

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

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ALBANY COUNTY, NY

## VOLUME 5: IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

2020

PREPARED BY:



Initiatives	Description	Lead	Partners	Timeline
<b>Goal 1: Fill the gap that Exists in Albany County's Economic Development Ecosystem &amp; Align Regional Resources</b>				
Appoint Executive Liaison	This person would be designated as the point person for the County Executive to advance the County's economic growth and development interests. Initially, the role of this individual will be to assist with the formation and launch of a new economic development organization. This person might be expected to assume the permanent position as the County's Director of Economic Development.	County Executive Office		<b>Immediate</b>
Form Ad Hoc Organizing Work Group	Form a small Ad Hoc Organizing Work Group to advise the County Executive's Office with regard to specifics of forming a new private/public organization, establishing a diverse board of directors comprised of business and civic leaders, philanthropic, academic, and nonprofit executives, with consideration of including some public sector officials. The Work Group would help determine process for selecting a President and CEO and also be charged with assisting with securing commitments for start-up funding.	County Executive Office	Members from Strategic Planning Committee, Local officials & Civic leaders, Future board members (6-8 total members)	<b>Immediate</b>
Establish Albany County LDC	Establish an independent local development corporation to promote economic development to benefit the public good and manage public interest projects on behalf of Albany County government. This new entity would assume a lead role for Albany County in championing economic growth and development, attracting new businesses, marketing and branding the county to increase private investment, and creating a vibrant sense of place for residents and visitors. Working with partners, it would support business retention and expansion, innovation and entrepreneurship, and workforce development.	County Executive Office, County Legal Counsel, Ad Hoc Work Group	Local and Regional Economic Development Organizations, County Legislature	<b>Immediate</b>
Explore a Sustainable Funding Model	Secure financial commitments from public and private sources for early phase operations, develop a business plan for ensuring revenue-generating investments and a dedicated revenue stream to support the priorities and activities of the new LDC, develop support for and guide passage of new legislation to make it happen.	County Executive Office, Ad Hoc Work Group, LDC Board of Directors, County Legislature		<b>Immediate</b>
Develop a Stakeholders Communications Plan	One of the most important roles of the Economic Development Director for Albany County will be to convene the various economic development organizations and stakeholders to facilitate and collaborate efforts. Provide continuous, transparent information to stakeholders and interested third parties. Establish a clear chain of communication between County and local economic development entities. Employ many channels to 'meet people where they are' including in-person meetings, email newsletters, digital media posts, existing community events, etc. Consider investing in a digital platform designed to help management stakeholder communications and engagement (like Bang the Table).	Economic Development Director, LDC	LDC, County Executives Office, Local Municipalities	<b>Immediate</b>
Explore Management & Governance Options for LDC	Establish a selection committee and process for hiring a President and CEO for the new LDC. Note: This position is separate from the County Director of Economic Development position.	LDC Board of Directors		<b>1 year</b>
Practice Business Friendly Messaging Across all County Departments	Once a year, engage all Albany County Department heads and relevant staff to discuss best practices for engaging with the business community. Bring in speakers from local business community to talk about their experiences. Create and disseminate hard-copy information to County staff about where to direct businesses and developers seeking assistance.	Albany County,	County Department Heads, County Executives Office	<b>1 year</b>

