach, a 2023 analysis of wage and home sale data by Hudson Valley Pattern for Progress, median-earning families in every county would fall at least \$100,000 short of qualifying for a mortgage necessary for a median-priced home.

This gap underscores that the pathway to homeownership is closed for many people, forcing many more of our neighbors to live in rentals for longer

periods of time. The associated increase in demand for rental units has pushed rents higher throughout the region.

Planners and housing experts generally use a federal standard that outlines that housing is unaffordable if occupants pay more than 30 percent of their gross income toward housing costs. Using that metric, rent for a one-bedroom apartment is unaffordable for workers making median renter wages in all seven of our counties. Those making median renter wages would need to work between 42-105 hours a week to afford typical one-bedroom rents in our communities.

The supply of housing in the Mid-Hudson region has dropped to record lows because of the historic increase in demand and the relatively little development of new housing units since the Great Recession of 2008. According to building permit data, the Mid-Hudson region has permitted the construction of approximately 0.5 housing units for every job that it attracted to the region since 2010. The region currently has about 4,800 homes listed on the market – a quantity that is roughly one-third the inventory for sale in 2019.

The Mid-Hudson region recognizes that its housing challenges are also economic challenges. A region

without an adequate supply of affordable housing for residents across the full spectrum of income will have trouble sustaining a workforce to meet the needs of its employers. A 2022 U.S. Census Bureau migration survey found that people who moved out of the Northeast cited housing as their primary reason for relocating.

Our opportunities to build housing are also economic development opportunities. The construction of housing puts laborers and contractors to work, while also supporting material and equipment suppliers. Economic experts also believe in the popular saying that “residential leads commercial.” In other words, employers invest where the people are living, and people live where there is good, stable housing that they can afford.

The regional housing crisis can be quelled if all its stakeholders – public and private – set the conditions to spur the rehabilitation and development of housing. Federal, state, and local governments, along with private and nonprofit developers, all have roles to play. More communities in the Mid-Hudson region have developed housing assessments and action plans, and adjusted their comprehensive plans or zoning to encourage more of the housing that is needed by their residents.

The Council should continue to examine their roles in promoting and supporting the rehabilitation and development of housing that is necessary to sustain our regional workforce and economy.

Wages

It is important to examine wage trends as we consider our economic conditions in the Mid-Hudson region. The original strategic plan drafted by the Mid-Hudson Regional Economic Development Council in 2011 set three goals for jobs that would be attracted by public incentives. The Council determined that public incentives should attract new jobs that pay above average wages, that would be likely to stay in the region, and would produce an above-average multiplier effect.

There are several ways to examine our progress on wages since the work of the Regional Council began 12 years ago.

Total wages in the region between 2011-2021 – a measure of the total payroll for all private and public employers in the region – increased by \$17 billion, or 35 percent.

The median earnings for workers on a county-by-county basis, adjusted for inflation, showed mixed results during that time. Median earnings adjusted for inflation grew modestly in Dutchess, Sullivan, Ulster, and Westchester counties, but median earnings fell in Orange, Putnam, and Rockland.

Those data can be further examined by analyzing wage quintiles that break down the county-by-county population into five groups based upon wages: the bottom 20 percent of earners, the 20-40th percentile, 40-60th percentile, 60-80th percentile, and the top 20 percent of earners. When adjusted for inflation, these data show that the purchasing power of our lowest 40% of earners declined in the majority of Mid-Hudson counties. This is an important economic development metric for several reasons. Those who see their purchasing power decrease are less likely to buy nonessential goods and services because their income is already constrained by vital, necessary costs, such as housing and transportation. This constraint on household budgets can also hamper the full potential of a local economy by limiting expendable income within a portion of the middle class. Those who experience the hardship of rising costs and stagnant wages are also more likely to leave the region in search of a less costly standard of living, which exacerbates the stress within our workforce.

Other Challenges

Economic development in the Mid-Hudson region is also challenged by the rising costs of interest rates, energy, and taxes. Although some of these factors are outside the control of state and local authorities, it is important to acknowledge that these costs affect investments in the region.

Several transformative projects in the region were slated for final land-use approvals or groundbreakings before the Federal Reserve raised the baseline interest rate by more than 5 points to help control inflation. Developers report they are faced with financing gaps that might cause them to delay projects or develop them in stages. The refinancing of debt has also become more expensive, which can constrain access to capital for development and other purposes. Recognizing this challenge, this strategic plan encourages the Council and the state to work with developers on alternative modes of financing through various opportunities available through New York State.

Many employers, especially manufacturers, expressed concern about the growing costs of

energy. Energy costs have continued to rise because of many factors. Business owners and investors expressed concern about the rising costs as a competitive disadvantage for the region as it seeks to attract high-paying businesses that are dependent on reliable and affordable power.

The first strategic plan for the Mid-Hudson Regional Economic Development Council highlighted the need to make our region more business friendly by considering tax and policy changes at the state level. Many of those tax and policy recommendations from 2011 remain relevant today. For example, lessening the overall tax burden on businesses and reforming the SEQRA process are still two of the most salient items that affect our competitiveness and the overall business atmosphere in the region. Both were listed as critical issues in the Council's original plan. The state should work with a diverse group of stakeholders to take a fresh look at SEQRA, pinpointing reasonable changes that would move project proposals through the review process with more speed and predictability, and without compromising the examination of issues that affect environmental and public well-being.



Assets and Opportunities

The Mid-Hudson region is a physical and economic bridge between downstate and upstate New York. The region's proximity to New York City is an important asset, as it expands job opportunities for commuting residents and markets for its businesses. The Mid-Hudson region can better capitalize on its proximity to the nation's biggest economic engine in several ways.

We should continue to support communities that are advancing transit-oriented development plans to build housing and commercial, retail, and modern industrial spaces near mass transportation. Communities should be encouraged to modify zoning to support transit-oriented development. These plans will reduce our carbon footprint, increase community vitality, expand business opportunities, and bring more revenue back to our neighborhoods.

Frequent communication between regional leaders and elected and appointed officials from New York City should be encouraged to explore the development and expansion of markets for goods that are made in the Mid-Hudson region. An example of this partnership is the soon-to-open Grow NYC / New York State Regional Food Hub at Hunts Point in the Bronx. This represents an opportunity for more food grown in the Mid-Hudson region to reach markets and consumers in New York City. Leaders of the creative economy should also join the discussion about additional opportunities to produce films and TV shows in the Mid-Hudson, manufacture stage and film sets, and more. Of the 60,000 people who moved north from New York City into our region during the pandemic, many brought their creativity, new skills, and investments to our neighborhoods. Local economic development authorities should continue to understand what our new neighbors enjoy about the Mid-Hudson region and encourage them to invest in businesses that can thrive in our communities.

Five of our counties in the Mid-Hudson region have a legal right to tap the New York City water supply

system, whose aqueducts travel hundreds of feet beneath the surface of Sullivan, Orange, Ulster, Putnam, and Westchester counties. When the State Legislature passed the Water Supply Act of 1905, it preserved the legal right of all communities in those counties to tap the aqueduct system to draw water for themselves. Approximately 70 communities in the Mid-Hudson region currently use the New York City water supply system as their primary source of drinking water. Sufficient capacity exists within the water system to draw water from existing connections, or new ones, to meet the needs of job-creating industries that might have a harder time finding an ample supply of high-quality water elsewhere. Our region's abundant water resources, including these connections to the New York City water supply system, should be utilized better for the attraction of businesses and well-paying jobs.

Internal opportunities for economic growth and community revitalization are plentiful in the Mid-Hudson region.

Renewed interest in walkable living has resulted in a wave of reinvestment across our cities, villages, and hamlets. This momentum often started with investments in the public realm – bike lanes, facade restorations, sidewalk and streetlight upgrades, urban trails, and other public investments that improve the look of our downtowns and set them up to attract private investment. These actions led to the opening of new restaurants, breweries, galleries, retail shops, and community spaces in buildings that had long been vacant. This pattern of investment has not reached all our downtowns. There are still many who would benefit from planning grants, public realm investments, tax credits, and other state programs that can help them overcome revitalization inertia and kickstart future progress.

Some of the investment in our downtowns has come through the adaptive reuse of Main Street anchor buildings.

Adaptive reuse of existing assets is a broader strategy that is yielding good projects throughout the Mid-Hudson region and has the potential to create many more. Many sites are poised for reutilization. These include industrial parks, office spaces, former manufacturing facilities, large



Saw Mill River Daylighting, Yonkers, Westchester County

parking lots that sit mostly vacant, and Main Street storefronts. Currently, some of the region’s most promising economic development projects hinge on the adaptive reuse of buildings or spaces to create new businesses, housing, and community facilities. The portfolio of sites available for adaptive reuse has expanded in recent years, as online shopping changed the demand for retail space, remote work cut the demand for office complexes, and dwindling school enrollments led to the closure of more than two dozen elementary schools. Each county in the region has its share of vacant sites or significantly underutilized parking lots that are ready for redevelopment. The Council and the state will continue to support projects that bring jobs, housing, recreation, and other forms of activity to these spaces.

The Council also recognizes the considerable potential of mixed-use and “town square” developments that co-locate housing, commercial, and industrial uses. More economic development proposals are relying on a modern pattern of development that brings housing and workplaces close together. The construction of campus-style developments in the Mid-Hudson region is hampered by outdated, single-use zoning that for decades sought to keep residential and industrial uses far apart. Industry now includes breweries and distilleries, arts manufacturing, vertical farming, research and development hubs, and other uses that are very compatible to be interspersed with housing, parks, and shops. This presents an opportunity for the Mid-Hudson region to bring people and jobs closer together, and create a walkable, modern pattern of development that is attractive to our next generation of neighbors.

Our transition to a green economy is also creating diverse economic development opportunities in the Mid-Hudson region. In the past year, companies that manufacture and assemble parts for wind turbines, research and build batteries, and distribute parts of electric vehicles have sought to invest in the region. Some have begun to discuss repurposing farmlands for hemp that could be used for hempcrete, a modern building material, or harvesting additional lumber as a renewable resource. The Council and its partners should convene stakeholders to brainstorm the full spectrum of opportunities that exist as clean technology and green industries expand across the nation. With our access to highways and large consumer markets in the Northeast, the Mid-Hudson region should establish itself as a prime destination for these companies that will drive the future of our economy and our fight against climate change.

