



WARREN COUNTY
2040

Warren County, NY Comprehensive Plan
2025



WARREN COUNTY 2040

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FOREWORD

LETTER FROM THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Warren County 2040 is more than just a plan—it's our guide for shaping the future of our community. It tackles key challenges like an aging population, workforce shortages, and the housing crisis. The plan highlights the need for thoughtful, strategic planning to ensure sustainable growth and economic stability, giving us the tools to make informed decisions that benefit everyone who calls this place home or visits.

This Plan is the result of two years of hard work from our project team, who gathered insights about the current state of the County, identified emerging trends, and looked ahead at the challenges we might face. What makes it truly special is that it reflects a long-term vision for Warren County, one shaped by the voices of our residents, businesses, and local leaders. Through extensive engagement, we've made sure this plan incorporates what matters most to our community, ensuring we move forward together.

We want to extend our heartfelt thanks to all the Warren County residents, county officials, and county employees who played a vital role in creating this plan. Your input, feedback, and dedication have been invaluable in shaping a vision that reflects the hopes and needs of our community. Whether you attended meetings, shared your thoughts, or worked behind the scenes, your efforts have made a lasting impact. This plan wouldn't have been possible without your commitment to making Warren County a better place for everyone. We truly appreciate your collaboration and look forward to working together to bring this vision to life.

John Taflan



County Administrator



HOW THE PLAN IS ORGANIZED

Chapter 1, Introduction provides an overview of Warren County, NY and its history and the planning process, including the Plan purpose and public engagement.

Chapter 2, Who We Are presents a snapshot of the County's demographics.

Chapter 3, What We Do & How We Collaborate provides an overview of the County organization and its powers and authorities.

Chapter 4, Our Natural Environment describes the County's important natural environment features and the critical issues facing this important component of the County's quality of life.

Chapter 5, Our Built Environment addresses housing, infrastructure, and transportation in the County.

Chapter 6, Our Economy outlines the County's current economic base and employment trends.

Chapter 7, Our Arts, Institutions, & Community Services focuses on the cultural, education, and health care institutions in the County, as well as emergency services.

Chapter 8, Vision, Implementation, and Accountability lays out the overarching vision, goals, and objectives and targeted near-term strategies to further the goals, as well as the structure to utilize the Warren County 2040 Plan in County decision-making and to advance the Plan's priority recommendations.



CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION



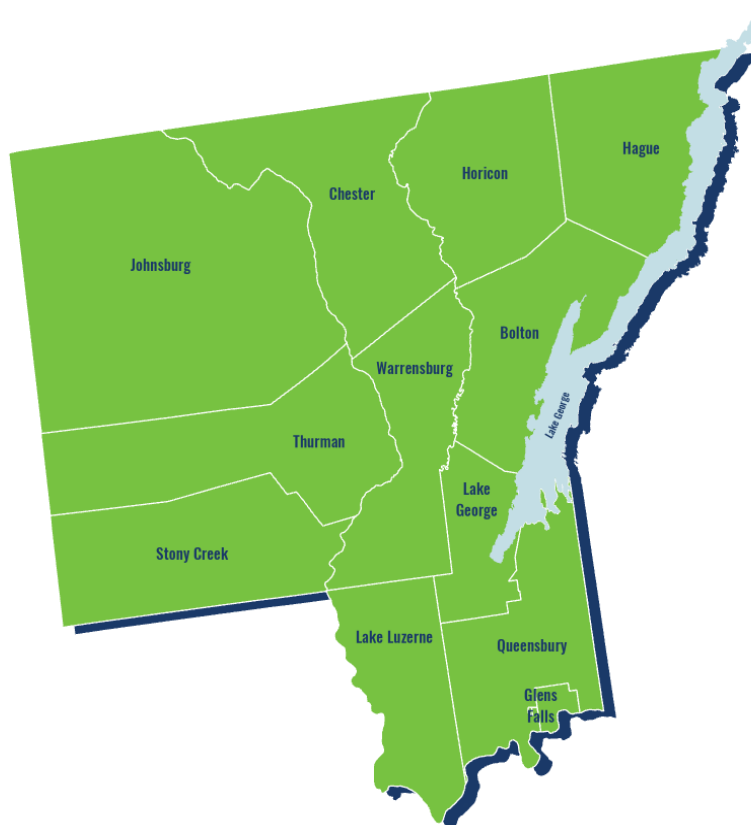
WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

A Comprehensive Plan articulates a long-range vision for the future of a community. In order to realize the community's vision, the Comprehensive Plan establishes goals, objectives and strategies through a deliberative and iterative process of data analysis, public engagement, and consensus building. A Comprehensive Plan is not law and therefore unenforceable as regulation; the power and success of a Comprehensive Plan lies in its ability to align and inspire stakeholders around a shared, long-term vision for the future while identifying the work required to achieve that vision. It serves as the foundation upon which future planning and policy decisions are based. At the County level, as opposed to the local level, a Comprehensive Plan has a broader scale and focus.

This Plan, which outlines a vision for the next ten to 20 years, covers essential topics, such as environmental quality, housing, transportation, public services, and economic development. With this long-term outlook, the County can transition towards more proactive decision-making, budgetary and otherwise. A well-considered Comprehensive Plan helps to align near term actions, such as annual budgeting and workplans, with strategic goals that have a far longer horizon.

By integrating long-range priorities into decision-making processes, Warren County can allocate resources more effectively, targeting projects that advance the objectives outlined in the Comprehensive Plan. This alignment helps in planning significant capital improvements and operational adjustments that are critical for the County's future, rather than prioritizing them based solely on short-term considerations.

Furthermore, this strategic alignment will enhance transparency and accountability in how funds are spent, fostering greater public trust and involvement. Residents will gain a clearer understanding of how financial choices are connected to the County's long-term goals, which can lead to increased community engagement and support. In essence, by adopting a Comprehensive Plan, Warren County commits to a future where decisions are not just about the next fiscal year but about meeting long-term community goals. This strategic approach to aligning annual spending with long-range priorities lays a robust foundation for thoughtful and forward-looking governance.



A VISION FOR WARREN COUNTY

Warren County is home to vibrant communities and a high quality of life, achieved through proactive planning and collaboration. The County leverages its natural, cultural, and human resources, fosters economic innovation, and ensures environmental stewardship to create a resilient, sustainable, and inclusive community. With enhanced infrastructure, a thriving economy, a collaborative and considerate civic culture, and strong supportive services, Warren County addresses demographic, economic, and environmental challenges while providing a prosperous future for all residents.



GOALS & OBJECTIVES

A series of goals and objectives were identified to address the most pressing issues and opportunities the County faces today. The intent of the goals and objectives is to serve as long-term guideposts for decision-making at the County.

GOAL 1 **ATTRACT AND RETAIN YOUNGER RESIDENTS WHILE ACCOMMODATING AN AGING POPULATION.**

The demographic shifts that Warren County is facing present unique challenges and opportunities that must be strategically managed to ensure the long-term vitality of the County. An aging population requires enhanced healthcare services, age-friendly infrastructure, and accessible public spaces to support their well-being and independence. Additionally, creating an environment that is attractive to younger families and individuals is essential to maintaining a balanced and dynamic population and addressing workforce needs. By addressing these shifts, Warren County can ensure that its community remains inclusive, vibrant, and sustainable, fostering intergenerational connections and securing economic stability through a diverse and engaged populace.

GOAL 2 **IMPROVE HOUSING ACCESS & QUALITY**

Addressing the current housing challenges, such as rising costs and a shortage of affordable options, is vital to ensuring that all residents have access to safe, comfortable, and affordable homes. By implementing policies that encourage new construction and promote diverse housing types that provide stepping stones to address housing insecurity for all residents, Warren County can help to alleviate housing pressures and create a more stable market. Enhancing existing housing quality and access will attract new residents, support the local workforce, and contribute to the overall well-being and sustainability of the County.

GOAL 3 **SUPPORT THRIVING COMMUNITIES, HAMLETS, & DOWNTOWNS**

Fostering vibrant, economically robust, and socially cohesive communities, hamlets, and downtowns is key to enhancing community well-being and supporting sustainable growth. Strengthening these areas as hubs of commerce, culture, and social interaction involves promoting mixed-use and infill development that integrates residential, commercial, and recreational spaces, creating dynamic and walkable environments. Proactive investment in the maintenance and improvement of community infrastructure and services is essential to support these areas. Resilient transportation networks, such as bike paths, walkable streets, and upgraded culverts, can help communities recover during emergencies by ensuring access to essential services. Also key is preserving and celebrating the unique character and history of each community, while encouraging innovation and fostering new business growth, paving the way for the County's next chapter and improving residents' well-being.

GOAL 4 **STRENGTHEN AND SUPPORT EXISTING AND EMERGING ECONOMIC SECTORS**

Warren County's economy is deeply rooted in its natural resources, scenic beauty, and entrepreneurial spirit, which have driven its tourism, manufacturing, and healthcare sectors. The County's strategic location between the Capital Region and the Adirondacks provides access to emerging technology sectors, connections to traditional resource and recreation-oriented businesses, and desirable communities to live, work, and play in. Warren County will continue to invest in healthcare and educational facilities, workforce development, economic development, and tourism to ensure the County has the talent, infrastructure, and resources to support existing industries, while fostering a modern, place-driven economy. Economic resiliency means supporting businesses during disruptions and diversifying industries to reduce risks. Connecting businesses with emergency resources and promoting year-round economic activity are key steps to improve economic resiliency.

GOAL 5 **MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY**

The County's natural environment is an incredible asset. Lake George, the natural landscape, and a diversity of outdoor offerings are the foundational attributes that make the County a great place. The threat of climate change, introduction of invasive species, and the ability to adapt to unknown threats are of vital importance. While the County and greater region are fortunate to have a broad group of not-for profits and other entities focused on these matters, continued diligence and investment is required. Investment in maintaining environmental quality should consider adaptation and mitigation for changing climate and increasing resiliency against possible natural disasters and impacts. Investments in wetland restoration, floodplain management, and habitat preservation can reduce flood risks and help communities recover more quickly after extreme weather events. Updating FEMA floodplain maps and enhancing stormwater management are critical to mitigating future risks.

GOAL 6 **DEVELOP AND MAINTAIN A LONG-TERM PLAN FOR COUNTY INFRASTRUCTURE/ASSETS**

Warren County must strategically manage both its physical infrastructure and human infrastructure (workforce) to ensure long-term operational efficiency and service delivery. While the County owns and maintains critical properties, it lacks a plan to guide future decision-making on asset viability, improvements, and alternative uses. Developing such a plan will enhance financial stability, infrastructure resilience, and efficiency. This planning is an opportunity to align with hazard mitigation strategies outlined in the Hazard Mitigation Plan like relocating at-risk DPW facilities and upgrading flood-prone infrastructure. Equally vital is the county workforce, with recruitment, retention, and development efforts essential to maintaining services. Integrated planning that prioritizes both physical assets and human resources will strengthen the County's long-term stability and capacity.

GOAL 7 **IMPROVE GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION AND TRANSPARENCY**

The County's rural nature, the growing number of seasonal residents, the ever-changing landscape of government mandates, and a rapidly evolving information landscape have made it more challenging for residents to stay informed and engaged with County operations. Addressing this issue is essential to ensuring that Warren County residents can effectively participate in governance, understand how decisions are made, and improve efficiency in accessing community resources.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

FORMING THE PROJECT ADVISORY GROUP

The planning process was led by a Project Advisory Group (PAG) included 12 representatives of County leadership, staff, and community members from across the County that were selected through an open solicitation process in spring and summer 2023. The PAG met on a regular basis throughout the planning process to establish priorities, review interim documents, and brainstorm ideas. During the first PAG meeting, members provided input on their goals for the planning process and their vision for the future of the County. Subsequent PAG meetings delved into each of the Plan topic areas, identifying and reviewing issues, opportunities, and trends, and establishing objectives and priorities for the future. All PAG meetings were in-person, noticed, open to the public, and concluded with a public comment period.

In addition to the PAG meetings, a Working Group was established, consisting of County staff and the consultants that met on a more frequent/regular basis to review draft documents and oversee the overall planning process.

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The Planning Process



Listening to Community Voices

A multifaceted approach to community engagement was developed with the PAG, which included public workshops, surveys, focus groups, and stakeholder interviews. In total, more than 1,000 residents were engaged in the two-year planning process.

LISTENING TO COMMUNITY VOICES

Community feedback, when combined with insights into county operations, demographic trends, and regional influences, helps pinpoint where and how adjustments in county practices can better align with residents' needs. Diverse, representative feedback is critical to the planning process. A multifaceted approach to community engagement was developed with the PAG, which included public workshops, surveys, focus groups, and stakeholder interviews. Over 1,000 residents and stakeholders were engaged in the two-year planning process.

WHAT WE HEARD

Residents are generally happy with life in Warren County

In conversations, meetings, and survey responses, what is clear is that residents are happy with quality of life in Warren County. Notably, over 80 percent of the almost 1,000 survey respondents consider the quality of life in the County to be good or very good. Significant contributing factors to overall quality of life in the County were identified as safety, environmental quality, and emergency services.

The County offers the best of both worlds, with a small-town charm, while still being close to all necessary amenities and services. The environment, natural resources, outdoor recreation, quality of life, safety, affordability, the community, and the natural beauty of Warren County's scenery, open space, and nature all provide value to Warren County residents.

The County's water and land resources are second to none

The County's natural assets are world class and major contributors to not only quality of life but the environment and economy. The overall quality and quantity of resources and the ease of access to those resources are what really differentiate the County, even among other counties in the Adirondacks. Whether mountain biking, kayaking, boating, Warren County offers something for everyone and has invested in infrastructure and amenities to make those resources accessible.

Residents, however, are concerned about the effects of climate change on the County's natural resources, including potential threats to air quality, increased risk of forest fires, flooding, and the spread of invasive species—all of which could harm wildlife, outdoor recreation, and the local economy.

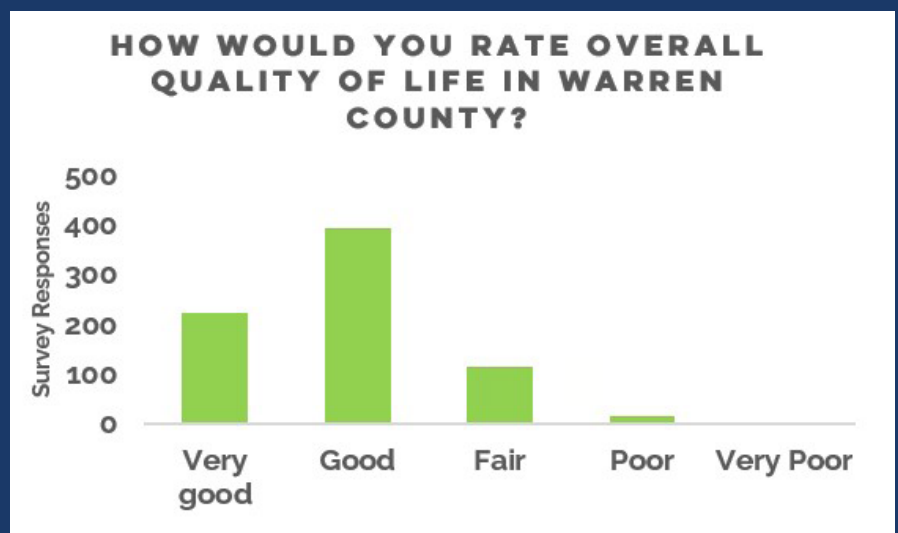
The County has a wealth of skilled organizations

The County's varied assets are supported by a capable, diverse, and impressive range of institutions and their skilled leaders and staff. There are opportunities to improve collaboration and better leverage these existing organizations to make the County a stronger, better place to live.

The County's demographics trends are clear and concerning

The most cited – raised in perhaps every Project Advisory Group meeting, public workshop, stakeholder meeting, and many survey responses – is the fact that the County is old and getting older. This has impacts on all assets of the County from its workforce to housing, social services, and schools. While this issue extends beyond Warren County and is driven by many factors that the County cannot impact directly, residents and stakeholders are interested in thinking about ways to prepare and adapt to this new reality and look into opportunities to attract and retain younger populations.

"Community, safety, and the mountains—living here offers a unique blend of small-town feel with access to incredible natural landscapes and a secure, tight-knit community atmosphere."
- Survey Respondent



The housing crisis is impacting Warren County residents

Also notable is the housing crisis, which 61 percent of survey respondents cited as the biggest challenge facing the County today. Of note however, the 18 to 24 age group and 25 to 34 age groups ranked housing as the County's biggest challenge 85 percent of the time and 77 percent of the time, respectively, showing that the housing crisis is more concerning for younger people – the exact group that the County needs to attract to address its aging population and its worker shortage.

We need to strike a balance between tourism and local needs

Tourism is a significant and highly visible contributor to the County's economy. However, its negative impacts, such as increased traffic and a reliance on seasonal jobs, were frequently highlighted. Striking a balance between expanding the tourism economy and preserving local quality of life will be essential to sustaining residents' support for being a tourism destination.

The County should help fill gaps and upgrade infrastructure

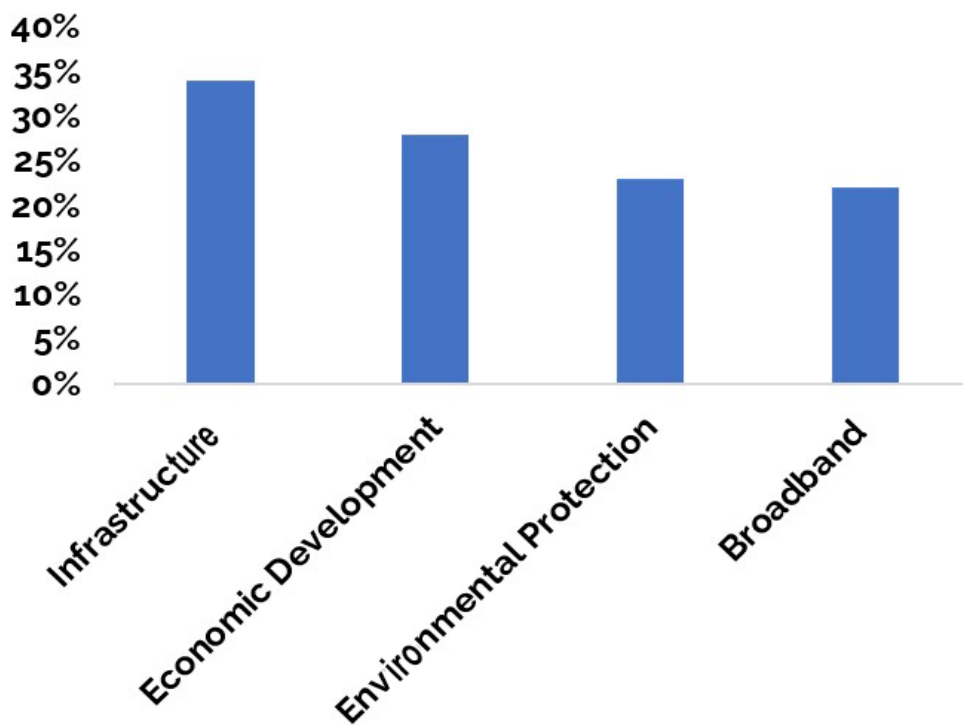
Citizens emphasized the County's critical role in maintaining and upgrading infrastructure, including roads, culverts, and bridges. Concerns were also raised about local capacity to take full advantage of historically high levels of State and Federal funding support for infrastructure projects, highlighting a potentially larger role for the County in these areas.

Cellular and high-speed internet infrastructure remains a pressing issue for many residents and stakeholders. This concern is especially significant for up-County residents, who identified it as a top priority 34 percent of the time, compared to 22 percent countywide.

"The mix of culture and nature, from vibrant community events to quiet moments by the lake, gives everyone something to cherish about Warren County."

- Survey Respondent

WHAT SHOULD BE THE TOP PRIORITIES OF WARREN COUNTY'S GOVERNMENT?



Nuanced approaches should be considered to meet local contexts and specific demographics

Feedback from residents and stakeholders emphasized avoiding a "one size fits all" strategy, as needs vary significantly between rural, urban, and tourism-driven areas. Similarly, the needs of different demographics, such as residents looking to retire in Warren County versus those looking to start their careers in the County, must be considered. By considering these distinctions, the County can create equitable and effective policies that serve its diverse communities.

EXISTING PLAN REVIEW & ANALYSIS

Developing Warren County 2040 included a review of plans prepared in recent years by the County, local municipalities, planning agencies, and State agencies.

LOCAL PLANS

Ten of the County's 12 municipalities have prepared and adopted local Comprehensive Plans. Warren County 2040 is the first effort by the County to establish a Comprehensive Plan, but these existing municipal Comprehensive Plans offer excellent insights into the issues and priorities of individual communities.

Common themes emerge from a review of existing and ongoing planning efforts, including concern over aging population, lack of attainable housing, loss of young population, the need for cellular and internet service, and environmental quality. The shared nature of community issues across municipalities reinforces the value of establishing shared County-wide goals.

Several local municipalities have also prepared focused plans that were reviewed and referenced, including the 2023 Town & Village of Lake George Workforce Housing Market Study and 2019 Queensbury Affordable Housing Strategy.

COUNTY PLANS

Warren County has actively explored key areas like housing, outdoor recreation, hazard mitigation, health, and waterbody protection. These studies inform the County's Comprehensive Plan, which consolidates previous documents to guide future decisions. Key plans include:

- **Outdoor Recreation Economy Strategic Plan (ongoing):** Defines the County's role in supporting outdoor recreation and its economy.
- **Hazard Mitigation Plan Update (adopted January 2024):** The Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP), updated in 2023, identifies risks to Warren County's infrastructure, environment, and communities.

It provides detailed assessments of vulnerabilities and outlines strategies to reduce risks, increase resiliency, prepare for emergencies, and recover quickly. Incorporating the HMP into this plan ensures alignment of priorities and resources to enhance community resiliency.

- **Housing Needs Study & Market Demand Analysis (2023):** Highlights a strong demand for housing across all types, indicating a shortage in Warren County.
- **Community Health Assessment (2022-2024):** Analyzes resident health needs to inform the County's Health Improvement Plan.
- **First Wilderness Plan (1998-2014):** Aims for the coordinated revitalization of communities along the Upper Hudson River through tourism, heritage preservation, and recreational opportunities.





REGIONAL PLANS

The issues and opportunities that Warren County faces do not end at the County's borders and must be framed within and informed by other regional plans that have been undertaken by County partners. A key example of this is local watershed planning: Warren County has partnered with other State, regional, and local entities to prepare a series of studies and plans focused on preserving and protecting the quality of Lake George, Lake Champlain, and the Hudson River. This has included the 2023 Lake George Watershed Action Plan, the 2022 Lake George Harmful Algal Bloom Action Plan, the Upper Hudson Watershed Revitalization Plan, and the 2018 Lake Champlain Non-Point Source Pollution Subwatershed Assessment and Management Plan, among others.

Similarly, the economy extends past the County's borders, with Warren County residents working and spending outside of the County and vice-versa. These economic plans by regional entities are key to understanding the influencing economic development factors and strategies being undertaken by the County's partners.

The LCLGRP's 2021 Forward Together: Economic Resiliency Plan notably identifies six economic imperatives that remain relevant to Warren County:

- Connecting Our People: ensuring that residents, businesses, and visitors have adequate infrastructure
- Child Care Access: supporting and growing this critical need
- Housing Access & Stability: ensuring that this basic human right is accessible for the region's residents, workers, and new/prospective residents
- Main Street & Community Centers as Economic Engines: increasing downtown economic development capacity
- Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Building: supporting and growing the region's entrepreneurial spirit
- Career Building & Skills Training: adapting regional workforce training

The Capital Region REDC's 2024-2028 Strategic Plan includes three regional priorities:

- Economic Growth
- Social and Economic Integration
- Community Vibrancy and Sustainability

Also of note is the Adirondack Gateway Council's 2015 "Pathways to Progress" whose common themes were the need for stable jobs, quality of life matters, striking a balance between jobs and housing, and how focused investment in existing communities pays off. This was a multi-County effort (encompassing Warren and Washington Counties and parts of Saratoga County), and many of the findings and recommendations of the report are still relevant today

For other topics – such as transportation – past plans prepared by the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) serving the region, the A/GFTC, were reviewed and considered. This includes their 2021 Regional Bike Plan, 2023 Rural Workforce Transportation Plan, and 2023 Long Range Transportation Plan.

CHAPTER 2: WHO WE ARE



Understanding who Warren County residents are today – and who Warren County's residents could be tomorrow – is critical for shaping this Plan, as demographics directly impact long-term planning for services, infrastructure, and economic development. With an aging population, the needs of older residents will drive decisions on healthcare, housing, and transportation as an example. Stagnating population growth highlights the need to attract new residents, young families and a more diverse workforce to sustain the local economy. Addressing these demographic trends will ensure the County can effectively allocate resources, support economic vitality, and enhance quality of life for all residents. This information helps prioritize strategies for growth, equity, and community resilience.

POPULATION

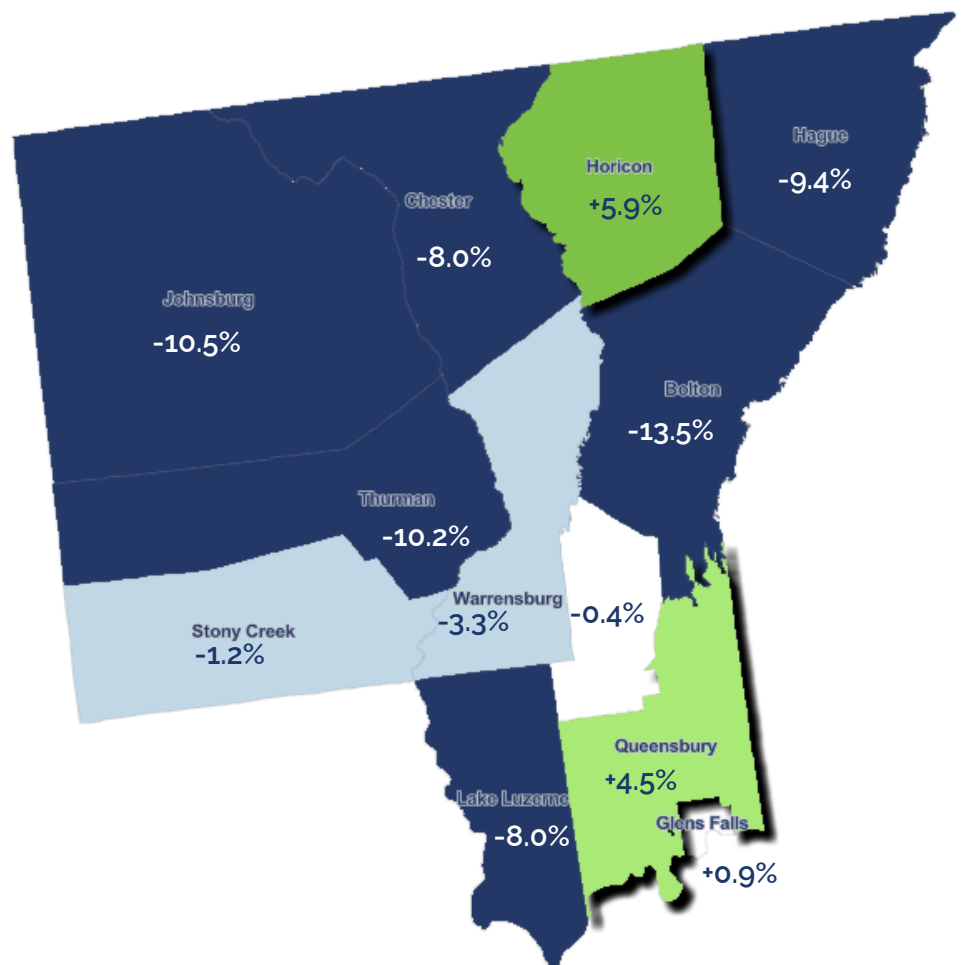
State and national rural population trends are evident in Warren County, with growth slowing dramatically in recent decades. After a history of relatively steady increases, including rapid growth between 1830 and 1890 and again between 1960 and 1980, the pace of growth has stagnated entirely, with only 30 new residents added to the County's population between the 2010 and 2020 Censuses. The 2020 Census lists the County's population as 65,737.