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Create and Maintain a Website for Economic Development in Albany County	Create a standalone website for the new LDC to promote economic development in Albany County. Hire a website design firm that thoroughly understands the unique user experience that must be achieved, with strong preference for one that specializes in websites for economic development. The website should include current data on workforce assets, industry sectors, employers, and demographics. Connect social media. Contact information for the ED Director should be in the footer (i.e. visual at all times). Link to the region's economic development stakeholders such as the Port, City, CEG, and local IDAs. Dedicate staff resources for ongoing maintenance of the website. Updates should occur weekly, at a minimum, to keep content fresh and top among search rankings (SEO).	LDC	Albany County	<b>1 year</b>
Streamline the County Referral Process	Streamline the County referral process by developing a guide that clearly defines the County's economic development goals and establishes project evaluation criteria. This initiative should be done in collaboration with municipalities to establish a unified vision for countywide economic development and to identify opportunities to expedite the referral process for municipal-led projects that are aligned with County economic development goals. The guide should include contact information, timeline expected, required documentation, etc.	Economic Development Director	County Department Heads, LDC, Local Municipalities	<b>2-5 years*</b> *This initiative should be conducted in tandem with the development of an Albany County Comprehensive Plan.
Create a Digital One-Stop-Shop for Economic Development in Albany County	Develop a one-stop-shop of business development resources for developers and municipalities (for planning and coordination purposes), including a countywide shared GIS parcel database highlighting strategic sites for future development, consolidation of license and permitting requirements by location, and site-specific public infrastructure access (including guidelines for early coordination with utilities). This initiative should build upon existing resources developed by municipalities (e.g., the Towns of Colonie, Bethlehem, Guilderland, and the City of Albany), as well as support the creation of these resources for municipalities with limited capacity (e.g., Towns of Knox, Westerlo, Rensselaerville, Coeymans, Berne). A first step in this initiative should be the establishment of a clear chain of communication between the County and local economic development entities to ensure the County is well-aware of municipalities' current economic development goals, resources, and strategic sites.	Economic Development Director	Local Municipalities	<b>5 years</b>
Coordinate a Business Retention and Expansion Program in Support of Ongoing BR&E Efforts	This is one of the most common efforts EDOs undertake to strengthen economies and a critical first-task for the County Economic Development Director. Many local economic development organizations in the County do some level of BR&E within their own communities and CEG has a regional BR&E program. Coordinate local and regional BR&E efforts that are ongoing by ensuring information is shared utilizing a formal Customer Relationship Management ("CRM") tool to record data, convert it to business and industry information, analyze it over time and feed intelligence into the organization's marketing and attraction program. Support business visitation efforts, as needed.	Economic Development Director	LDC, CEG, Local IDAs	<b>1 year, Ongoing</b>

Initiatives	Description	Lead	Partners	Timeline
<h2>Goal 2: Target Investments Around Catalytic Projects and Critical Infrastructure</h2>				
<h3>Planning</h3>				
<p><a href="#">Develop an Albany County Comprehensive Plan</a></p>	<p>This Plan should define a unified vision for the County, inventory existing land uses and public infrastructure assets, create a transparent framework for land-use decisions, foster economic growth, and ensure future development is sustainably and strategically located. Several of the opportunities identified in the Infrastructure Analysis should be addressed through and in support of an Albany County Comprehensive Plan, including the implementation of transit-oriented development policies, enhancement of a countywide trail and open space network, source water protection, and the development of an intermunicipal asset inventory of countywide wastewater infrastructure. The County's recently completed Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan represents an important component of a future comprehensive plan. <i>Note: County Comprehensive Plans are regulated by New York State General Municipal Law §239-d.</i></p>	<p>Albany County (inter-departmental effort)</p>	<p>Local municipalities, IDAs, CDTC, CDTA, CDRPC, Ports of Albany and Coeymans, Albany County Water Purification District, other water and sewer districts, land conservancies, State agencies (e.g., DOT, DEC, OPRHP), other stakeholders</p>	<p><b>2-5 years*</b>            *This plan is a critical first step in defining economic development priorities and identifying critical infrastructure projects to support these priorities. Therefore, it should be a high priority project for the County and undertaken in the short-term.</p>
<p><a href="#">Create an Albany County Open Space and Trails Plan to Enhance Quality of Life</a></p>	<p>Create an Albany County Open Space and Trails Plan to define the County's vision for its open spaces, identify priority areas for conservation (e.g., recreational, agricultural, natural resources, landscape corridors), establish strategies for achieving conservation goals, and develop a suite of best management tools for municipalities to implement local conservation efforts in support of the countywide vision. By proactively protecting natural resources, preserving scenic viewsheds and landscapes, and developing an accessible countywide trail system that connects residents and visitors to the county's diverse natural areas, Albany County will enhance the quality of life for all of its residents (human, animal, and plant).</p>	<p>Albany County, CDTC</p>	<p>Local municipalities, Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy, Albany Pine Bush Preserve, Nature Conservancy, NYS DEC, NYS OPRHP</p>	<p><b>2-5 years*</b>            *This initiative should be conducted in tandem with the development of an Albany County Comprehensive Plan or should be a direct outgrowth of the Comprehensive Plan.</p>

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<b>Transportation</b>				
<a href="#">Adopt a Transit-Oriented Development Policy</a>	<p>Working closely with the CDTC and CDTA, draft and adopt a transit-oriented development policy for the county that prioritizes smart growth principles and access to multimodal transportation options. This policy will provide an important framework for siting new development, improving the county's transit, bicycle, and pedestrian networks, conserving natural resources and open space, spurring economic development, and reviewing projects through the county referral process. To encourage necessary investments and support decision making and policy development, conduct economic and fiscal impact research on benefits of TOD.</p>	<p>Albany County, CDTC, and CDTA</p>	<p>Local municipalities</p>	<p><b>2 years</b></p>
<a href="#">Establish Rural Road Design Standards</a>	<p>Develop rural road design standards for county-owned roads to better address the needs of all users, including the identification of priority rural road networks for the movement of agricultural goods and bicycling. The rural road design standards should specifically address the efficient movement of farm goods and machinery, including wider shoulder widths, wider bridges, shallower drainage ditches, and increased pull-off areas, and expanded opportunities for bicycle touring in order to support the growth of the county's agricultural and recreational sectors. To expand the impact of these standards, the county should work closely with municipalities and stakeholders to address local concerns and encourage the adoption of the rural road design standards at the local level, as well.</p>	<p>Albany County and CDTC</p>	<p>Local municipalities, CDTA, NYS DOT, farmers and the agricultural industry, the bicycling community</p>	<p><b>2 years</b></p>

