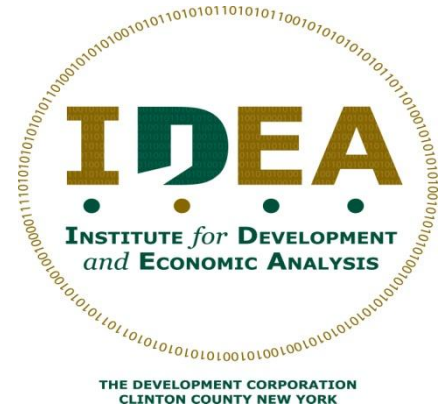


2011



Vision 2040: A Regional Economic Development Plan For The Future

**Presented By: The Institute for
Development and Economic
Analysis**

*Underwritten by The Development
Corporation, Clinton County New York*

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Executive Summary:

Clinton County has experienced a dramatic resurgence in economic and community vitality over the past twenty years. Although there is no question that local businesses and citizens alike have felt the ill-effects of the recent economic downturn, The Development Corporation (TDC) believes that the region's overall economic outlook is sound and the future is promising.

In November of 2009, TDC's Institute for Development and Economic Analysis (TDC IDEA) hosted the first in a series of four community forums that were aimed at developing a sustainable economic vision for the next thirty years. *Vision 2040-Phase I* consisted of a small group of diverse community members who engaged in constructive dialogue about Clinton County's collective future. TDC's IDEA provided participants with economic and demographic data on the local communities and offered various observations on local, state, national and global economic/social trends. Event participants were asked to propose community innovations that could help accelerate the area's socio-economic progress. Discussion topics included Government Efficiency, the Cost of Doing Business in New York, Workforce Development and Education, Quality of Life, Global Competitiveness and Investment and Demographics and Sustainability.

Vision 2040-Phase II reunited the original community participants in April 2010. This forum further focused on defining a strategic vision for the future, based on the aforementioned topics and outcomes of Phase I discussions. This forum also saw the inclusion of several talented young professionals to the discussion. The concepts set-forth by participants became the basis for *Vision 2040-Phase III*, which focused on constructing a regional economic development strategic plan.

Commencing in July of 2010, participant sub-committees were formed and began to lay the groundwork for the development of this unified plan based on the results of the Phase I and Phase II table discussions. Chairs convened their respective sub-committees and met several times over the course of three months in order to identify major themes, strategies, stakeholders and desired outcomes, thought to be crucial to the strategic plan.

In November of 2010, participants presented their findings at the *Vision 2040-Phase III* forum. This report summarizes the group's collective findings and thus becomes the basis for their blueprint for a Sustainable Regional Economic Development Plan.

Vision 2040 has always been about challenging the community to advance new ideas and ensure current and future regional prosperity. The lofty goal of forging a vision for the year 2040 was constructed to focus on the longest of views. By doing so, participants put aside their own preferences for the here and now, and imagined what needed to be done in order to make Clinton County sustainable and attractive for those that will follow.

TDC IDEA looks forward to *Vision 2040-Phase IV* as the transition from concept to action takes place and the community empowered to affect positive change.

Community Engagement:

- ❖ **Theme:** Community Involvement - Volunteerism
- **Strategies:** Talk about community involvement at a very young age (K-12) and continue through college. Teach about the value of working in a place that they live. Promote and coordinate service learning and community service projects.
- **Stakeholder/ Implementation:** Local school districts in partnership with local colleges; Full support from faculty at these institutions; Businesses and organizations that would provide and benefit from volunteers; municipalities.
- **Outcomes:** "Ownership" of the place we live by those that live here. Continuous improvement that will benefit the area because of an engaged population.

- ❖ **Theme:** Community Services Projects – Connect to College
- **Strategies:** Connect colleges and community through volunteer projects. Market area to college students so they stay after graduation. Raise awareness of business community through implementation of a bridge program. Better define what type careers are available in the area. Arrange tours of area business and provide more internship opportunities.
- **Stakeholder/ Implementation:** Colleges; Businesses.
- **Outcomes:** Increase cooperation between colleges and the local community to grow the area. Increase visibility of businesses to both populations as well.

Competitiveness:

- ❖ **Theme:** Education – Graduation Rates
- **Strategies:** Improve graduation rates of area high schools through added educational and social supports.

- **Stakeholder/ Implementation:** School Districts; Colleges; Municipalities.
- **Outcomes:** Improve the overall education of the population already in Clinton County. Increase the skill level of the area workforce to aid with business attraction. Will help with base pay increases for area workers and help increase their quality of life.

