

**Chautauqua County
Partnership for
Economic Growth**

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
Strategic Plan



Mission

The Chautauqua County Partnership for Economic Growth brings together public and private leaders to focus on county-wide and regional economic development projects. It also serves as the catalyst and broker of resources for advancing economic prosperity efforts and is the central coordinating entity for the formation, retention, development, and attraction of sustainable jobs and advancements to quality of life in Chautauqua County.

Chautauqua County Partnership for Economic Growth



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Economic Development Strategic Plan

In 2018, Chautauqua County embarked upon a two-phase economic development planning process with the assistance of a nationally recognized consulting firm, Camoin Associates. The goal of this process was to work with public and private stakeholders from across the county to identify a cohesive and comprehensive strategy, and importantly, a collaborative mechanism for its implementation. Our work with stakeholders throughout Chautauqua County revealed a strong interest in collaborating to better position the county for continued economic success.

Phase I of this process (Chautauqua County Economic Development Organizational Plan) recommended the formation of a project-based, private/public economic development “collaborative” that encourages county-wide economic development stakeholders to work together in the development and implementation of a county-wide Economic Development Strategy (Phase II). This collaborative, known as the Chautauqua County Partnership for Economic Growth, was launched in 2019.

Chautauqua County’s numerous assets, including a high quality of life, good infrastructure, a strong tourism industry, opportunities for skilled workers, and rising incomes, provide the necessary foundation for growth in the coming years. The energy and interest in overcoming challenges and seizing opportunities shows that Chautauqua County can be stronger when acting together as a group. Coming together and forming robust county-wide partnerships will result in a stronger economic development strategy,

increased efficiency and effectiveness of programs, and optimization of financial and human resources.

Phase II resulted in the creation of the Chautauqua County Economic Development Strategic Plan. The plan contains high-level ideas and a clear vision for transformative projects and equitable opportunities for all county residents, with specific tactics, projects, programs, services, and policies to be updated or initiated.

The strategic plan was created to:

- Align with and contribute toward goals of increasing levels of per-capita income, private capital investment, population, and job growth.
- Promote an equitable quality of life and place for county residents, with vibrant downtowns and healthy neighborhoods having affordable, diverse options for housing and accessible amenities.
- Help create an environment where entrepreneurs of diverse backgrounds and incomes can start and grow businesses across all industry sectors.
- Improve the business climate, characterized on the front line by streamlined processes and business-friendly efforts of municipal officials in all jurisdictions.
- Contribute to the fiscal sustainability of the county – either in terms of tax revenue generated as a result of economic growth, program income, and dedicated funding streams; and/or in a decreased need for public spending, particularly on social services.
- Support efforts of public education and workforce development professionals to help retain graduates

as permanent residents in local jobs.

- Fill gaps in local economic development programming and target resources in order to support the growth and development of each jurisdiction within the county.
- Leverage regional collaboration and state resources to support county services and initiatives.
- Complement the County’s comprehensive plan and target resources to improve infrastructure and community development priorities.
- Produce right-sized performance metrics to stay on track and implement management control and accountability measures for maximum impact.

Across individual and group meetings, there is an enthusiasm to refine economic development delivery services in Chautauqua County in a method that emphasizes the best of what is currently underway, while eliminating duplication of services and adapting other programs to meet the needs of today. The Economic Development Strategic Plan is a call to action for the wide range of economic development partners in the county. The challenges loom large; however, this is an opportunity for the Partnership and its stakeholders to exhibit the best of what the county has to offer and make the case for why investment is crucial from state, federal, and foundation partners.