Initiatives	Description	Lead	Partners	Timeline
<b>Water</b>				
<b>Develop an Inter-Municipal Inventory of Public Water Infrastructure</b>	Working with the Albany County Purification District, the Stormwater Coalition, and local municipalities, develop a comprehensive, spatially-explicit, intermunicipal asset inventory of countywide wastewater and water supply infrastructure. This inventory should be regularly updated (in real-time, if possible) and be used to define areas suitable for future development, identify high priority projects to improve the quality and capacity of the county's water system, and highlight maintenance priorities and opportunities for intermunicipal coordination. This initiative should be conducted in coordination with the creation of a one-stop shop for economic development and the Albany County Comprehensive Plan.	Albany County	Local municipalities, Albany County Water Purification District, Albany County Stormwater Coalition, sewer and water districts, NYS DEC, NYS EFC	<b>2 years</b>
<b>Upgrade Water Infrastructure</b>	Once an intermunicipal inventory of public water infrastructure is developed, create an action plan for upgrading county-owned water infrastructure and supporting municipalities in upgrading local water infrastructure. This action plan should consider current and projected future demand to identify high priority projects that address public health concerns, enhance system efficiencies (e.g., target areas with high leakage rates, opportunities for intermunicipal resource sharing), improve water quality, increase system reliability, and upgrade critical infrastructure to improve resiliency and support infill development. Implementation of this action plan should be coordinated with local and state partners.	Albany County, local sewer and water districts/departments, Albany County Stormwater Coalition	Local municipalities, NYS DEC, NYS EFC	<b>10 years</b>
<b>Implement Source Water Protections</b>	Working with municipalities and local land conservancies, undertake a countywide land use and watershed planning initiative to identify lands critical to the protection of municipal water supplies and public health and define strategies for acquiring and managing these lands. The final product of this initiative is a strategic plan that guides implementation, leverages public funding sources, and ensures the long-term protection of municipal water resources and the lands that buffer them. This initiative should be conducted in coordination with the development of an Albany County <u>Open Space and Trails Plan</u> .	Albany County, local water districts / departments, local land conservancies and conservation-oriented non-profits	Local municipalities, Albany County Stormwater Coalition, NYS DEC, NYS EFC	<b>10 years</b>

Initiatives	Description	Lead	Partners	Timeline
<b>Telecommunications</b>				
Enhance Broadband Access, Speed, and Affordability	Pursue public-private partnerships with local technology companies to expand broadband access, speed, and affordability across the county. Specific initiatives and capital projects may include: install fiber optic cable in areas targeted for economic growth; leverage the rapidly growing 4G and 5G cellular networks to build-out high-speed community broadband networks, particularly in low-income urban communities and rural farms; and, develop an alternative high-speed broadband network that is publicly subsidized to increase competition, affordability, and access	Albany County	Local municipalities, tech companies, NYS Broadband Program Office, NYS ESD	<b>5 years</b>
<b>Project Development</b>				
Support the Land Bank to on its Real Property Disposition Strategy	The Albany County Land Bank is launching a first-in-the-State market analysis and real estate planning process to strategically plan for assemblage and deposition of its vacant and underutilized properties. This is an exciting project that will require broad collaboration among many partners and the County should support these efforts as appropriate.	Land Bank	Albany County, LDC	<b>Immediate</b>
Prioritize Development Adjacent to the Airport	Work with the Airport Authority to advance its capital planning, while identifying public and privately owned parcels adjacent to or nearby the airport for business and commercial development. In particular, develop a redevelopment plan for the old health facility for office and research and development uses within targeted industries.	LDC	County of Albany, Airport Authority	<b>2-5 years</b>
Consider Reuse of County's State Street Building	The County's State Street office building is not ideally designed to accommodate modern, efficient and cost effective use for County functions. Given its strategic location it represents high value for private and State government related use. A feasibility analysis should be commissioned to evaluate selling or leasing the property and relocating County offices. Consideration needs to be given to having the County anchor a new catalytic development project elsewhere in the City of Albany or other location in the county.	Albany County, LDC		<b>2-5 Years</b>
Identify a Transformative Downtown Development Project	The new LDC should identify a new transformative development project in downtown Albany to focus its efforts and resources. The project should take advantage of market trends and add a unique character element to the Albany urban environment, represent the highest standards of design, advance mixed-use planning and help fill lifestyle/livability needs.	LDC	Albany County, Capitalize Albany	<b>5 Years</b>
Prioritize and Position Old Industrial Buildings and Sites for Redevelopment	Many large, vacant industrial buildings and sites dot the region. These properties are too large and complex for any one entity to take on. Work with local municipalities and other public-entities, such as the Land Bank, to identify vacant and underutilized properties and establish priorities and timelines for investment into demolition, redevelopment, etc.	LDC	Albany County Economic Development Director, Land Bank, Local municipalities	<b>10 years</b>