- ❖ **Theme:** Access to high quality educational opportunities to attract and sustain population; Pre-K through Post Secondary.
- **Strategies:** Promote and strengthen existing educational institutions, initiatives and partnerships. Expand access to Pre-K and daycare programs. Connect with business to create more internships. Organize a Business Fair to create awareness of local internship opportunities. Sponsor internships from other universities and programs not in our area (stipends and housing). Business visits to schools, class field trips to businesses and incorporation of career planning in classroom curriculum to foster interest and a sense of belonging at a young age. Create more Master Degree programs to complement the needs of the local workforce.
- **Stakeholder/ Implementation:** K-12 Schools; Colleges; Career Centers and Technical Education schools; area businesses; TDC; TAC; WIB; PBS and Commercial TV and Radio Stations; Chambers of Commerce.
- **Outcomes:** Provides citizens with quality education opportunities with special focus on K-12. Create awareness and foster partnerships that results in attracting a younger demographic and providing a more sustainable community.

- ❖ **Theme:** Continuous/seamless pipeline that begins with early childhood (Pre-K) and leads to graduate school that provides students with the knowledge and skills necessary for success in the workplace, college, job skills, training programs and as productive citizens of the community.
- **Strategies:** Offer a variety of different pathways, including non- traditional

Incorporate intern/externships and hands-on learning. Need to have transferability in and among different pathways. Involve students in academic decisions and pathway choices early on. Need ready access to terminal degrees and certification programs for other fields (i.e.; real estate, attorneys, etc.).

- **Stakeholder/ Implementation:** Educational Institutions; School Districts/Boards; Local Governments.
- **Outcomes:** Increased success in college, the workplace and training programs. Increased knowledge, skills and abilities in individuals in our region.

- ❖ **Theme:** Increase the percentage of students who leave high school ready to attend college or join the workforce without remediation.
- **Strategies:** Students need strong science, math and technology skills; elaborate these curricula. Early monitoring and support systems need to be in place to ensure students are on target for success in college/career readiness programs. Intern/externships and hands on learning needs to be incorporated in educational systems. Provide education and training opportunities (including supportive services) for those who are uneducated or live in poverty. Increase math and reading levels across the board to have a workforce able to progress in careers beyond entry level. Increase critical and creative thinking skills, problem solving skills, etc., to make out students job-ready.
- **Stakeholder/ Implementation:** Educational Institutions; School Districts/Boards; Local Governments.
- **Outcomes:** Increased readiness for college and jobs. Higher math and reading levels across the board. More prepared workforce for higher level positions.

- ❖ **Theme:** Develop an increased value for higher education and career readiness training.

- **Strategies:** High school diploma alone is no longer adequate. Individuals need to value lifelong learning, take responsibility and take advantage of training opportunities. Improve communication/marketing of educational opportunities to the community. Employers need to value and encourage lifelong learning – training for all employees should be encouraged. Employers need to be willing to hire from approved training programs. Regularly survey employers to determine what knowledge, skills, abilities are needed and use this information to develop/refine training programs and education curricula.
- **Stakeholder/ Implementation:** Individuals; Business/Employers; Training Provides; Education Institutions.
- **Outcomes:** Increased education levels across the board. More prepared workforce and a more highly educated population.

- ❖ **Theme:** Grow community capacity for lifelong learning and contract training programs that allow us to keep incumbent workers up-to-date with ever changing technology.
- **Strategies:** The job market is changing all of the time – educational curriculum and training programs must keep pace. Communication between training programs and businesses needs to be frequent and comprehensive to ensure quality training programs as well as acquisition of jobs by trainees post-training. Focus on really utilizing incumbent workers (avoid underemployment) by “raising the bar” for the pool of existing workers. Through regular assessments by employers, the readiness of the workforce should be evaluated on an ongoing basis so corrections can be made as necessary.
- **Stakeholder/ Implementation:** Individuals; Business/Employers; Training Provides; Education Institutions; Chamber of Commerce.
- **Outcomes:** More prepared workforce, capable of attaining higher level jobs, retention of workers to our area and more competitive economy.

- ❖ **Theme:** Workforce Competitiveness: The importance of both business and community investment in a trained and skilled workforce. Need a workforce that can remain competitive in a global and ever-changing economy.
- **Strategies:** Businesses and educational institutions work together in order to create programs that train to meet local industrial needs. Dialogue is key; assumptions just set us back. Create more externship opportunities for teachers and more internship opportunities for students (both high school and college levels). Highlight the importance of investing in human capital and the community benefits of having a competitive workforce.
- **Stakeholder/ Implementation:** Workforce Develop Agencies (WIB, OWS, private employment outfits, etc.); Current and potential businesses; Educational Institutions (CCC, CV-Tec, Trade Schools, Trade Programs such as Solid Foundations).
- **Outcomes:** A trained workforce with the necessary skill-sets that businesses want and need.