Many people continue to visit the Mid-Hudson region each year for its natural beauty, entertainment venues and resorts, agritourism, and other attractions. Although tourism on a regional scale is difficult to quantify, the most reliable statistics suggest that tourism into the region has at least doubled – and possibly tripled – since the Great Recession of 2008 inspired the renaissance of “staycations” into our region. Visitor spending in the region was estimated at \$5.2 billion in 2021. For many, tourism is an entry point into the Mid-Hudson region that compels them to invest here, live here, or return for another trip with their families. The undeniable uptick in visitation provides opportunities for many of our businesses to grow and drive economic prosperity.







Status of Past CFA Projects







The MHREDC has focused on identifying projects that align with its vision as well as with state priorities. Through the Council's work, **1,136 projects** have been awarded since 2011 of which **88.3%** of those are either complete or progressing. The leverage ratio (total project cost to total CFA award amount) is 8.7:1, demonstrating that the MHREDC has maximized the return on investment of New York State awards.



Overview of Previously Funded Priority Projects

SUMMARY STATUS OF PAST PRIORITY PROJECTS BY ROUND

Status	Round I	Round II	Round III	Round IV	Round V	Round VI	Round VII	Round VIII	Round IX	Round XI	Round XII	Total
	1	9	6	13	8	7	6	3	3	-	-	56
	-	2	1	3	4	2	6	11	5	11	8	53
	-	1	-	-	1	3	-	-	-	-	4	9
	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	4	3	8	1	17
	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	2
	-	6	4	4	8	3	5	2	2	1	-	35
Total	1	18	11	21	22	15	17	20	14	20	13	172

-  Project is complete
-  Project concerns need to be resolved
-  Project is on schedule
-  Project contract not yet executed
-  Project is progressing more slowly than anticipated
-  Project canceled or funding declined

LEVERAGE OF STATE INVESTMENT IN ALL PAST PRIORITY PROJECTS

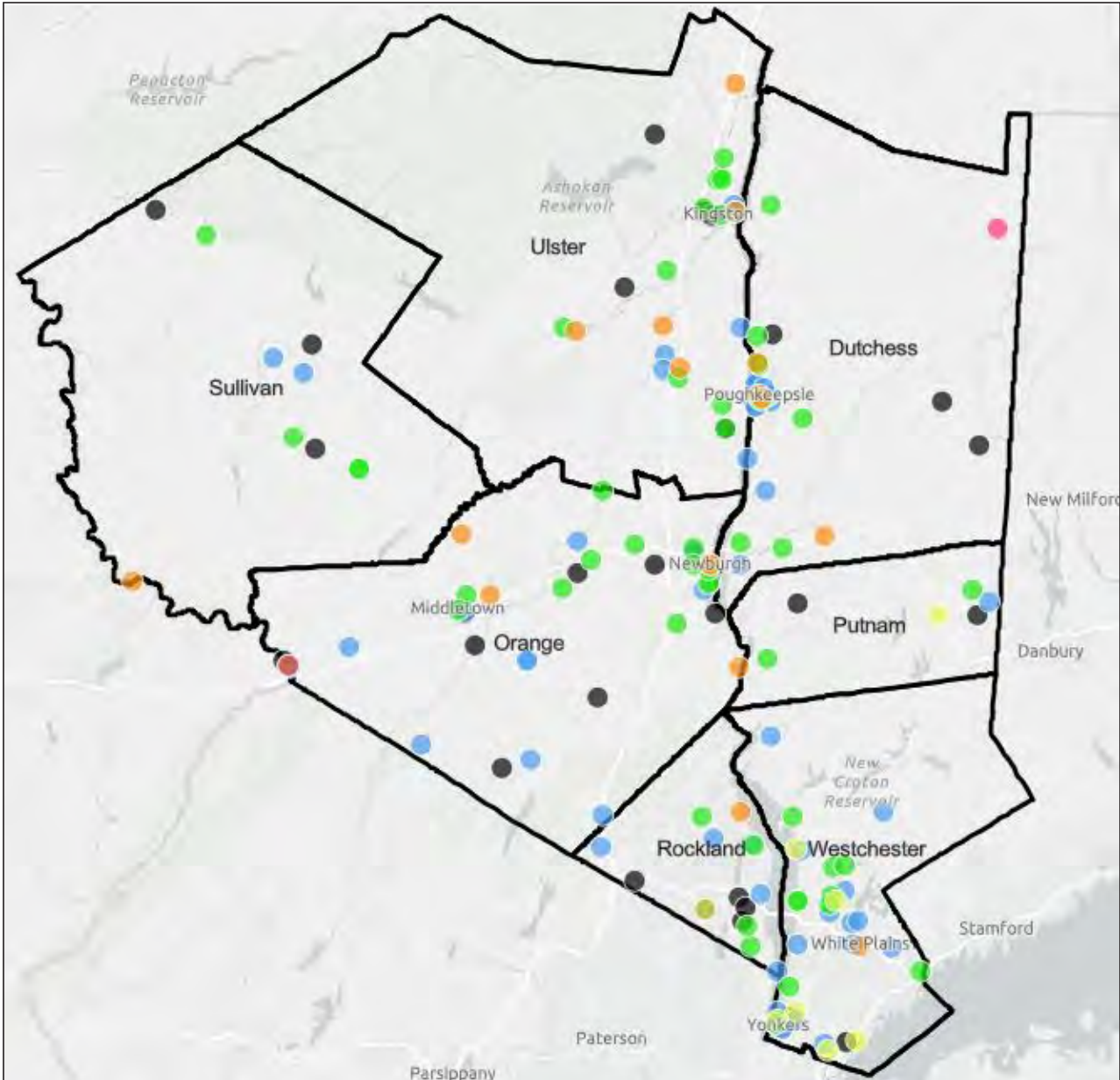
The table below lists the ratio of the total investment in past priority projects to the state investment over Rounds I through XII of the REDC.

Round	Total Number of Priority Projects	Total Amount of Priority Project Awards	Total Project Cost	Ratio of Award Amounts to Total Project Cost
Round I	1	\$4,000,000	\$14,000,000	1:3.5
Round II	12	\$15,475,242	\$232,839,461	1:15.05
Round III	7	\$4,040,000	\$32,708,993	1:8.1
Round IV	17	\$18,854,000	\$183,132,469	1:9.71
Round V	14	\$8,790,000	\$564,399,181	1:64.21
Round VI	12	\$14,432,400	\$178,081,179	1:12.34
Round VII	12	\$10,272,445	\$110,213,870	1:10.73
Round VIII	18	\$16,144,910	\$131,663,097	1:8.16
Round IX	12	\$9,815,000	\$215,411,029	1:21.95
Round XI	19	\$18,406,545	\$233,399,153	1:12.68
Round XII	13	\$11,903,000	\$268,738,167	1:22.58
Total	137	\$132,133,542	\$2,164,586,599	1:16.38

Project data is updated through October 2023. For additional analysis and full appendix of all projects, please visit <https://regionalcouncils.ny.gov/mid-hudson> to view the Project Tracking Dashboard.

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF PAST PRIORITY PROJECTS

- Project is complete
 - Project is on schedule
 - Project is progressing more slowly than anticipated
- Project concerns need to be resolved
 - Project contract not yet executed
 - Project canceled or funding declined





New York State Governor Kathy Hochul

Overview of All Previously Funded CFA Projects

SUMMARY STATUS OF ALL PAST PROJECTS

Status	Round I	Round II	Round III	Round IV	Round V	Round VI	Round VII	Round VIII	Round IX	Round XI	Round XII	Total
Project is complete	49	65	63	83	74	69	52	34	21	1		511
Project is on schedule	3	5	8	12	13	22	44	70	72	93	48	390
Project is progressing more slowly than anticipated	-	1	-	-	2	7	4	3	3	2	6	28
Project contract not yet executed	-	1	1	-	2	2	2	11	11	25	4	59
Project concerns need to be resolved	-	-	1	3	-	-	1	-	2	1	-	8
Project canceled or funding declined	17	20	19	28	19	10	12	8	5	2	-	140
Total	69	92	92	126	110	110	115	126	114	124	58	1136

- Project is complete
- Project concerns need to be resolved
- Project is on schedule
- Project contract not yet executed
- Project is progressing more slowly than anticipated
- Project canceled or funding declined

LEVERAGE OF STATE INVESTMENT IN ALL CFA PROJECTS

Round	Total # of Awards	Total Amount of All CFA Awards	Total Project Cost	Ratio of Award Amount to Total Project Cost
Round I	52	\$25,262,819	\$270,098,609	1:10.69
Round II	72	\$60,846,649	\$468,109,151	1:7.69
Round III	73	\$32,860,234	\$310,231,413	1:9.44
Round IV	98	\$47,889,884	\$717,325,492	1:14.98
Round V	91	\$38,179,011	\$754,979,873	1:19.77
Round VI	100	\$43,724,215	\$309,185,743	1:7.07
Round VII	103	\$51,102,155	\$286,748,964	1:5.61
Round VIII	118	\$56,702,501	\$273,237,900	1:4.82
Round IX	109	\$69,235,336	\$579,443,876	1:8.37
Round XI	122	\$112,933,554	\$614,196,452	1:5.44
Round XII	58	\$36,132,157	\$421,254,114	1:11.66
Total	996	\$574,868,515	\$5,004,811,586	1:8.71

JOB CREATION IN ALL CFA PROJECTS

The table below lists the total number of permanent jobs retained and created through the CFA.

Round	Projected Jobs Created	Projected Jobs Retained	Total
Round I	211	313	524
Round II	1248	6176	7424
Round III	1127	2646	3773
Round IV	978	3237	4215
Round V	723	2484	3207
Round VI	589	3483	4072
Round VII	619	3312	3931
Round VIII	838	947	1785
Round IX	1270	2692	3962
Round XI	969	1393	2362
Round XII	215	1006	1221
Total	8787	27689	36476

PART TWO

Regional Strategic Plan Update & Participation



Regional Strategic Plan Update

Economic Vision for the Mid-Hudson Region

The Mid-Hudson Regional Economic Development Council envisions vibrant community centers that stand out as attractive places to live, work, and play. Our region will attract well-paying jobs in thriving industry sectors by setting the conditions for economic development to thrive. We will also cultivate a robust and skilled workforce through training, education, and the development of ample housing for people at every income level, all while protecting our treasured natural resources and expanding upon the attractions that make the Mid-Hudson region a uniquely dynamic and beautiful place for its residents and visitors.

Regional Priorities, Goals, and Strategies

The Mid-Hudson Regional Economic Development Council has identified many priorities, goals, and strategies that should be pursued to support its economic vision for the region. Each of them is listed in the section below and categorized within six core goals to support thriving communities, set the conditions for economic stimulation and job growth, and preserve a well-trained workforce. The Council will evaluate projects that come before them to ensure they align with the goals set forth in this strategic plan.