When looking at population at the municipal level, varying trends emerge: the County's largest town, Queensbury, increased in population between 2010 and 2020 by about 5%, or 1,268 people. The population in the City of Glens Falls held steady, with an increase of just under 1%. The "up-County" rural towns within the Adirondack Park mostly declined in population.

Warren County's population stagnation mirrors broader trends. Between 2010 and 2020, the United States experienced its slowest growth since the 1930s, with over half of all counties losing population. In New York State, the overall growth of 4% was concentrated in a handful of counties, as 75% of upstate counties lost population or remained flat. Notably, some Capital Region counties, including Saratoga (up 7.2%), Schenectady, Albany, and Rensselaer, did grow, reflecting the national trend of urban areas gaining population while rural areas hold steady or decline.

Looking ahead, population projections through 2040 from the Cornell Program on Applied Demographics suggest that Warren County's population will decline (to 62,314), while the Capital Region and NYS will experience slight increases in population. Specifically, Warren County's population is projected to decline by 3% between 2020 and 2030, with an additional 2% decline from 2030 to 2040. That being said, other external factors, such as climate change, migration, and the growth of the Capital Region chip fabrication industries, could reverse some of these projections if housing availability improves.

POPULATION CHANGE, 2010-2020



The County's population growth has slowed over time, with declines projected, but there are opportunities to capture some of the growth occurring in the larger Capital Region.

AGE

Compared to other counties in Upstate New York, Warren County's population is old and getting older. As of the 2020 Census, the median age of Warren County is 47.5, with significant increases in the County's median age since 1990. This demographic shift has significant implications. For the first time between the 2010 and 2020 Censuses, Warren County recorded a higher percentage of seniors (23.2%) than children (17.8%). The aging population, coupled with stagnant overall population growth, underscores a decline in the County's youth population.

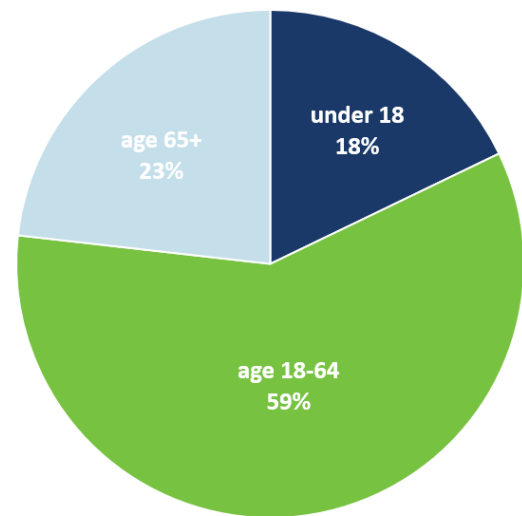
From Warren County to New York to the United States as a whole, the population is aging, largely due to the Baby Boomers, who started turning 65 in 2011. The increase

in older population is especially pronounced in rural America, with over a fifth of the rural population in the country over the age of 65. While both the State and US populations are aging, Warren County's population is especially old. Warren County (median age 47.5) is tied for fourth oldest county in the State and is in the top fifth of oldest counties in the country.

At the municipal level in Warren County, the aging of the population is especially stark. In 2020, Glens Falls was the municipality with the lowest median age (39.6), which is still higher than the median age of both New York State (39.0) and the country as a whole (38.8). In Hague, the municipality with the highest median age in the County (61.8), over half of everyone living in the town is over the age of 60. Even Queensbury, the County's fastest growing town, has a median age of 47.4.

A disproportionately large increase in older residents coincides with a significant decline in the County's youth population. Warren County has 4.3% fewer children, and in many municipalities the decline in the youth population is much greater than the County average. For example, the Town of Bolton has three times as many seniors than it does children, with over 30% of the population aged 65+ and only 10% under age 18. In Hague, Horicon, and Lake George, fewer than 15% of the population are children. This decline in the youth population is impacting the County's schools: school enrollment across Warren County decreased by almost double the 2012-2022 statewide enrollment rate over the same period.

Population Over Age 65



Aging Population



41% of survey respondents cited the County's aging population as the biggest challenge facing Warren County.

AGING IN WARREN COUNTY: A COMMUNITY-WIDE CONSIDERATION

Warren County is experiencing a significant demographic shift, with residents aged 65 and older now comprising nearly one in four of the county's population. This trend will continue in the coming decades, shaping local needs in housing, transportation, healthcare, and workforce development.

However, planning for an aging population is not just about senior services—it's about ensuring that Warren County remains a livable, accessible, and economically viable place for people of all ages. Many of the same investments that benefit older adults—such as walkable communities, better public transportation, and a mix of housing options—also support younger families, businesses, and workforce retention efforts.

The Warren/Hamilton Counties Office for the Aging (WHCOFA) plays a critical role in providing direct services to seniors, but the challenges of an aging population extend beyond any single department. Cross-departmental coordination—in housing, transportation, and economic development—will ensure that Warren County remains responsive to demographic changes while strengthening its long-term prosperity.

As Warren County plans for the future, the aging population should be seen not as a challenge to overcome but as a reality to prepare for. By integrating aging-friendly policies into broader planning efforts, the county can ensure that its residents, businesses, and institutions succeed in the years ahead.



HOUSEHOLDS

Household size is a key demographic indicator that shapes housing needs and reflects broader population trends affecting the County. As of 2022, the average household size in Warren County was 2.2 persons per household, smaller than the national average household size of 2.5 persons per household. The average household size in both the County and nation is projected to decrease through 2027. Within the County, the average household size is smallest in Bolton, at 2.0 persons per household, and largest in Stony Creek, at 2.5 persons per household. As discussed in Chapter 5, "Our Built Environment," the small - and continuing to decline - household size is a driving factor in the County's housing issues, among other things.

Household Size

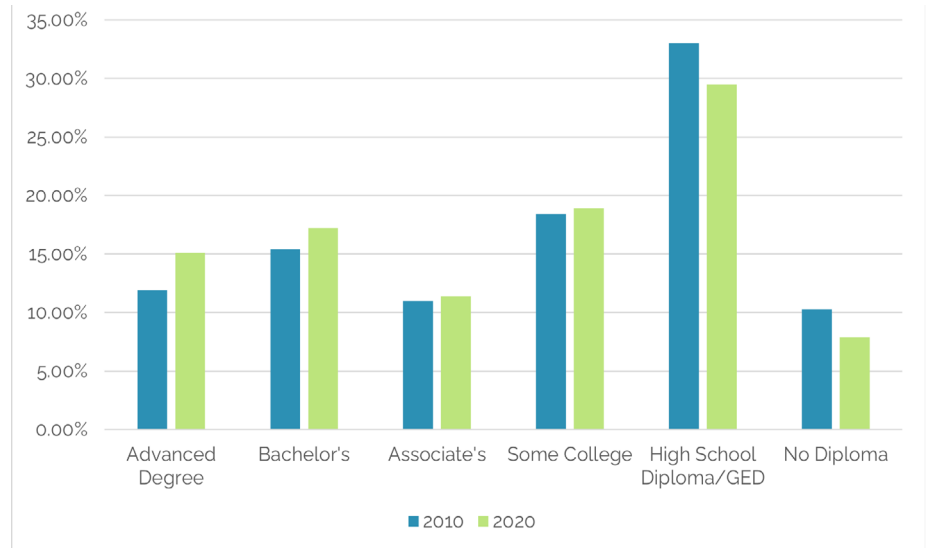


1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
3	2.78	2.58	2.41	2.32	2.22



EDUCATION

Educational attainment can be a useful measure of a region's workforce readiness, economic potential, and overall quality of life. Over the past ten years, the percentage of Warren County residents over 25 that have post-high school degrees has increased – including the percentage with Associate's, Bachelor's, and Advanced Degrees. In total, the percentage of Warren County residents with post-high school degrees has increased from 38.3 percent to 43.7 percent. Relatedly, the percentage of Warren County residents with less than a high school diploma or equivalent has declined over the same ten-year period from 10.3 percent to 7.9 percent. This is a lower percentage than State-wide: 12.8 percent of NY State residents over 25 have less than a high school diploma.



GENDER & RACE

The County's gender ratio has remained relatively stable from 2010 to 2020 – 49.1 percent of the population is male; 50.9 is female – with a slight increase in the overall male percentage (from 48.8) and a slight decrease in the female percentage (from 51.2) over the ten-year period.

Warren County remains predominantly White: in 2020, the County's population was 90.2 percent White. However, there has been a modest trend towards increasing diversity, reflected in the almost five percent decline in the County's White population between 2010 and 2020.

INCOME & COST OF LIVING

The 2023 median household income in Warren County was \$73,802, representing a 43 percent increase since 2010. The County's median household income remains less than that of New York State as a whole (\$82,095) and grew at a slightly lower rate than the State's median income. Between 2010 and 2023, the percentage of the County's families that were below the Federal Poverty Level increased slightly from 5.5 percent to 5.7 percent.

Compared to the rest of NYS, transportation costs for residents in the County are particularly high. Although adequate access to vehicles is often the most important consideration for workforce transportation in rural areas, there are other transportation factors which influence an individual's ability to get and keep a job. These can include the cost of gas, vehicle maintenance, and insurance. Collectively, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has consolidated these factors into the Transportation Cost Burden (TCB), which quantifies transportation costs as a percentage of income of the typical household for the region. All Warren County communities, with the exception of Glens Falls and portions of Queensbury, are above the 50th percentile for TCBs, when compared to NY State. The northwestern communities of Johnsbury, Thurman, and Sony Creek have the highest TCB in the County (80th to 90th percentile, when compared to NYS).

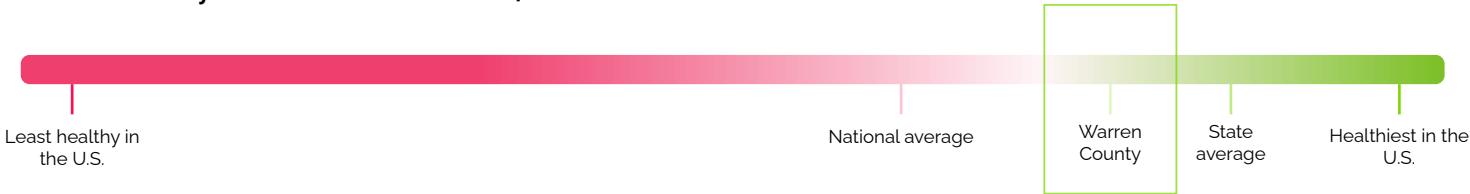
HEALTH

Population trends are directly shaping health outcomes in Warren County. With a higher median age compared to state and national averages, the County faces increasing impacts of chronic diseases like cancer and

cardiovascular conditions. This demographic shift contributes to higher hospitalization and death rates, which have both trended upward in recent years. Based on data from the County's Health Improvement Plan, from 2017–2019, Warren County had a death rate of 1,157.3 per 100,000 exceeded the Upstate average of 916.2 during the same period. However, when compared to State and National "Health Outcomes" as developed by the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute, Warren County is faring slightly worse than the NY State average, but better than the average county in the nation.

Efforts by organizations like the Adirondack Health Institute (AHI) and Albany Medical Center, as well as Warren County Public Health, emphasize the need to expand community-based health services and preventive care initiatives. These include managing chronic diseases, promoting tobacco cessation, and addressing asthma and diabetes, all crucial in improving long-term health outcomes in Warren County. These factors underline the importance of local initiatives and coordinated efforts to adapt healthcare delivery to the County's aging population and evolving needs.

Warren County Health Outcomes - 2024



CHAPTER 3: WHAT WE DO & HOW WE COLLABORATE



2022 Warren County
Mission Statement

Warren County government works for its Warren County residents; funding shall be dedicated to protecting and enhancing our residents' quality of life by providing excellent services in a cost-effective manner.

A County's structure, operations, and services are largely a function of State mandated requirements, County governmental roles and responsibilities to provide essential services, and approaches designed to respond to the specific community needs and opportunities by leveraging the unique community resources that exist in a County. Warren County also benefits from collaborations with an extensive network of community and governmental partners to extend the quality and reach of services, manage resources, and improve residents' quality of life.

This chapter provides an overview of the Warren County government structure and operations, as well as key partners and regional agencies with influence in the County. Additional information on County operations is included in **Appendix 3**.

WARREN COUNTY
GOVERNMENT
STRUCTURE &
OPERATIONS

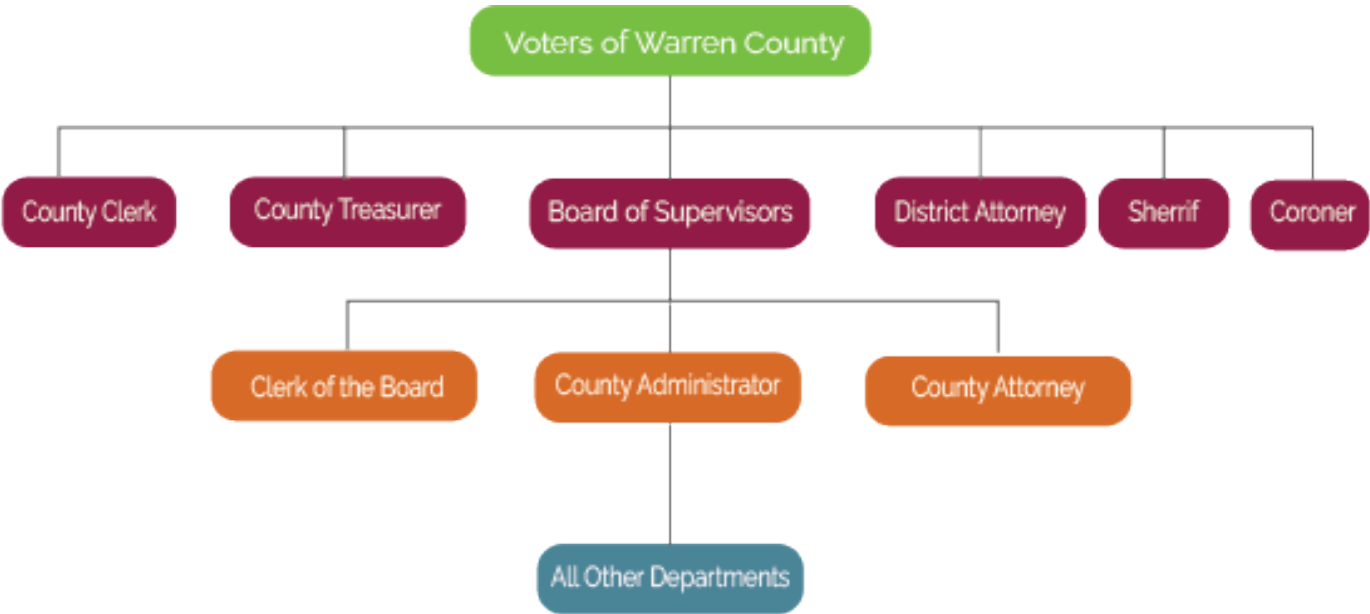
ELECTED OFFICIALS

Warren County operates under a legislative body known as the Board of Supervisors, a system in which each town and city within the county has representation. The Board of Supervisors serves as the legislative and executive body of the County, overseeing County-wide services, passing laws, and managing the County budget.

The 20-member Board of Supervisors consists of the 11 town supervisors, five city supervisors elected from the 5 wards of the City of Glens Falls, and four at-large supervisors elected by the residents of the Town of Queensbury.

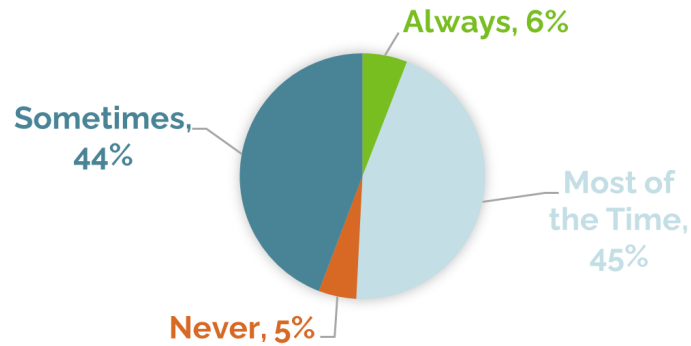
Supervisors are elected officials responsible for both their respective municipality and the County as a whole. Supervisors from each municipality are elected to serve two-year terms (or four years in the case of the Town of Chester and the Town of Warrensburg), and the number of votes each supervisor holds on the board is weighted based on the population of their respective town or city. This system ensures that more populous areas, such as Glens Falls, have greater influence in County decisions, while smaller towns also maintain representation.

The Chairperson of the Board of Supervisors is elected annually by board members and plays a leadership role in managing board meetings and guiding the legislative process. The chairperson represents the county in various capacities and is often the face of the County government in public matters. In addition to the Board of Supervisors, Warren County residents elect the following County positions: County Clerk, County Treasurer, District Attorney, County Coroner, and Sheriff.

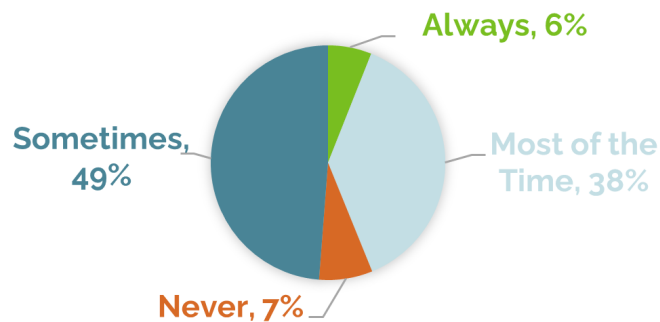


The Warren County 2040 survey asked several questions about County government. Feedback on good government questions is generally positive, but indicate some room for improvement.

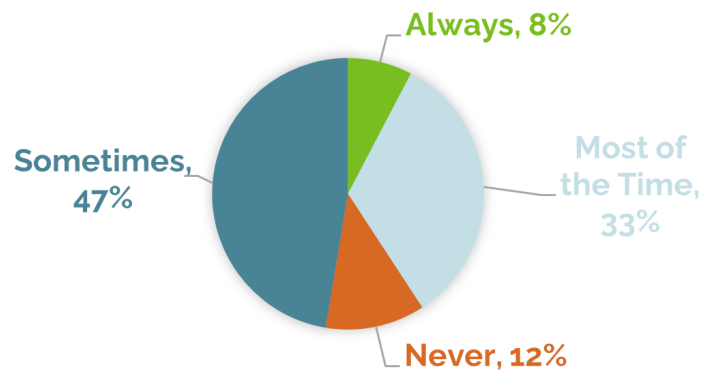
GOOD VALUE FOR TAXES PAID



GOVERNMENT WELCOMES RESIDENT FEEDBACK



WELL INFORMED ON GOVERNMENT ACTIVITIES



COMMITTEES

In Warren County, strong emphasis is placed on the committee system, and each committee exercises a certain amount of supervisory authority on behalf of the legislative body over the operational arrangements for the provision of specific services or activities. Nearly 95% of the resolutions enacted by the Board of Supervisors originate through one or more of its standing committees or special committees. There are currently 11 Standing Committees, and two Special Committees. Committees are tasked with oversight of different aspects of County operations, such as economic growth and development; health services; tourism and occupancy tax coordination; County facilities; and finance and budget. These committees review proposals, make recommendations, and work closely with the County's departments to ensure that County services are functioning effectively.

DEPARTMENTS & STAFF

The County's staff are divided into 30 departments, with a combined staff of 825. Each department is managed by a department head who reports to the County Administrator, who, in turn, along with the Clerk of the Board and County Attorney, report to the Board of Supervisors. The largest departments at the County – in terms of staffing levels – are the Sheriff's Office (217), Social Services (150), Public Works (119), and Health Services (73). Brief description of each of the County departments are provided below:

Administrator: The County Administrator is appointed by the Board of Supervisors to manage the day-to-day affairs of the County. The Administrator serves as the liaison between the departments and the Board.

Assigned Counsel: Assigned Counsel provides legal counsel to the indigent under County Law in both Criminal and Contested Family Court matters. Assigned Counsel represents clients when they are identified as having a conflict with the Public Defender's Office.

Auditor: The Auditor is an official appointed by the County Legislature that is responsible for reviewing all payments made by the County and ensuring that they comply with contracts and procedures.

Building & Fire Code Enforcement: The Fire Prevention and Building Code Enforcement Department is responsible for the enforcement and administration of the New York State Uniform Code and the Energy Conservation Construction Code in Warren County (except in the Town of Queensbury and City of Glens Falls).

Clerk of the Warren County Board of Supervisors: The clerk keeps a record of all acts and proceedings of the board of supervisors and is the custodian of the records, vouchers and other papers required or authorized by law to be deposited in the clerk's office.

Community Services (Mental Health): The Office of Community Services for Warren and Washington Counties is a shared administrative office between the two counties responsible for planning, oversight and coordination of a wide range of services for individuals and families impacted by mental illness, intellectual/developmental, and addiction issues. The office provides no direct care but instead works with a variety of partner agencies to ensure services are available to residents.

Countryside Adult Home: The Countryside Adult Home is a 48-bed residential care facility providing long-term residential care and short-term respite care to adult residents of Warren County who do not require twenty-four (24) hour skilled nursing services.

County Attorney: The County Attorney's Office provides legal advice and representation for all civil law matters to Warren County's municipal government including elected officials and County departments.

County Clerk: The Warren County Clerk's Office serves County residents by recording, filing and maintaining a diversity of court, land and other public records.

Coroners: Warren County is served by four elected coroners and a coroner's physician. The role of the coroner is to investigate any death that occurs outside of a hospital.

District Attorney: The District Attorney (DA) is an independently elected official responsible for responding to all allegations of criminal activity in the County. The District Attorney oversees an office that prosecutes cases in every town, city, county and state court in Warren County.

Elections: The Warren County Board of Elections (BOE) is one of 62 County Election Boards in New York State charged constitutionally and by Statute with administering the election process for Warren County residents.

Emergency Services/Fire/EMS: The Office of Emergency Services contains three main foci: emergency preparedness, emergency medical services and fire coordination. Its main roles are support and planning, it does not provide actual response services.

Health Services: Health Services provides public health services ranging from disease prevention to direct patient care through its homecare operations.

Historian: The Warren County Historian's Office preserves, interprets and promotes the history of Warren County and serves as an umbrella entity for the network of 11 town and village historian offices throughout the County.

Human Resources: Warren County Department of Human Resources (HR) is responsible for HR management, employee relations, and benefits administration. The Department also administers Civil Service Law and Rules for classified employees in the County, Towns, City, Village, School Districts, College, Libraries and other special districts within the County.

Information Technology: The Information Technology Department is responsible for all the County owned computers and operating the phone system. There are a few systems, such as those in the Department of Social Services and the DMV computers that are maintained by the State, but the County IT will assist with those as well where appropriate.

Planning & Community Development: The Warren County Planning & Community Development Department identifies and plans for the use of the County's natural resources and built environment to enhance the quality of life for current and future generations.

Probation: The Warren County Probation Department provides professional, cost-effective intervention and service to adult and juvenile offenders that enable judicial systems to offer a community based rehabilitative program as an alternative to confinement.

Warren County has 671 full-time employees, or 10.2 per 1,000 residents. This is comparable to nearby Clinton and Washington Counties, but lower than the state which has 11.4 full-time employees per 1,000 residents.

Public Defender: The Warren County Public Defender's Office provides legal representation to individuals who cannot afford an attorney for criminal court, family court, appearance at arraignments and parole violation hearings.

Public Works: The Department of Public Works provides several essential services including the maintenance of County roads, bridges and culverts. Other major divisions include the Floyd Bennett Airport, Fleet and Automotive Repair, Facilities, Parks and Recreation and Solid Waste.

Purchasing: Warren County Purchasing Department is responsible for the purchase of materials, supplies and services for all County departments.

Real Property Tax Service Agency: The Real Property Tax Service Agency manages property assessments, tax rolls, and tax bills for the County, local municipalities, school districts, and public taxpayers.

Sheriff: The Sheriff's Office is led by an elected sheriff and provides comprehensive portfolio of law enforcement and correctional services to the County. The department is also responsible for the operation of the sole answering point for 911 calls in the County and dispatches most of the public safety agencies.

Social Services: The Department of Social Services (DSS) works to provide the assistance and services necessary to sustain dependent and disabled persons, protect children and adults from abuse and neglect, and to assist applicants and recipients in achieving the greatest degree of independence possible. Broadly, the department has five primary units: Fiscal, Legal, Countryside Home (discussed elsewhere), Eligibility, and Human Services.

Tourism: The Tourism Department promotes and supports the tourism industry in the Lake George Area through marketing, collaboration and communication with regional tourism partners and visitors.

Treasurer: The Treasurer of Warren County is a separately elected position. This office is responsible for collecting County Taxes, administering payroll and the accounting of the County's books.

Weights & Measures: The Weights & Measures Department is responsible for assuring measurement and pricing accuracy in the marketplace.

Veterans' Services: The Warren County Veterans Services Office advocates on behalf of all Warren County veterans or their surviving spouse to ensure they receive the maximum benefits to which they deserve under federal, state and local laws.

Youth Bureau: The Bureau partners with schools, and community and County service providers to plan, coordinate, advocate, fund and monitor programs and services. The goal of the department is to prevent delinquency through positive youth development.