- ❖ **Theme:** Value the Trades; Importance of skilled labor.
- **Strategies:** Creation of a local Technical Trades School (use Vermont as a guide). Educational institutions, more specifically Guidance Counselors need to better cultivate those students who are not attending college and will instead attend a trades school/program. We have to get over the cultural stigma of a student choosing the trades path.
- **Stakeholder/ Implementation:** Workforce Develop Agencies (WIB, OWS, private employment outfits, etc.); Current and potential businesses; Educational Institutions (CCC, CV-Tec, Trade Schools, Trade Programs such as Solid Foundations).
- **Outcomes:** A trained workforce with the necessary skill-sets that businesses want and need.

- ❖ **Theme:** In order to spark job growth in the state, NY needs to be more business-friendly to companies that create jobs.

- **Strategies:** Ensure Clinton County workforce, both public and private, is competitive from a Cost/Benefit standpoint. Foster an environment of better union/management relations.
- **Stakeholder/ Implementation:** Government, TDC IDEA, TAC, Chamber - Develop "cost of benefits" and regulatory cost per employee analyses (UI/worker's comp., etc.). Provide cost of retirement analysis on our government budgets.
- **Outcomes:** Young members of the workforce find a reason to begin their careers in the North Country and businesses have access to a workforce that values productivity and opportunity.

- ❖ **Theme:** Stay competitive with other regions in total tax burden on businesses who choose to operate in Clinton County.
- **Strategies:** Holistic review of levels of taxation that affect businesses (income, sales, property, utility, etc.) and be aware of various tax rates in other states.
- **Stakeholder/ Implementation:** TDC IDEA; Coordinated discussions with the Chamber of Commerce and Government Entities.
- **Outcomes:** Taxation decisions are based on informed research with a holistic understanding of possible outcomes.

- ❖ **Theme:** Better national branding of the region for business and tourism purposes.
- **Strategies:** Define a more unified regional message that tells people and business why they should live, work and play here. Highlight regional attributes (i.e., proximity to Canada, access to inter-modal transit, distance to markets, workforce, cost of living, and cost of doing business vs. areas outside of the county). Brand core industries that identify Clinton County as an industrial hub. Example: As a for the mass transit industry. Take it one step further and define the region as a multi-modal hub (aviation potential).

- **Stakeholder/ Implementation:** Area Economic Development Agencies; Chamber of Commerce; Companies already here (in the form of testimonials); Local Governments.
- **Outcomes:** Better name recognition as a region. Increased foreign and direct investment. Increased tourism.

- ❖ **Theme:** Increase the Region's Marketing Efforts to Companies/Countries beyond Quebec/Canada.
- **Strategies:** The Clinton County-Quebec relationship is of vital importance to the economic well-being of the area. However, the region may want to consider a more active role in the marketing of Clinton County to targeted companies outside of the Quebec market. Target niche countries or regions. Possibly find connections in Plattsburgh to a specific European or Asian region.
- **Stakeholder/ Implementation:** Economic Development Agencies; State Agencies; Chamber of Commerce; Government Officials.
- **Outcomes:** Identifying new and emerging markets outside of our normal marketing activities while adding jobs to our region and increasing our reputation for business and tourism.

- ❖ **Theme:** Tourism Dollars and Quality of Life – How do we entice people to stay in Clinton County after they cross the Border, instead of just driving through?
- **Strategies:** Clinton County needs regional strategies to address what is "lacking" from a quality of life perspective. Clinton County needs to work on creating an environment that fosters culture, arts, high-end retail and fine dining – this is what will attract people and investment here instead of elsewhere. Community leaders will have to be visionary in thought, looking at their "hometown" from an outsiders perspective (i.e., opening the waterfront up).

- **Stakeholder/ Implementation:** Chamber of Commerce; Businesses (especially large employers that have recruiting deficits because the area lacks some of the cultural amenities found in larger metro-areas); Economic Development Agencies; Local Governments; Downtown Associations; Zoning Boards; State Agencies.
- **Outcomes:** Investing in our quality of life will aid in attracting business investment and tourism opportunities to Clinton County.