Initiatives	Description	Lead	Partners	Timeline
<b>Goal 3: Create, Retain, and Attract Top Talent Around Growth Sectors</b>				
Participate in the Workforce Development Network	Creating a pipeline of workers is critical to satisfy current and future industry needs. Partnerships between industry and educators exist, but the County is not currently engaging in these networks and, therefore, not benefiting from them. Become more engaged in existing networks and partnerships for regional workforce development.	Economic Development Director	Local and regional educational institutions, Capital Region Workforce Investment Board	<b>Immediate</b>
<b>Cybersecurity, FinTech, &amp; InsureTech</b>				
Focus BR&E on Cybersecurity, FinTech/InsureTech	Understanding challenges and opportunities of existing cybersecurity businesses, as well as crossover businesses in other sectors who employ information security analysts (like banks and insurance companies), is a critical first step in growing this sector. Identify finance, insurance, and related technology businesses within Albany County and conduct business visits to understand their unique needs and challenges. Focus discussions around workforce needs (all skill levels), partner collaboration opportunities, and sharing information about available resources. Conduct at least 3 business-visits a month for this sector, and follow-up with technical assistance and connections to resources as needed.	LDC	Executive Director, SUNY Albany, CEG	<b>2 years</b>
Communicate Career Opportunities in Cybersecurity to Albany County Students and their Networks	Work with industry, educators, and service providers to develop a marketing campaign designed to educate Albany County's students, parents, and local educators about the great career opportunities in Albany County in Cybersecurity. Seek to reach diverse under-represented groups in this sector (women and minorities). Host meet-and-greets where students, parents, and teachers get to interact with local business leaders.	LDC	Local schools	<b>3 years</b>
Partner with Libraries to Make Youth Coding Classes Available to Students Across Albany County	The role of libraries is changing across the U.S. and many are becoming involved in locally-driven economic development and workforce development initiatives. The Albany Public Library hosts <i>Girls Who Code</i> classes twice a year to teach girls 6th-12th grade technology skills needed for future STEM careers, as well as connect them with a national network of peers and leaders in technology. Partner with the public libraries across Albany County to expand on these classes and offer middle and high school students throughout the county access to critical technology skills training that will inspire more youth to seek careers and even start businesses in STEAM fields.	Economic Development Director & Albany Public Library	Public libraries across the County, SUNY, Local businesses in Tech, STEAM Garden	<b>3 years</b>
Launch a Business Attraction Campaign Targeting Cybersecurity, FinTech	There is an emerging trend in high-tech sectors that could become a competitive advantage for Albany County: cost of living compared to major metro areas like NYC, San Francisco, and Chicago. While availability of talent continues to be the number one driver for locational decisions, lowering the cost of living and maintaining a high quality of life is starting to play a more important role in talent retention for high-tech companies. The strategy is to target companies in high-tech, high-cost metros and offer a lower-cost alternative. Target companies who have grown to 'Stage 3' size (more than 10 employees) and have secured several rounds of venture capital from a number of sources. In other words, the types of companies who have established themselves and no longer need to be headquartered in the more traditional high-tech (and high-cost) metros.	LDC	CEG	<b>3 years</b>