HR'S ROLE IN COUNTY OPERATIONS

The Warren County Department of Human Resources plays a vital role in supporting County operations by ensuring a well-trained and adequately staffed workforce. The department actively works to recruit, retain, and develop employees through a variety of strategies, including:

- **Employee Retention Initiatives:** HR has implemented both exit and stay interviews to gather insights from employees and improve workplace satisfaction. These efforts help identify trends and address concerns before they lead to unnecessary turnover.
- **Compensation and Benefits Enhancements:** The department regularly conducts salary evaluations and workforce assessments to ensure that county employees receive competitive compensation. Additionally, HR has expanded benefit offerings, including vision plans, voluntary insurance options, and flexible spending accounts.
- **Professional Development and Training:** HR collaborates with Workforce Development, SUNY Adirondack, and BOCES to provide employees with ongoing training opportunities. Programs such as CDL certification for DPW employees help County personnel grow within their roles while addressing staffing needs in critical areas.
- **Recruitment and Civil Service Improvements:** The department actively works to streamline hiring processes and review civil service requirements, making recruitment more efficient while ensuring compliance with state regulations.

HR's proactive approach aligns with the broader County strategy to maintain a strong, well-supported workforce, ensuring that government services can continue to operate effectively for residents. By integrating workforce planning into long-term County operations, HR helps address challenges in staffing, professional development, and employee retention in a sustainable manner.

COUNTY BUDGET

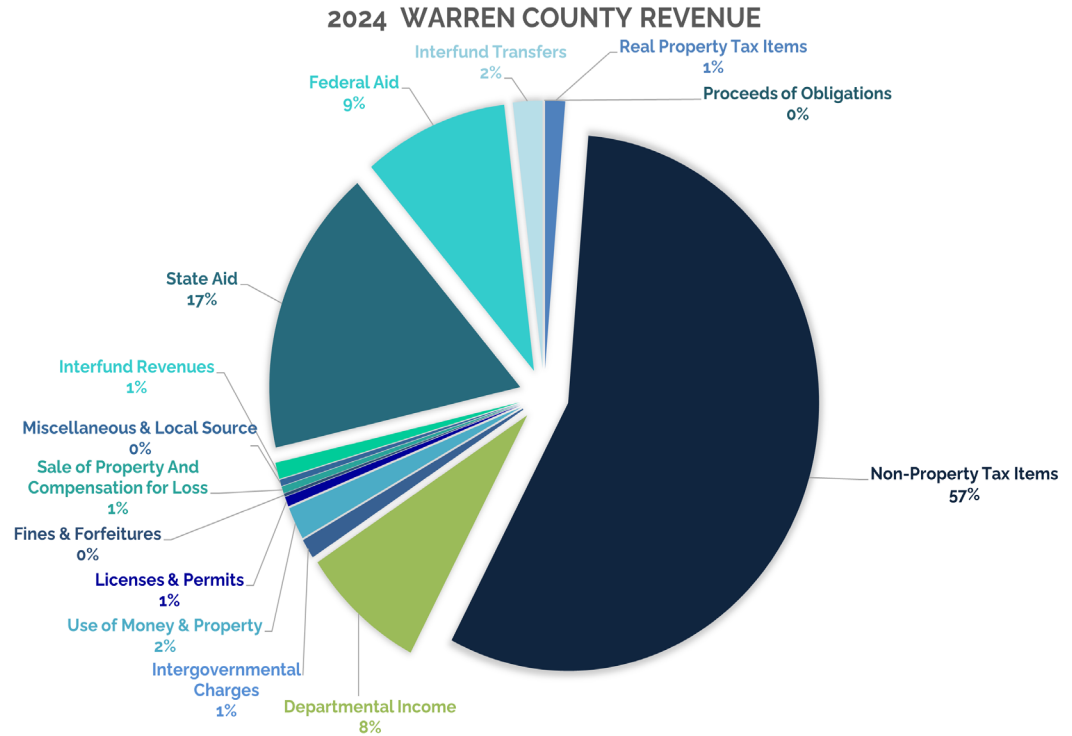
Warren County's operating budget and fiscal year is based on a calendar year, beginning on January 1 and ending on December 31 of each year. The budget development process begins in July with the Budget Officer meeting with the Department Heads to outline the status of the County finances and items to keep into consideration for the upcoming year. Between August and September, department budgets are refined through meetings with the Budget team (consisting of the Budget Officer and Committee Chair), as well

as representatives from the County Administrator and Treasurers offices, and review by each Department's respective Oversight Committee. Throughout the month of October, the Budget Officer, with input from the Budget committee, reviews the departmental requests, and develops a Budget Officer recommendation, which is presented to the Board of Supervisors in early November. The Board of Supervisors typically adopts the tentative budget in November and schedules a Public Hearing on the budget in order to solicit input from the public on the proposed budget.

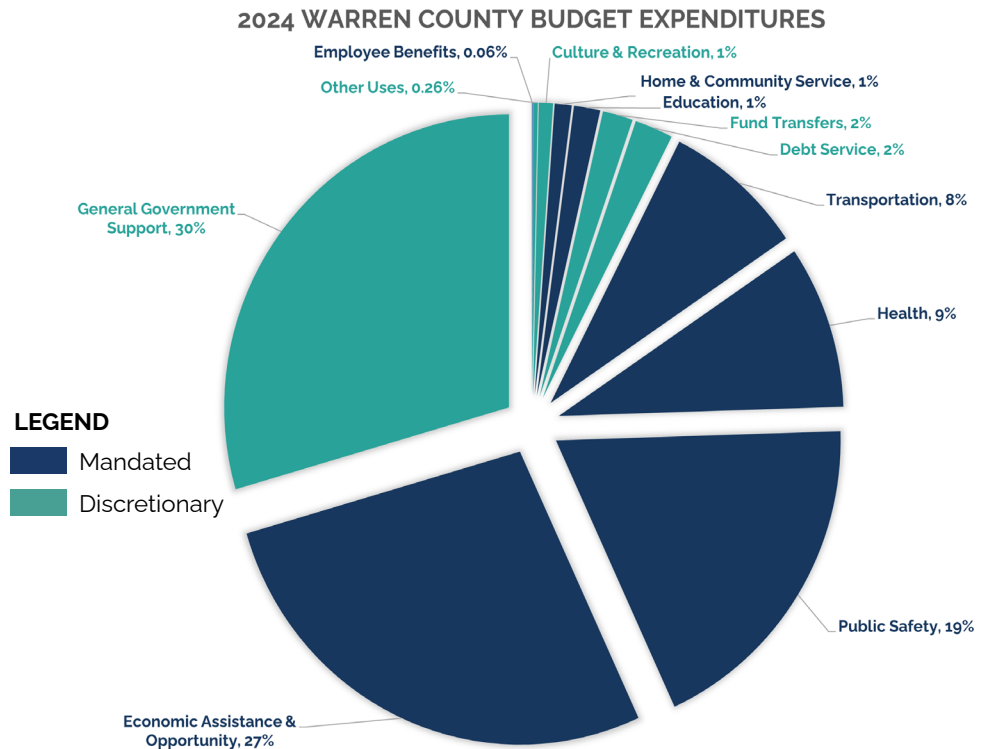
After the public hearings, the Board of Supervisors may propose modifications to the budget prior to its final adoption by the Board of Supervisors. The County must adopt a budget by December 15th.

Warren County generates about \$11,500 per resident in visitor revenue, which is higher than the State average (\$2,620) but less than nearby Essex County (\$20,300) and Hamilton County (\$19,000).

The 2024 Adopted Budget was set at \$192,837,622 with a total amount to be raised by taxes of \$49,816,409. This represented an increase of 2.49% over 2023 and was under the tax cap allowance of \$2.64%. A breakdown of the sources of the 2024 budget can be found in the chart to the right; the largest revenue sources are non-property tax items (56%) and state aid (17%). Sales and use tax is 89% of the non-property tax item budget category; hotel room tax (occupancy tax) is 9%. More information on the County's budget, revenue, and expenditures can be found on the Digital Budget Book, launched by Warren County in 2024 to increase transparency.



On the expenditure side of the budget, Warren County approved \$192 million in total expenditures in the 2024 budget. General Government Support and Economic Assistance comprised the majority of the County's 2024 budget at \$56 million and \$52 million respectively. Roughly 66% of all 2024 expenditures fell into categories mandated by the State of NY.



REGIONAL AGENCIES WITH INFLUENCE IN WARREN COUNTY

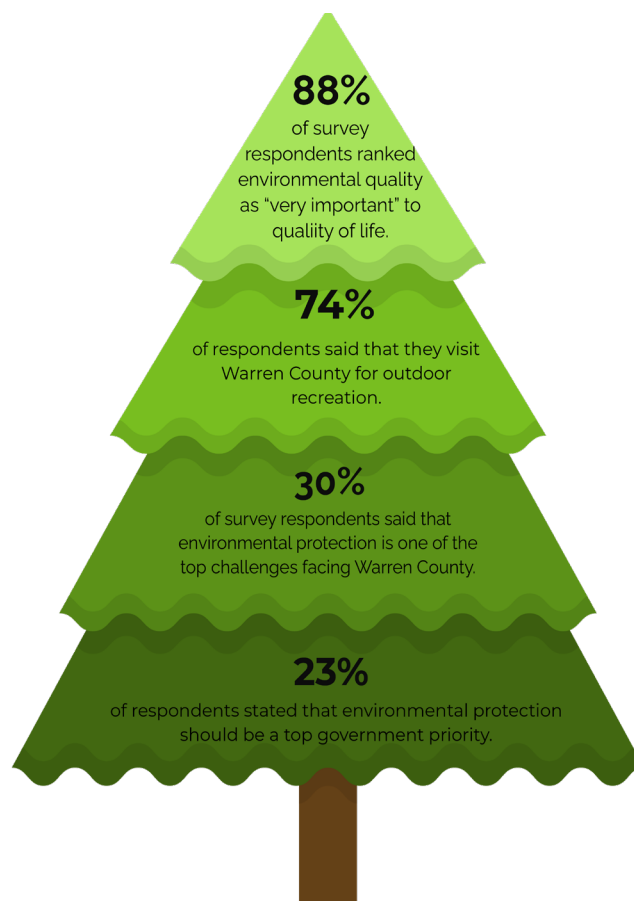
Warren County is influenced by a diverse network of regional entities, each playing a critical role in shaping the County's development, environment, economy, and infrastructure. These organizations help Warren County navigate complex challenges like balancing conservation with development, addressing the County's housing crisis, and promoting sustainable economic growth in a largely rural setting. Each of these regional partners contributes to the County's broader planning efforts, helping align local priorities with larger state and regional goals.

- **Adirondack Park Agency (APA):** Covering 94% of Warren County, the APA regulates land use within the Adirondack Park to balance conservation and development. Established in 1971, it ensures that the park's natural, scenic, and recreational resources are preserved while guiding responsible growth. The APA works closely with local governments, including Warren County, to manage development pressures in the region.
- **Lake Champlain-Lake George Regional Planning Board (LCLGRP):** Representing five counties, including Warren, LCLGRP provides regional planning, economic development, and environmental services. It supports projects like watershed planning, drinking water protection, pollution reduction, and economic resilience and offers ongoing resources to local governments and businesses for sustainable development.
- **Capital Region Economic Development Council (REDC):** As one of New York's ten REDCs, this council coordinates state-supported economic development efforts across eight counties, including Warren. Composed of community leaders, businesses, and public representatives, the REDC identifies local priorities for job creation and economic growth. Warren County benefits from REDC's strategic investment to strengthen the regional economy.
- **Warren-Washington IDA:** This public benefit corporation promotes industrial and commercial development in Warren and Washington Counties. It provides tax incentives and financial support for new and expanding businesses, managing projects like the Airport Industrial Park. The IDA's initiatives stimulate job growth, improve local infrastructure, and enhance regional competitiveness.
- **Warren County EDC:** A 501(c)(3) organization, the EDC attracts new businesses and supports existing ones, working with local governments to boost Warren County's economy. It offers expertise in areas like site selection, workforce data, and funding opportunities. With several revolving loan programs, the EDC helps bridge financing gaps for business retention and expansion projects.
- **Warren County LDC:** The County-sponsored Local Development Corporation (LDC) furthers projects and programs that enhance the economic well-being of Warren County and its communities. It serves as a fiduciary account for County Planning Department projects and repository for housing program funding awards, disbursements and repayments, and also administers the County's small business lending program.
- **Adirondack/Glens Falls Transportation Council (A/GFTC):** The designated MPO responsible for regional transportation planning and federal funding allocation. Their planning principles are to strengthen and support regional character and economic vitality, integrate all transportation modes, balance system maintenance and expansion, protect the environment, and to adapt to innovation.
- **Warren County Soil and Water Conservation District (WCSWCD):** A local arm of State government, WCSWCD provides technical conservation services to residents and municipalities in Warren County. It addresses stormwater management, erosion control, and natural resource conservation, enhancing land and water quality. WCSWCD works with landowners and communities in the County to sustain natural resources and support long-term environmental health.
- **Saratoga, Warren, & Washington County Workforce Development Board:** Formed under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), this board connects job seekers with training and employment opportunities across three counties. It collaborates with Warren County's Workforce Development Department to align workforce readiness programs with local business needs. The board plays a key role in supporting regional economic growth by enhancing labor force skills and access to employment.

CHAPTER 4: OUR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT



Warren County has a strong connection to its natural environment, which serves as both an economic driver and a focus of environmental stewardship. Public input collected during the development of this plan indicates that environmental quality and outdoor recreation are considered major assets by residents and stakeholders, contributing significantly to quality of life and economic development in the county. The natural environment is highly valued in Warren County because it provides a unique blend of accessibility, diversity, and quality of recreational opportunities. According to stakeholder interviews, even among Adirondack counties, Warren County stands out for offering recreational resources suitable for all skill levels, from beginner to expert, all within an hour's drive. Lake George serves as the crown jewel, attracting tourists and anchoring the County's recreation economy, while also generating occupancy tax revenue that benefits all municipalities. Other key natural assets include multiple ski mountains, extensive trails systems and many navigable waterways. The natural setting provides both economic benefits through tourism and recreation, and lifestyle benefits through easy access to outdoor activities, scenic beauty, and a balance between urban amenities and rural seclusion.



WATER RESOURCES

WATERBODIES

Warren County contains over 25 lakes, hundreds of streams and named/unnamed ponds, and over 50 miles of the Hudson River. Combined, seven percent of the County's total area is covered with water (42,134 acres). These waterbodies form watersheds and sub-watersheds that move ground and surface waters into, through, and out of the County. Eleven percent of County parcels are waterfront and 18 percent of all parcels are located within 250 feet of large waterbodies.

Lake George, known as the "Queen of American Lakes," stands out for its pristine water, scenic beauty, historical significance, and role in the region's tourism economy. The lake's clear waters are a significant asset for local recreation, drawing visitors for activities such as boating, fishing, and swimming. It also contributes enormously to the local economy through tourism and hospitality industries. The conservation efforts around Lake George are recognized as a national model, with extensive measures in place to maintain its water quality. In addition to Lake George, Warren County has 86 other waterbodies over 20 acres in size. Twenty-three of them are entirely on State land; the remainder are either partially or entirely surrounded by privately owned land.

The Hudson River, which played an essential role in the settlement of Warren County, continues to influence the region. Towns such as Warrensburg, Lake Luzerne, and Glens Falls were developed along the river, capitalizing on its power to drive mills and industry. Today, the Hudson River remains a vital natural and economic resource, continuing to support recreational activities and providing a sense of historical continuity.



In addition to the County's lakes, ponds, rivers, and streams, wetlands are a key component of the local hydrological system and provide essential ecological services, such as flood control, water filtration, and habitat for diverse plant and animal species. The wetlands surrounding Lake George and along the Hudson River serve as natural buffers, absorbing stormwater and preventing soil erosion, while also helping to maintain water quality by filtering pollutants.

WATERSHEDS

The County has two distinct watersheds: the Upper Hudson River Watershed, which encompasses 75 percent of the County, and the Lake Champlain Watershed, which includes Lake George and drains the remaining 25 percent of the County. The Upper Hudson River Watershed originates in the Adirondack Mountains and flows south to the Hudson River confluence with the Mohawk River at the Troy Dam. The Lake Champlain Watershed drains the area between the Adirondack Mountains in northeastern New York State and the Green Mountains in northwestern Vermont. Methods and approaches to protect these watersheds has been the focus of numerous County and regional studies, including the Lake George Watershed Action Plan and Upper Hudson Watershed Plans.

LAND RESOURCES

The rolling and mountain landforms provide part of the unique scenic and recreation environment and are home to diverse plant and animal habitats. Approximately 323,518 acres of land in the County is used as wild, forested, conservation lands and public parks according to the NYS property type classification codes. Characteristics of these lands are shown in the table below. These lands support a variety of recreational opportunities and ecosystem functions. Private forest lands have a variety of owners, including timber companies, sporting clubs, conservation-based non-profits, and individuals. As a result, the County is in a relatively outstanding position in terms of natural resources and the ecological services provided by the natural landscape. Benefits include helping keep the surface water runoff clean through natural processes that buffer rainfalls, reducing erosion and helping keep the rates and volumes of runoff manageable through the existing natural landscape. Forests also provide an environmental service for air quality and climate resilience, beneficially absorbing massive amounts of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

The County is located almost entirely within the Adirondack Park so most private lands are regulated by the Adirondack Park Agency (APA), which enforces stricter zoning and building codes than areas outside the Park to protect the natural environment. There are also specific guidelines for timber harvesting, mining, and other resource extraction activities to ensure sustainable practices. Continued stewardship and wise management of the privately owned land in the County will be an important aspect of maintaining the high quality of the natural resource base that contributes to the quality of life in Warren County.

RECREATION

The County's land and water resources play a significant role in the County's economy and quality of life through outdoor recreation. Based on the Comprehensive Plan survey responses, hiking is the most popular recreational activity amongst residents, with 85 percent participating at least one to two times per season. There are 270 miles of public hiking trails distributed throughout the County. NYSDEC is involved with the management of just over half (52 percent) of the hiking trails and trail systems in Warren County. Municipalities (23 percent of trails/ trail systems) and land trusts (20 percent) also play a critical role in hiking trail system management.

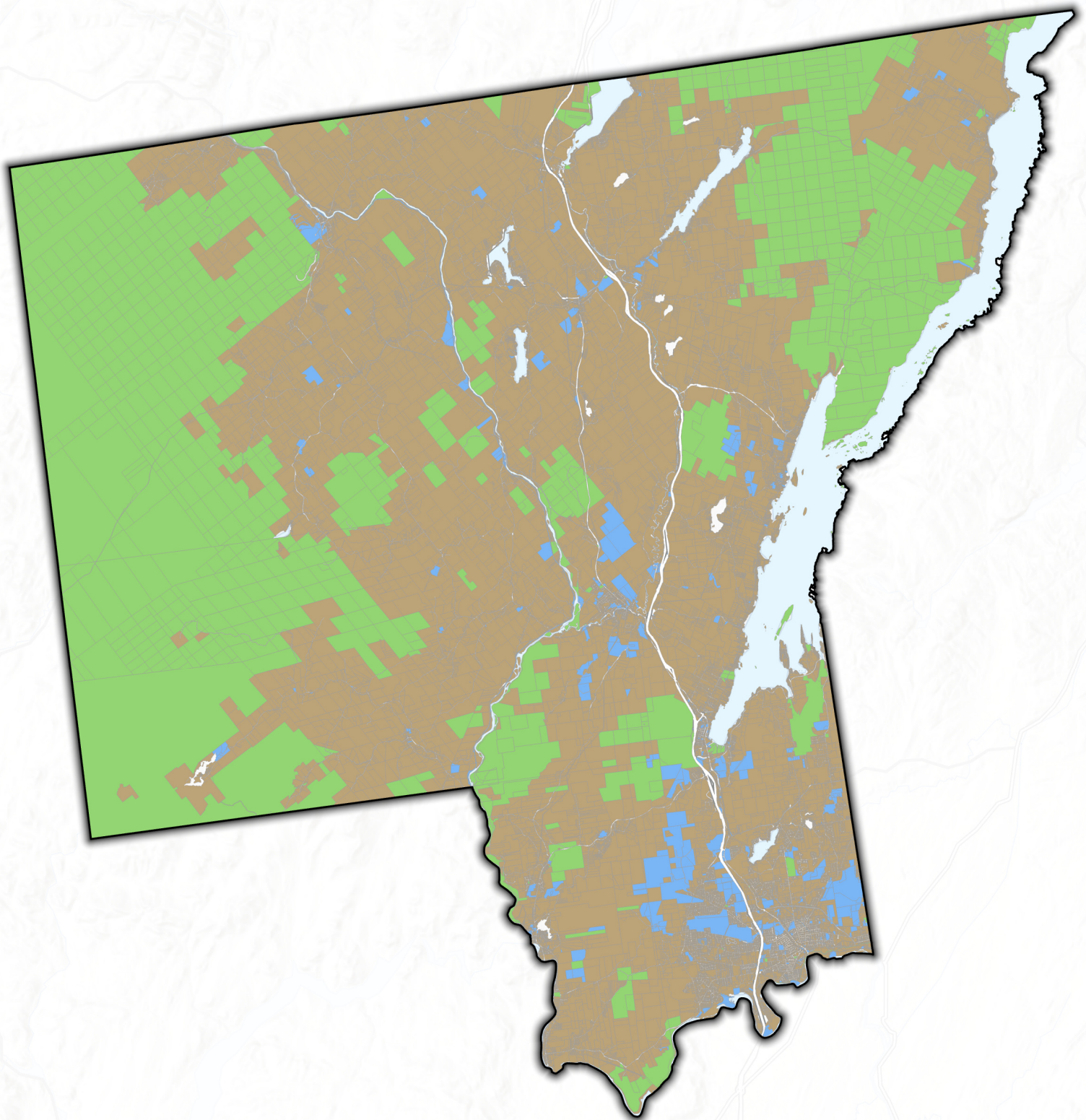
Other existing land resources include seven purpose-built cross-country mountain bike trail networks, two downhill mountain bike parks, 33 car-accessible campgrounds, 523 backcountry camp and tent sites and nine lean-tos, four lift-served skiing and riding areas, four groomed Nordic skiing areas, horseback riding, rock climbing, and 223 miles of public snowmobile trails. Hunting is also permitted on nearly 199,000 acres of State-managed lands in Warren County.

According to the Warren County Outdoor Recreation Existing Conditions report, waterbodies across the County support a variety of canoeing, kayaking, rafting, and tubing activities. In terms of paddle boating, there are 52 public boat launches in Warren County – mostly managed by NYSDEC (18) or Warren County (16). Municipalities manage an additional 18 launches. Public motorized boating access is provided to the following waterbodies: Lake George, Brant Lake, Schroon Lake, Lake Luzerne, Trout Lake and Hudson River impoundments. There are 15 municipally managed public beaches and a variety of managed public fishing access locations scattered throughout the County. While Warren County is blessed with water resources, there is limited public access to certain waterbodies, with some larger waterbodies having only a single public access point and a handful having no public access or poorly-maintain boat launches.

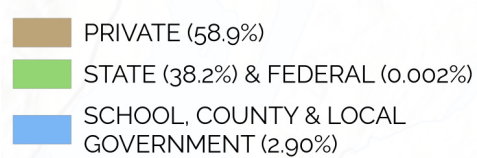
Land Type	Percentage
Forest Cover	88%
Publicly Owned Conservation and Recreation	37%
Wetlands (Herbaceous and Woody)	13%
Developed Land	2%

LAND OWNERSHIP

WARREN COUNTY, NEW YORK



LAND OWNERSHIP



KEY NATURAL ENVIRONMENT PARTNERS

Although Warren County Planning administers programs related to environmental initiatives, the County does not have any staff dedicated to environmental quality issues. Much of the work being done to research and address invasive species, private septic systems, and road salt use is spearheaded by non-profit organizations. Warren County Planning has either applied for funding, have been awarded funding, and/or administers programs for all of these initiatives. It is essential for the County to collaborate with these local and regional organizations to strengthen their efforts or broaden their reach. The WCSWCD and LCL-GRPB (described in Chapter 3, "What We Do and How We Collaborate") are two key natural environment partners. Others include:

Lake George Land Conservancy has protected over 12,000 acres on and around Lake George since its founding in 1988 and has several initiatives, including additional land conservation and invasive species management/mitigation, among others.

Lake George Park Commission is a NYS Agency authorized to carry out a wide array of programs aimed at protecting Lake George and the safety of the recreating public. Program areas include invasive species prevention and management, stormwater management, stream corridor protection, Septic System Inspection Program, and New Wastewater Regulations.

The Lake George Association (LGA) is a not-for-profit agency focused on protecting Lake George through advocacy, research and public education. The Fund for Lake George recently merged with the LGA and includes the Lake George Waterkeeper program. The Jefferson Project is a collaboration of the LGA with the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI) and IBM bringing "world-leading technology and science" to collection and analysis of water chemistry data to inform decision making with respect to policy.

Cornell University Cooperative Extension provides programs based on the needs of the County using research-based information from Cornell University to improve lives and communities, increase economic vitality, and enhance environmental quality. Cooperative Extension offers programs addressing community health; natural resources and water quality; wise energy use and 4-H youth development through real life, hands-on learning. The organization is well-known for its focus on agriculture and natural resources, with programs to promote stewardship of our natural resources.

New York State Department of Conservation, in consultation with the **Adirondack Park Agency**, prepares unit management plans (UMPs) to help guide the uses of State-owned Forest Preserve, State Forests, Wildlife Management Areas, and Lands under Conservation Easements. The agencies identify opportunities for public use and recreation that are consistent with the classifications of these lands and consider the ability of the resources and ecosystems to accommodate such use.

Queensbury Land Conservancy, a not-for-profit organization founded in 2000 to protect open space in the greater Queensbury-Glens Falls region. QLC safeguards multiple preserves in Warren County and provides recreational opportunities to residents and tourists.

Two of the State's eight **Partnerships for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISMs)** operate in Warren County: the Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program (APIPP), which operates inside of the Adirondack Park, and the Capital Region PRISM, which operates outside of the Park. The PRISMs work to prevent or minimize the harm caused by invasive species on New York's environment.



CLIMATE CHANGE AND GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

Climate change is requiring municipal governments to reframe their approach to how infrastructure, community facilities, and programs are designed and managed. Climate change, once considered an abstract threat as recently as a decade ago, has forced its way into the tax-payers consciousness- primarily in the form of massively damaging storm events. Increasing county resilience in the face of climate change impacts through planning, infrastructure investments, and policies will be necessary in the coming years.

CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS

The New York State Climate Impact Assessment projects significant impacts for the Adirondack region. By the 2050s, average temperatures are expected to increase by 4.6° to 6.6° F, and by 6.1° to 10.6° F by the 2080s, with fewer very cold days and more extremely hot ones. Warmer temperatures will reduce snowfall and lake ice, replacing winter snow with rain. Lakes are already experiencing shorter ice cover durations, and this trend is set to continue.

Increasingly severe storms in Warren County cause greater runoff, sedimentation, nutrient loading, and infrastructure damage, raising repair costs. While the County's Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) addresses some vulnerabilities, municipalities need further support to adapt.

In Warren County, the greatest risks posed by climate change include:

- **Increased flood risk**
- **Severe storms (high winds)**
- **Increase in extremely hot days**
- **Infestation and invasive species**
- **Vector-borne diseases**

Climate changes will also affect outdoor recreation. Ice fishing, skating, and fall foliage may decline, while warmer conditions increase harmful algae, invasive species, and fish population shifts. However, extended seasons for boating and cycling may offer opportunities. The County's current Outdoor Recreation Economy Strategic Plan acknowledges this threat and identifies goals and strategies to prepare and adapt.

CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION

Addressing the impact of climate change is becoming increasingly important as communities are experiencing impacts. Warren County has made significant strides in addressing climate change. Since adopting the New York State Climate Smart Communities (CSC) Pledge in 2019 and achieving Bronze certification in 2020, the County has launched various initiatives. The County successfully secured DEC CSC funding to develop an Organics Management Plan, which later led to additional funding in 2024 for a municipal composting pilot program. The County also began systematically integrating electric vehicles into their fleet and, in 2023, invested \$750,000 annually to expand public transportation access through the CDTA merger. While the merger was primarily driven by practical considerations, it represents a significant step toward reducing transportation-related emissions.

To strengthen their climate initiatives, the County has recently hired a dedicated climate coordinator and re-established the Climate Smart Task Force, demonstrating a renewed commitment to addressing climate challenges systematically. The Climate Smart Task Force will pursue maintaining an active role in supporting projects throughout the County that will advance mitigation and adaption to prepare for a changing climate. Specific actions and goals from existing plans will be a starting point for the Climate Smart Task Force to act in addressing a changing climate. Warren County's actions are in alignment with the goals outlined in New York State's 2019 Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA).

CLIMATE ADAPTATION

In 2023, FEMA approved Warren County's Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP), prioritizing resilience to climate-related hazards. The County mapped mitigation projects from the HMP against its Capital Project Inventory, identifying infrastructure at risk of flood damage. Key efforts focus on right-sizing culverts and transportation infrastructure to improve flood resilience and guide future investments in community preparedness.

STORMWATER RUNOFF

While Warren County's wealth of water resources are world-renowned assets, they also face significant environmental challenges. As development continues, stormwater runoff from both developed and undeveloped lands threatens water quality through increased sedimentation and nutrient loading. This leads to degraded water quality and creates conditions conducive to the growth of harmful algal blooms, which threaten aquatic ecosystems and public health. Stormwater management will become increasingly important as the region experiences increased precipitation and more extreme

precipitation events. The need to right-size culverts and incorporate green infrastructure is becoming increasingly important as the County works in partnership with municipalities to improve resiliency.

Stormwater management has made great strides since the adoption of Clean Water Act Phase I Stormwater regulations in 1990. The USEPA, as implemented by the NYSDEC, currently requires that stormwater management measures are included in land development activities disturbing more than one acre. The Lake George Park Commission (LGPC) has taken further measures to address the impacts of land development and reducing runoff-related pollutants.

ROAD SALT

It is recognized that the use of road salt in winter maintenance can have long-term implications for local ecosystems. According to the 2023 Adirondack Road Salt Reduction Task Force Assessment, an estimated 193,000 tons of road salt are applied annually to the road network of the Adirondack Park during the colder months of the year. Of this road salt, 44 percent is applied to the local road network and the remaining 56 percent is applied to the State road network. Research by the Adirondack Road Salt Task Force Assessment indicates that road salt has doubled chloride concentrations in local streams and rivers since the 1990s, with ten percent of the County's surface waters showing elevated salt levels that exceed recommended thresholds for aquatic life and drinking water sources.





Road salt management has become an important concern, and the Adirondack Road Salt Task Force has included leadership from the Warren County Department of Public Works. The County, along with other public works/town highway partners, have been leading the way to minimize the impact of road salt to help protect water resources. A systematic approach, including improved plowing and deicing technology and knowledge sharing with other professionals, are contributing to significant reductions in the amount of salt applied to participating jurisdictions. This will be of continual importance, as the impact of salt will still need to be considered and mitigated over the long term.

INVASIVE SPECIES

The presence of invasive aquatic plant species has been recognized as adversely impacting surface waters in the County, including Lake George and other water bodies. These include aquatic plants Eurasian milfoil and curly-leaf pond weed and invasive animals, including zebra mussels, Asian clams, and spiny water fleas. The recent arrival of the hemlock woolly adelgid, an invasive insect that kills hemlock trees, may lead to the devastation of our hemlock forests which in turn could threaten water quality and clarity throughout the region.

Invasive species will be an ongoing challenge to property owners and resource managers. In 2023, the LCLGRPB facilitated the Watershed Action Plan for Lake George, which documents more than \$1.0 million is spent annually for prevention and mitigation of invasive species in Lake George and other lakes in the County are also facing increasing costs for invasive species management.

Addressing this and the other challenges facing the natural environment is imperative as it is critical to maintaining the quality of life that is valued by residents and drives tourism. Environmental protection was ranked as the third most important priority for the County; however the top priorities (infrastructure and economic development) are highly dependent upon a healthy natural environment and mitigating negative impacts on the environment.

CHAPTER 5: OUR BUILT ENVIRONMENT



Our Built Environment is organized into three sections: Housing, Infrastructure, and Transportation. These three facets of the built environment go a long way towards determining where people will live, where businesses can locate or expand, and how residents and visitors will move across the County.

HOUSING

Housing is currently a central focus of community conversations at the Federal, State, and local levels. Warren County and the city, village, and towns within the County have invested in understanding current housing conditions, the existing and future gaps in its housing offerings, and the steps that can be taken to fill those gaps to create safe, affordable, and desirable housing for current and future residents.

HOUSING SUPPLY

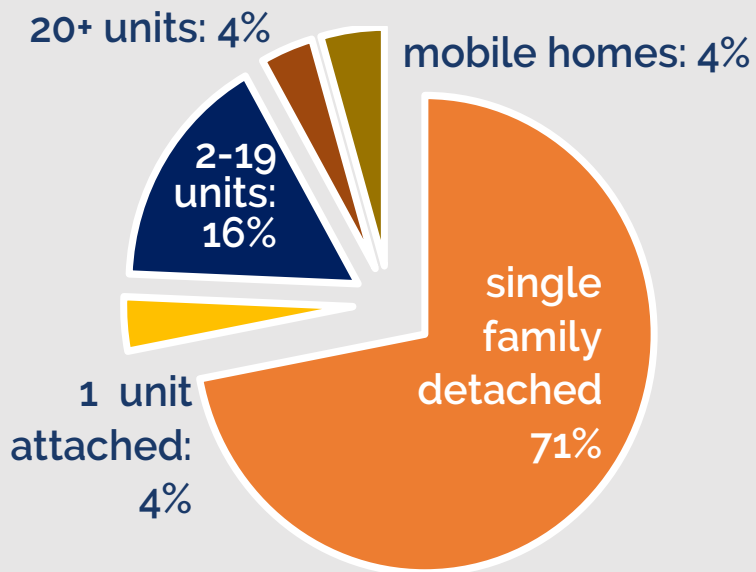
According to the 2023 Housing Needs Study of Warren County, NY, the County has 40,406 housing units. The current housing supply of Warren County is not diverse: 71 percent of housing is comprised of detached single-family homes. This is substantially higher than the percentage of single-family homes in the State (42 percent) and nation (62 percent). Most occupied housing units are also owner-occupied. As of 2022, approximately 70.2 percent of occupied housing units in Warren County were owner-occupied, above the national average of 64.6 percent. Glens Falls is the only city/town located within the County where there is a fairly even distribution of renter and owner households (among the general population).

The current housing supply is not diverse.

Warren County has
40,406 housing
units.



Of these,
71% are detached
single-family homes.



This is substantially higher than the percentage of single-family homes in the state (42%) and nation (62%).

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF WARREN COUNTY GOVERNMENT IN HOUSING?

Warren County currently plays a limited role in housing today. Recent housing-related initiatives undertaken by Warren County Planning have included adopting a new Fair Housing Plan in 2022 and completing the Housing Needs Study in 2023. Also falling within the purview of Warren County is the Warren County Countryside Adult Home in Warrensburg. This 48-bed public, non-profit, Adult Residential Care Facility is licensed by the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) and falls under the direction of Warren County's Department of Social Services (DSS). Fifty percent of the facility's funding comes from the County, with the remainder coming from the State through reimbursements. The County is currently in the process of evaluating how and via what mechanisms to engage in addressing housing needs. This is a priority that has been identified by the Board of Supervisors as an important next step following completion of the 2023 Housing Needs Study.

Previously, the County played a larger role in home rehabilitation. From 1977 through 2010, the County Planning Department administered approximately \$15.5 million of awards to rehabilitate owner-occupied housing or to assist first time home buyers. These programs assisted 1,954 individual residences and provided an additional 66 units of new construction for lower income home buyers. Before ending the program in 2010, the new home ownership programs leveraged \$3.3 million of private financing and \$1.8 million of grant funding.

Nearly a third of the housing stock in all of Warren County was built prior to 1950, and 63 percent of homes in Glens Falls were built before 1950. This is generally similar to other counties in the region and State but is substantially older than that of the nation (16.5 percent built pre-1950). Homes built prior to 1950 are likely at or beyond their lifespan absent substantial repair. Since 2010, the County has added 1,680 new housing units, an increase of 4.3 percent. This is above the North Country region (2.4 percent), but below the Capital Region (6.4 percent), State (5.9 percent), and national (9.2 percent) increases. Looking ahead, most planned development in Bolton and Queensbury is owner-occupied homes, while proposed development in Glens Falls and Lake George is primarily for renter units. Minimal activity is in the pipeline in the northern part of the County.

APA regulations limit the areas within which new development can occur; however, there are ways to increase housing opportunities within areas under local land use control. Most of Warren County is within the Adirondack Park. Within the Park, development potential is generally limited outside of the hamlets, due to State ownership and APA land use regulations; within the hamlets, communities have control over local land use regulations and the APA encourages increasing density. The Warren County Planning Department has begun evaluating zoning and infrastructure limitations for properties in the County's hamlets within the Park and communities outside the blue line to better understand development potential.

Local resistance to change can also be a hinderance to housing development. Recent housing development proposals in the region have not come without controversy. This community pushback against housing projects creates additional delays and can deter developers.

KEY HOUSING PARTNERS

Rural Housing Coalition of New York: The Rural Housing Coalition is a statewide organization dedicated to revitalizing rural New York by strengthening housing and community development providers through organizational capacity development, raising public awareness and advocacy, and training and technical assistance.

Warren-Washington IDA: The Warren-Washington IDA, noted as a key partner in Chapter 3, has supported several major housing developments in recent years, including the Sun Valley and Fowler Square developments.

Glens Falls Housing Authority (GFHA): Established in 1966, the GFHA operates three low-income apartment buildings in Glens Falls (including two senior buildings, and one family complex) and one low-income senior housing building in Washington County. The Housing Authority also operates the federally funded Housing Choice Voucher rental subsidy and First Time Homeowners programs.

Adirondack Community Housing Trust (ACHT): ACHT was created to keep Adirondack Park homes affordable for them to purchase. ACHT utilizes the

Community Land Trust (CLT) model to reduce the cost of home purchases for families making up to 120 percent of AMI. While staffed by the Essex County-based Adirondack Roots, the ACHT covers the entirety of the Adirondack Park.

City of Glens Falls' Office of Community Development: The Glens Falls Office of Community Development offers housing rehabilitation grants and loans for low- and moderate-income homeowners across the County and administers a home buyer assistance program for families interested in purchasing a home in Warren County.

North Country Rural Development Coalition: A non-profit organization established in 1984 for the purpose of connecting and enhancing the community through housing restoration, downtown revitalization, historic preservation, and community development programs. PRIDE's Tri-County HOME Program funds owner-occupied home rehabilitation and lead-based paint abatement for low to moderate-income residents of Essex, Washington, and Warren counties. Their Tri-County RESTORE Program funds owner-occupied home emergency home repairs for residents 60 years old and above in Essex, Washington, and Warren counties.



The new housing that is constructed does not match up with household demographic trends.

HOUSEHOLD TRENDS

As noted in Chapter 2, "Who We Are," as of 2022, the average household size in Warren County was 2.2 persons per household and is projected to decrease through 2027.

New housing that is constructed does not align with demographic shifts of those in need of housing. For example, 59 percent of Warren County's housing units have 3 or more bedrooms. The only housing unit type to have statistically grown since 2016 is units with 5 or more bedrooms, increasing from 4.1 percent to 5.5 percent of the County's housing stock. Compared with New York State, Warren County has ten percent more 3+bedroom units and 13 percent fewer studio and one-bedroom units. With rental units, two-bedroom units are the most widely available rental unit type, although nearly half of the County's overall renter households and over 75 percent of senior renter households are one-person. With an increasing senior population, the housing needs of this population must also be planned for. As of 2022 there are 28,802 households and 9,779 senior (65+) households in Warren County. While the number of all households in the County is projected to remain stable through 2027, the number of senior households is projected to grow: Warren County is projected to add 633 senior owner-occupied units and 254 senior renter-occupied units by 2027.

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

While average household spending on housing is generally considered within affordable categories, current home prices are generally unattainable for the local market. On average, households in Warren County spend 26 percent of their income on housing costs. This percentage is in line with our neighboring counties and is considered affordable. However, home sale prices in the County have also been on an upward trend. According to the Southern Adirondack Realtors Association, from 2019 to 2022, County median sale prices for all homes increase by \$70,000, from \$210,000 to \$280,000, which is considered unaffordable for the median household income of \$67,244. This disconnect is especially marked in the Town of Bolton, which was the largest contributor to the Countywide home price increases. Homes sold in 2022 in the Town of Bolton exceeded affordability for the median income earner by nearly \$350,000. Renters in Warren County are also considered housing cost burdened. With 47 percent of all renter households paying more than 30 percent of their income on rent.

Current home prices are unattainable for the local market.

HOUSING DEMAND

Demand for housing has increased substantially in recent years, driven in part by the area's abundant natural amenities, such as forests, lakes, trails, and wildlife, which attract both tourists and new residents. From 2018 to 2023, the median days from listing to pending sale in Warren County decreased from 84 to just 13, far outpacing the 38 percent national decrease over the same period.

Many who choose to relocate to Warren County first experience it as tourists, creating a positive feedback loop where increased interest fosters new businesses and services, further enhancing the area's appeal. However, this growth brings significant challenges, including housing shortages: Warren County's current overall housing vacancy rate is 3.6 percent, which is below the national average of 3.8 percent. The current vacancy rate in the rental market is 0.4 percent. Vacancy rates below five percent typically indicate a housing shortage.

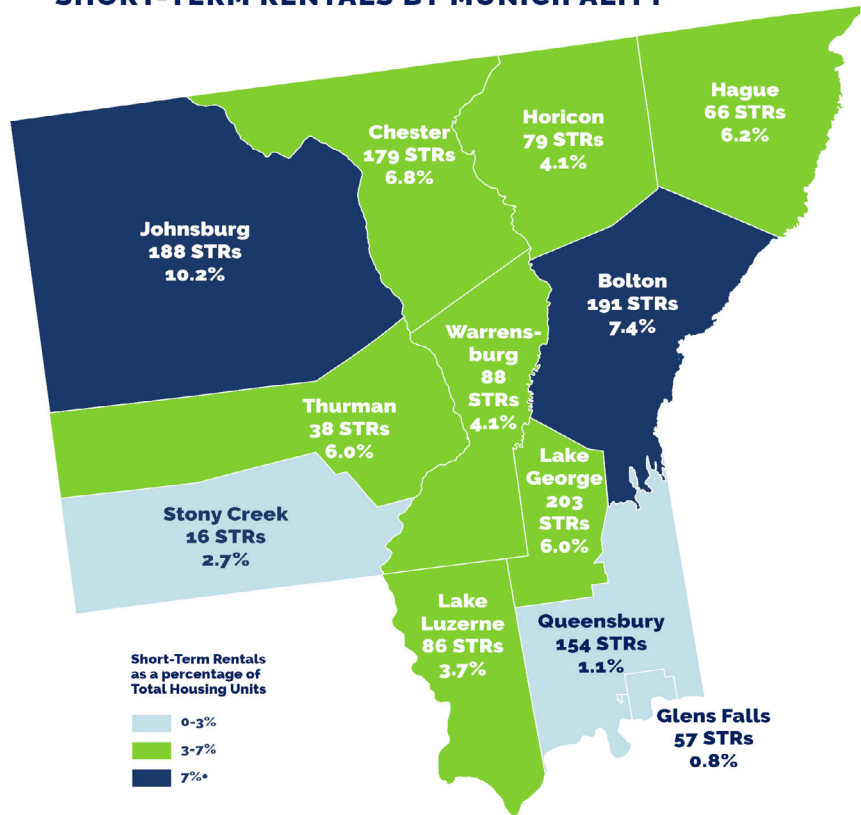
This dynamic illustrates the "amenity trap," where the very qualities that make a place desirable can also lead to issues like rising home prices and infrastructure stress, requiring careful planning to balance growth with sustainability.

TOURISM AND SEASONAL HOUSING IMPACTS & NEEDS

The Warren County housing market is significantly impacted by tourism, in terms of both seasonal homes and short-term rentals (STRs). Over the past 20 years, the number of non-locally owned homes in the County increased at three times the rate of locally-owned homes. Today, 22 percent of Warren County's housing units are seasonal. As of November 2024, Warren County has 1,345 registered short-term rentals. Distribution of seasonal housing and STRs varies, with the least in Glens Falls, where less than one percent of housing is seasonal and STRs make up less than one percent of the housing stock. In contrast, 42 percent of the housing stock in Johnsbury is seasonal and STRs represent over ten percent of the housing stock.

In addition to the impacts of tourists and visitors on the housing market, the significant increase in the local workforce in the summer seasonal is another complicating factor in the local housing market. Communities like Lake George rely on a seasonable workforce that are finding it increasingly difficult to secure housing. The 2023 Town & Village of Lake George Workforce Housing Market Study estimated that there is a seasonal worker housing demand potential of 1,375 beds (workers) in the combined Town and Village of Lake George over the next five years. The demand is estimated to include 550-687 beds in "dormitory-style units," as well as 687-825 beds in private units.

SHORT-TERM RENTALS BY MUNICIPALITY



INFRASTRUCTURE

Infrastructure, including water, wastewater, and communications infrastructure, are essential components to support current residents and businesses and future economic growth. Beyond the economy, ensuring the adequacy of wastewater and stormwater infrastructure is also paramount to preserving the quality of Warren County's natural environment, and particularly its water resources.

WATER

In Warren County, water is provided from various facilities as a public service or through private supplies, such as wells. There are ten municipal water districts located within the County. In addition, the City of Glens Falls supplies water to its residents (and adjacent municipalities) and the Village of Lake George to Village residents. The County also has numerous smaller community water systems managed by private homeowners' associations and other entities. The County does not own or maintain any water infrastructure, and unlike some counties, is not involved with monitoring public water supply sources.

In total, of the parcels in the County that have water, approximately 54 percent are served by public water. Within the Adirondack Park, some of the hamlets are not fully served by public water and sewer, limiting their development potential. Eight of the County's 17 hamlets have public water serving limited areas; however, only one hamlet is fully served by public water (Bolton Landing). Four of the County's hamlets are served by public sewer (Bolton Landing, Hague, Lake George, and Warrensburg); however, in all four hamlets, not all parcels are connected to the public sewer system.

The unserved areas represent an opportunity – these are areas that are under APA regulations and can accommodate additional density, however, absent adequate infrastructure development and investment is stymied.

Much of the public water infrastructure in the County is aging and in need of upgrades or replacements. Based on information provided by municipalities to County Planning to-date, in total there are 36 drinking water improvement projects totaling \$53.2 million across the County.

Additional upgrades to water systems are needed to ensure compliance with the 2021 federal Lead and Copper Rule Revisions (LCRR), which requires water systems to conduct and maintain LSL inventories, as well as develop LSL replacement programs. Many systems do not have accurate records of where LSLs are located, and insufficient tools to conduct

34% of survey respondents that said Infrastructure Maintenance should be the County's top priority – the highest response rate.

thorough inventories. As of October 16, 2024, every water system, with no exception, is required to develop an initial service line material inventory that includes all LSLs regardless of ownership and submit the inventory to its local health department. Systems must update their inventory annually or triennially depending on their monitoring frequency. Warren County GIS has taken on a lead role in meeting this deadline, assisting municipalities with their data collection.

PUBLICLY MANAGED WATER SYSTEMS IN WARREN COUNTY, INCLUDING APPROXIMATE POPULATION SERVED:

- Bolton Water District: 1,800
- City of Glens Falls: 14,000
- Chestertown Water District: 750
- Diamond Point Water District (Town of Lake George): 493
- Hudson Grove Water District (Town of Lake Luzerne): 345
- Lake George Village: 1,800
- Lake Luzerne Water District: 2,500
- North Creek Water District: 1,100
- Pottersville Water District: 300
- Queensbury Water District: 21,200
- Shore Colony Water District (Town of Queensbury): 100
- Warrensburg Water District: 3,600



SEWER

Warren County has ten publicly owned sewer districts, half of which are in the Town of Queensbury. In addition, public sewer is provided by the City of Glens Falls to its residents (and the Town of Queensbury) and Village of Lake George to its residents as well as portions of the Town of Lake George. A much smaller percentage of the County has public sewer than public water.

There is a growing interest in septic system inspections, and funding is available for replacements in priority areas.

In addition to the public systems, there are several small community wastewater systems managed by homeowners' associations and other entities. The County does not own or maintain any sewer infrastructure. Approximately 73 percent of the land parcels in Warren County are not located within a sewer district. Developed properties that do not have public sewer or community wastewater systems have on-site septic systems. When properly designed, these systems can be effective at protecting public health and the environment. However, poor routine maintenance, excessive density of systems, and undersized and overused systems can all lead to on-site system failure and water quality impacts. The County has evaluated establishing a septic inspection on transfer law, but it was not adopted and would require additional resources to implement.

Much of the public sewer infrastructure in the County is aging and in need of upgrades or replacements. Based on information provided by municipalities to Warren County Planning to-date, in total there are 59 stormwater and sewer improvement projects totaling \$44.2 million. In addition, there are future capacity concerns at local W/WTPs associated with increased volumes from septage haulers, as more Warren County properties modernize their septic systems and implement more rigorous upkeep practices.

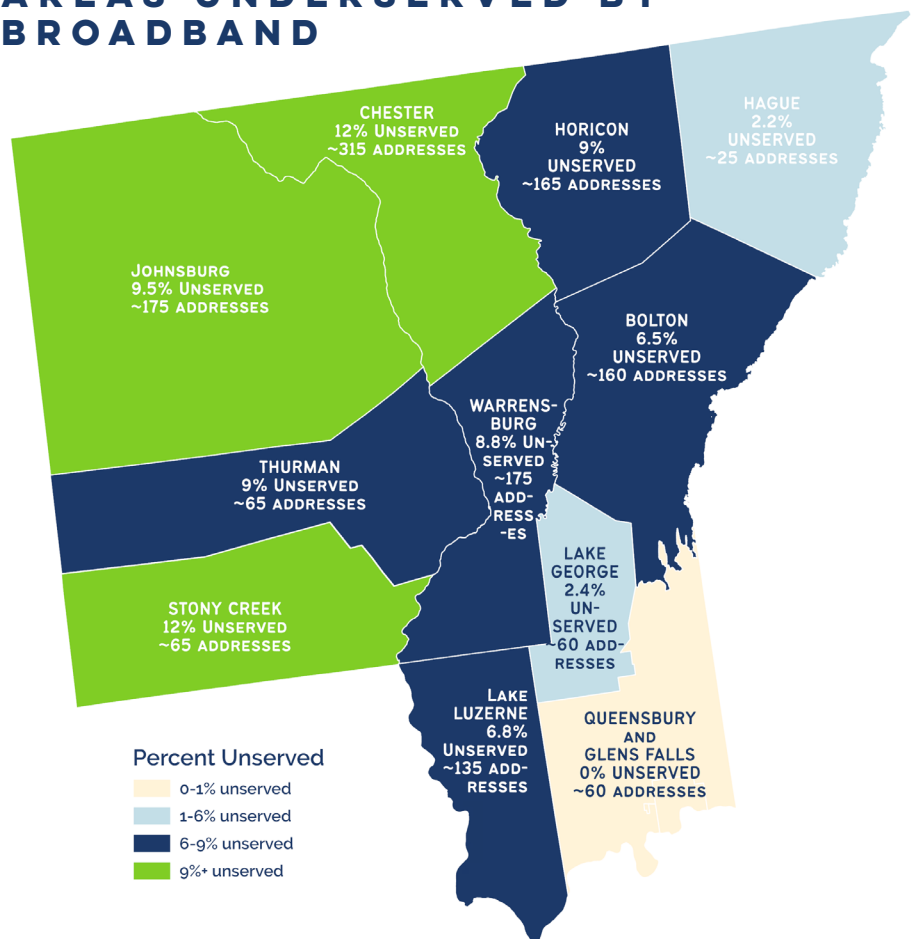
BROADBAND

Broadband access remains a critical infrastructure need in Warren County, as 5.3 percent of residents still lack access to reliable internet despite ongoing efforts. This gap has significant implications for the community's future, given the growing recognition that internet access is no longer optional—it is essential for education, healthcare, and economic resilience.

In response, the County and its partners, including the LCLGRP and Warren County GIS, have worked to improve the accuracy of broadband access data, successfully challenging the FCC's 2022 broadband map to produce a more accurate 2023 version. Building on this, the LCLGRP is now developing a broadband deployment plan to address remaining gaps and challenges. However, funding remains a key obstacle to progress. The urgency of this issue is underscored by its wide-ranging impacts. As school enrollments decline and education increasingly relies on online resources for communication, coordination, and classwork, students and families without broadband access are at a disadvantage. Similarly, as the population ages, particularly in rural areas, telemedicine has become vital for healthcare delivery, enabling residents to access medical care without traveling long distances. Addressing broadband access is not just about connectivity—it is about ensuring equal opportunities and services for all residents, safeguarding the County's future.

The County and its partners are working to address broadband access gaps.