- ❖ **Theme:** U.S.-Canada Border
- **Strategies:** Continue to work towards shorter Border crossing times without jeopardizing security. Continue to foster relationships with Border personnel; especially with the Port Director, mid-level and senior management. This could be accomplished by the creation of a local Border council. Moreover, establishing an open dialogue between businesses and Custom's could better help the two sides understand one another's needs. Continue to work with elected officials and stakeholders on both sides of the Border to identify ways to streamline the Custom's processes in order to move goods more efficiently and at a lower cost to business (delays = \$\$\$ lost). This concept is also applicable to people and tourism. Support creative ideas (i.e., a train from Montreal to Plattsburgh that pre-approval from immigration/customs purposes).
- **Stakeholder/ Implementation:** Government Officials (both sides of the Border); US/Canada Customs Officials; Economic Development Agencies; Chamber of Commerce.
- **Outcomes:** Keeps the "supply-chain" of goods and people moving for the economic benefit of both countries.

Government Reform:

- ❖ **Theme:** Mandate Relief/Unfunded Mandates - Taxpayers, businesses and local governments are being crushed by healthcare and pension liabilities; and demographics are not on our side.

- **Strategies:** Mandate relief at the state and federal levels; Enact legislation that requires any state mandate which is imposed on a locality or a school district that costs more than \$10,000 annually (or \$1 million statewide) to be funded by the state; legislation to do this already exists. Further enact legislation that requires the fiscal impact on legislation to be stated before a bill is voted on; legislation to do this already exists.
- **Stakeholder/ Implementation:** Federal, State and Local Governments; School Districts; Taxpayers.
- **Outcomes:** More control over government spending; Increased accountability of government.

- ❖ **Theme:** Public Sector vs. Private Sector – What’s changed? The design of the Public Sector is based on an outdated organizational structure and has not kept up with modern times.
- **Strategies:** The public sector is getting bigger and is depending more on the private sector for funding – this trend must be reversed. Consider government consolidation; Job reductions through attrition; Examine the effectiveness of a County-wide School District.
- **Stakeholder/ Implementation:** State and Local Governments; Citizens; Educational Institutions; Workforce/Labor; Unions.
- **Outcomes:** More streamlined and efficient government; Less overlap and redundancy; Costs savings to the taxpayer; Less reliance on the private sector.

- ❖ **Theme:** Collective Bargaining
- **Strategies:** Outsource Contract Negotiation to professionals that specialize in collective bargaining for municipal and school district contracts; Have professionals negotiation with unions instead of School Boards or municipalities; Examine the feasibility of a County-wide Collective Bargaining Unit.

- **Stakeholder/ Implementation:** Elected Officials; State and Local Governments; Educational Institutions; Taxpayer; Workforce/Unions; Volunteer Board Members.
- **Outcomes:** Increase effectiveness of the negotiation; Eliminate Conflicts of Interests; Greater accountability to the taxpayer.

- ❖ **Theme:** Pension Reform
- **Strategies:** Investigate "buying out" old defined benefit plans and move towards defined contribution plans like the private sector (and some federal government agencies).
- **Stakeholder/ Implementation:** State and Local Governments; Workforce/Unions.
- **Outcomes:** Controlling Pension Costs; Reducing Unfunded Liability Exposure.

- ❖ **Theme:** Open Government Law
- **Strategies:** Governments need to be fully transparent to the voters. The community needs to see what our Legislators are doing every step of the way; Full disclosure is key. We need to hold our government officials accountable for the decisions they make and that the electorate must live with. The use of the media can help bridge the public awareness gaps; Televised and internet broadcasts, town hall style meetings, etc.
- **Stakeholder/ Implementation:** Voters; Media; Elected Officials.
- **Outcomes:** Transparency and accountability in Government; Increased Citizen Involvement.

- ❖ **Theme:** Term Limits
- **Strategies:** Implement Voter Approved Term Limits for All Elected Officials.
- **Stakeholder/ Implementation:** Voters; Taxpayers; Elected Officials.
- **Outcomes:** More Involvement of Citizens in Government; Newer Ideas; Turnover; Opportunity for “New Blood” to get into the mix.

- ❖ **Theme:** Need to “budget ahead” – How can we achieve a long-term goal with short-term planning?
- **Strategies:** Better long-range planning and dealing with problems head-on regardless of election cycle.
- **Stakeholder/ Implementation:** Municipalities; Elected Officials; Voters.
- **Outcomes:** Increase government officials long-term accountability.