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<b>Advanced Transportation &amp; Logistics</b>				
<a href="#">Draw Local Attention to the Ports</a>	Many people from the region are not aware that there is a port in Albany County, let alone two ports that serve international supply chains. Develop an inward-facing marketing and communications campaign designed to inform the local resident and business community about the exciting growth and career opportunities at the ports.	Albany County Economic Development Director	Port of Albany, Port of Coeymans, CEG	<b>2 years</b>
<a href="#">Create a Workforce Training Program Focused on the Warehousing, Distribution, and Light Manufacturing Industries</a>	In partnership with the Port of Albany, create a workforce training program focused on the following industries: port operations, warehousing & storage, distribution, logistics, light manufacturing, and assembly. The Port of Albany has invested millions of dollars in infrastructure upgrades in recent years and is in the early stages of redeveloping an 80-acre parcel. This new redevelopment represents one of the largest industrial/commercial developments in the county and has the potential to create many new local jobs. Partnering with the Port of Albany in the near-term to establish a workforce training program will help equip the local population with the skills necessary to support the future growth of the light industrial, warehousing, and distribution sectors at the Port and throughout the county.	Albany County and Port of Albany	Port of Coeymans, SUNY	<b>5 years</b>
<a href="#">Prepare for Autonomous Vehicles</a>	Establish an interdisciplinary task force of government and business leaders focused on planning for the integration of self-driving vehicles into Albany County's transportation system. With rapid advances in technology, autonomous vehicles are expected to be a significant component of the transportation and transit systems by 2040 (or sooner). While autonomous vehicles have several potential benefits (e.g., significant reductions in crash injuries and fatalities, increased highway capacity, reduced congestion, more efficient movement of freight, expanded access to seniors and people with disabilities), it is impossible to project the future impacts of a totally automated vehicular system at this time. This interdisciplinary task force should convene regularly (at least twice a year) to develop a plan that quantifies the potential impacts of autonomous vehicles, establishes a coordinated approach to proactively address expected impacts, and identifies key public investments to improve mobility and safety for all residents.	Albany County and CDTC	Local municipalities, CDTA, NYS DOT, trucking industry	<b>2 years</b>

Initiatives	Description	Lead	Partners	Timeline
<b>Goal 4: Transform Albany's Image</b>				
Leverage Major Athletic Events to Showcase Albany County, 'the place'	Continue to provide marketing support to athletic competitions throughout the region like the Aurora Games and the Freihofer's Run for Women and find creative ways to promote the event and connect the competition to Albany County as the <u>place</u> for where these events are happening. Seek opportunities to engage and connect at the human level by featuring local and visiting athletes in internal marketing and communications.	Discover Albany, Albany County	Capital Region Chamber	<b>1 year</b>
Tell the Stories of Women in Business, Innovation, Competition, and Politics	Partner with local marketing and communications organizations to help tell the stories of local women who are not only at the table, but taking the lead in one way or another. Use social media to reach younger audiences with these stories. Partner with the Capital Region Chamber Women's Business Council on efforts to support the business community in enabling female leadership through growing and strengthening diverse peer and mentor networks. This must be done in a genuine way in order to be effective. Marketing and messaging should feature the women being highlighted first, with reference to Albany County or the sponsoring organization, secondary. Use the woman's name in the title, include her photo in the press release, etc.	LDC	Capital Region Chamber WBC, Albany County, Local women's groups and organizations	<b>2 years</b>
Create Excitement for Business and Entrepreneurship in Albany County	Launch a marketing and communications initiative designed to specifically highlight the exciting economic development happenings in Albany County - research and innovation, new business startups, venture capital investments, etc. Seek creative ways to share these stories with local and regional networks beyond the entrepreneurial, business, academic, or economic development community. Employ a variety of digital, traditional, and in-person channels to communicate this message. Use an editorial calendar that schedules content areas around the region's targeted industries, including life sciences, technology, advanced manufacturing, cybersecurity, etc. Aggregate existing content from partners and stakeholders and disseminate to new audiences - <u>internally and externally</u> .	LDC & Discover Albany	Albany County, CEG, Local Colleges & Universities, Local Businesses	<b>3 years</b>
Establish Albany County as a Clean Energy Hub	Create an Albany County Clean Energy Action Plan to identify priority projects and establish Albany County as a leader in the clean energy sector. This action plan should evaluate opportunities in multiple sectors, including, but not limited to: energy efficiency, electric vehicles, renewable energy generation (e.g., solar, wind, small-scale hydroelectric), microgrids, and organic waste diversion. This action plan will provide the roadmap for Albany County and its partners to secure funding and pursue capital projects that reduce the county's carbon footprint, improve air quality, increase efficiency, and improve the resiliency and reliability of the county's electrical grid. This action plan should also be accompanied by several supporting analyses, such as the quantification of current and future electrical energy demand and the identification of suitable sites for renewable energy development that are compatible with existing land uses (i.e., renewable energy development should not compromise agricultural and/or natural resource conservation uses).	Albany County	Local municipalities, LDC, NYSERDA, NYPA, National Grid	<b>10 years</b>