AREAS UNDERSERVED BY BROADBAND



KEY TRANSPORTATION PARTNERS

In addition to the A/GFTC, noted in Chapter 3, "What We Do and How we Collaborate," other key Warren County transportation partners include:

CDTA: In May 2023, the Warren County Board of Supervisors voted to merge Greater Glens Falls Transit (GGFT) with the Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA), a public benefit corporation created in 1970 that provides regional transportation services. Warren County is funding the merger through annual contributions.

Adirondack Cycling Advocates is a non-profit organization whose mission is to promote safe and quality bicycling in the southeastern region of the Adirondacks.

TRANSPORTATION & MOBILITY

Transportation infrastructure connects residences, places of work, and places of leisure. It touches nearly all of people's daily activities. Access to a variety of transportation alternatives has health, environmental, and economic benefits. The transportation and mobility sub-section looks at the roads, transit, and bike and pedestrian infrastructure that serve Warren County residents and visitors.

TRANSPORTATION MODES

The primary mode of transportation in Warren County is the automobile. While most Warren County residents drive to work, the fact that a large number work within the County and/or within a short distance of the home, offers the potential to expand alternative transportation opportunities. Eighty-one percent of Warren County workers over age 16 travel to work by private automobile. Less than three percent of Warren County workers walk to work, with all other modes of transportation making up less than one percent each. Despite the high reliance on private automobiles, 70 percent of County residents work in the County, and approximately one-quarter have a total commute time of less than ten minutes. Exploring opportunities to decrease reliance on private automobile use represents an opportunity.

ROADWAYS

I-87 runs through Warren County, connecting the County to key nodes and contributing to easy tourism access. Based on 2019 NYS DOT data, daily traffic volumes on the Northway range from a low of 9,861 in the northern end of Warren County to a high of 47,620 vehicles a day at the southern end of the County. The accessibility that the Northway provides to residents to

Improving roadway safety is a priority for residents of the region.

access points within and outside of the County was frequently cited as an asset for the County during stakeholder outreach. Looking ahead, as the Capital Region continues to grow, access to the Northway will continue to be a driver of development.

The County Department of Public Works (DPW) services include maintenance of County roads, bridges, and culverts. Increased investments in road maintenance over the last three to five years has allowed the County to catch up on deferred maintenance and reduce the number of poor-quality roads. However, securing State and Federal funding for roadway improvements in Warren County remains a challenge. The County competes against much more urban areas for transportation funding. Warren County is located within NYS Department of Transportation (DOT) Region 1, which encompasses eight counties, including Albany, Schenectady, and Rensselaer. Projects within the Region are often competing for the same funds; Warren County's more rural nature often times make it more difficult to show the need for the funding. Many of the County's smaller communities also lack the information or capacity to administer Federally funded transportation projects.

The 243 miles of Warren County roads represent a component of the transportation network that the County has direct influence over. Warren County owns 78 roads distributed throughout the County; there are no County-owned roads within the City of Glens Falls.

Several of these roads do fall within the County's denser, more walkable hamlets. However, not all roadways have pedestrian infrastructure. Of the 35 County road segments within the hamlets, 11 (one-third) have no sidewalks and nine (one-quarter) have only partial sidewalks. The County does not have a Complete Streets policy or any specific plans to ensure that provisions for non-motorized transportation are incorporated into planned upgrades. Improving roadway safety is a priority for residents of the region. In 2022, the number of fatal crashes in Warren County was at a ten-year high (11). A 2023 study conducted by the A/GFTC found that safety was the biggest transportation priority for survey respondents.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

In May 2023, the Warren County Board of Supervisors approved the merger of Greater Glens Falls Transit (GGFT), which began operation in the Glens Falls area in 1984, and the Capital District Transit Agency (CDTA), a larger transit agency that was founded in 1970 and transports more than 55,000 customers each weekday. CDTA began operation of the former GGFT routes in January 2024. The routes span portions of Warren, Washington, and Saratoga counties and include Glens Falls, Queensbury, South Glens Falls, Lake George, Hudson Falls, Kingsbury, Fort Edward, and Moreau. Routes operate year-round, Monday through Friday from 6:30am – 9:45pm and on Saturdays from 8:00am–6:00pm.

The recent merger of GGFT and the CDTA represents an opportunity for improved transit service.

After initially taking over the existing GGFT routes, the CDTA is now exploring new or changed routes, including opportunities to connect the Warren County routes to the rest of the system and potential on-demand models.

The dispersed, rural population distribution of much of the County makes the traditional approaches to public transportation difficult to implement. GGFT periodically studied and considered various scheduled transit services to the rural area of Warren (and Washington) County but has consistently found insufficient demand to justify the local financial support required to make them feasible.

Two County agencies also provide limited transportation services: the Warren-Hamilton Counties Office for the Aging (WHCOFA) and the Warren County Veterans' Services Agency. WHCOFA provides transportation to medical appointments, with the costs shared between counties by operations managed within Warren County. There has been an increase in demand for this service that has not been matched with increased availability of volunteer drivers. The result is that the County may need to step into transportation services for some seniors. Veterans' Services provides transportation to and from the Albany Veterans' Administration Medical Center on a daily basis.

Consideration of the long-term future of the Warren County Railway is needed.

RAIL

Amtrak does not provide direct service to Warren County. The nearest Amtrack stop is located in Ft. Edward, in neighboring Washington County.

The County purchased in the Warren County Railway with the assistance of \$1.6 million in grant funding. Since then, the County has been successful in securing over \$18 million in grant funds for needed repairs and upgrades. Previous efforts to use the railway for tourism purposes have not been fruitful. New ownership in the northern portions of the route may impact the long-term utility of the corridor, and consideration of the long-term future of the Warren County Railway is needed. Any significant repairs of bridges will need to be engineered to the type of future use planned for the railway. The desired type of use will determine the quality/strength of replacement bridges, and the scope of potential uses, including commercial, industrial, and recreational, must be considered.



CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

The Warren County Bikeway is a paved 9.4-mile multi-use trail for bicycling, walking and running. The bikeway begins at Platt Street in downtown Glens Falls and continues north with rolling hills to Ft. George Road in Lake George. Where a separate trail was not possible, the trail intersects with local roads and shares the shoulder of the road. The origin of the bikeway is a branch of the Delaware & Hudson Railroad line. The bikeway was constructed in four phases. The first section was established in 1978, with the final section of the bikeway (from Leonard Street to Platt Street, in downtown Glens Falls) constructed in 2000, completing the 9.4-mile bikeway.

In addition to the Bikeway, the multi-use Feeder Canal Park Heritage Trail is also located within Warren County (in the Town of Queensbury and the City of Glens Falls) and provides

a connection to the Champlain Canal Trail and larger Empire State Trail System via Fort Edward in Washington County. The nine-mile Feeder Canal Park Heritage Trail provides a separate cycling path with a smooth, crushed stone surface, with long-term plans to build a connecting path to the Rush Pond Trail in Queensbury. Warren County is currently undertaking the Modernization and Connectivity Plan for Multi-Use Trails, which is examining enhancements and connections to both the Feeder Canal Trail and the Warren County Bikeway.

In terms of on-road facilities, while there are on-road bike facilities along some roadways in the County, there are no NYS Bike routes in Warren County and the existing cycling network remains disjointed. Opportunities to address gaps and improve connections along the Warren County Bikeway are currently being explored by Warren County Planning.

AIRPORTS

Floyd Bennett Memorial Airport is located in the Town of Queensbury, owned by the County, and maintained by DPW. The airport is open for corporate, private, and recreational aviation; the airport is not served by commercial aviation. Previous plans to expand the airport in 2010 were met with opposition, and in 2019, the FAA rejected as unnecessary the expansion plans, eliminating any potential for Federal funding for the project. Since then, the airport has seen changes in operations that have brought it from a \$800,000 deficit six years ago to only a \$200,000 planned deficit for this year. In terms of current utilization, the airport had 23,359 aircraft operations in 2022, and the FAA does not project a major uptick in airport utilization in their 2050 Terminal Area Forecast.

A photograph of a residential yard. In the foreground, a large American flag with red and white stripes is waving. To the left, there is a wooden log rack filled with logs. In the background, a house with light-colored siding and a porch is visible. The scene is set outdoors with green foliage on the left.

CHAPTER 6: OUR ECONOMY

Warren County's economy is shaped by its natural beauty, entrepreneurial history, and strong legacy industries like tourism, health care, and manufacturing. However, as workforce shortages, housing challenges, and infrastructure limitations place increasing strain on economic growth, the County must adapt and diversify to remain competitive.

Economic studies such as Warren County EDC's Pathways to Progress (2015), LCLGRP's Forward Together (2021), and EDC's Natural Resources, Natural Beauty, and Opportunity (2024) provide a deeper understanding of these dynamics. Together, they highlight the County's strengths and emerging opportunities: expanding

year-round tourism, supporting advanced manufacturing and clean energy innovation, enhancing small business growth, and investing in infrastructure.

Challenges like workforce shortages, a lack of affordable housing, and rural infrastructure gaps must be addressed to unlock the county's economic potential. Investments in workforce training, broadband expansion, and economic diversification could help Warren County to sustain its economic competitiveness.

The following section explores the County's core industries, challenges, and opportunities, providing a clearer picture of Warren County's economic present and future.

28%

of survey respondents that said **Economic Development** should be the County's top priority – the second highest response rate.

INDUSTRY

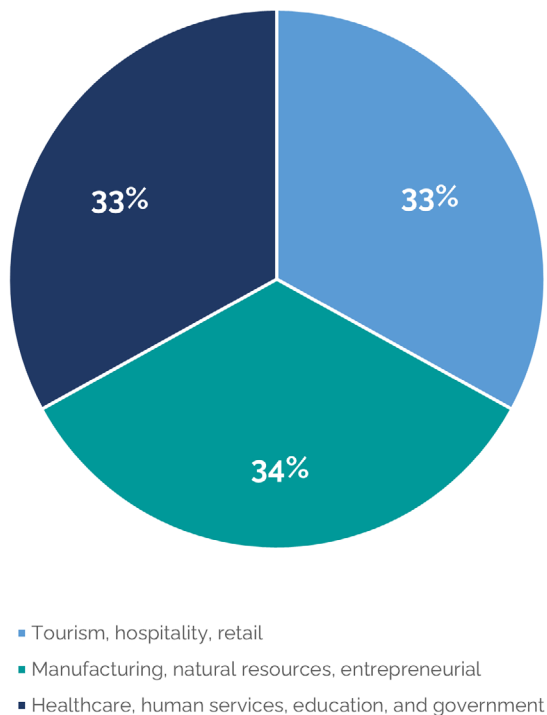
Warren County's economy is driven by a diverse mix of industries. In this context, **industry** refers to a group of businesses or organizations that produce similar goods, provide related services, or perform similar types of work. These industries are categorized based on the **North American Industry Classification System (NAICS)**, which is a standard used by federal statistical agencies to organize and analyze economic activity.

The County's current industries fall into three main clusters:

1. Tourism, hospitality, and retail
2. Manufacturing, natural resources, and entrepreneurial ventures
3. Healthcare, human services, education, and government

Over the past 25 years, shifts in employment and economic activity have reshaped these sectors, particularly manufacturing. In 1990, manufacturing accounted for 20% of the County's employment, but by 2023, this share declined to 11%. Historically treated as a standalone sector, manufacturing is now viewed as part of a broader cluster alongside natural resources and entrepreneurial activities, which

2024 Warren County Industry Clusters by Employment



Source: Warren County Economic Development Commission

for purposes of this categorization include professional and business services, finance, information, and traditional entrepreneurial activities like technology start-ups, gig work, freelancers and consultants, and miscellaneous services.

This way of viewing the County's economy highlights shared characteristics across sectors and provides a more balanced perspective on the County's economy, with each cluster comprising roughly one-third of the economic activity.

Within these clusters, no one industry, in terms of GRP, accounts for more than 14% of the overall economy. While the total manufacturing Gross Regional Product (GRP) declined between 2010 and 2022 by approximately \$23 million, manufacturing continues to make up the largest percentage of the County's economy in terms of GRP. Over time, manufacturing employment in the County has shifted from the more traditional, natural resources-based businesses to specialized manufacturing, such as medical devices. Based on data compiled by the Warren County EDC, the three largest manufacturing businesses in Warren County today are Finch Paper (paper manufacturing), BD Becton Dickinson (medical devices), and AngioDynamics (medical devices).

The next cluster – government, private education, and health services – is relatively stable, resilient sector. Health Care positions are largely concentrated among Warren County's two largest employers in any industry – Glens Falls Hospital (2,800 employees) and Hudson Headwaters Health Network (930 employees). Other major public sector employers include SUNY Adirondack (161 employees), Glens Falls School District (122), and Queensbury Union Free School District (119).

Tourism - Adopted 2023 Budget					
Personnel Services	Employee Benefits	Contractual Expense	Other Benefits	Equipment	Total
\$50,495	\$164,303	\$1,852,725	\$25,170	\$2,000	\$2,564,693



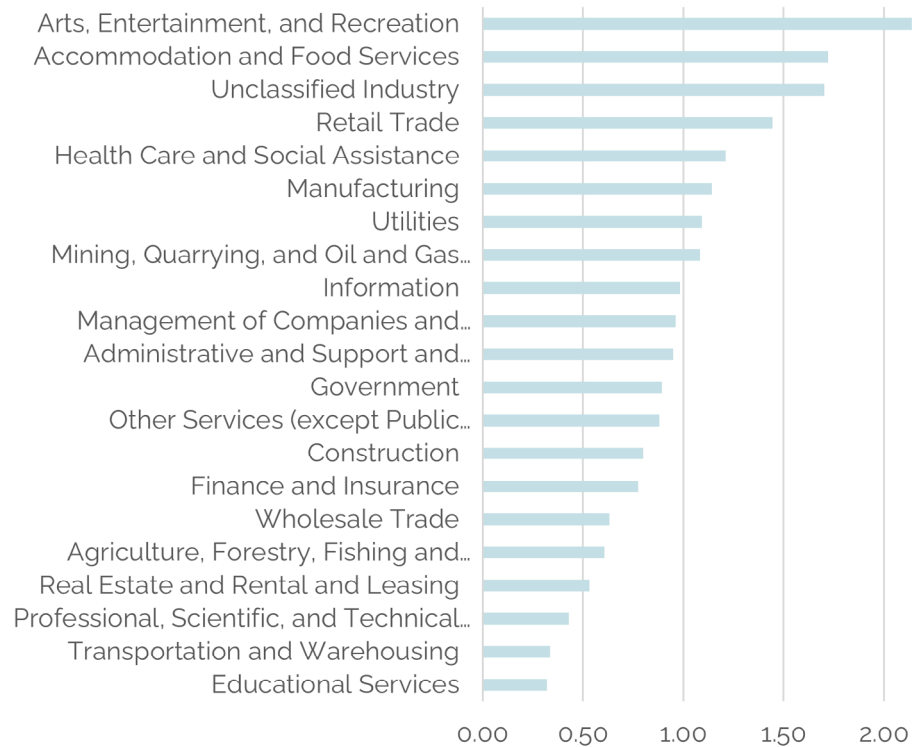
Tourism and its related sectors are a point of emphasis within Warren County. The County staffs a Tourism department within the County government and contracts with Lake George Regional Chamber of Commerce and Convention and Visitors Bureau for additional programs and services to support the County's tourism industry.

The outdoor recreation sector within tourism is a key economic driver, distinguishing Warren County from other areas and serving as a cornerstone of the county's culture and quality of life. According to the Outdoor Recreation Strategic Plan, at least 160 private businesses in Warren County are directly involved in selling outdoor goods, services, and experiences. In 2022, tourism spending supported 5,866 direct jobs, accounting for one in six jobs in the County, despite its overall strength, the outdoor recreation

industry faces several challenges, including the lack of a central hub for information on outdoor activities, a shortage of employee housing, poor cell coverage at critical recreational locations like trailheads, limited lodging options, high insurance costs for business operators, and restricted public access to water resources. Another issue affecting the tourism industry is the disparity in average annual earnings. Although the tourism sector represents 33% of the county's workforce, it accounts for just 24% of the wages paid. In 2021, two of the top three industries in the county by total employment—Retail Trade and Accommodation and Food Services—ranked 13th and 16th out of 16 industries in terms of average wages, with average annual earnings of \$39,227 and \$28,648, respectively. Filling these minimum-wage service sector jobs has become increasingly difficult.

The chart to the right highlights the concentration of industries in Warren County compared to the national average, measured by their location quotients (LQs). Eleven industries have an LQ greater than one, indicating a higher concentration in Warren County than at the national level, identifying them as regional strengths. Notably, the Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation sector has a location quotient of 2.14, meaning its employment concentration is more than double the national average. This underscores Warren County's unique strength in this sector both regionally and nationally.

2022 Location Quotient by Industry

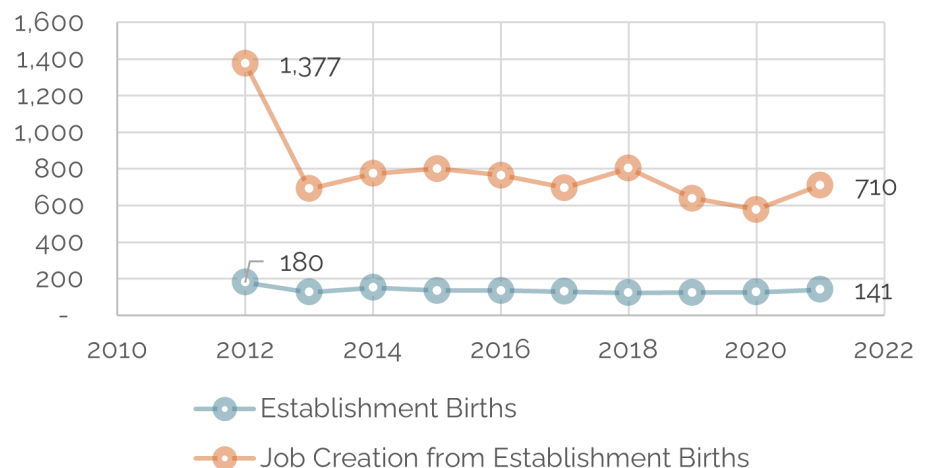


Source: Center for Economic Growth, Lightcast

Most of Warren County's economy is comprised of smaller businesses; 97% of all Warren County businesses employ 49 or fewer employees. The LCLGRP's 2022 Forward Together: Economic Resiliency Plan identified the region's "Spirit of Rural Entrepreneurship" as a key competitive asset. While this remains true in Warren County, certain indicators have declined over the past ten years. Warren County business formations, as tracked by Employer Identification Number (EIN) applications reached a fifteen year high in 2021 at 608 applications and saw 585 applications in 2022. However, despite the strong LLC filings, establishment births, which filters for business operations versus holding companies or LLCs formed for other legal reasons, have steadily declined since 2012 and 667 fewer jobs were created from establishment births in 2022 as compared to 2012.

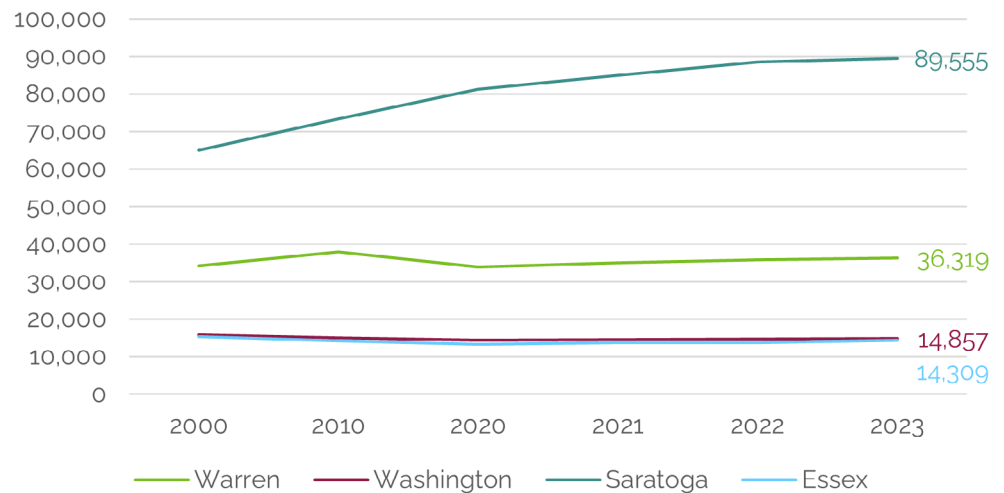
Warren County's economy is diverse and comprised of mostly small businesses.

Establishment Births and Job Creation



An aging workforce and skills mismatches are two challenges the County faces in filling open positions.

Employment Comparison: 2000 - 2023



WORKFORCE

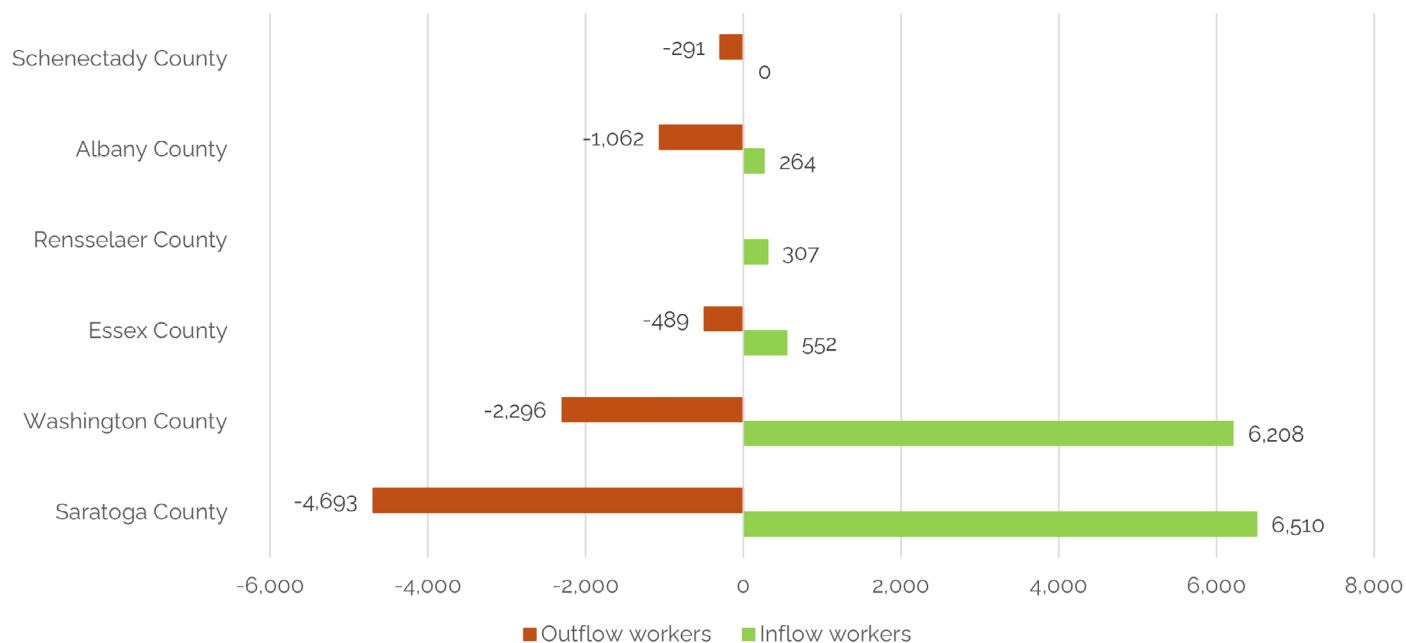
Employment in Warren County has remained relatively stable over the past 20 years. Since 2000, the county has added 2,087 jobs, representing a 6% growth, bringing total employment to 36,319 jobs in 2023. This performance compares favorably to its more rural neighbors, Washington and Essex Counties, both of which experienced a 7% decline in employment during the same period. However, Warren County's growth lags behind Saratoga County, which saw a significant 38% increase in employment over the same timeframe.

Looking ahead, data gathered from the Center for Economic Growth and Lightcast database shows the number of jobs in Warren County is projected to increase – to 41,643 by 2030. While a projected increase in local jobs is a positive sign for the County, filling these jobs will be a challenge, given current low unemployment levels and workforce age trends. As of September 2023, the unemployment rate in Warren County was 2.91%, a decrease from 4.64% just five years prior. In terms of labor force participation, according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, the County has a rate of around 62% (on par with the national average of 61.5%); however, many local businesses report difficulties in filling positions, in particular jobs that require specific technical skills.

For instance, in the manufacturing sector, over 20% of job openings remain unfilled due to a shortage of qualified candidates. Consequently, while there are available jobs, the local workforce often lacks the necessary qualifications, leading to both unutilized human potential and unmet employer needs.

In terms of age, the average age of workforce participants has risen from 37 in 2000 to 45 in 2022. The 2022 Forward Together: Economic Resiliency Plan found that 23.8% of all workers in the five-County region are over 55; notable key industries with a high number of workers over 55 include medical (hospitals, physician offices, nursing care facilities), manufacturing (medical equipment and pulp/paper mills).

Top 5 Counties for Worker Inflow-Outflow



The workforce supporting jobs in Warren County extends beyond its boundaries. According to 2020 data from the New York State Department of Labor (NYSDOL), Warren County has a net commuter inflow of 5,025, meaning more workers commute into the county for jobs than residents commute out for work elsewhere.

These commuting patterns highlight opportunities to enhance transit connections, such as rideshares, shuttles, and dedicated bus lines. Additionally, they present a chance to connect Warren County residents currently commuting elsewhere with similar employment opportunities within the County.

J1 Visa workers also remain a critical component of Warren County's labor force. J1 Visa workers fill a range of positions, including au pairs, physicians, professors and research scholars, and, most relevant to Warren County's workforce, summer work travel positions typically within the hospitality and tourism sectors. According to BridgeUSA, a company that helps connect foreign workers to host companies and support groups, Warren County hosted 952 summer work travel participants in 2024 within ten communities.

Lake George hosted 543 of those workers; Queensbury (174) and Bolton Landing (91) also hosted a substantial number of workers. This spike in international workers has generally coincided with seasonal housing crunches, which some communities have explored addressing through dorm style housing. It also raises interesting challenges around language accessibility, wayfinding, and other community resources that can aid foreign workers in living and working in Warren County, even for a season.

CHAPTER 7: OUR ARTS, INSTITUTIONS, & COMMUNITY SERVICES



Warren County is home to a variety of assets that contribute to the well-being of residents and the vitality of its communities. From cultural landmarks like the Hyde Collection and Charles R. Wood Theater to essential services provided by Glens Falls Hospital, SUNY Adirondack, emergency responders, and social service organizations, these institutions play a central role in daily life.

Arts and cultural venues inspire creativity and bring people together, while education and healthcare provide foundations for learning, growth, and community health. Emergency and social services ensure residents remain safe and supported. These assets not only enhance quality of life but also strengthen the County's appeal to new residents, families, and businesses.