Wallace Campus, Poughkeepsie, Dutchess County

The six goals include the following:

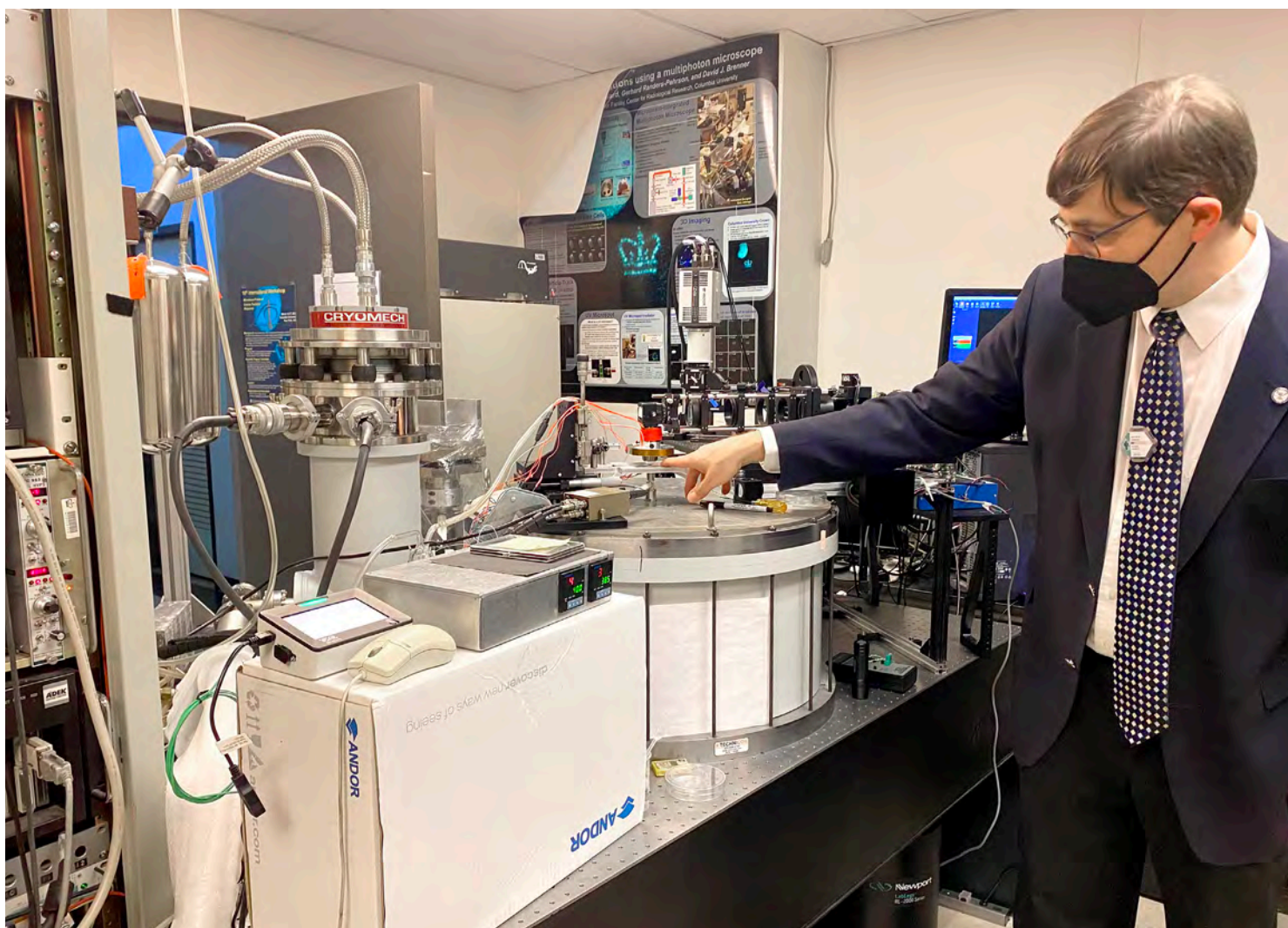
1. Set a strong foundation for economic growth by investing in infrastructure, transportation, and housing.
2. Incentivize local planning and technical assistance to speed up review times, create shovel-ready development sites, and administer economic development funds.
3. Revitalize downtowns and community centers through adaptive reuse and packaged investments in the public realm that will further establish our walkable communities as economic engines for the region.
4. Attract new companies and support the growth of existing businesses in the Mid-Hudson region, with a special focus on priority sectors that are likely to stay, expand, and pay a living wage for the region.
5. Support the region's workforce by taking steps to attract and retain people, providing them with affordable access to education, training, and wraparound services, and by exposing them to regional workforce opportunities at an earlier age.
6. Preserve and create outdoor spaces that make the Mid-Hudson region an attractive place to live and visit. Recognize the imperative need to protect our natural resources from degradation, while also leveraging them for tourism, agriculture, and the development of sustainable businesses.

The six goals are supported by dozens of strategies that will help the region make stepwise progress toward its larger vision for economic development, job growth, and community revitalization. For the purposes of implementation, the detailed strategies in this report fall under the responsibility of various levels of government, along with other institutions, nonprofits, and supportive authorities.

Many of the economic development strategies can be funded through existing programs at Empire State Development, including capital and planning grants, tax incentives, and funds that support business operation and innovation. Several can be funded through well-established programs within other state departments, including the Department of Transportation, Department of Health, and the Environmental Facilities Corporation. But many of the strategies outlined below – including

those that control the targets, rules, and review times for economic development project – rely on action at a more local level by governments, educational institutions, or by business who decide to invest or expand in the Mid-Hudson.

Because the economic aspirations in this plan are diverse and regional, they will require focus, collaboration, and contributions from numerous stakeholders. There is no single government entity, civic group, or business that will meet our vision alone. That is why the Council hopes that civic and business leaders identify their supporting roles to make this plan come to life. We encourage all stakeholders to pursue their piece of the vision for the benefit of the entire Mid-Hudson region.



Colombia University LINAC, Irvington, Westchester County

Goal One

Set a strong foundation for economic growth by investing in infrastructure, transportation, and housing.

Infrastructure – Economic development is hindered in communities where infrastructure is undersized, outdated, or nonexistent. The following strategies aim to maintain or establish adequate utility services for economic growth and community revitalization.

- Provide funding for communities to extend water, sewer, and road infrastructure to sites that would be prepared and marketed for economic development.

- Make it easier for communities to access more than \$5 billion in capital funds that the State Legislature has allocated since 2015 for water and sewer upgrades. While these large appropriations recognize the need to rehabilitate and expand infrastructure that protect human and environmental health, the process to access the funding is too complicated for many small and medium sized communities to navigate without substantial help. Creating easier pathways to funding will keep our infrastructure in a state of good repair and support economic growth.

- Help communities pay for the engineering and other soft costs that are necessary to get a project designed and submitted to receive funding through the Environmental Facilities Corporation (EFC), Department of Health (DOH), and other agencies. EFC currently administers an engineering planning grant that will fund these soft costs for wastewater projects, but no similar program exists for drinking water. Expanding the program to help communities design and submit drinking water projects would help utilize the funds more quickly, and it would improve access for small and medium communities that do not have their own engineering, planning, or grant departments.

- Because the programs generally prioritize communities that are out of compliance with drinking water or wastewater regulations, counties should help to identify those municipalities and point them toward the capital funds to rehabilitate their waterworks.

- Convert some funding, or future funding, to include block grants. The state's current model for disbursing drinking water and wastewater infrastructure funds relies on providing low-interest financing paired with a percentage of loan forgiveness after the project is built. Block grants, along with intensive auditing, would expedite funding to communities in need.

- Work with communications infrastructure companies and government agencies to extend broadband access, both wired and wireless, to all communities in the Mid-Hudson region.

- Utilize the region's share of funding through the ConnectALL program to install fiber and other infrastructure that is necessary to bring wired internet to communities that remain unconnected.

- Help local governments understand the nodes and other infrastructure that is necessary for the rollout of 5G wireless broadband, which could help to connect rural communities to the internet and create more competition in the market.

- Create a fund to pay for energy upgrades in the Mid-Hudson region, including the modernization of our electric distribution grid. As the state policy moved toward fighting climate change through the electrification of transportation and heating, our electric distribution infrastructure needs significant upgrades to increase its carrying capacity and keep up with demand. For example, the addition of electric vehicles and electric heating is expected to triple the electric demand of a standard home in the region. Our transformers, circuitry, substations, and other infrastructure cannot move that quantity of electrons to all places without expanded capacity.

- Provide communities with funding to right-size bridges, culverts and other infrastructure that will be necessary to pass the flow from larger rainstorms, snowmelts, and other extreme runoff events as a result of climate change.

- Encourage communities to study their existing infrastructure to understand its flow capacity compared with probable maximum flows.

- Focus on the replacement of infrastructure that will affect maximum flood heights in downtown business districts and other places where people live and work.

- Provide funding through new or existing DOT / ESD programs to right-size infrastructure and reduce peak flood heights around businesses and homes.

Transportation – Effective transportation planning can bridge the physical distance between our population and employment centers, which are often located far enough apart to create challenges. The Mid-Hudson region also has several regional transportation hubs and priorities that are central to our economic prosperity.

- Concentrate on investments and service at New York Stewart International Airport and Westchester County Airport as regional hubs for moving people and cargo.

- Promote New York Stewart International Airport as a vital northeast hub for cargo, especially given the significant distribution hubs that have developed within a few miles radius of the airport.

- Support the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey (PANYNJ), which operate New York Stewart International Airport,, to attract domestic carriers that serves at least one major hub in the United States. Although international flights from Stewart have gained popularity in recent years, the airport’s full potential is not being realized as it lacks a domestic carrier with access to a major hub such as Atlanta or Chicago.

- Improve the terminal at Westchester County Airport to account for the significant increase in travelers that are flying from Westchester to a number of domestic and international destinations.

- Support the Gateway Program and its potential to provide a one seat ride from Rockland and Orange counties into New York City.

- The state should amplify its discussions with New Jersey about the installation of more passing sidings that will be needed to allow more trains to travel between the Hudson Valley and the proposed bridges and tunnels that would carry those trains into New York City. For example, the number of trains that can run each day on the Pascack Valley Line is constrained by the number of passing sidings that exist along the train line as it goes through New Jersey. Passing sidings are sections of single-track rail that split into two tracks, allowing southbound and northbound trains to safely pass each other. The number of daily trains moving people between the Hudson Valley and New York City cannot increase unless additional passing sidings are installed, which makes this infrastructure modification important for our economic connection to the metro area.