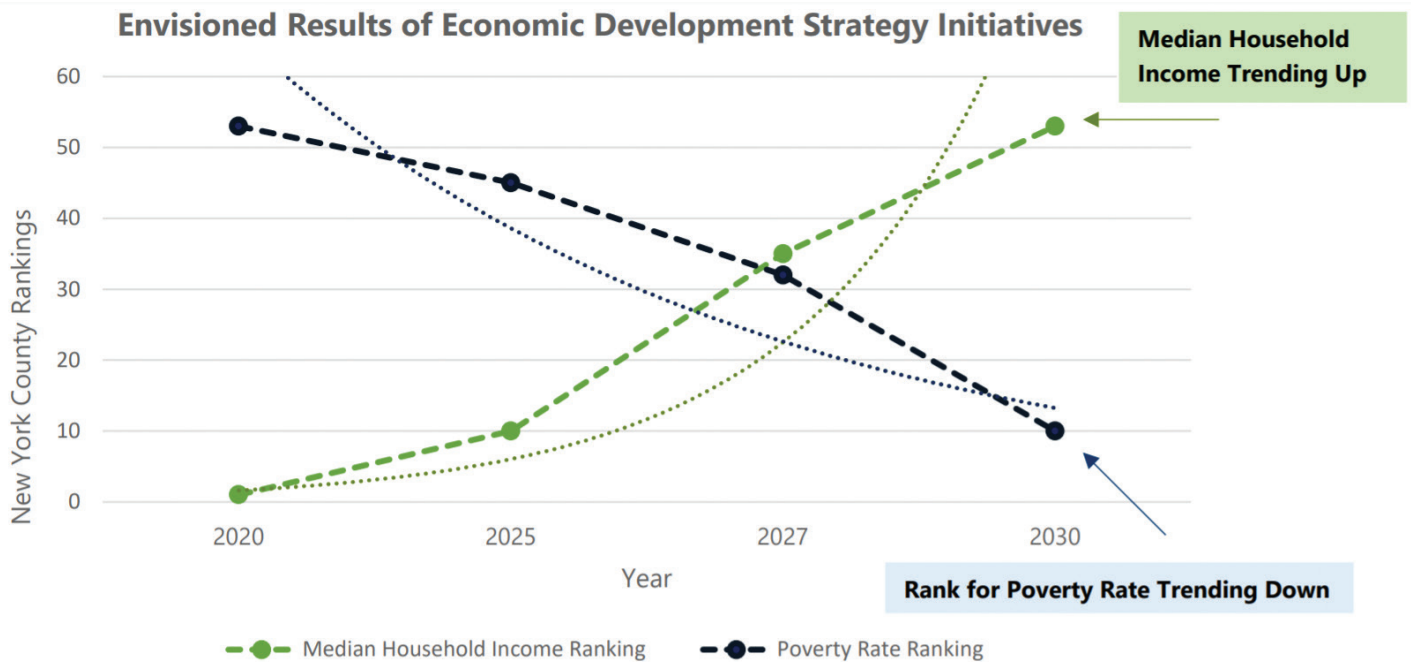
The Chautauqua County Economic Development Strategic Plan is available at <https://www.chqpartnership.org/resources>





Transforming Our County

Chautauqua County knows that meaningful and sustained economic transformation will require setting ambitious but realistic goals, and carefully tracking the progress made towards achieving them. The completion of the Economic Development Strategic Plan established a framework for catalytic projects and policies that the County anticipates will have a lasting impact on the Chautauqua County economy. The plan sets an ambitious but realistic target of steadily increasing median household income (MHI) with a correlative decrease in poverty rates over the same period.



This plan offers ambitious, but achievable actions which aim to reverse stifling economic trends of population loss, net job loss, and stagnant household incomes. Specifically, the plan calls on public, private, and philanthropic partners to make immediate transformative investments and pivot their attention to these priorities, with the expectation that MHI in Chautauqua County will grow significantly. As of February 2020, Chautauqua County ranked last in MHI among New York State's 57 counties. Using MHI as a target outcome will focus attention and help move the needle on other economic indicators such as poverty, which Chautauqua County now ranks as the 4th highest among all counties. Through careful tracking of performance and adapting tasks as the plan advances, the Chautauqua County Economic Development Strategy will improve MHI, reduce poverty, and begin to reverse population loss. The goals and transformational initiatives of the plan align with the five work groups that comprise the Partnership (Business Development; Community Development; Workforce Development; Housing Development; and Tourism and Destination Development), and are broad enough to include other elements of economic development in Chautauqua County.





Economic Opportunities



OPPORTUNITY

Capitalize on the county’s sites, open land, and available space for redevelopment.

Throughout Western New York, the supply of appropriate buildings and sites for development or redevelopment is low. Chautauqua County has the benefit of available open space and an inventory of industrial land and brownfields, which are eligible for federal incentives to bridge financing gaps to make projects economically feasible. Site preparation investment, while costly on the front end, would have lasting positive impacts on Chautauqua County and the Western New York region as a whole. Prioritizing resources to develop 2-3 sites, and the development of a Western New York megasite that aligns with target industries and regional market demand, will increase the desirability of Chautauqua County as an appealing area for business expansion and attraction.



OPPORTUNITY

Establish industry base for clusters by leveraging signature projects.

Chautauqua County and Western New York have a legacy in the manufacturing sector, which continues to incorporate advanced technologies into their processes to improve production and remain competitive. Today’s manufacturing plants are a combination of digitalized processes managed and supported by industrial technicians, among other roles. Workforce training and the availability of skilled labor is critical to ensure that manufacturing remains a viable and profitable industry in Chautauqua County. With institutionalized knowledge and established resources in manufacturing, growing and adapting this cluster must be a top priority. In addition to manufacturing subsectors, such as Vehicle Component Manufacturing and Technology, Chautauqua County’s industry mix and economics demonstrate the upward trend of other target industries such as Agribusiness, Value-Added Manufacturing, and Healthcare Research & Development.





OPPORTUNITY

Continue to grow the tourism industry around visitation nodes and invest in the connections between destinations.