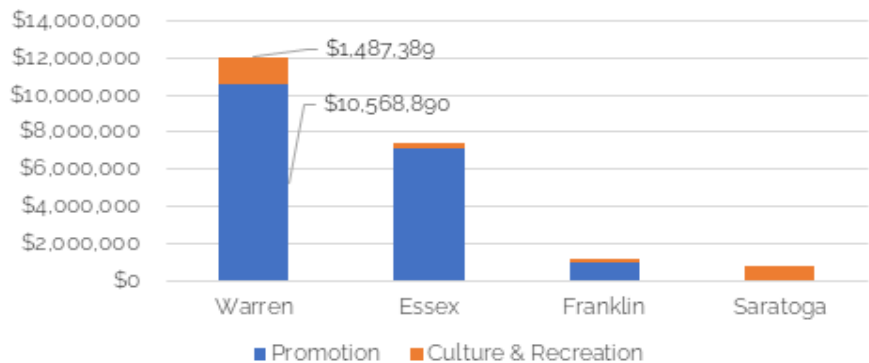
By supporting and investing in these institutions, Warren County can foster vibrant, connected communities while preserving its unique identity and meeting changing demographic needs.

ARTS AND CULTURE

Arts and cultural institutions play a critical role in enhancing local quality of life, as evidenced by the Warren County 2040 survey, where nearly half of respondents identified Arts and Culture as "very important" to their quality of life. These institutions not only enrich the community with vibrant programs and events but also drive economic growth and cultural vitality. At the state level, the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis reports that the arts and culture sector contributed \$126.7 billion to New York's economy in 2020, representing 7.3% of the State's GDP, 435,693 jobs, and total compensation of \$53.4 billion.

"Glens Falls has to stop being seen as a beneficiary of Saratoga and Lake George Tourism. We have so much to offer in Glens Falls." -Survey Respondent

Peer County Comparison
2023 Promotion and Culture & Recreation
Expenditure



Warren County has a thriving arts and culture scene including music, theater, dance, the visual arts, and historical and cultural museums. Glens Falls is a hub of thriving arts community from museums to theaters, and galleries to concert halls, helping to enrich the culture and lives of residents and visitors alike. Within a single square mile, 14 arts and cultural organizations brighten the Glens Falls City scene. Outside of Glens Falls, organizations like the Lake George Arts Project bring arts and music to the waterfront, including one of the oldest-running jazz festivals in the County. Further north, the Adirondack Folk School provides unique programming for all ages, highlighting the history of the County. These are just some of many arts and cultural institutions that bring vibrancy to the County and enhance quality of life.

Warren County's role within arts and culture centers largely around the Tourism Department, the work of the County Historian, and Occupancy Tax distribution. The Tourism Department works to promote and support the tourism industry, especially in the Lake George area, through marketing, collaboration, and communication with regional tourism partners and visitors. The County Tourism and Planning Departments are successful at promoting tourism related to outdoor recreation and drawing people to the Lake George region.

The County Historian's Office works to preserve, interpret, and promote the history of Warren County and serve as the connection between the local municipal town and village historian offices throughout the County.

The County, through its Occupancy Tax, provides funding for special event and activities. As outlined in the County's Occupancy Tax Local Law, the tax revenue is allocated

"to enhance the general economy of the County of Warren, and its city, towns and villages through the promotion of tourist activities, conventions, trade shows, special events and other directly-related and supported activities." In evaluating projects and events to fund through the County's occupancy tax, an emphasis is placed on how many "beds" the event will generate. While this framing does contribute to continued occupancy tax generation (through additional hotel stays), it unfortunately leaves out the County arts and cultural institutions, whose visitors are more likely day-visitors.

HEALTHCARE, SOCIAL SERVICES, EMERGENCY SERVICES

HEALTHCARE

Quality healthcare is a driving factor behind quality of life, a priority need for an aging population, and an important factor in people's decision on where to live or relocate to. In the recently completed Adirondack Relocation Assessment Survey, respondents were asked to select the top five most important factors when selecting a community or neighborhood to live in: availability of health care services was third most important of fifteen factors with 54% of respondents choosing it as one of their top five factors.

Warren County has one hospital, Glens Falls Hospital. Their main hospital campus is located in the City of Glens Falls along with several specialized medical services that are proximate to the main campus. Glens Falls Hospital has 391 hospital beds, the majority of which are designated medical/surgical beds, resulting in a total hospital beds rate of 609 per 100,000 when considering the total regional population.

Warren County is facing a healthcare workforce shortage and access challenges.

As outlined in the 2022-24 Warren County Community Health Assessment (CHA), this rate is higher than the Adirondack Regional Health Network region (274 per 100,000), which includes Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Fulton, Hamilton, Warren, and Washington Counties. In addition to its main hospital campus, Glens Falls Hospital operates 20 regional health care facilities. On July 1, 2020, Glens Falls Hospital became an affiliate of the Albany Med Health System.

Warren County has one Federally Qualified Health Center, Hudson Headwaters Health Network. Hudson Headwaters Health Network is a nonprofit system of 21 community health centers with ten of the health centers located in Warren County. The health centers include two urgent care centers and a dental center all located in Warren County. Hudson Headwaters is the sole medical provider in much of the rural, medically underserved region. In the Glens Falls area, Hudson Headwaters is the only primary care "safety net" provider. To address the aging population trends and associated growing medical and supportive service needs, Hudson Headwaters recently opened in Glens Falls the Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE), a community-based program that provides coordinated medical and social services to eligible older adults who want to continue living in their own home despite chronic care needs. PACE services portions of Warren, Washington, and Saratoga Counties.

The County Health Department also provides both mandated and voluntary programs to the residents of the County. The Public Health programs in the department include immunization programs and clinics, preschool and early intervention programs for children with growth and developmental concerns, lead poisoning prevention, disease control programs, health education, rabies (for both animals and humans) and emergency preparedness. Health Services' Homecare Services is also one of the largest homecare agencies in the County.

There are four nursing home facilities within the County, totaling 409 nursing home beds resulting in a total nursing home beds rate of 637 per 100,000. There are four adult care facilities totaling 248 beds resulting in an adult care facility rate of 633 per 100,000. Existing nursing homes in the County are also struggling: the Elderwood Skilled Nursing Facility in Johnsbury was recently denied a lifeline funding request of \$2.5 million to the NYS Department of Health through their Vital Access Provider (VAP) program.

One of the biggest challenges the healthcare providers in the County are facing is staffing. Many of the current healthcare staff, especially the nurses, are nearing retirement age and attracting medical professionals to the region is a challenge. Based on current data from the Health Resources and Service Administration, Warren County is considered a Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSA) for both primary care providers and mental health providers.

While the County and its partners offer a diverse range of services, accessing these services can be a challenge.



This shortage has led to closures, consolidations, and the loss of critical specialized medical services, such as emergency pediatric care. This is not an issue unique to Warren County; attracting medical professionals has been an issue for much of rural America. Based on NPR reporting, "only 1% of doctors in their final year of medical school [...] want to live in communities under 10,000; only 2% want to live in towns of 25,000 or fewer."

SOCIAL SERVICES

Warren County offers a range of social services to support its residents, addressing needs related to health, housing, employment, and family welfare. The County's Department of Social Services provides essential programs such as Medicaid, Temporary Assistance, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP). Services also include child and adult protective services, foster care, adoption support, and services for seniors. Additionally, the County supports residents through mental health and substance abuse treatment programs, aimed at improving the well-being of individuals struggling with these challenges.

The Adirondack Regional Chamber of Commerce currently has 104 non-profit members, the majority of which are located in County and count Warren County as its primary service area. Services offered by these organizations range the continuum of services, including emergency food services, shelters, early childhood education, senior services, and employment training programs.

However, the needs of Warren County residents often exceed the available resources, especially in areas such as affordable housing, transportation, mental health services, and food insecurity. The rural nature of the County presents challenges in accessing services, particularly for low-income families and individuals living in more isolated areas. There is also a growing demand for more comprehensive mental health care and addiction treatment services, reflecting national trends. As the population ages, there is an increasing need for senior care, home health services, and caregiver support, as well as continued investment in child welfare services to meet the needs of vulnerable families.

Food insecurity is an issue in the County, fueled by rising food prices and lack of access to fresh food.

According to data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, food prices in Warren County have seen significant increases over the past few years, mirroring trends observed nationwide. From 2020 to 2024, the overall cost of food and beverages rose by about 22%; this rate is higher than the overall inflation rate, indicating that food prices have been particularly impacted by economic conditions. This has resulted in 23% of adults in Warren County to report they are food insecure (just under the Statewide average of 24.9%) according to a 2023 NYS Department of Health study. Food insecurity in the County is compounded by the limited access many residents have to supermarkets. The USDA developed a Food Access Research Atlas to identify areas across the Country that have limited supermarket access due to distance and vehicle ownership. Local food banks and pantries have observed these trends and are working to support communities by providing essential services and distributing food to those in need; however, pantries are often stretched thin, given the growing demand and the increasing prices they face along with consumers.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

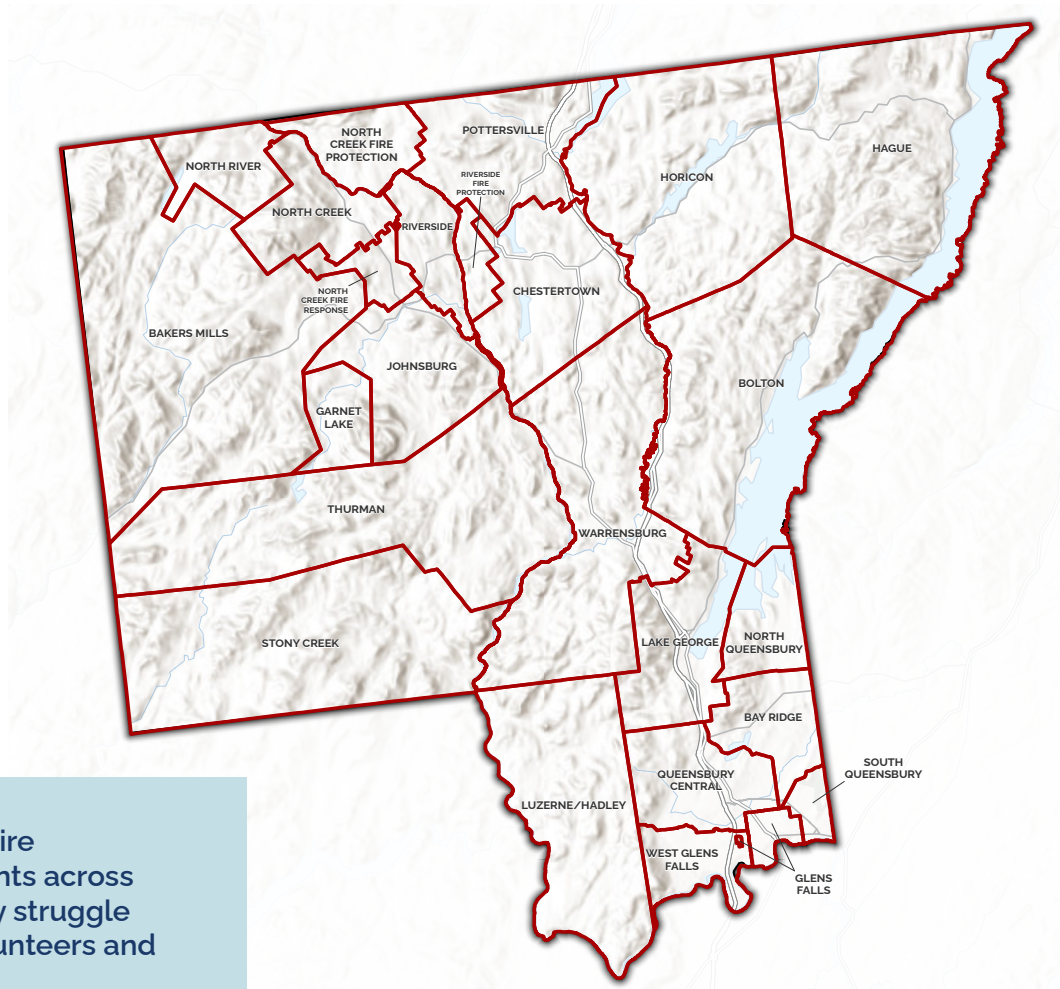
Warren County is served by 22 Fire Departments, 13 Emergency Medical Service (EMS) agencies, and seven Fire Department First Response Agencies. At the County level, there is an Office of Emergency Services (OES) Department with a fire coordinator and EMS coordinator, the roles of which are mandated by the State. There are also state and federal mandates related to emergency preparedness planning. The Department supports the County's hazardous materials response team and coordinates efforts to respond to weapons of mass destruction. The Department

coordinates applications for grants for emergency preparedness and response funds. In the event of an emergency, the OES serves as the response coordinator and coordinates the Emergency Operations Center. The OES also works with the local municipalities as they develop their response plans and conduct drills. The Department also had a substantial role in coordinating the County and localities' response to COVID-19.

The Department relies heavily on volunteers and deputy coordinators during events and to help support the local EMS and fire agencies. EMS and Fire Departments across the County struggle to find

volunteers and paid staff. To address reduced volunteerism, most EMS agencies in the County are using paid staff, and there have been discussion and support for the County to begin operating an EMS transport service or paramedic first response to provide a back up to the volunteers. Even with the shift to paid positions, however, staffing remains an issue, as the EMS services in the County cannot compete with the salaries offered in down-State counties. This EMS staffing issue is exacerbated by State-level changes in provider levels; with the removal of mid-level providers, additional costs and training are needed for these providers to advance.

WARREN COUNTY FIRE DISTRICTS



EMS and Fire Departments across the County struggle to find volunteers and paid staff.

WARREN COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT ENROLLMENT

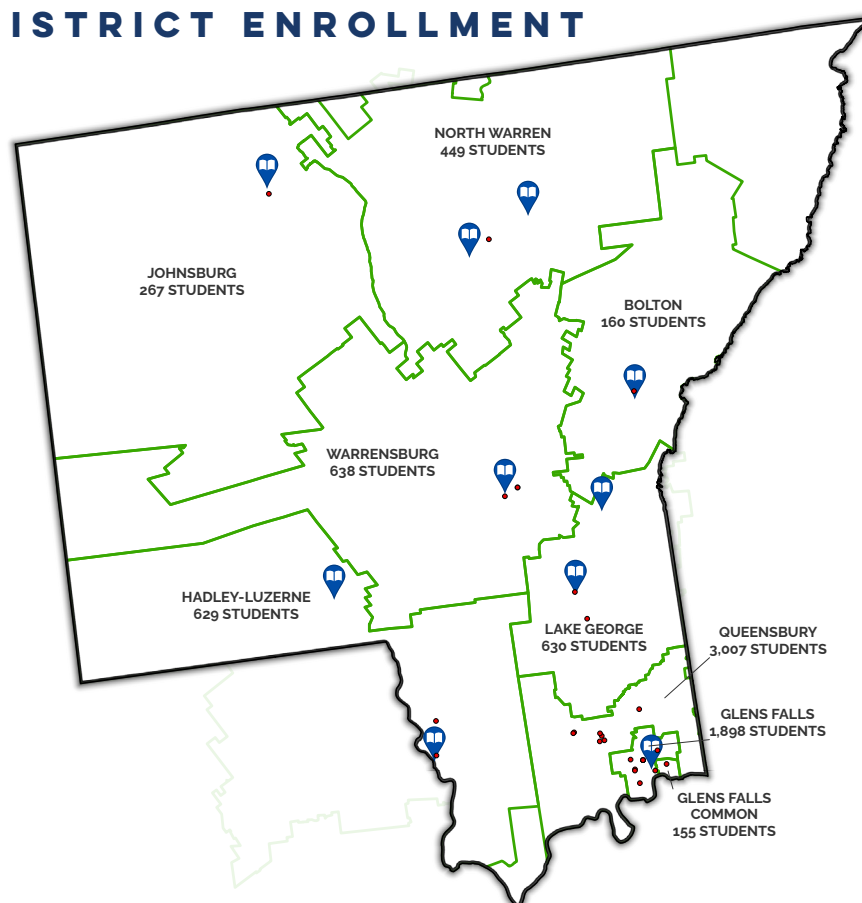
EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Educational facilities provide essential learning opportunities and resources, preparing individuals for future success. Warren County has nine public school districts, with a total enrollment of 7,833 students (2022-23 school year) and four-year graduation rate of 85%. Many of these school districts are high quality and consistently top ranked K-12 public school education: The Albany Business Review publishes its Annual Schools Report, which provides school district rankings for Capital Region districts in various academic areas. Warren County school districts consistently rank in the top 20 in the Capital Region.

The County's nine public schools are a point of pride and an attraction to the region. Many families are attracted to smaller schools over larger schools due to benefits of smaller student-teacher ratios, the sense of community they provide, and safe, close-knit nature. The schools across the County offer a range of diverse, unique curricula, such as the International Baccalaureate (IB) program at Whitehall. While the small size of the County's schools is a point of pride, class size continues to decline across the County, which comes with additional challenges. Based on data from the Empire Center, school enrollment across Warren County decreased by 15.5% between 2012 and 2022, exceeding the statewide enrollment decline of 8% over that same period. The three school districts that saw the largest decline were Lake George (-30.5%), Bolton (-26.2%), and Hadley Luzerne (-25%).

With declining enrollment, several schools in the County have already begun combining athletics. The Johnsbury and Minerva school districts – located just six miles apart – considered combining, but the merger was voted down, highlighting the role schools have in local sense of pride. Despite this pushback and absent a significant shift in population trends, additional sharing of services such as Special Education and other academics, will need to be considered if the districts want to continue to provide the range of offerings that families and students desire. This is a trend that is being seen across NYS's rural school districts, as outlined in the Rural Schools Association of New York State's 2023 Policy Brief. The State Education Department is currently exploring legislation to authorize greater flexibility in choosing shared and regional educational programs and services.



The County's public schools are a point of pride and attraction to the region, but are all facing declining enrollment, which comes with additional challenges.

The declining school enrollment could also impact access to NYS funding. In this year's budget, the Governor originally proposed significant changes to the Foundation Aid Formula, which is the main way that school money gets allocated. Under the formula that the Governor proposed, many districts around the State would receive less money than they anticipated.

The Governor also proposed eliminating a provision known as "hold harmless," which has traditionally ensured that schools receive at least as much funding as the year before, regardless of any enrollment loss. While both the state Senate and the Assembly rejected the Governor's Foundation Aid formula changes and the elimination of "hold harmless," the State is advancing a study of how to change the Foundation Aid Formula, which would impact funding for school districts across the County.

HIGHER EDUCATION

For higher education, SUNY Adirondack, located in Queensbury, is the only college based in Warren County. It offers a wide array of associate degree programs and vocational training, supporting around 2,994 students annually. Additionally, SUNY Plattsburgh operates a satellite campus at SUNY Adirondack, extending opportunities for undergraduate and graduate studies within the County. Warren and Washington Counties are the two service counties responsible for the formation, leadership, and financial support of the institution. Each County appoints members of the College's Board of Trustees

and provides annual financial support. In 2023, Warren County contributed \$2.6 million towards SUNY Adirondack; Washington County contributed \$2.1 million. The decline in enrollment at the public schools is having spillover impacts at the community college (SUNY Adirondack), as much of the school's enrollment has historically come from regional public school graduates.

LIBRARIES

In Warren County, libraries extend far beyond traditional book lending; they are community centers that foster connections. They provide key access to digital resources and internet connectivity, crucial for bridging the digital divide in rural areas. Libraries also serve as community gathering spaces, offering programs that cater to learning and social interaction, which are especially beneficial for our aging population.

There are ten libraries in the Southern Adirondack Library System (SALS) are located in Warren County. The libraries are well distributed and resource rich, with the Crandall Public Library being a notable hub. It offers a variety of services including book lending, digital resources, and community programs for all ages. The library system's branches provide additional access points for residents to engage in educational activities. The County has consistently supported SALS with a \$55,000 budget allocation each year.

CHILD CARE

Child care services in Warren County are facilitated by the Southern Adirondack Child Care Network (SACCN). This organization provides support and resources for licensed day care centers, school-age programs, and family day care homes, ensuring that working families have access to reliable and affordable child care options.

Warren County, like other regions across the State and nation, has been faced with a significant decline in child care availability. Based on the SACCN's most recent (2024) Child Care Needs Assessment Report: Warren & Washington Counties, there are 33 licensed/registered child care providers in the County. This is a decline from 50 providers in 2019. 45% of surveyed parents in Warren County stated that the registered and licensed child care providers whom they called did not have openings for their child(ren) and there was a wait of several months in many programs especially for infant care. The child care shortage not only has long-term developmental impact on children but also further depletes the workforce, with parents unable to return to the workforce due to lack of child care.

There is not enough child care to meet the needs of County residents.

CHAPTER 8: VISION, IMPLEMENTATION & ACCOUNTABILITY

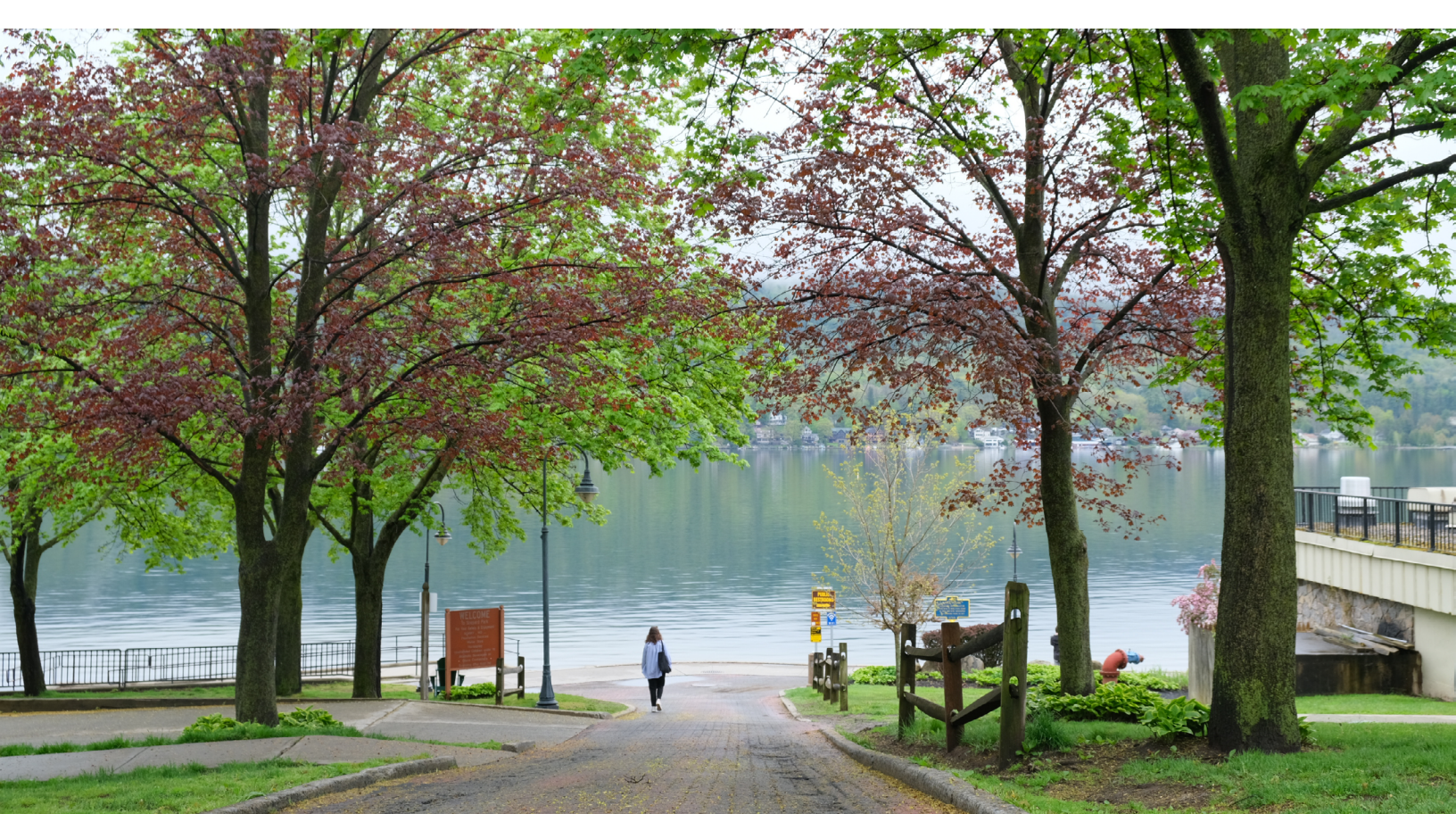


In order to be successful, a Comprehensive Plan should be developed and implemented on multiple levels. It must address both short- and long-term needs. This chapter has five key elements:

- **Vision:** A general statement that describes the aspiration of the County; it is an end towards which all actions are aimed. The Vision will not dramatically change over time but rather be consistent throughout the planning horizon. Ideally, the Vision contained in this plan should be useful for the 15-year planning horizon.
- **Goals:** Similar to a vision in that it is a general statement of a future condition towards which actions are aimed. However, the scope of a goal is more narrow. It supports the vision by addressing a particular area or issue facing the County. Similar to the Vision Statement, goals should not dramatically change over time.
- **Objectives:** A statement of a measurable activity to be accomplished in pursuit of the goal; it refers to some specific aspiration which is reasonably attainable.
- **Priority Actions:** A specific proposal to do something that relates directly to accomplishing one or more objective.
- **Implementation & Accountability:** The process through which the County will ensure the success of the Plan.

A VISION FOR WARREN COUNTY

Warren County is home to vibrant communities and a high quality of life, achieved through proactive planning and collaboration. The County leverages its natural, cultural, and human resources, fosters economic innovation, and ensures environmental stewardship to create a resilient, sustainable, and inclusive community. With enhanced infrastructure, a thriving economy, a collaborative and considerate civic culture, and strong supportive services, Warren County addresses demographic, economic, and environmental challenges while providing a prosperous future for all residents.



GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Through community engagement and public feedback, the Project Advisory Group (PAG) identified a series of goals and objectives to address the County's most pressing issues and opportunities. These goals and objectives are designed to serve as long-term guideposts for decision-making at the County level.

GOAL 1: ATTRACT AND RETAIN YOUNGER RESIDENTS WHILE ACCOMMODATING AN AGING POPULATION

The demographic shifts that Warren County is facing present unique challenges and opportunities that must be strategically managed to ensure the long-term vitality of the County. An aging population requires enhanced healthcare services, age-friendly infrastructure, and accessible public spaces to support their well-being and independence. Additionally, creating an environment that is attractive to younger families and individuals is essential to maintaining a balanced and dynamic population and addressing workforce needs. By addressing these shifts, Warren County can ensure that its community remains inclusive, vibrant, and sustainable, fostering intergenerational connections and securing economic stability through a diverse and engaged populace.