- Fund transportation plans that connect population centers with employment centers.

- Utilize public-private partnerships to establish “loop” lines that more efficiently connect residents of our cities and villages with employers that are struggling to find workers.

- Support additional bike lanes, trails, and other aspects of nonmotorized transportation in communities throughout the Mid-Hudson region. Existing networks of bike lanes and multi-modal trails have attracted visitors, created safe pathways for people to walk or bike in their communities, reduced our reliance on motor vehicles, and spurred additional economic development activities. Projects to create additional bike lanes and trails should be incentivized and acknowledged for their important role in economic development and population retention.

- Incentivize micromobility strategies, such as bike shares or scooter shares, to help residents and visitors travel throughout our downtowns. These systems can also help connect residential neighborhoods to nearby train stations without relying on cars.

Housing – Housing lies at the core of economic and community wellness. Experts often use the phrase “residential leads commercial” to emphasize that businesses choose to establish themselves in locations where housing is abundant and affordable. The development of housing creates well-paying jobs for the construction industry and for the suppliers of lumber, appliances, and other goods and materials.

The low supply and high cost of housing in the Mid-Hudson region has created a crisis on several fronts, including economic development. An ample supply of housing for people across the entire spectrum of income is necessary for our region to maintain a workforce and a customer base for businesses. The following strategies would help to alleviate our housing crisis and provide a good, safe, affordable place to live for our valued neighbors in the Mid-Hudson region.

- Utilize public financing and grants to subsidize capital and operating costs to develop the most affordable rent levels and purchase prices.
- Encourage municipalities to work with their residents, professional planners, and other stakeholders to adjust their zoning codes and regulations in ways that encourage more of the housing that is needed by their neighbors.
- Develop housing in locations where infrastructure is available, and utilize existing industrial, office, or institutional buildings to create housing through adaptive reuse.
- Preserve existing housing by using local code enforcement, tax relief assistance, and programs to refinance debt and rehabilitate housing units.
- Incentivize “town square” or “campus” style developments that incorporate housing into a broader plan that includes commercial, retail, office, and light-industrial uses. Mixed-use developments can often help to retain and attract new residents to a region by siting housing, jobs, and entertainment in close proximity to each other, thereby creating or expanding walkable communities.
- Develop housing near mass transportation to New York City so that transit-oriented developments become new hubs of economic and residential activity in our communities.

- Adopt policies that encourage the development of senior housing, with universal design features, to meet the needs of our aging population in the Mid-Hudson region.
- Rebuild the path to homeownership by diversifying ownership options and adjusting programs that assist first-time buyers of low and moderate income.
 - Adjust the qualifying income limits for down payment and closing costs to reflect the higher cost of homes throughout the Mid-Hudson region.
 - Encourage local governments to allow manufactured homes, shared-equity cooperatives, condominiums, and other models of homeownership that can allow our neighbors to own a piece of their communities.
 - Encourage the incorporation of additional community land trusts throughout the Mid-Hudson region to remove land-value speculation from the cost of housing.



Village of Sleepy Hollow, Westchester County

Goal Two

Incentivize local planning and technical assistance to speed up review times, create shovel-ready development sites, and administer economic development funds.

- Fund the predevelopment work, such as a General Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS), that would allow local governments to create shovel-ready development sites in their communities, thereby minimizing the review time by land-use boards.

- Continue to market the FAST NY Shovel-Ready Grant Program to counties and their municipalities to perform pre-develop site planning and to extend utilities to prime development sites.

- The state should consider reducing the size of parcels that are eligible for the program, as the 40-acre minimum is too large for many parts of the Mid-Hudson region, especially communities south of Interstate 84.

- Incentivize communities to create General Environmental Impact Statements (GEIS) to review a single site, or several contiguous or scattered sites, to expand the number of locations that are shovel ready. This will substantially reduce land-use review times.

- For communities that receive public money to establish shovel-ready sites, the state should require that land subject to the GEIS be used for a predetermined list of regional or statewide priorities, including but not limited to:

- Housing
- Transit-oriented developments
- Projects related to priority industry sectors listed in this plan
- The attraction of jobs that will pay more than the current median wage

- Fund the technical assistance for small and medium communities – especially those in our rural areas – who need external help to establish shovel-ready sites.

- Encourage towns, villages, and cities to overhaul their zoning in ways that allow for modern patterns of development, including zoning that concentrates more on the form, size, and appearance of buildings.

- Continue to promote the availability of ESD’s strategic planning and feasibility grants to help communities hire the technical assistance needed for comprehensive plans, zoning overhauls, the rightsizing of parking regulations, and other vital actions outlined in this section.

- Activate vacant storefronts in our downtowns through vacant property registration ordinances. Successful vacant property ordinances require owners of vacant storefronts to work with licensed realtors to market their space and/or allow communities to provide temporary activation of storefronts through art or other means. This strategy helps to recruit new businesses to downtown buildings, and it removes the blight of vacancy that can harm downtown aesthetics and economic vibrancy.

- Continue to support funding programs that allow counties to apply for state grants through the Consolidated Funding Application process on behalf of their small/medium municipalities. Since many of our towns are governed by part-time lawmakers who rely on small teams of municipal employees, counties should be encouraged to apply for funds and administer them on behalf of their smaller towns to create more equitable access to state funding.



Haverstraw, Rockland County

Goal Three

Revitalize downtowns and community centers through adaptive reuse and packaged investments in the public realm that will further establish our walkable communities as economic engines for the region.

- Continue to prioritize and provide incentives to companies that site or expand their businesses within a city, village, hamlet, or other community center with existing water and sewer infrastructure and access to transportation. This strategy reduces sprawl and transportation challenges, while prioritizing adaptive reuse and smart-growth in community centers that have infrastructure to support it.

- Continue to incentivize adaptive reuse projects at every scale to bring already developed areas back into productive use. Adaptive reuse could help to develop new businesses, vertical or hydroponic farms, housing, and uses that create businesses, jobs, and places to live. Several trends and economic factors, including online shopping and remote work, have quickly changed the need for space and the highest and best uses of certain buildings. The Hudson Valley is primed with excellent locations for adaptive reuse. Those who participated in outreach session for this plan offered the following examples:

- Vacant or struggling malls: Every county in the Mid-Hudson region has at least one mall that is vacant or nearly vacant. There are viable proposals – and precedents from other states – to reuse malls for town-square style developments that create mixed-use communities, housing, medical facilities or other in-demand uses.

- Large parking lots: Many of our malls, shopping centers, and other retail spaces were outfitted with large parking lots that are extremely underutilized.

- Office space: The COVID-19 pandemic hastened an exodus from many of the region’s office complexes. Experts throughout the Mid-Hudson region expect that less than 50 percent of the

available Class A office space will ever be filled again, as many companies have moved toward allowing some proportion of remote work for their staff.

- Former industrial sites: Our region is filled with former factories and manufacturing facilities. Many of these locations have great physical infrastructure and architectural appeal but are looking for a new use.

- Continue to fund the demolition of downtown structures that are beyond repair and promote infill buildings on vacant parcels to create open swaths of land where new job-creating projects can establish themselves downtown.

- Continue to invest in programs, such as the Mid-Hudson Momentum Fund, by allowing communities to apply for capital grants that would fund a package of infrastructure and community upgrades to foster economic activity in a particular portion of a city, village, hamlet, or town center. Past projects in the region have shown that revitalization in a concentrated portion of a community often spreads to areas that surround the public investment. That’s why the Council will support communities that submit applications for a package of upgrades that might include the following:

- Utility upgrades
- Bike lanes and recreation paths
- Pedestrian plazas
- Facade restorations
- Parking
- Signage
- Nonmotorized transportation infrastructure
- Parks improvements
- Upgrades to other aspects of the public realm, including lights, sidewalks, street furniture, etc.

These applications should identify specific and achievable goals related to economic development, job growth, housing production, or community revitalization that would be furthered by the public's broader investment in a set of proposed upgrades.

- Survey people who moved into the Mid-Hudson region and are working remotely from our neighborhoods to learn about the businesses and amenities they need during the workday. Share that information with entrepreneurs and small business owners who might create new businesses and jobs in these communities. For example, many co-working businesses are filled to capacity with

remote workers, and service businesses such as coffee shops and gyms have seen more daytime use.

- Continue to support planning and development projects that would connect waterfronts with downtowns, especially in cities where the downtown business corridor is cut off from the Hudson River, Delaware River, or another body of water by train tracks, highways, or steep slopes. Connecting popular waterfronts with struggling downtowns can help spread the positive impact of investment, visitation, and revitalization.

Village of Sleepy Hollow, Westchester County



Goal Four

Attract new companies and support the growth of existing businesses in the Mid-Hudson region, with a special focus on priority sectors that are likely to stay, expand, and pay a living wage for the region.

Target job-creating capital investments in the following industries that have been identified as priorities for the Mid-Hudson region:

Agriculture

Farming in all its forms – livestock, fruit and vegetables, maple syrup, grain, etc. and the emerging market for cannabis and hemp – remains a significant industry sector for the Mid-Hudson region, especially as metro-area markets continue to pay a premium for locally grown/raised ingredients.

- Job-creating investments include processing facilities to create finished or value-added products, storage facilities to preserve food before it is sold to market, and a range of urban farming, vertical farming, and other trends that promise to bring the cultivation of food into our urban areas.
- The use of working lands for building materials, such as dimensional lumber or hempcrete, also stands out as an economic opportunity, especially for communities in the northern and western parts of the Mid-Hudson region.
- Support new opportunities for our region to act as the “foodshed” for the largest metro region in the United States by innovating ways to grow, harvest, and ship food year-round.

Biotech and Life Sciences

A cluster of businesses in the biotech and life sciences industries, including several Fortune 500 companies, are thriving in the southern part of the Mid-Hudson region.

- The Council, in partnership with the state and regional stakeholders from the Mid-Hudson region, will strategically focus on marketing the area as “BioHud Valley,” to solidify our position as a nationwide leader in biotech research, development, and manufacturing.

- This sector would also benefit from a hub strategy in which state and local economic development experts talk with existing companies in the Mid-Hudson region about other businesses that are within their supply chain. Attracting those smaller or complementary companies to move closer to their large clients could attract more jobs in this priority sector.

Distribution

The Mid-Hudson region has become a prime location for distribution centers due to its excellent highway access and its proximity to dense population centers throughout the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic. Most distribution centers are sited in towns along the highway corridors, especially the New York State Thruway, Route 17/86, and Interstates 84 and 684.