Infrastructure & Investment:

- ❖ **Theme:** A commitment to maintaining a regional infrastructure that is competitive in costs and capacities to other commercial and/or industrial sectors.
- **Strategies:** Develop- regional infrastructure so North County businesses have competitive access to electricity, natural gas, water and sewer services. Continue innovation of transportation routes, including ports of entry for global logistics. Countywide access to broadband and wireless services.
- **Stakeholder/ Implementation:** Planning and CDOs collaborate to provide infrastructure enhancements. Development of countywide master plan that has a growth strategy for commercial and industrial opportunities based on existing infrastructure.
- **Outcomes:** Businesses have access to competitive utilities, communications and supply chain routes.

- ❖ **Theme:** Infrastructure Improvements - Technology
- **Strategies:** Improve access to technology such as cell phone and broadband coverage to allow for things such as tele-commuting. Improve transportation throughout the county for better access to events/attractions. Improve access to daycare and grocery store locations. Develop a "welcome wagon" to orient new people to the community.
- **Stakeholder/ Implementation:** Local Municipalities (government and citizenry); Local Investors.
- **Outcomes:** With better access to things like daycare parents will be afforded the opportunity to enroll in education/training programs that will help hone their skill-sets in order to get better jobs. With investment comes more events and businesses, which brings more jobs attracting more young professionals to the area.

- ❖ **Theme:** Transportation
- **Strategies:** Increase transportation opportunities to recreational facilities. Establish a Customs Inspection Station to increase air transportation opportunities. Improve and increase rail travel (including high speed rail).
- **Stakeholder/ Implementation:** CCPT; County; Local Municipalities; Chamber of Commerce.
- **Outcomes:** Moving people to places more effectively.

- ❖ **Theme:** Build capacity to be a destination for professional development and technical training workshops and seminars.
- **Strategies:** Market our region for purposes of training, professional development workshops, seminars, etc. Employers must be willing to train and invest in their employees. Professional

development should be encouraged at all levels from entry to management.

- **Stakeholder/ Implementation:** Employers/Businesses; Chamber of Commerce; Local Governments.
 - **Outcomes:** Improved economy, more recognition of our region statewide.
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- ❖ **Theme:** Build capacity for universal childcare that allows parents to seek education, training and employment.
 - **Strategies:** Make childcare available to all – not just “best and brightest” or “most in need.” Make childcare affordable, flexible and workplace-based if possible. Before and after school programs necessary. Extend the school day at all levels. Offer high quality electives at area high schools.
 - **Stakeholder/ Implementation:** Educational Institutions; School Districts/Boards; Local Government; Community Participation; Businesses, and Employers.
 - **Outcomes:** People will be able to pursue education, training and employment thus advancing their careers.

Sustainability

- ❖ **Theme:** Increase and maintain a diverse population and culture.
- **Strategies:** Recruitment of a more diverse group of students, families, employees and service organization members. Provide scholarships to diverse students as an incentive to attend local colleges (foreign exchange programs, etc.). Create programs to attract, create and celebrate diversity (diversity festival, PBS Native American, cultural and commercial ethnic programming. Support /Promote Interfaith Councils. Promote diversity in Service Organizations. Promote arts programs to foster and reflect diversity. Construct more signage to represent a diverse population: French, Native American, Braille, etc.
- **Stakeholder/ Implementation:** Area schools and colleges; Service Organizations; Social Service Organizations; Ethnic Organizations; CVPH; Major Businesses;

Arts Organizations; Media, Religious Organizations; Chamber of Commerce; Local governments.

- **Outcomes:** A more diverse population. Greater awareness and celebrate of diversity.

- ❖ **Theme:** Provide Health/Fitness, Recreation, Arts, Cultural and Family Opportunities in order to foster a sustainable community.

- **Strategies:** Fund and promote existing health/fitness opportunities (CVPH, Mental Health and other social service agencies, exercise facilities, schools, etc.). Fund and promote existing recreational and family opportunities (outdoor and indoor recreation – e.g, Beartown revitalization, “Learn to Sail” programs). Fund and promote existing arts/cultural opportunities (Strand, Museum Campus, arts and cultural centers, music and dance programs and community theaters). Promote and support the PBS community interactive calendar; Create Teen Centers throughout the county and increase access to bike and hiking paths for all abilities.

- **Stakeholder/ Implementation:** Area Schools; Service Organizations’ Social Services Area Schools; Service Organizations’ Social Services Agencies; Beartown Ski Area; Valcour Sailing Club; Arts and Cultural Organizations; Economic Development Agencies; Chamber of Commerce; TAC; Media; Governments.

- **Outcomes:** Better quality of life that will attract a younger demographic and create a sustainable community.

VISION 2040 COMMUNITY PARTICIPANTS:

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