Objectives

- Adapt and develop services and infrastructure to support an aging population
- Explore strategies to attract and retain younger residents and families
- Capitalize on regional and local growth to attract new residents and retain existing residents
- Address aging workforce and declining volunteerism to maximize human capital

GOAL 2: IMPROVE HOUSING ACCESS & QUALITY

Addressing the current housing challenges, such as rising costs, a shortage of affordable options, and the prevalence of short-term rentals, is vital to ensuring that all residents have access to safe, comfortable, and affordable homes. By implementing policies that encourage new construction, promote diverse housing types that provide stepping stones to address housing insecurity for all residents, and regulate short-term rentals, Warren County can alleviate housing pressures and create a more stable market. Enhancing existing housing quality and access will attract new residents, support the local workforce, and contribute to the overall well-being and sustainability of the County.

Objectives

- Increase the availability of affordable and diverse housing options consistent with local needs
- Improve housing quality to address aging housing stock and changing demographics
- Address the impact of tourism on the local housing market (i.e., STRs, seasonal workforce housing)
- Encourage new housing construction and renovation to meet current and future demands

GOAL 3: SUPPORT THRIVING COMMUNITIES, HAMLETS, & DOWNTOWNS

Fostering vibrant, economically robust, and socially cohesive communities, hamlets, and downtowns is key to enhancing community well-being and supporting sustainable growth. Strengthening these areas as hubs of commerce, culture, and social interaction involves promoting mixed-use and infill development that integrates residential, commercial, and recreational spaces, creating dynamic and walkable environments. Proactive investment in the maintenance and improvement of community infrastructure and services is essential to support these areas. Resilient transportation networks, such as bike paths, walkable streets, and upgraded culverts, can help communities recover during emergencies by ensuring access to essential services. Also key is preserving and celebrating the unique character and history of each community, while encouraging innovation and fostering new business growth, paving the way for the County's next chapter and improving residents' well-being.

Objectives

- Support placemaking and downtown beautification for local communities and hamlets
- Encourage infill development within the County's downtowns, Main Streets, and hamlet areas
- Enhance transportation, mobility, and walkability to support compact, efficient growth
- Think holistically when making decisions related to housing, infrastructure, and transportation
- Ensure transit access in the County is maintained and improved
- Enhance community well-being
- Celebrate Warren County's history and culture

GOAL 4: STRENGTHEN AND SUPPORT EXISTING AND EMERGING ECONOMIC SECTORS

Warren County's economy is deeply rooted in its natural resources, scenic beauty, and entrepreneurial spirit, which have driven its tourism, manufacturing, and healthcare sectors. The County's strategic location between the Capital Region and the Adirondacks provides access to emerging technology sectors, connections to traditional resource and recreation-oriented businesses, and desirable communities to live, work, and play in. Warren County will continue to invest in healthcare and educational facilities, workforce development, economic development, and tourism to ensure the County has the talent, infrastructure, and resources to support existing industries, while fostering a modern, place-driven economy. Economic resiliency means supporting businesses during disruptions and diversifying industries to reduce risks. Connecting businesses with emergency resources and promoting year-round economic activity are key steps to improve economic resiliency.

Objectives

- Create a more productive tourism economy with greater revenue, wage growth, and year-round operating potential
- Identify and mitigate the negative impacts of tourism (i.e., traffic, overuse, rental costs, etc.)
- Align County-wide economic development efforts to maximize public investment and economic benefits
- Ensure a consistent and coordinated approach to workforce education and training

GOAL 5: MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

The County's natural environment is an incredible asset. Lake George, the natural landscape, and a diversity of outdoor offerings are the foundational attributes that make the County a great place. The threat of climate change, introduction of invasive species, and the ability to adapt to unknown threats are of vital importance. While the County and greater region are fortunate to have a broad group of not-for profits and other entities focused on these matters, continued diligence and investment is required. Investments in wetland restoration, floodplain management, and habitat preservation can reduce flood risks and help communities recover more quickly after extreme weather events. Updating FEMA floodplain maps and enhancing stormwater management are critical to mitigating future risks.

Objectives

- Adapt to climate change impacts and strengthen resiliency
- Mitigate development impacts on natural resources
- Support and partner in natural resource management and research initiatives
- Collaborate with local and regional environmental agencies to strengthen efforts
- Integrate circular economy principles and reduce waste generation



GOAL 6: DEVELOP AND MAINTAIN A LONG-TERM PLAN FOR COUNTY INFRASTRUCTURE/ASSETS

Warren County must strategically manage both its physical infrastructure and human infrastructure (workforce) to ensure long-term operational efficiency and service delivery. While the County owns and maintains critical properties, it lacks a plan to guide future decision-making on asset viability, improvements, and alternative uses. Developing such a plan will enhance financial stability, infrastructure resilience, and efficiency. This planning is an opportunity to align with hazard mitigation strategies outlined in the Hazard Mitigation Plan like relocating at-risk DPW facilities and upgrading flood-prone infrastructure. Equally vital is the county workforce, with recruitment, retention, and development efforts essential to maintaining services. Integrated planning that prioritizes both physical assets and human resources will strengthen the County's long-term stability and capacity.

Objectives

- Achieve a clear view of the County's capital assets, current conditions, and operational and funding needs
- Develop a clear understanding of the County's property
- Maximize County's existing physical and cultural assets, before developing new assets
- Ensure workforce planning efforts support County operations by maintaining adequate staffing levels and professional development opportunities

GOAL 7: IMPROVE GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION AND TRANSPARENCY

The County's rural nature, the growing number of seasonal residents, the ever-changing landscape of government mandates, and a rapidly evolving information landscape have made it more challenging for residents to stay informed and engaged with County operations. Addressing this issue is essential to ensuring that Warren County residents can effectively participate in governance, understand how decisions are made, and improve efficiency in accessing community resources.

Objectives

- Improve alignment of community priorities with the budget process
- Foster a sense of community and belonging for all age groups and backgrounds
- Foster community involvement through inclusive initiatives
- Cultivate communication strategies that prioritize responsiveness to community needs
- Encourage collaboration between local government and the community for shared goals and progress

PRIORITY ACTIONS

For each goal, a series of near-term strategies that the County should actively seek to advance are identified ("priority actions"). These are not intended to encompass all potential strategies that could be implemented at the County level, but high priority recommendations that should be implemented in the coming years. The priority actions generally fall within one of five categories: (1) technical assistance; (2) funding support; (3) legislative action; (4) communication and collaboration; and (5) operations. A table listing all priority actions, the action type, involved departments, partner organizations, and alignment with the goals and objectives is included in **Appendix 1**.

GOAL 1: ATTRACT AND RETAIN YOUNGER RESIDENTS WHILE ACCOMMODATING AN AGING POPULATION

1.1 - Explore alternative models to deliver services to rural portions of the County

Rural areas of the County face challenges in accessing essential services, including healthcare, transportation, and social support, which are exacerbated by the County's increasing elderly population. Implementing innovative service delivery models, such as satellite offices, expanded hours of operation, and mobile staff may be an effective measure. These models enhance the accessibility and quality of services, ensuring that rural residents, particularly the elderly, receive timely and adequate support. Additionally, leveraging technology and partnerships with local organizations can create more resilient and adaptable service networks. By adopting these alternative approaches, Warren County can better meet the needs of its aging population, promote equity in service provision, and improve overall community health and well-being in its rural areas.

1.2 - Establish ongoing dialogue and engagement with younger residents

Attracting and retaining younger residents in Warren County requires a long-term, multi-faceted strategy, starting with establishing consistent dialogue with this demographic. The Warren County 2040 planning process gathered valuable feedback from over one hundred individuals aged 18 to 34, providing a foundation for future engagement. To deepen this connection, the County should conduct follow-up focus groups to explore young residents' experiences and aspirations; regular surveys can track changes in their attitudes. Additionally, fostering partnerships with schools and businesses to create internship and job opportunities will help build connections to their communities. Utilizing social media for outreach, organizing community events tailored to younger residents, and collaborating with local organizations focused on youth engagement will further promote meaningful dialogue. By implementing these actions, Warren County can ensure that younger residents feel heard and valued in shaping the County's future.

1.3 - Increase County's participation in school civic programs to allow younger residents further opportunity to engage in local government

By connecting youth with civic processes, the County can cultivate informed, active citizens who feel empowered to influence their community. The County can increase participation with school civic programs in several ways. The County can establish a youth advisory council that allows young people to voice their concerns and ideas directly to decision-makers. The County can also invite school government classes to attend youth-oriented Supervisors' meetings, providing students with firsthand experience in local governance, inspiring their involvement. These initiatives will not only enhance civic engagement among youth but also strengthen community ties and encourage a sense of ownership in local affairs.

1.4 - Explore innovative transportation solutions for the County's communities aging and vulnerable populations

While conventional bus transit is not viable in all areas of the County to address the transportation access equity gap, alternative solutions have been proposed by local partners, including the recently launched Senior and Veteran Van Transportation program, supporting expanded services by community non-profits like the Conkling Center, SAIL, and CWI, and new offerings through the CDTA partnership like its FLEX On-Demand Transit ride booking service and STAR, its paratransit service for individuals with disabilities. These innovative solutions can fill service gaps in urban areas and be scaled to meet rural needs, as well. This coordination should involve multiple County departments, including Planning, Office for the Aging, Workforce, and Social Services to ensure the needs of all County residents are met and that opportunities to replace or augment current taxis and volunteer-led shuttle services are explored. With the CDTA currently undertaking an update to their Transit Development Plan, now is the time to start the conversation and explore innovative solutions.

1.5 - Work with partner agencies to expand or support a marketing campaign to attract new residents

The efforts of the Warren County Tourism Department are largely focused on marketing Lake George and the surrounding region to increase visitors and tourism dollars. While continuing to attract tourists is critical to the County's economy, further efforts can be made to highlight why Warren County is a great place to live and work. This campaign would highlight the County's exceptional quality of life, emphasizing its natural beauty, rich cultural amenities, and strong sense of community. Targeting young families, remote workers, and professionals seeking a high quality of life, the campaign can showcase its vibrant downtowns, excellent schools, and recreational opportunities. By leveraging digital marketing, social media, and partnerships with regional economic development organizations, Warren County can effectively reach potential new residents. Additionally, the campaign can emphasize the County's potential as a climate haven, appealing to those looking for a stable and attractive place to live amidst increasing climate concerns.

Case Study: Olean, NY

The "Come Home, Stay Home" marketing campaign by the City of Olean aims to attract former residents back to the area and encourage them to settle permanently. Launched in 2022, the campaign leverages a mix of digital and traditional media to highlight the City's unique blend of rural charm and modern amenities. Key elements include testimonials from returnees, showcasing their success stories and quality of life improvements since moving back. The campaign emphasizes the area's affordable housing, excellent schools, and vibrant community life. Social media plays a crucial role, with targeted ads and engaging content that resonates with both younger audiences and families. The initiative sees a significant increase in inquiries about relocation and a notable uptick in new residents within the first year. By focusing on personal stories and the tangible benefits of living in Olean, the "Come Home, Stay Home" campaign effectively rebrands the area as an attractive destination for those seeking a balanced and fulfilling lifestyle.

1.6 - Provide opportunities for centralized services for municipalities and districts where appropriate

Municipalities across the County are facing the similar challenge of retiring staff, whether that be Clerks, Code Enforcement, or Public Works staff. The County can and should monitor these staffing challenges and explore opportunities to support and consolidate services, as appropriate, to continue to provide these vital local services. Examples include shared assessor, shared purchasing/accounting and IT services. Some of this is happening already. For example, the County IT Department has been proactively reaching out to towns across the County to offer their services at a fee. Additional opportunities to provide centralized services to support the County's smaller communities should continue to be explored.

1.7 - Consider providing expanded benefits and incentives to aid in recruitment and retention for local EMS and fire departments

To enhance public safety and ensure timely and effective emergency response, Warren County should consider expanding benefits and incentives to aid in recruitment and retention for local EMS and fire departments. Many of these departments rely heavily on volunteers and struggle to maintain volunteer levels; others are staffed, but struggle to compete with the higher salaries offered in down-State communities. By allocating County funds to expand benefits and incentives, the County can ensure that these critical services are adequately staffed and can respond promptly and efficiently to emergencies, improving outcomes for residents in times of crisis. Warren County can also support the New York State Association of Counties supported "Rescue EMS" legislative package, which target related authorities and funding abilities like countywide EMS, financial incentives, and updated Medicaid reimbursement rates.

1.8 - Support and expand Fire and EMS youth engagement activities to spur interest and involvement from young people

Warren County can support and expand Fire and EMS youth engagement activities through several key actions. Establishing youth mentorship programs will allow experienced firefighters and EMS personnel to guide and train young recruits, fostering their interest in these professions. Additionally, organizing open houses and community events can provide opportunities for youth to explore fire and EMS careers firsthand, helping to demystify these fields. Collaborating with local schools to integrate fire and EMS education into the curriculum will further educate students about the significance of these services and the available career paths. The County should also consider implementing scholarships or incentives for youth who participate in Fire and EMS activities, encouraging greater involvement. Finally, leveraging social media and digital platforms to promote success stories and volunteer opportunities will effectively engage younger audiences and highlight the positive impact of Fire and EMS services in the community.

1.9 - Align County Funding with Aging Demographics to Support WHCOFA's Growing Role

As Warren County's population continues to age, the demand for services that support older adults—such as home care, transportation, nutrition assistance, and caregiver support—is increasing. The Warren/Hamilton Counties Office for the Aging (WHCOFA) plays a critical role in delivering these essential services, but its resources must keep pace with the county's shifting demographics. Proactively planning for increased financial support will ensure that older residents can continue to live independently while also reducing strain on emergency services and healthcare systems. The County should continue to strengthen community partners providing complementary services (SAILS, Salvation Army, Conkling Center, etc.) while continuing to assess WHCOFA's needs and capacities and securing additional funding through federal and state funding sources.

GOAL 2: IMPROVE HOUSING ACCESS & QUALITY

2.1 - Implement the Warren County Housing Strategy

On the heels of completing the Warren County Housing Needs Assessment, the County Planning Department is currently developing a Housing Strategy to determine the best course of action – or role – for the County to play to support and expand services offered by other County, regional, and local housing partners. In implementing the recommendations from this Comprehensive Plan, the County should also implement and track success of implementing the actions identified in the Housing Strategy.

2.2 - Educate the public on the role planning and zoning can have on housing potential while assisting in identifying a community-supported vision for increased housing

The County Planning Department can provide valuable technical assistance and community support to set the stage for future housing development. At the earliest stage, this could begin with continuing to assist in conducting build-out analyses that identify potential opportunity sites for housing, in consideration of infrastructure or transportation access. The County can facilitate community discussions - using this analysis and the recently completed Housing Needs Assessment as a conversation starter - to gather feedback on where and what type of housing they would like to see in their communities. Once feedback from this technical analysis and community conversation is compiled, County Planning could provide further technical assistance in the form of zoning updates and advancing pre-development tasks. This approach would result in projects that are rooted in the community, more shovel-ready, and enticing to housing developers.

2.3 - Explore creating a dedicated funding stream (i.e., transfer tax, occupancy tax, sales tax) to support housing needs

Addressing the housing crisis takes both public and private funding. While the State and Federal government have programs, in the form of grants, loans, and tax incentives, the County should explore opportunities to supplement this funding through a County-wide housing fund that could be used to support new housing construction, housing rehabilitation, and policy and regulatory changes needed to facilitate housing development and preservation. Potential funding sources for this housing fund include transfer tax, sales tax, and occupancy tax. Other counties, including Ulster County, have expanded the use of their occupancy tax revenue to fund housing initiatives, understanding the impacts the interconnection between increased tourism, rising home prices, and the availability of workforce housing.

2.4 - Develop a clearinghouse of housing data and planning and zoning best management practices to improve housing development opportunities

The County Planning Department has the professional experience to help municipalities undertake critical planning and zoning reforms that can be overly burdensome or complicated for many of these communities to undertake on their own within their limited capacity. Compiling data and best practices would be a helpful resource that would allow communities to develop solutions tailored to their needs. Some potential examples include aggregating information from real property and code enforcement departments, organizing resources to assist communities in pursuing Pro-Housing status, and establishing model zoning regulations for subdivisions and multifamily housing. Such actions would promote consistency and clarity in development standards.

Case Study: Ulster County

Ulster County is currently facing a severe housing crisis that was made worse by several compounding issues during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Ulster County Legislature and Ulster County Planning Department have been focused on developing and implementing innovative solutions to address the housing crisis. This has included three main components: creating the Ulster County Housing Development Corporation, developing a Housing Action Plan, and launching the Housing Smart Communities Initiative.

In 2020, the County Legislature, by resolution called on the County Executive to identify County-owned lands suitable for contributing to meeting the County's housing goals. The first site identified was the "Golden Hill property," the site of the old County jail. The Ulster County Housing Development Corporation (UCHDC) was created to receive the Golden Hill property, select the development team, and manage the project. The current concept design includes 80 units of senior housing and 80 units that are affordable at a range of 30 to 130 percent AMI.

In 2022, the Ulster County Planning Department launched the "Ulster County Housing Smart Communities Initiative" (UCHSCI) which provides guidance, support, and resources for local communities that are working towards long-term solutions to their housing supply and affordability challenges. Structured similar to the State's Climate Smart Communities program, the County identified a set of short- and long-term actions that communities can take to help to develop and secure affordable housing for all residents. Municipalities participating in the program receive support from the Ulster County Planning Department and partners and are awarded a UCHSC Certification level based on the number of weighted actions taken by the community.

Warren County could take a similar approach, and leverage occupancy tax to address the housing crisis. In 2024, Warren County allocated \$700,000 in grants to local organizations and municipalities, representing 9% of the \$7.7 million in occupancy tax revenues collected in 2023. Over the past five years, the County's occupancy tax revenue has grown at an impressive annual rate of 13.92%. If this trend continues, revenues are projected to reach \$13 million by 2027.

By doubling the percentage of occupancy tax revenue dedicated to grants from 9% to 18%, and earmarking half of this amount specifically for housing projects, the County could generate \$3.8 million in just a four-year period. This substantial investment could be directed towards initiatives that significantly benefit the community, addressing the housing crisis, and enhancing the quality of life for residents across Warren County.



2.5 - Leverage County-owned and foreclosed land to increase the housing supply

Warren County owns 123 parcels of land, encompassing 2,292 acres. While some are being actively used, others are vacant or underutilized. Underused or vacant properties should be evaluated for their potential for residential development to expand its housing stock, particularly in areas where demand is high and that are served by existing water, sewer, and transportation infrastructure. This initiative involves identifying suitable parcels of land, streamlining the redevelopment process, and partnering with developers to create a mix of affordable, workforce, and market-rate housing. In addition to the County-owned property, the Warren County Real Property Tax Service Agency also oversees the Warren County Tax Foreclosure auction. There is an opportunity for the County to evaluate the potential for foreclosed parcels to be converted into more housing units, whether that be through the conversion of single-family homes to multi-family homes, constructing accessory dwelling units, or subdividing parcels for new residential development. Opportunities to increase housing supply on foreclosed parcels should be evaluated prior to their sale at auction.

2.6 - Support investment in housing for County's seasonal workforce

Warren County hosted 952 summer work travel participants in 2024 within ten communities. The need to house these workers and other seasonal workers is an issue that expands beyond the local level. While some Warren County municipalities – notably Lake George – have explored opportunities to tackle this challenge themselves, there is a role for Warren County to play, leveraging occupancy and/or sales tax dollars, County-owned property, or other methods. Similar initiatives have been undertaken in Suffolk and Dutchess Counties, which have addressed seasonal workforce housing shortages by developing public-private partnerships to build affordable, temporary housing units, utilizing modular construction techniques for quick deployment, and repurposing existing structures.

2.7 - Consider increasing County staff resources to work on housing policies/initiatives

Addressing the County's housing shortage will take resources and focused attention from several housing partners. The County should lead the way by dedicating its own staff time and resources to support housing planning and development. By adding personnel to this area, the County can enhance its ability to analyze housing data, develop comprehensive strategies, and implement targeted programs that meet the specific needs of residents and developers. Dedicated staff can conduct thorough research on housing trends, engage in community outreach, and facilitate collaboration among local municipalities, ensuring that policies align with community priorities. This focus also improves the County's capacity to pursue funding opportunities and grants, leveraging external resources for local housing projects. The County has already begun this initiative with new staff in the County Planning Department that are advancing analyses of the STR market and developing the Housing Strategy. Investing in housing-focused personnel demonstrates a commitment to enhancing the availability, affordability, and quality of housing, which ultimately contributes to the overall well-being of the community and strengthens Warren County's economic resilience.

2.8 - Increase collaboration through the establishment of a Warren County Housing Task Force

Warren County is fortunate to have several departments and partners that are addressing different aspects of housing in the County. However, feedback gathered through the planning process indicated this decentralized approach can, at times, lead to duplication of effort, uncertainty around roles and responsibilities, and gaps in information and resources. Establishing a Warren County Housing Task Force would enhance collaboration among stakeholders to address housing challenges and opportunities within the region. This task force could bring together representatives from partner housing organizations to create a unified approach to housing policy and planning. Regular meetings and collaborative efforts will facilitate the exchange of ideas, best practices, and resources, ensuring that all stakeholders are aligned in their goals. Additionally, the task force can serve as a platform for advocating for necessary changes in policy and securing funding for housing projects. Overall, this collaborative approach will lead to more effective solutions that meet the unique housing needs of Warren County residents and promote sustainable community development.

2.9 - Continue regular communication between departments throughout the County to ensure citizens with housing needs are directed to the appropriate resources

Continuing regular communication between departments throughout Warren County government is essential to effectively direct citizens with housing needs to the appropriate resources. Enhanced interdepartmental collaboration can ensure that information about available housing programs and services is consistently shared, reducing confusion and improving access for residents. The County Planning and Administrator Departments can spearhead these communication efforts through their departmental and committee communication efforts. Their efforts could be supported by implementing a communication and ticketing system to track inquiries and ensure follow-up on housing-related issues. Information desk staff should also be trained on housing resources and initiatives and included in updates so they are reliable sources of information and can make appropriate referrals. Finally, the County can add housing communication as a standing agenda item for Departmental meetings to ensure staff are in regular communication about citizen inquiries.

Case Study: Lewis County

Understanding the interconnections between infrastructure, public health, and community and economic development, Lewis County Planning has prioritized support of improvement and expansion efforts.

In 2007, the County developed a Comprehensive Public Water Supply Study that included projections of population, water needs, and system improvements over the next decade, evaluated all existing public water supply systems relative to DOH standards at the time, and made recommendations for improvements, where required. It further recommended the creation of new water systems in hamlets and evaluated the creation of an intermunicipal system (although this recommendation was deemed too costly to justify the benefits).

Since then, the County has prepared regional water studies for County sub-areas and the County also provides funding to local communities to prepare preliminary engineering report, a critical step needed for communities to access to State and Federal funding.

GOAL 3: SUPPORT THRIVING COMMUNITIES, HAMLETS, & DOWNTOWNS

3.1 - Support local municipal infrastructure needs

The County could act as a resource for smaller communities in infrastructure planning. Essex County, as an example, maintains an inventory of infrastructure needs and assists communities in securing funding, developing project plans, and procuring consultants for water and sewer projects. Acknowledging that the County cannot support all \$44.2 million of storm and sanitary improvement projects and \$53.2 million in drinking water projects identified across the County, the County should take a holistic look at a project's potential to support Smart Growth economic development and housing development. As noted in 1.6 – where local communities lack capacity to effectively and efficiently deliver services, the County might step in. The building permit and inspection process performed by the County for several of the rural communities is an example of this collaboration.

3.2 - Prioritize Complete Streets improvements along County roads in the hamlets and population centers

Public survey respondents prioritized the importance of walkable communities to quality of life. To support this public interest, the County can implement changes in an area that they have control over: County roads. Improvements should focus on enhancing pedestrian safety through the installation of well-marked crosswalks, sidewalks, and pedestrian-friendly infrastructure. Additionally, opportunities to improve accessibility for cyclists along these roadways should be explored by incorporating dedicated bike lanes, shared-use paths, and secure bike parking facilities. By prioritizing these enhancements, we can create more vibrant, inclusive, and livable communities while promoting active transportation options and reducing reliance on single-occupancy vehicles. Implementation of this priority should begin with the adoption of a Complete Streets Implementation Plan and Policy. This approach has been taken in other counties in Upstate NY, including Franklin and Lewis Counties. To complement the Plan and Policy, the County should also collaborate with the A/GFTC on Complete Streets outreach and education at the local level.

3.3 - Create an "Opportunity Fund" to support local revitalization initiatives that can be used as a match for grant applications

Warren County should establish an "Opportunity Fund" to provide matching funds for local grant applications that promote placemaking and infill development. The fund could be seeded through multiple sources, such as CDBG Economic Development funding, a County-wide NY Main Street grant, and/or occupancy tax revenue. This fund would support projects that create vibrant public spaces, encourage sustainable development, and enhance community well-being. By allocating initial funding and setting clear eligibility criteria, the County can facilitate the development of parks, public infrastructure maintenance and expansion, mixed-use spaces, historic preservation projects, and green infrastructure. A streamlined application process, a review committee, and a robust monitoring system will ensure accountability and effectiveness. This initiative would leverage external funding, amplify community impact, and improve the overall quality of life in Warren County.

Case Study: Franklin County

Franklin County, a rural, Adirondack county similar to Warren County, has been prioritizing improving transportation access through several measures.

In 2012, the County adopted a Complete Streets Policy and Implementation Plan. As a component of the Policy, existing County roadways are categorized by roadway type as either "local," "commuter/residential," "farm/recreation," or "bicycle routes." For each roadway type, specific facility types that should be considered are identified. For example, "sidewalks buffered from moving traffic by additional sidewalk width or a planting strip" should be considered on local County roads and "paved and striped shoulders suitable for walking/bicycling" should be considered on local, commuter/residential, and bicycle routes. The Policy also includes a Checklist that is completed when the County does any work or maintenance on County roads to identify what currently exists and what facilities are included in project, referencing back to the applicable facility improvements. Since adoption, the County has made incremental progress to implement the Policy and Implementation, including new signage and additional protected bus stops.

In addition to the Complete Streets Plan, the County has also partnered with municipalities to assist with restriping projects, providing County equipment to reduce local costs and improve efficiencies.

3.4 - Assist and partner with local municipalities and community organizations to secure funding that enhances Main Streets, hamlets, and downtowns' economic activity and community resilience.