The Council should consider the following factors regarding distribution:

- It is important that regional distribution centers in the Mid-Hudson region pay living wages, or it will continue to be difficult for them to attract and retain workers.
- Automation, which already plays a big role at some of the distribution and logistics centers in the Mid-Hudson region, might quickly change the number and nature of careers at the distribution companies that are coming to our region.
- Distribution centers often utilize large tracts of undeveloped land. Once the distribution centers are built, those lands are unavailable for other uses that might benefit from our unique combination of access to abundant water and interstate highways. Each project should be carefully evaluated to ensure it represents the highest and best use of our limited land along the highway corridors.

- Encourage distribution centers to utilize green building initiatives, such as rooftop solar arrays, which create a stronger public benefit from these large structures. With increased truck traffic emissions, companies should be encouraged to utilize green alternative modes of transportation.
- Continue to work and strengthen ties between the distribution centers and the cargo operation at New York Stewart International Airport, which could create and preserve jobs at the airport.

Film and TV Production

Certified sound studios in several of our counties are booked for more than a year into the future, underscoring the demand for filming, production, and editing space.

- The New York State Film Tax Credit Program should continue to be supported to cultivate this industry sector in the region.
- Continue to work with local economic development partners to identify new spaces, including adaptive reuse opportunities, to continue building our studio capacity to meet the needs of this sector.

Green Energy and Technologies

Significant job growth opportunities are likely to be available as the United States and New York move toward decarbonizing our systems that produce, distribute, and store energy. Communities within the Mid-Hudson region have attracted companies related to the production of parts for offshore wind turbines, battery research and manufacturing, and the distribution of parts for electric vehicles.

Manufacturing

In this context, manufacturing applies to many types of businesses that are thriving in the Mid-Hudson region. This includes companies manufacturing chip and electronic components, lighting, flavorings, fragrances, packaging, food, and large stage elements for theater shows on Broadway.

State and regional leaders should support policies that maintain the Mid-Hudson region as a viable home for manufacturing by focusing on certain input costs, such as taxes and energy, that affect the cost of manufactured products and their competitiveness in a global market.

Yoni Bokser, Executive Director/Vice President, NYS Governor's Office of Motion Picture & Television Development & New Media - Speaking at the Orange County Summit, 2023 - SUNY Orange, Middletown, Orange County



Research & Innovation

The Mid-Hudson region is home to some of the most powerful quantum computers anywhere in the world, and medical research labs that are developing new vaccines. The region has a long history of innovation and research that produces well-paying jobs for a highly skilled and educated workforce.

The Council will continue to prioritize job-creating investments in a wide range of research and innovation fields, including quantum computing, artificial intelligence, robotics and automation, medical research and innovation, and agricultural innovation.

Tourism

The roots of the most recent uptick in tourism for the Mid-Hudson region date back to the Great Recession of 2008, when the fiscal crisis compelled families to forego air travel and opt instead for “staycations.” The trend toward cheaper, driving-distance vacations brought many families to our region. This resulted in a steady uptick in visitors to historic sites, riverside towns, state parks and campgrounds, restaurants, wineries, farms, and other destinations throughout the Mid-Hudson region. The region is within driving distance of more than 20 million Americans who have been eager to get outdoors, enjoy the scenic beauty of our region, and experience our many concert venues, resorts, outdoor shopping centers, theme parks, and more. Many trusted metrics suggest that visitation into our region has at least doubled over the past 15 years.

- Establishing a critical mass of attractions that are proximate to each other will help tourism in the region by allowing local and regional tourism authorities to create itineraries that easily connect nearby attractions for visitors.
- Highlighting career pathways is important to help people working in tourism and hospitality identify opportunities to move quickly up the ranks and make a more livable wage compared to entry-level jobs.
 - Support projects in the hospitality industry that address the region’s shortage of hotel rooms by encouraging the construction of new hotels, resorts and overnight facilities that can meet the demand of visitors.

Additional Strategies

- Ensure that New York’s public investments are used to support jobs that meet three essential criteria:
 - Jobs that pay a livable wage, with a sharp focus on careers that will pay more than the current median wage to help close the widening pay gap between our lowest and highest earners and allay our housing affordability crisis.
 - Jobs that are likely to stay in the region and are not easily transferred to another state or country.
 - Jobs that have an above-average multiplier effect.
- Local economic development experts should pursue a “hub” strategy that would utilize large anchor businesses within the region to attract other companies that are part of their supply chains, shipping networks, and their broader ecosystem of partners.



Graft Cider, Newburgh, Orange County

- Each county in the Mid-Hudson region should aim to meet with its five largest private employers to learn where they get their supplies and materials, the other companies they depend on for parts and shipping, and other information related to business connections. The counties, in collaboration with the state, should then reach out to site managers for those companies to pitch viable sites in the region that might meet their needs and bring them closer to existing Mid-Hudson region businesses that are their critical partners.

- Continue to offer tax benefits or volume-based deductions to companies in the Mid-Hudson region that purchase goods and services from other businesses in the state, including those owned by minorities, women, and veterans.

- Develop a regional asset map that shows highways, educational institutions, major water supplies, high-capacity electrical services, office and industrial parks, cultural institutions, airports, distances to major markets, and other assets and information that will help site managers choose the Mid-Hudson region as a location for business investment and job growth. The asset map should be digital and include layers to highlight different features that are more relevant to each potential investor.

- Train existing small business owners with succession planning so that businesses owned by those in the baby boomer generation do not liquidate when the owner retires.

- The state, through partners at the local level, should offer training on employee stock ownership plans (ESOP) to help retiring small-business owners transition their companies into being owned by their employees. Employee-owned businesses in the region often pay better wages, as the employees each have a stake in decisions about the use of revenues and profits. ESOP training is likely to become an important business retention strategy in the Mid-Hudson region as more small-business owners head toward retirement and consider liquidation. Learning about options to pass the business along to their employees would keep many valued companies open, and their workers employed.

- Support entrepreneurs by connecting them to critical support services within the region.

- Continue to support the region's designated innovation hot spots that provide business planning services, training, and connections to investors to help entrepreneurs operationalize their business concepts.

- Develop a regional guide to capital access that is easy to understand, providing businesses with a full directory of lending institutions, and grant programs that are specific to the needs of various industries. These sources should include state, federal, and private programs that can be leveraged by businesses in the region.

- Create an easy to use guide for all state funding programs that can support capital construction, community revitalization, workforce development, site preparation, and other elements of economic development. New York is fortunate to have many programs that can support economic development, but business and communities do not have one place to learn about funding programs that fit their needs.

- Market this Mid-Hudson Regional Economic Development Council strategic plan broadly to raise awareness of our regional goals, priorities, and strategies, and state funding opportunities to help meet them.

- Promote small business access to capital programs to provide a variety of loans that can help developers and companies bridge their financing gaps.

- Create digital peer-to-peer mentoring opportunities and networking for all levels of business across different industries.



Rendering - Cornwall Downtown Revitalization Hospitality Project, Cornwall, Orange County

Goal Five

Support the region's workforce by taking steps to attract and retain people, providing them with affordable access to education, training, and wraparound services, and by introducing them to regional workforce opportunities at an earlier age.

- Establish career academies inside K-12 public school to introduce children earlier in life to the wide breadth of careers that are available in the Mid-Hudson region. Offer internships, apprenticeships, and job shadowing opportunities to high school students who want to find careers at the intersection of their talents and interests.

- Continue to collaborate with local companies that would invest in equipment and training for local high schoolers to learn skills that lead to jobs upon graduation.

- Allow colleges, universities, BOCES, and One Stop Centers to efficiently respond to workforce needs by creating or adjusting programs to respond to regional needs.

- Identify careers in the Mid-Hudson region that are facing critical shortages of workers, such as engineers and nurses, and work with education institutions to focus additional attention and investment on getting qualified individuals into degree programs for those jobs.

- Continue to invest in innovation hubs, research centers, and other forward-thinking efforts within our colleges and universities, which are economic hubs for the region and critical centers of workforce development and civic engagement.

- Respond to the latest New York State Department of Labor survey of job seekers by providing funding and wraparound services, such as childcare and transportation, that are needed to get people retrained and align their skills with the needs of employers.

- Advertise scholarships or free training classes that can help job seekers overcome their primary concern of cost.

- Continue to support and expand the work of nonprofit organizations that are training and providing pathways to employment for people with disabilities, the formerly incarcerated, retirees, and other underutilized subsets of our potential workforce.

- Support childcare and eldercare. These vital services allow people to get to work, provide early childhood education, and maintain social connectivity for our senior citizens.

- Continue to support initiatives that attract and develop suitable spaces for childcare facilities, and train childcare operators and early education professionals.

- Establish a plan to provide childcare for workers on the second shift, whose needs are equally important, but do not fall within the traditional operating hours of most childcare businesses.

- Help mitigate outward migration from the Mid-Hudson region by establishing focused programs that can connect graduates from local colleges with employers who need their training. Higher education is the second largest industry cluster in the region, attracting tens of thousands of students to the region every year. Investing time and money to keep them in the region post-graduation could help to alleviate our workforce shortages.

Goal Six

Preserve and create outdoor spaces that make the Mid-Hudson region an attractive place to live and visit. Recognize the importance of protecting our natural resources from degradation, while also leveraging them for tourism, agriculture, and the development of sustainable businesses.

- Encourage CFA applicants to share whether they have examined their project proposals for the inclusion of renewable energy, including rooftop solar or small-scale wind turbines, which can add clean energy to the grid and reduce the region's carbon footprint.
- Create a regional master plan that balances waterfront development with preservation, recreational access, and considerations for sea-level rise.
- Partner with land conservation groups to continue to support smart growth opportunities that allow for the development of new housing and job creating businesses in areas that already have infrastructure, while reducing development pressure mountains, forests, farmlands, scenic byways, wetlands, riparian corridors, and watershed buffer zones.
- Continue to support trail connections and public park projects that connect communities; provide accessible outdoor space in city and town centers; provide trees for shade in urban centers; protect clean water; create access to open space, cultural, and historic sites; allow communities to create sporting and activity centers that attract visitors; and generally increase the quality of life for those living in the Mid-Hudson region.
- Preserve open spaces and recreational amenities that provide access to our regional waterways.
- Continue to prioritize grants for watershed management and protection.

- Explore and support environmentally sound ways to use the Hudson River to move people and goods.