Chautauqua County is renowned for its tourism offerings such as the celebrated Chautauqua Institution and the National Comedy Center. Continued marketing of the county as a safe destination with an abundance of cultural and recreational amenities, along with investment in tourism transportation connections between these locations, will enable additional growth of the industry. Establishing routes between sites and showcasing the vast options to distinct target demographic markets could help grow visitation numbers and spending figures. In addition, the establishment of a tourism shuttle would serve the tourism venues well.



OPPORTUNITY

Grow entrepreneurial culture and businesses from within.

Cultivating the business community from within the region provides near term opportunities to grow the local economy. It is essential to take steps to showcase existing business support resources that currently exist for start-ups and small businesses, and supplement these tools by seeking to improve access to capital and entrepreneurial learning opportunities and other needed support services. Making this a county-wide priority will strengthen the message across the region. Collaboration through the Partnership aims to ensure each partner is best equipped to deliver services that most appropriately suit their skill set.



OPPORTUNITY

Establish a unique sense of place throughout the community.

Chautauqua County was not alone in experiencing net population loss over the last several decades. Nearly all upstate counties experienced this phenomenon. Chautauqua County's downtowns are at the cusp of acting as attractors to the county. Smaller cities, with urban amenities and a small-town vibe, are in high demand. Investments in infrastructure, downtown revitalization, and placemaking have all helped to improve the sense of place and livability of Jamestown and Dunkirk. One of the key components for downtown revitalization is the housing stock. Continual improvement of the housing stock and offering a diversity of units is imperative to driving foot traffic to businesses and adding vibrancy during the day, after-hours, and on the weekends.





Business

DEVELOPMENT

The Business Development Work Group encompasses several partners, from business support entities to municipal officials, who work collaboratively to ensure Chautauqua County fosters a positive environment for the creation and expansion of small and large businesses, the preparation of development-ready sites, and extension of needed infrastructure throughout the county. The group works to help businesses to grow, expand, locate, and thrive in Chautauqua County, and has identified core sectors that should be targeted in order to optimize key assets and amenities.

Game Changer

Develop appropriate site(s) for Advanced Manufacturing, Science, and Research Hubs.

Strategic Initiative

Prepare physical infrastructure to align with the demands of the manufacturing sector and high-growth sub-sectors in Western New York, Eastern Ohio, and Northwest Pennsylvania.





Community DEVELOPMENT

Chautauqua County encompasses many small, agricultural-based towns that possess unique rural character and charm. These historic downtowns and lakeside communities have the “good bones” required to become attractive centers of activity and commerce. By convening partners and providing support and technical assistance, the Community Development Work Group seeks to create healthy, vibrant, walkable communities characterized by thriving downtowns and enhanced waterfronts.

Game Changer

Produce 10% growth of total tax revenue in core communities over 7 Years.

Strategic Initiative

Support projects and initiatives that add to a sense of place with focus on business startups, the gig economy, arts, culture, and livability in core communities.





Workforce

DEVELOPMENT AND READINESS

Ensuring that Chautauqua County’s businesses and not-for-profits have access to a qualified workforce is vital to their productivity and the future of the economy. Therefore, workforce training and the availability of skilled labor is a critical component to the county’s economic development strategy. Partners involved in the Workforce Readiness and Development Work Group act as one in preparing the future workforce, and developing the current workforce. This will result in competitive, successful, thriving businesses, and establish a brand identity as the “Work Belt” region.

Game Changer

Initiate and maintain a talent retention and attraction campaign.

Strategic Initiative

Initiate and maintain a talent retention and attraction campaign with support and data from workforce and economic development partners and businesses.





Housing

DEVELOPMENT

Creating a diverse mix of safe and well maintained housing options throughout the county is critical to the future of Chautauqua County. The Housing Work Group engages and supports municipal leaders, housing agencies, investors, homeowners, and tenants through projects that improve the county's housing stock and remove blight. Specific projects will be initiated to provide a diverse range of housing styles in developed, walkable communities, to meet the demands of today's workers and active adults.

Game Changer

Determine housing needs by category and location, and construct 500 housing units by 2030.

Strategic Initiative

Provide a diverse range of housing styles in developed, walkable communities to meet demands of today's workers and active adults.





Tourism

AND DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT

Fully capitalizing on the county’s renowned tourism offerings and abundant outdoor recreation attractions is a central component to Chautauqua County’s economic future. The Tourism and Destination Development Work Group promotes unique experiences and destinations throughout Chautauqua County to increase visitor stays and spending, while also encouraging private businesses and entrepreneurs to invest in the themes of these assets.

Game Changer Increase tourism by number of visitors by 50% in 5 years.

Strategic Initiative Develop year-round events, festivals, and activities, and enhance additional destinations that extend visitor stays.





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