For example:

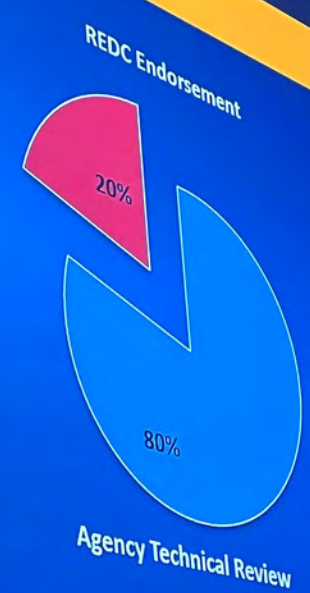
- Consider how the river can be used to move people for the purposes of commuting and tourism. This might include fast ferries for commuting, tourism boats that connect river cities, and other viable strategies.
- The shipping of food, and the safe shipping and assembly of infrastructure components, such as offshore wind turbines.

- Recognize that water is our most abundant and precious resource by protecting it, but also utilizing it for sustainable for economic development. In particular, counties that have a legal right to tap into the New York City water supply system (Orange, Putnam, Sullivan, Ulster, and Westchester) should explore the possibility and use their existing connections as a marketing tool to attract high-value industries, such as microchip fabricators, that tend to require more water than other economic sectors.
- Plan for ongoing effects of climate change by preserving floodways and flood plains, right sizing infrastructure to handle the flow of water from large runoff events, and examining the long-term risk for homes and businesses that were built at lower elevations that are likely to be impacted by rising waters.

Review & Scoring

... Council reviewer will determine the degree to which the plan complements the regional strategic plan and assign the corresponding number of points.

DEGREE	POINTS
Priority	20
Very Strong	15
Strong	10
Moderate	5
Weak	0



Participation

The MHREDC continues to work diligently to ensure the public is informed and included in various multifaceted outreach efforts. While maintaining a strong network of community stakeholders and fostering solid communication with elected officials, the MHREDC has effectively shared its vision for the region's future.

Public Outreach and Engagement

The Mid-Hudson Regional Economic Development Council (MHREDC) and its consultant, Hudson Valley Pattern for Progress (Pattern), solicited input for this plan from civic leaders and residents of the region.

The feedback was collected in three forums: public input sessions, focus groups, and written feedback.

Seven public input sessions, one for each of the counties in the Mid-Hudson region, were hosted virtually to solicit economic development, job growth, and community revitalization ideas from the public. The executive or manager in each county opened the public session and provided brief remarks about the MHREDC, the Consolidated Funding Application process, its impact on each county up until now, and ideas for the future. The research team from Pattern then walked participants through the details of the original MHREDC strategic plan from 2011, the current plan, and the effects of ESD's public investments in the region since the councils were established. Participants were also presented with a series of questions to help steer their feedback toward topics that were relevant to the plan, with an emphasis on economic development supports, priority industries, and elements of community revitalization that would be most helpful in their communities.

More than 250 people attended the online sessions, and many of them provided feedback that yielded ideas and priorities for this plan. Those who attended the public sessions were also given a link to a website where they could answer questions about economic development and community revitalization priorities. A total of 17 people utilized the online form to provide detailed feedback. The online form included four questions:

1. What strategies and priorities should the Mid-Hudson Regional Economic Development Council consider to drive state investments for economic development, job growth, and community revitalization?

2. What industry sectors are more important for the future of the economy in the Mid-Hudson?

3. What are the most essential infrastructure investments that can help to revitalize our communities and improve their ability to attract and retain employers?

4. Is there anything else the council should consider while putting together the Mid-Hudson strategic economic development plan?

Each of the public forums, and the address to the online feedback form, were advertised through email, social media, and other methods by ESD, county governments in the region, the consultant, members of the regional council and their respective organizations, and other civic groups throughout the seven county area.

In addition to the public outreach, the Council hosted focus group meetings with topic experts and civic leaders throughout the Mid-Hudson region.

These focus group meetings included sessions for county tourism directors, county planning departments, county and regional economic development agencies, manufacturing companies, workforce development boards, college presidents, environmental nonprofits, healthcare leaders, mayors, supervisors, social service agencies, and a more general session that included civic leaders from a broad spectrum of businesses, utilities, and nonprofits throughout the region.

Participants in the focus groups had open and detailed discussions about priority industries and projects, broad economic development needs and goals, and strategies for the state to help local governments set the conditions for job growth and downtown vibrancy.

The consultant team and the Council received feedback from nearly 500 people between the public sessions, answers to the online form, and focus groups. Pattern synthesized the feedback to identify common themes, including many that are reflected in this report. We sincerely appreciate those who shared their ideas, knowledge, and experience.

In addition to the outreach for the Regional Strategic Plan Update, the MHREDC worked closely with Empire State Development's (ESD) Mid-Hudson Regional Office, elected officials and regional economic development partners to deliver valuable information on the REDC initiative and other state programs and incentives.

In summary, outreach efforts included:

- **CFA Information Sessions & Public Meeting** – seven in-person information sessions were held, one in each of the seven counties, from June to July 2023. Total attendance was 211 participants. The Council also held a hybrid public meeting with approximately 80 participants.
- **Monthly E-Newsletter** – the e-newsletter reaches over 2,700 stakeholders every month. As of November 2023, there have been 35,699 sends with an average open rate of 44.5%, and an average click rate of 9.7%.
- **Other events** – the MHREDC, in conjunction with ESD's Mid-Hudson Regional Office staff, have participated and attended over 15 events held by regional economic development partners, business associations, etc., to further promote state economic development resources.

Workgroups

The Mid-Hudson Regional Economic Development Council's four workgroups, LIVE, WORK, PLAY, and WORKFORCE, were tasked with furthering the Council's mission while aligning with the statewide priorities.

Workgroup Goals:

- Drive progress on key components of the MHREDC's overall strategy
- Provide opportunities for stakeholders and members of the public to contribute to the REDC process
- Facilitate connections between the business, not-for-profit, academic and government sectors
- Identify barriers and develop solutions across various industry sectors to further economic development
- Monitor how the regional strategy and the lingering effects of COVID-19 affect the region's economy
- Apply the lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion to their efforts
- Inform the full Council of developments and recommendations to advance and/or update the regional strategy, recover from COVID-19, and grow the economy

LIVE

The **LIVE** workgroup's mission is to identify challenges, resources, and best practices for key issue areas and present solution recommendations. Key issue areas include infrastructure, planning (including smart growth and TOD) opportunity agenda, retention and attraction of residents, revitalization, and workforce.

Members:

- Adam Bosch, Hudson Valley Pattern for Progress
- Barbara Barosa, Putnam County
- Mary Beth Bianconi, Delaware Engineering
- Mayor Joseph DeStefano, City of Middletown
- Denise Frangipane, Sullivan Renaissance
- Susan Gerry, Esq.
- Jill Marie, Habitat for Humanity of Greater Newburgh
- Mayor Steven Noble, City of Kingston
- Kevin O'Connor, RUPCO
- Michael Romita, Westchester County Association

WORK

The **WORK** workgroup's mission is to identify and assess challenges and assets that are key to strengthening the growth, retention, and attraction of priority industry clusters in the Mid-Hudson region including: life sciences, advanced manufacturing, information technology, financial and professional services, distribution, film and tv, innovation, hospitality, healthcare, as well as for diverse small business enterprises.

Members:

- Thomas Carey, Westchester Putnam Central Labor Body
- Dr. Marsha Gordon, The Business Council of Westchester
- Maureen Halahan, Orange County Partnership
- Wiley Harrison, Business of Your Business, LLC

PLAY

The **PLAY** workgroup's mission is to support all aspects of the regional tourism economy, including strengthening the Mid-Hudson regional and local tourism brand, facilitating initiatives for sustainable tourism growth and resiliency planning for the tourism and hospitality industry.

Members:

- Lisa Berger, Ulster County Tourism & Film
- Noah Bobrowsky, City Winery HV/Milk Factory
- Roberta Byron-Lockwood, Sullivan County Tourism & Film
- Natasha Caputo, Westchester County Tourism & Film
- Amanda Dana, Orange County Tourism & Film, Hudson Valley Tourism
- Kathy Finlay, Glynwood Center for Regional Food & Farming
- Eric Frances, Bethel Woods Center for the Arts
- Donna Haynes, MTA
- Kellie Honeycutt, Storm King Art Center
- Donald Liloia, NY Waterway/Galaxy Properties
- Claire Marin, Catskill Provisions
- Johanna Porr, Orange County
- Jay Quaintance, SUNY Sullivan
- Lucy Redzeposki, Rockland County Tourism & Film
- Robin Rosenberg, GARNER Historic District
- Melaine Rottkamp, Dutchess County Tourism & Film
- Stacy Shuster, Rye Playland
- Tom Smiley, Mohonk Mountain House
- Ned Sullivan, Scenic Hudson
- Tracey Walsh, Putnam County Tourism & Film
- Adam Watson, Sloop Brewing Co.

WORKFORCE

The **WORKFORCE** workgroup's mission is to develop attract and retain a quality workforce in the region, focusing on connecting short- and long-term industry talent needs with the Mid-Hudson region's many educational institutions to create a pipeline for employment.

Members:

- Rachel Adler, NYS Department of Labor
- Mary Jane Bertram, Workforce Development Institute
- Michael Bonura, Bonura Hospitality Group
- Jason Chapin, Westchester County Association
- Susan Dean, McKesson
- Kathy Halas, Child Care Council of Westchester
- Johnnieanne Hansen, The Council of Industry
- Joseph Kenner, Greyston
- Harold King, The Council of Industry
- Jacquie Leventoff, Carol Alexander Enterprises
- Helena le Roux Ohm, The Center for Discovery
- Jerry McKinstry, Pace University
- Johny Nelson, NYS Department of Labor
- Al Samuels, Rockland Business Association

With this strategic plan update, the MHREDC will reevaluate the current workgroups to determine if a new approach is warranted.



IBM, Poughkeepsie, Dutchess County

PART THREE

Challenges Competition Proposal



Challenge Overview

As the focus of our challenge proposal, the Mid-Hudson Regional Economic Development Council unanimously chose the challenge topic of People and Talent Attraction and Retention.

Data show that our region is beginning to feel the effects of a people shortage that will likely worsen in the coming decades if certain demographic trends cannot be slowed or altered. Lower birth rates, outward migration from the Mid-Hudson region, and unaffordable housing costs are the three most salient causes of a trend that is pointing us toward fewer school children, fewer workers, and fewer full-time residents in many of our communities.

Most importantly for this report, our region's shifting demographics could be detrimental to our overall business environment if companies cannot find enough people to meet their workforce needs. The Mid-Hudson region must have an ample workforce to sustain its current businesses and attract new ones in the future.

Business owners and civic leaders throughout the Mid-Hudson region have lamented the stress within our regional workforce and how it constrains their ability to hire employees. This has affected practically every industry sector in the region, and the symptoms of our people shortage are easy to find. Our healthcare system is struggling with the scarcity of primary care physicians, laboratory technicians, home health aides, and staff in other sub-specialties. Hospital systems are hiring contract nurses from outside the region to fill the deficit of local nurses. Several school districts have eliminated bus routes because they could not find enough drivers. Obtaining drivers and operators is also a challenge for large contractors, distribution centers, and other employers who cannot find enough people with CDL licenses. Many restaurants throughout the region have posted flyers in their eateries to ask customers to remain patient while they cope with a shortage of cooks, dishwashers, and waitstaff.

The trends within our workforce are creating a particular tension for some industries that have seen their supply of workers dwindle just as the demand for services is increasing. For example, the demand is rising for healthcare services because the Mid-Hudson population is rapidly aging, but there is not an ample workforce to fill the jobs necessary to meet the demand. A similar paradigm exists within the tourism and hospitality sectors. Our region has experienced an uptick in visitors as the number of people available to work at resorts, restaurants, and other attractions has declined.

The evidence of workforce stress throughout the Mid-Hudson region is reflected in the significant body of data that are presented in the following pages.



Bjorn Gorn at Skate Time, Accord, Ulster County

BIRTH TRENDS - ANNUAL BIRTHS BY COUNTY

	1997	2010	2020	Total Change 1997-2020	Percent Change 1997-2020
Dutchess	3,399	2,867	2,563	-836	-24.6%
Orange	4,869	4,999	5,234	365	7.5%
Putnam	1,227	931	831	-396	-32.3%
Rockland	4,341	4,525	5,708	1,367	31.5%
Sullivan	839	831	867	28	3.3%
Ulster	1,922	1,693	1,473	-449	-23.4%
Westchester	12,655	11,104	9,634	-3,021	-23.9%
TOTAL	31,249	28,960	28,330	-2,919	-9.3%

SOURCE: NYS DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH VITAL STATISTICS

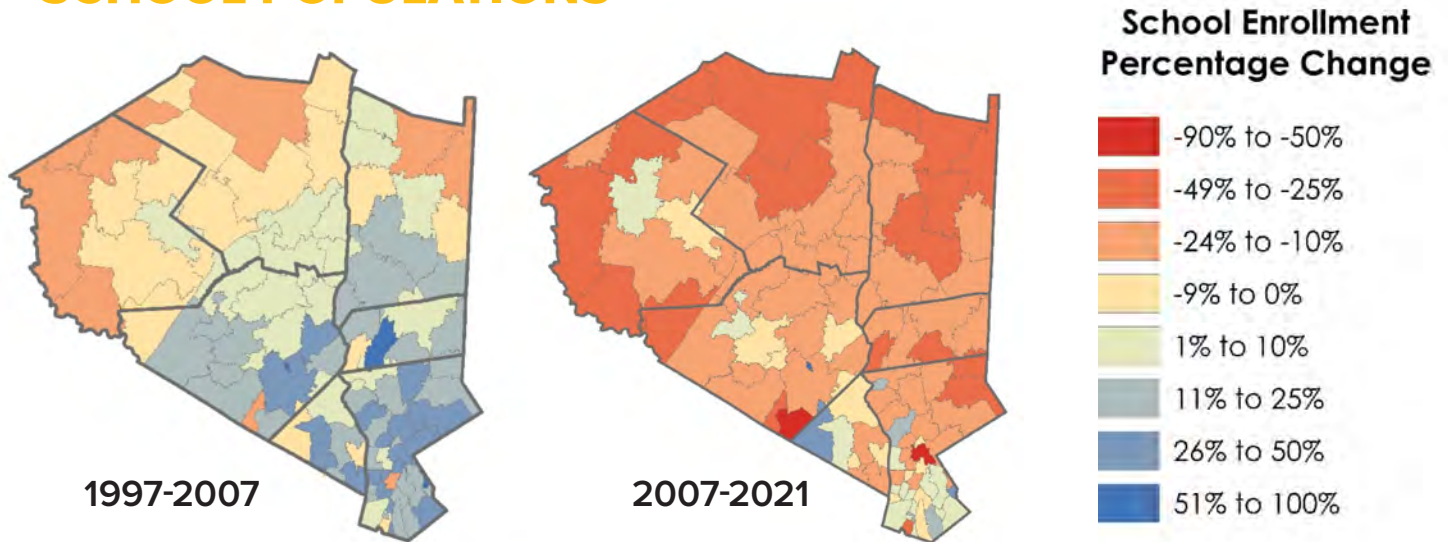


The Mid-Hudson region has experienced a significant decline in live births that mirrors a global trend. The typical family needs to have 2.1 children to keep global, national, and regional populations flat. This birth rate is known as the “replacement rate.” All the major industrialized countries across the globe are now below the replacement rate. The typical family in the United States had 1.94 children as of 2022, and families in the State of New York had 1.55 children according to the most recent data from the Department of Health. Those data point toward a long-term trend of population decline.

The data are similar in the Mid-Hudson region where most of our counties have seen a steady and significant decline in total annual births over the past two decades. Certain areas in Orange, Rockland, and Sullivan counties are growing at a greater rate than the rest of the population as a whole.

The Mid-Hudson region is having approximately 3,000 fewer children each year than in 1997. This information is vital because it predicts future workforce trends and availability, absent an outside influence from domestic migration or international immigration.

SCHOOL POPULATIONS



The Mid-Hudson region has experienced a significant decline in its public-school enrollment, especially in the years that have followed the Great Recession of 2008. Regionwide public school enrollment has fallen by 42,399 students, from a peak of 362,242 students in 2004-2005, to a low of 319,843 in 2022-2023.

Since 2007, 81 of our 107 school districts have seen their enrollments decline, most by more than 10 percent. Three of our seven counties’ school districts are faced with declining enrollments.

These data are important to follow for the same reason as births. Today’s students traditionally would become the workforce that met the needs of public, private, and nonprofit employers in the future.

Migration

Migration is the domestic movement of people from one state to another, or one county to another, throughout the United States. Some of the most accurate migration data available to the public comes from the Internal Revenue Service, which uses tax filings to measure the movement of people throughout the country.

When it comes to migration, our region has lost more people than it has gained every year from 1996-2021. On a net basis, the Mid-Hudson region lost 138,071 people to outward migration during that time, a quantity of people that is nearly double the population of Sullivan County.

Net Change in Migration in the Mid-Hudson Region: 1996-2021



Thousands of people have historically moved each year between the Mid-Hudson region and New York City because of our proximity, the commuter train lines that connect our regions, and other social and economic factors. Most notably, the Mid-Hudson region gained many thousands of new residents from New York City during the COVID-19 pandemic and during the year that followed the terrorist attacks of 9/11. Our region lost a net total of people during those years because of outward migration to other states. There have also been times when more of our neighbors moved to the five boroughs. That includes the 2010s, when many young people sought a return to walkable living and an urban lifestyle.

Other than New York City, our region is currently losing residents on a net basis to two places. The first is just over the border to neighboring counties in adjacent states. There is strong migratory evidence to places like Bergen County, New Jersey, or Pike County, Pennsylvania. In addition, thousands of our neighbors

each year are continuing to move south, with Florida and the Carolinas being the two most common destinations.

When people who left the Northeast were surveyed by the U.S. Census Bureau in 2021, nearly 50 percent of them listed housing-related issues as their top reason for relocating. Housing outpaced family reasons and job-related issues as the second and third reasons for outward migration.

Outward migration from the Mid-Hudson region affects our economic future in two fundamental ways. First, outward migration reduces the labor pool when adults who could fill jobs in our communities decide to relocate. Second, the outflow of people also contributes to lower births as we lose young families that might have children, thereby reducing the size of our future potential workforce.

The Labor Pool and Workforce

As we think about how births, school populations, and outward migration affect the future of our workforce in the Mid-Hudson region, it is helpful to look at a breakdown of our current population by age cohorts. The chart below shows the total population in all seven counties of the Mid-Hudson region broken down into some five-year and ten-year cohorts. These are the total populations as of the year 2010, and the year 2021 – the most recent year for which these data are available.

These data show a few trends that point toward more workforce challenges in the future.

Many economists refer to the age of 25-65 as the prime labor cohort, or the primary pool from which you can draw a workforce. The older segment (ages 45-64) includes 658,995 people, while the younger half (ages 25-44) includes 567,587 people. These data show that the older half of our workforce in the Mid-Hudson

region outnumbers the younger half by 91,408 people. Consequentially, for every person who retires from the workforce there is only a fraction of a person moving up into the workforce to replace the retiree.

That trend is even more stark when you compare the number of infants, children, and teenagers who lived in the region in 2021 compared to 2010. The number of young people living in the region declined sharply during that time, and the data show that 20,160 fewer infants, children, and teenagers were living in the Mid-Hudson region by the end of that 11 years. At the same time, the number of senior citizens in the region grew considerably as the baby boomer generation entered those age brackets in greater numbers. (Note: Demographers generally disregard the cohort that includes people ages 20-24 because it tends to include many thousands of college students who claim residency in the region for only a handful of years.)

To summarize, the population data show that our labor pool in the Mid-Hudson region will continue to decrease unless the current trends are influenced by a factor that attracts more people to the region.

MID-HUDSON POPULATION BY AGE GROUPS

	2010		2021		Change 2010-2021
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number
Under 5 years	142,734	6%	138,640	6%	-4,094
5 to 9 years	154,762	7%	144,177	6%	-10,585
10 to 14 years	163,366	7%	160,027	7%	-3,339
15 to 19 years	168,755	7%	166,613	7%	-2,142
20 to 24 years	136,503	6%	153,844	6%	17,341
25 to 34 years	249,876	11%	276,357	12%	26,481
35 to 44 years	330,672	15%	291,230	12%	-39,442
45 to 54 years	355,847	16%	326,981	14%	-28,866
55 to 59 years	148,370	7%	171,288	7%	22,918
60 to 64 years	118,542	5%	160,726	7%	42,184
65 to 74 years	154,791	7%	228,618	10%	73,827
75 to 84 years	103,273	5%	114,597	5%	11,324
85 years and over	43,681	2%	55,451	2%	11,770



Pace University, Westchester County

CHALLENGE PROPOSAL

The challenge proposal for the Mid-Hudson region recognizes that it is difficult to affect longstanding trends that are shaping the demographics of our region. Still, we believe our region can focus its energy on a handful of factors that could shift the trends, capture, and retain some of the talent that is passing through our neighborhoods, and make it easier to find affordable places to live, great places to work, and exciting places for our neighbors to spend their free time in the Mid-Hudson region now and in the future.

Our proposal focuses on six strategies that would help retain people in the Mid-Hudson region and attract more to enjoy life in our vibrant and diverse communities.

SOLUTION ONE

RETAIN COLLEGE STUDENTS WHO ARE STUDYING IN THE MID-HUDSON REGION

Higher education is the second largest industry sector in the Mid-Hudson region, after healthcare. The region has more than two dozen colleges and universities that educate tens of thousands of people annually, including many who come from outside the region. This captive audience presents a significant opportunity for the Mid-Hudson region to connect students with employers who need their energy, intelligence, and labor to keep our regional economy thriving.

The Mid-Hudson Regional Economic Development Council would invite colleges and universities to submit proposals for one of two options:

- 1.** Strengthen their respective career resource centers in ways that connect students to employers who need interns, apprentices, and full-time employees. This would include forging stronger relationships with local and regional employers who are struggling to find employees in fields for which the students are being trained.
- 2.** Collaborate with a county, chamber of commerce, or another group representing private employers to expose more college students to job opportunities in the Mid-Hudson region and broaden their pathways to working and living in the region.

Each proposal should be accompanied by the following items:

- An explanation of how the funding would be used to create a new program or position or expand an existing program that has shown success.
- An outline of the partners and their statements of support.
- A list of metrics or evidence that would be collected to show the success of the public investment in making job connections in the region.

SOLUTION TWO

COUNTYWIDE HOUSING SMART COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

The nationwide housing crisis, both affordability and availability, must be tackled if the Mid-Hudson region hopes to retain people and attract new workers. As we noted in the data section above, housing is listed by those who have left the region as their primary reason for moving elsewhere.

To ensure public funds have the broadest impact possible, we would propose a grant to counties that would engage its local cities, towns, and villages through a “Housing Smart Communities Initiative.” This program, modeled after the state’s Climate Smart program, would replicate an initiative that was started with great success in Ulster County last year.

With assistance from state funding, each county would work with a committee of civic leaders to design a program that would challenge its communities to take actions to allow or encourage the development of additional housing. The countywide committees would create a list of housing-related actions that each municipality could take to establish the conditions for more housing development. Each action is associated with an allocation of points, and the accumulation of points can earn communities a bronze, silver, gold, or platinum certification on the Housing Smart scale. Some of the actions include establishing a community outreach campaign for housing or adopting short-term rental regulations. Other actions might include establishing a housing rehabilitation program or taking steps to streamline the development approval process. Municipalities could first pass a resolution and create a local housing action committee to enter the program.

As municipalities reach the various levels of certification, the counties can make funding available to hire planners or other technical experts to help the towns, cities, and villages to take additional steps that will make them ready for housing development.

This program would be accompanied by a website that lists the actions and the minimum criteria that are necessary to achieve each, and a map that shows the certification levels for each community within a given county.

In Ulster County, where this program has been in effect since 2022, several communities have started educational campaigns, moved to update zoning in parts of their towns that are served by municipal sewer and water, or begun to examine publicly owned lands that might be suitable for housing under competitive agreements with developers.

This optional program compels communities to start thinking about and acting on housing, which is an essential element of any plan to retain and attract people. It also helps counties and the region identify those communities that are in the coalition of the willing and that want to understand their housing needs to and identify evidence-based methods to act upon those needs.



Walkway Over the Hudson and Mid-Hudson Bridge, Dutchess & Ulster Counties

SOLUTION THREE

WORK WITH A SOFTWARE DEVELOPER TO CREATE DIGITAL APPS THAT CONNECT PEOPLE TO JOBS, HOUSING, RECREATION, AND OTHER REGIONAL ASSETS

The Mid-Hudson region shall collaborate with a software developer who can create two products that would help the region **connect people with jobs, homes, and entertainment**, and help its economic development experts in their efforts to attract and grow companies in the region. The apps would be available on smartphones and other mobile devices, but the information would also live on a website that would be accessible to anyone.

1. Mid-Hudson Works/Lives/Plays – Consumers have become familiar with geospatial apps that map services and goods that are available near the places where they live, work or visit. Applications like Uber and Zillow apply this methodology with great success to help people find transportation and homes. We would work with a software developer to create an app that has three layers:

- The “works” layer would include jobs that are available across the region, complete with one-touch applications. Users could filter these opportunities for internships, apprenticeships, full-time jobs, and other categories.
- The “lives” layer would use the same map to show homes for sale and for rent. This would be searchable through several filters, including cost, rent/own, and a radial distance from a certain point.
- The “plays” layer would feature performance centers, craft beverage businesses, trails, parks, and a wide range of other entertainment and recreational opportunities that people consider when deciding where they live and work.

The app could use an Application Programming Interface (API) to important data on jobs and homes from existing, trustworthy sources, but it would also have a registration feature that would allow employers access to post their jobs.

By arranging this important information about our region in one location, residents, visitors, college students, and other audiences can easily find jobs, places nearby to work, live, and play.

There is no app that currently aggregates this information for people, while localizing it and presenting it through an interactive, visual, geospatial dashboard.

2. Regional asset map – The Mid-Hudson region would benefit from an asset map that shows businesses and site selectors all the reasons why they should invest or expand in the region. This GIS map would be designed in a visually appealing way to show some of the following information:

- Radial distance to major markets
- Airports, trains, and other major regional transportation assets
- Highways
- Existing water utilities
- Electric utility capacity maps
- Marinas and deep-water ports
- Colleges and universities
- Cultural institutions
- Trails and major parks systems
- Performance and arts centers
- Major employers within a certain radial distance

Economic development experts, tourism leaders, and others would collaborate on the content of this asset map to ensure it includes all the information that developers, investors and business owners might need to site or expand a business in the region. For example, if one of our economic

development agencies is talking to a developer about a particular parcel of land, the asset map could be used to show that developer all the utilities near the site, adjacent highway access, and local educational institutions that could help provide a workforce. It could also be used to show the distance to major markets that might be important to their business.

The app should be designed for visual appeal and ease of use, so that it could be loaded on a tablet and shared at site visits, conferences, and forums throughout the region and beyond.

Importantly, the Mid-Hudson region would need to identify an organization that could own, update, and maintain the apps with up-to-date information to ensure their function long into the future.



Healthy Kids Extended Daycare, Monticello, Sullivan County

SOLUTION FOUR

JOB EDUCATION AND PATHWAYS FOR K-12 STUDENTS

Teaching our children about the broad spectrum of careers that exist earlier in their education is an important way to connect them to careers that lie at the intersection of their talents and interests. Career training and experiential opportunities can also help to keep young people here in the Mid-Hudson region.

Several BOCES or K-12 school districts are already offering programs that connect students directly to employers in a variety of fields. However, these enrichment academies, or career and technical training programs, are still relatively rare among the region's 107 school districts.

The Mid-Hudson Regional Economic Development Council would like to incentivize additional programs that could integrate the student experience with industries throughout the region by getting a variety of professionals into our schools, and getting our students into workplaces where they can enrich themselves with experiential learning.

To foster those connections, the MHREDC and the state would continue to make grants opportunities available to BOCES, county workforce groups, and other organizations to create or expand opportunities for experiential learning in coordination with industries throughout the Mid-Hudson region. These industries include, but are not limited to manufacturing, healthcare, graphic design, aviation, nursing, construction trades, insurance and real estate, and the priority sectors listed in the strategy section of this plan.

The funding would be used to hire a coordinator that collaborates with local industries, BOCES, and K-12 schools to create a sector-based workforce education strategy. These strategies should seek to reach students several times throughout their public education, with age-appropriate touch points late in elementary school, junior high, and high school. By working with industry engagement boards, the coordinators can ensure that school

offerings are rooted in the correct skills for local employers. The coordinator can also facilitate trips, job shadowing programs, or other hands-on opportunities at local businesses for children who participate in the programs. Although hands-on programs are more likely to have success and leave a lasting impression, virtual programs can also be developed to introduce children to viable careers in Mid-Hudson industries that have a steady need for workers.

Organizations applying for funding should emphasize their collaboration with local industry, methods for breaking down the barriers between K-12 education and local employers, pedagogical methods to integrate career skills into the schools, and metrics for success that will be collected and tracked. Preference should be given to schools that show a public-private partnership with local industries for the purchasing of equipment or other goods that will help create enrichment or career academies within the school.



Dennings Point, Beacon, Dutchess County

SOLUTION FIVE

A PILOT PROGRAM FOR MICROMOBILITY IN OUR DOWNTOWNS

Transportation continues to be a challenge and an opportunity as the Mid-Hudson region considers how to make our downtowns more walkable, accessible to mass transportation, and enjoyable places to live. As we think about retaining and attracting people, one commonality among popular places to live is that they figure out unique and efficient ways to move people around.

For this reason, we are proposing that some of the Challenge Topic funding be used toward a micromobility pilot program in seven of our downtowns, one for each of the counties in the region. Communities would compete to submit proposals that show how they would provide accessible opportunities for bike shares, electric scooters, and other forms of micromobility to help their neighbors and visitors get around.

Preference would be given to proposals that do the following:

- Connect population centers to employment centers that are just outside a walkable distance.
- Connect urban centers to nearby parks.
- Connect residential portions of a city, village, or hamlet, to sections of the same place that have mass transit options such as a train or a bus stop.
- Knit together several restaurants, breweries, museums, or other attractions as part of a micromobility visitors itinerary.
- Develop a creative name for their micro-mobility system to give it a unique brand.
- Partner with a private organization to help fund, implement, and install the proposed system.

Implementation and Budget for the Mid-Hudson Challenge Proposal

Challenge Topic Solution	Budget and Details
SOLUTION ONE: Retain college students studying in the Mid-Hudson region	\$200,000 maximum award to colleges and universities approved through an application process, with a total budget of \$3 million
SOLUTION TWO: Countywide Housing Smart Community Initiatives	\$100,000 to each of the seven counties, or \$700,000 total
SOLUTION THREE: Creating digital apps that connect people with jobs, housing, recreation, and other regional assets	\$500,000 total for both apps
SOLUTION FOUR: Job education and pathways for K-12 students	\$150,000 maximum award to districts approved through an application process, with a total budget of \$2.3 million
SOLUTION FIVE: Pilot program for micromobility in seven downtown communities	\$500,000 per community, or \$3.5 million total





**Mid-Hudson
Regional Economic
Development Council**