Community and economic development involve overlapping elements that necessitate coordinated strategies for optimal results. Downtown revitalization is a critical focus, especially given the regulatory framework in Warren County, which is situated within Adirondack Park. Programs such as New York Main Street, Restore NY, the Downtown Revitalization Initiative, and New York Forward prioritize development in walkable areas. These programs are highly competitive and require extensive preparation and administrative capacity for successful applications and implementation. The County and its economic development partners can enhance readiness and capacity by offering technical assistance for pre-development steps, funding for grant matches and soft costs, and fostering implementation partnerships with the Lake Champlain-Lake George Regional Planning Board (LCLGRPB) and other economic development organizations to build administrative capacity. Additionally, leading information sessions on downtown redevelopment strategies for Chambers, Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), and individual businesses can raise awareness of the programs and build a roster of quality projects.

3.5 - Establish regular communication with CDTA to coordinate on local transit access challenges and opportunities

With the extension of CDTA into Warren County in 2024, the possibilities around transit access and connectivity are significantly expanded. However, how CDTA decisions are made and coordinated with the various County departments is not clear under their current structure. Currently, the County's transit planning needs are indirectly addressed through its involvement in the A/GFTC, which primarily focuses on regional transportation planning. While the County Planning and DPW are represented at the A/GFTC meetings, other County departments, such as the Department of Social Services (DSS) and Office for the Aging (OFA) have transit needs that are being met through a range of potentially overlapping solutions, including Uber and volunteer van services. The County should establish a more structured process for two-way communication between the County's departments and CDTA. By establishing these connections, Warren County can enhance local transit access, support economic growth, and improve overall mobility for residents.

3.6 - Continue supporting local law enforcement, fire, and EMS to maintain the high standard of public safety within the County

When asked about what they value most about living in Warren County, respondents to the public survey indicated that public safety was an essential component to quality of life. Warren County's Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan and Hazard Mitigation Plan exemplify a coordinated approach involving all relevant departments and agencies, delineating roles and procedures, and ensuring awareness and proactive management of hazard and emergency risks. The implementation and updating of these plans will continue to serve as a touchstone to foster communication and collaboration across departments and agencies. In addition to the activities covered in these planning efforts, under the Office of Emergency Services, the County Hazmat and Fire Investigations Team work to quickly and efficiently respond to hazardous materials related calls as well as post-fire investigations. Outside of planning and response, the County Fire Prevention and Building Codes Department should continue its close cooperation with local fire departments to ensure thorough fire inspections, timely responses to safety complaints, helping to mitigate emergencies from the start. Finally, the County should maintain its active participation in the Mountain Lakes Regional EMS Council to learn from peer approaches and advocate for State-level changes.

3.7 - Continue to support mental and public health services for all residents throughout the County

To ensure the well-being of all residents, Warren County should continue to support and enhance its mental and public health services. The County's Single Point of Access (SPOA) program provides centralized intake for high-intensity mental health services, fostering independence and improving quality of life for those with serious mental illnesses. Additionally, the County's Local Services Plan for Mental Hygiene coordinates efforts across departments to address mental health and substance use disorders. This is another service area where Warren County can benefit from its participation in the Mountain Lakes Regional EMS Council and engagement with the NYS Office of Mental Health through peer learning, resource sharing, and advocacy for State-level changes.

3.8 - Foster opportunities to provide a deeper understanding and appreciation of Warren County's history and culture

To foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of Warren County's rich history and culture, it is essential to continue and expand current initiatives. The Warren County Historical Society plays a pivotal role by preserving and showcasing local heritage through its museum exhibits, educational programs, and historical archives. Local initiatives such as the Cliff and Redfield Interactive (CRI) also support these opportunities. In February of 2022, Warren County and CRI announced a partnership for the promotion of heritage tourism in the Upper Hudson Region. The County should explore similar opportunities to not only preserve historical sites but also engage the community through interactive experiences and educational resources, like the Stories from Open Space website, which contains a rich and varied collection of heritage-oriented hikes, bike rides, bushwacks, paddles and other activities that provide more context than standard guidebook fare. By adopting these approaches and by supporting events such as the Adirondack Balloon Festival, Warren County can enhance its cultural offerings, ensuring residents and visitors alike gain a profound appreciation for the County's unique historical and cultural landscape.

Case Study: Monroe County Office of Mental Health

Monroe County has demonstrated a commitment to the mental wellbeing of its residents through the formation of a county-wide Office of Mental Health.

In New York, county offices of mental health are formed through the New York State Mental Hygiene Law. County offices work with the New York State Office of Mental Health, the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities, and the Office of Addiction Services and Supports. These offices receive and allocate public mental hygiene funds based on community priorities, treatment outcomes, and program performance. Like other county offices, Monroe County Office of Mental Health (MCOMH) is an administrative division within the Department of Health and Human Services (DHS).

MCOMH oversees the local service system through a variety of sub-contracts; provides fiscal oversight and technical assistance to agencies; and collaborates extensively with other DHS and county divisions, service providers, and community groups.

The Community Services Board (CSB) advises the Director of Mental Health in Monroe County and is comprised of 15 people from the community that have demonstrated an interest in the field of services for persons with mental disabilities. The CSB in Monroe County also has three subcommittees: the Alcoholism and Substance Use Committee, the Mental Health Subcommittee, and the Developmental Disabilities Committee.

The MCOMH carries out the following functions:

- Develops a comprehensive county plan for mental health, developmental disability, and alcohol/substance abuse services.
- Allocates funding to local agencies based on community priorities, treatment outcomes, and program performance.
- Ensures coordination of services across all levels of care and among an array of community providers.
- Assists in the transformation of our system to providing flexible services that are person/family centered, strengths-based, culturally competent, recovery-oriented, and evidence-based.

The MCOMH has developed a series of innovative service-based tools like a mental health service mobile app, a sliding payment scale for those without insurance, and a "find-a-service" function on the MCOMH website.

GOAL 4: STRENGTHEN AND SUPPORT EXISTING AND EMERGING ECONOMIC SECTORS

4.1 - Update the review criteria upon which occupancy tax funds are distributed

Expanding the evaluation criteria for programming and distributing occupancy tax funds in the County is essential to expanding tourism and leveraging the full spectrum of economic benefits generated by local organizations. Key to this effort is better understanding what tourism infrastructure is, what improvements to the tourism ecosystem will benefit tourism providers, and expanding visitation. While hotel stays are an indicator of tourism impact, many organizations contribute to the economy in diverse ways that may not directly translate to overnight stays. Cultural events, festivals, and local businesses often draw locals and day-trippers who spend on dining, shopping, and recreational activities, providing substantial economic benefits to the community. Additionally, organizations that promote local arts, heritage, and outdoor recreation enhance the County's appeal and quality of life for residents, fostering a vibrant community that attracts long-term visitors and residents. By broadening the criteria to include metrics such as local spending, job creation, community engagement, and overall economic impact, Warren County can more accurately assess and support the organizations that drive its economic vitality, ensuring a balanced and inclusive approach to tourism funding.

4.2 - Recognize the dominant economic sectors in Warren County and educate the public on employment shifts and trends

Warren County's economy has experienced significant shifts, accelerating over the past decade. Historically dominated by manufacturing, it has transitioned to a service-oriented economy with notable growth in healthcare and tourism. Today, the economy is broadly distributed across three primary clusters: tourism, hospitality, and retail; healthcare, human services, education, and government; and manufacturing, natural resources, and entrepreneurial businesses. The County and its partners are actively working to attract and retain businesses that align with this evolving economic landscape while maintaining a skilled labor force to support them. A key opportunity for the County is to share contextual information with residents and prospective newcomers. Through its communication platforms, the County can disseminate findings from the recently completed EDC Warren County Economic Prosperity Report and facilitate opportunities for EDC staff to present these insights at regional meetings. These efforts align with EDC's strategic goals to develop year-round tourism that creates stable employment opportunities, support healthcare and educational institutions to enhance community resilience, and promote innovative uses of natural resources while advancing knowledge- and technology-based businesses. By increasing public awareness of these economic shifts, residents can better evaluate career opportunities, understand local economic initiatives such as IDA tax incentives (e.g., PILOT agreements), and stay informed about business development and closures.

4.3 - Expand the County's approach to tourism by providing marketing and coordination support for the County's arts and cultural institutions and outdoor recreation assets

Warren County's Tourism Department could expand its focus to provide much-needed marketing and promotional support to the County's many smaller arts and cultural organizations, many of which lack the staff and funding to effectively reach wider audiences. The Department could create a comprehensive marketing strategy that highlights the county's rich cultural offerings, fostering a unified brand that attracts visitors to all areas. This strategy could include collaborative marketing campaigns, shared advertising opportunities, and a centralized online platform for event listings and promotions. Additionally, the Tourism Department could offer workshops and resources to help local organizations improve their own marketing capabilities.

Case Study: Monroe County

In each of its annual budgets, Monroe County sets aside funds to support arts and cultural organizations. In the 2023 budget, Monroe County budgeted \$1.2 million to support in community festival funding and mid-size arts funding. Approximately \$300,000 of that is being used to support community festivals, and the remaining \$900,000 is allocated to support mid-sized arts and cultural organizations.

Organizations seeking to apply for FY 2023 mid-sized arts support must meet the following eligibility guidelines:

- Have a significant presence in Monroe County, conducting at least 50% of its operations in Monroe County and maintaining a physical location in Monroe County.
- Be legally recognized for at least one year with a tax filing as a 501(c)3 organization or LLC.
- Have a primary mission directly related to arts and culture.
- Have an annual operating budget (operating expenses) between \$50,000 and \$4,000,000.

4.4 - Implement the recommendations from the Warren County Outdoor Recreation Economy Strategic Plan

Outdoor recreation is vital to Warren County's culture, quality of life, and economy. To steward and enhance the County's outdoor economy, Warren County government and its local and regional partners will need to undertake a sustained, long-term program of support and investment. Warren County government is well-positioned to play a central part in supporting the outdoor economy through four critical roles: Coordination; Planning and Technical Assistance; Investment; and Management. Through the "core actions", Warren County government will be able to lead and support a variety of local and regional outdoor economy initiatives. The Outdoor Recreation Economy Strategic Plan identifies a comprehensive set of 27 action areas that the County and its partners can initiate or incorporate into their ongoing work, ranging from improving accessibility of existing trails to supporting entrepreneurship in the outdoor economy.

4.5 - Prepare a Tourism Economy Strategy that includes an economic impact analysis of the County's arts and cultural institutions

Warren County has a robust tourism economy, but there is no current overarching strategy for how to continue to grow the tourism economy in a sustainable way. As a first step, the County should prepare a Tourism Economy Study that looks at Warren County's tourism sector relative to other destinations, highlighting strengths and areas for improvement. Engaging the public will be crucial to understanding resident and visitor preferences, ensuring that future developments align with community desires and enhance visitor experiences. While the County is already preparing an Outdoor Recreation Economy Strategic Plan, this broader study will encompass other facets of tourism, including cultural and historical assets. Such a study would quantify the contributions of these institutions to the local economy, including direct spending by organizations and visitors, job creation, and the ripple effects on related sectors such as hospitality, dining, and retail. By capturing detailed data on attendance, spending patterns, and economic linkages, the County can more accurately assess the value these institutions bring to the community. The findings from this study would provide valuable insights for policymakers, helping to justify future increased investment and support. Additionally, having concrete economic impact data can strengthen grant applications and attract new funding sources, further enhancing the sustainability and growth of these vital community assets.

Case Study: Finger Lakes Workforce Development Board

The Finger Lakes Workforce Development Board (FLWDB) has implemented comprehensive programming to address regional workforce needs. Their initiatives focus on advanced manufacturing, health care, and information technology. Funded by a combination of State and Federal grants, including the SUNY 2020 grant and the Finger Lakes Forward Upstate Revitalization Initiative, the FLWDB collaborates with local schools, colleges, and businesses to provide hands-on training, internships, and apprenticeships.

Key partners include the Finger Lakes Community College and regional employers who help shape the curriculum to meet industry standards. The outcomes have been significant, with many participants securing employment in high-demand fields. The FLWDB's efforts have not only enhanced job readiness but also contributed to the economic growth of the region by filling critical skill gaps and supporting local industries.

4.6 - Continue to build sustainable educational and training pipeline from K-12 to higher education to workforce in growth industry occupations

Warren County and its partners have established a strong continuum of education and training programs to support workforce job readiness. Organizations such as Warren-Washington BOCES, SUNY Adirondack, local high schools, and the regional Workforce Development Board offer programs in healthcare, advanced manufacturing, and IT, providing hands-on training, internships, and career pathways like P-TECH. However, shortages in key industries persist, constraining economic growth and limiting residents' job security and earning potential. To enhance the workforce pipeline, the County should continue investing budgetary resources in essential programs and assist partners in securing grants for program development. Additionally, the County can leverage relationships with private businesses to improve communication between program designers and employers seeking talent. Currently, there is no pre-apprenticeship program in the County, which would prepare individuals for Registered Apprenticeship Programs by providing foundational skills and industry-specific training. SUNY has led initiatives to develop these programs, including a Pre-Apprenticeship Resource Guide,⁸ resulting in successes like the nationally recognized Syracuse Build program.

4.7 - Continue to support EDC economic development initiatives

Warren County government should actively support the initiatives of Warren County EDC to enhance economic development and workforce growth. Key initiatives include business attraction and retention, workforce development, infrastructure improvement, and tourism promotion. To bolster these efforts, the County can allocate budgetary resources to fund programs that foster business development and training. Encouraging collaboration between EDC and other County departments, local municipalities, and community organizations will strengthen economic initiatives and workforce training efforts. Additionally, investing in infrastructure improvements will create a more conducive environment for business operations. The County should also assist in marketing Warren County as an ideal destination for businesses and tourists, leveraging its platforms for outreach. Finally, developing supportive policies that streamline permitting processes and offer incentives for businesses can significantly enhance EDC's effectiveness in attracting and retaining companies, ultimately contributing to the region's economic vitality.

4.8 - Inventory programs and incentives utilized by economic development, tourism, and workforce development departments and partners

Warren County has a variety of tools and functions, from PILOTs to site selection, marketing, and job training, that can enhance its economic development strategy. The County benefits from strong internal departmental capabilities in planning, economic development, and tourism, alongside an extensive network of local, County, and regional partners. However, there are opportunities to better understand the collective efforts being made, assess their effectiveness, identify gaps in tools and approaches, and determine which organizations are best suited to execute existing initiatives or introduce new economic development options. The first step in this process is to conduct an inventory of programs and incentives currently utilized in the County, as well as those that are not. With this comprehensive overview, the County and its partners can identify redundancies and gaps, leading to a more cohesive and effective economic development strategy across various domains and partners.

4.9 - Continue to engage in regional efforts to improve internet coverage throughout the County

Warren County has proactively reduced the number of households without reliable internet to 5.3%. However, rural and remote areas still lack coverage, affecting business expansion, remote work, telehealth, banking, and communication. To address this, the County should maintain an active role in the North County Broadband Deployment program and continue to support the LCLGRP's mapping challenges to the FCC. Additionally, the County should seek funding from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration, USDA's ReConnect Program, FCC's Rural Digital Opportunity Fund, and NYS Broadband Program Office, while advocating for state legislative resources. At a local level, the County can partner with ISPs to co-invest in infrastructure or new technologies like satellite internet and long-range WiFi. This includes negotiating easements, facilitating network expansion, and offering incentives such as reduced permit fees or expedited permitting processes.

SUNY ADIRONDACK HEALTHCARE PATHWAYS PROGRAM

In 2024, SUNY Adirondack announced the launch of Healthcare Pathways, a new program funded by a State University of New York (SUNY) Future of Work Centers grant. This allows SUNY Adirondack to develop career pathways and support individuals pursuing training and education for careers in health care.

Support is available for participants in noncredit training or degree programs, including those pursuing careers such as:

- Certified nurse aide (CNA)
- Home health aide (HHA)
- Personal care aide (PCA)
- Those studying Health Education, Nursing or related fields at SUNY Adirondack

This program allows SUNY Adirondack the flexibility to offer financial support in the way of books, uniforms, gas cards and technology, as well as access to emergency funds so students can overcome barriers to complete their education or employment retention.

4.10 - Expand programs and opportunities to address the health care workforce shortage

Warren County government can take several steps to expand programs and opportunities addressing the healthcare workforce shortage. Building on current initiatives, such as the SUNY Adirondack Healthcare Pathways program, the County can enhance collaboration with local educational institutions to develop additional career pathways in healthcare fields, including nursing and certified nursing aide programs. Strengthening partnerships with providers like Glens Falls Hospital and Hudson Headwaters Health Network can facilitate connections to training and workforce development centers. The County should also consider implementing housing solutions specifically designed for healthcare employees to attract and retain talent. Additionally, expanding service-obligated programs that offer incentives like loan repayment and scholarships for professionals committing to work in underserved areas can further support recruitment efforts. By focusing on these collaborative and supportive measures, Warren County can effectively address the healthcare workforce shortage and ensure residents have access to quality care.

4.11 - Continue to leverage funding and support efforts to remove employment barriers

Addressing the County's workforce shortage will require expanding the applicant pool and removing employment barriers that certain groups of individuals, including those with disabilities, formerly incarcerated individuals, parents, and immigrants. The County's Workforce Development Board offers career counseling, job training, and placement services, ensuring comprehensive support for job seekers, including those with disabilities. Collaborating with the Center for Workforce Inclusion can provide tailored career training and job preparation for formerly incarcerated individuals, addressing barriers such as social stigma and unstable housing. Additionally, utilizing the U.S. Department of Labor's Pathway Home 4 Grants can fund pre-release job training and post-release employment services, facilitating smoother transitions into the workforce. By adopting successful models from other counties, such as Monroe County's reentry programs and EmployAbility Toolkit, Warren County can effectively reduce employment barriers, promote economic inclusion, and foster community integration. These efforts will ensure all residents, including those with challenging backgrounds, have access to meaningful employment opportunities.

GOAL 5: MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

5.1 - Support water quality monitoring/permitting programs

Water quality monitoring programs are critical to safeguarding the County's invaluable water resources. The LGA, RPI, and IBM have collaborated to establish the Jefferson Project, created a cutting edge technology and platform for performing real time monitoring of Lake George. A long history of environmental advocacy by a wide variety of organizations and the knowledge base established around natural resource protection exists in Warren County. The County could leverage this expertise to assist in the continued development and maintenance of monitoring standards for waterbodies across the County and serve as a technical resource. This initiative is crucial for protecting public health, preserving aquatic ecosystems, and sustaining the County's recreational and tourism activities that heavily rely on clean water. One potential role could be in helping to establish an Environmental Laboratory Approval Program (ELAP)-certified laboratory within the County to support water quality testing efforts. Proactive water quality management will also support sustainable development and resilience against climate change impacts, ensuring long-term environmental and economic benefits for the community.

5.2 - Enhance inter-agency collaboration on invasive species

Invasive species pose a significant threat to the County's natural ecosystems, agriculture, and recreational resources. The LGA, the Lake George Park Commission and Warren County have been at the forefront of invasive species detection, prevention, and mitigation. The County can further assist in developing a cohesive and coordinated approach to invasive species management. This includes sharing data, resources, and best practices, as well as implementing joint public education campaigns and rapid response initiatives. Enhanced collaboration will enable more efficient use of resources, reduce redundancy, and ensure that invasive species management efforts are comprehensive and effective. This proactive strategy is vital for preserving the County's biodiversity, protecting its economic interests, and maintaining the health and resilience of its natural landscapes.

5.3 - Expand and promote higher education/business innovation associated with lake management/green jobs

By fostering partnerships between local colleges, universities, the lake protection/advocacy groups, and the business community, the County can become a hub for cutting-edge research and sustainable practices in environmental management. Initiatives could include developing specialized academic programs, supporting research projects, and creating business incubators for startups focused on green technologies and lake management solutions. Promoting these opportunities will attract talented students, researchers, and entrepreneurs to the area, driving economic growth and creating high-quality jobs. This will not only enhance the County's reputation as a leader in environmental stewardship but also ensure the long-term health and sustainability of its lakes and natural resources.

5.4 - Develop a Natural Resource Inventory

The County should prepare a Natural Resource Inventory to systematically catalog its diverse environmental assets. This inventory will provide detailed information on forests, wetlands, water bodies, wildlife habitats, and other critical natural resources. By mapping and documenting these resources, the County can better understand their distribution, condition, and ecological value, which is essential for informed decision-making and sustainable land use planning. The inventory would also support conservation efforts, guide development projects, and help prioritize areas for protection. Engaging community members, local experts, and environmental organizations in this process will ensure that the inventory is thorough and reflective of local knowledge.

5.5 - Share information of climate change impacts on infrastructure vulnerabilities with local municipalities and educate on potential funding opportunities

With the County's recent completion of the Hazard Mitigation Plan and digitized, mapped infrastructure data, the County can play a crucial role in sharing concerns around climate vulnerabilities with local municipalities, many of whom are unaware of the risks their infrastructure faces. Many of the County's rural communities also lack the resources and knowledge on how to adapt. The County can act as an informational resource on how to plan and construct infrastructure that is climate resilient.

5.6 - Continue and expand support for private septic system replacement programs

Approximately 73 percent of the land parcels in Warren County are not located within a sewer district. When properly designed, private septic systems can be effective at protecting public health and the environment. However, poor routine maintenance, excessive density of systems, and undersized and overused systems can all lead to on-site system failure and water quality impacts. Warren County was identified by New York State as being in a priority geographic area where there is a critical need to reduce the impact of sewage effluent from septic systems on groundwater and surface water. Warren County Planning has been successful in securing grant funding through the NYSDEC and EFC to replace underperforming septic systems. The County should seek to secure additional funding to include additional water bodies, help offset property owner costs, and continue the protection of Warren County's incredible water resources.

5.7 - Support municipalities efforts to improve and maintain wastewater treatment facilities

Many municipal wastewater treatment facilities are aging, at capacity, and/or struggling to keep up with the additional demand associated with septic waste transfer. Warren County can support the maintenance and improvement of municipal wastewater treatment facilities through several initiatives. The County should maintain current project information by monitoring Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) Intended Use Plan (IUP) submissions and synchronizing them with the County Capital Improvement Plan inventory. DPW engineers can provide technical assistance with IUP submissions, facility evaluations, and pre-development processes like SEQRA and SHPO consultations. Additionally, County Planning should proactively identify additional funding opportunities and play a greater role in administering funds for both local and intermunicipal projects. These efforts, combined with the progress made through the septic replacement program, will help safeguard the County's natural resources and strengthen community infrastructure.

5.8 - Measure GHG emissions, set goals, and measure progress towards those reduction goals

On June 24, 2019, the Warren County Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to adopt the Climate Smart Communities (CSC) Pledge and become a Registered Climate Smart Community. As a key next step to advancing the County's climate smart commitment, the County should measure current emissions, develop clear, actionable goals that support environmental standards and carbon reduction initiatives, and establish an implementation plan to measure progress. This will not only aid in lowering emissions but also enhance the County's eligibility for CSC silver certification (the County is currently certified bronze), opening up valuable additional funding opportunities, improving resilience planning, and positioning Warren County as a model for sustainable practices that can inspire similar efforts across New York State.

5.9 - Launch the County composting facility pilot project

In 2023, the County prepared an Organics Management Plan that recommended launching a County-wide composting pilot project to reduce waste, promote environmental sustainability, and enhance soil health. The County has identified a site for the pilot program, which would allow for a few hundred Warren County residents and at least one large food waste producer to divert compostables to the facility. This pilot project is a critical first step before the County advances a larger facility and serves more of the County. The project will not only decrease landfill use and greenhouse gas emissions but also produce nutrient-rich compost that can be used to improve local gardens, parks, and agricultural lands.

Case Study: Tompkins County

In 2016 Tompkins County developed an Energy Roadmap—a plan and action program to evaluate local energy resources and develop scenarios to reach the county's 80% greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction goal and project energy needs through 2050. Since the implementation of this plan, several actions have been taken to move towards these goals. These include the adoption of an updated Comprehensive Plan and adoption of the Tompkins County Energy Strategy.

The Energy Strategy was broken down into an internal and external focus. The internal side focuses on the County's operations, while the external focuses on the greater Tompkins County community. Utilizing the guidance written in the County's plans, operations have seen a 42.81% reduction in GHG emissions since 2008.

Tompkins County is the highest scoring county in New York State's Climate Smart Communities Program and in 2023 received Silver Climate Smart Community status, the highest distinction in the program. Tompkins County is currently one of only nine silver certified communities. The County earned the certification by documenting accomplishments and ongoing efforts, including decreasing energy use, shifting to renewable energy, and enhancing community resilience to climate change.

The County and local governments have received millions of dollars in funding to support both the planning and implementation of this program, including projects ranging from sidewalk construction to facilitate pedestrian mobility to culvert replacements to create more resilient stormwater management facilities.

5.10 - Continue road salt reduction initiatives and partner with municipalities to reduce salt stormwater runoff

Warren County has made significant strides in reducing road salt usage through innovative pilot programs and collaborative efforts with local municipalities. The County's Department of Public Works has successfully implemented the use of brine, a mixture of salt and water, which has proven to be more effective and environmentally friendly than traditional rock salt. This initiative has not only reduced salt usage by up to 30% but also saved the County approximately \$10,000 annually. To further these efforts, the County should continue to expand its road salt reduction initiatives by partnering with municipalities to address salt stormwater runoff. This can be achieved by increasing the use of brine, enhancing training programs for snow and ice management, and investing in advanced equipment and technology at more points throughout the County. By working together, the County and its municipalities can ensure safe roads while protecting the environment and preserving the natural beauty of the Adirondack region.

5.11 - Continue to incorporate green infrastructure practices to improve County resiliency

Green infrastructure, which uses natural systems, such as rain gardens, permeable pavements, and restored wetlands, to manage stormwater, reduce flooding, and improve water quality, is an important component to bolstering the County's resilience in the face of climate change. By implementing these strategies, the County can better handle extreme weather events, reduce infrastructure repair costs, and protect ecosystems. This proactive approach not only strengthens local environmental health but also contributes to a safer and more adaptable community, aligning Warren County with New York State's sustainability goals and enhancing quality of life for residents.

5.12 - Support Repair and Reuse Events and Initiatives

The County DPW, Planning Department, and community partners should work together to encourage and promote repair and reuse initiatives as a way to reduce waste and conserve resources. This could include organizing events, such as repair cafes, swap meets, and upcycling workshops that empower residents to extend the life of their possessions and divert items from landfills. This may also include assisting local municipalities with setting up reuse centers at local transfer stations. The County could advertise and promote options and activities on the website. By fostering a culture of reuse, these initiatives support environmental sustainability while also offering economic benefits, such as reducing the need for new purchases.

5.13 - Enhance Recycling Collection and Market Connections

Recycling is collected by private carters and at transfer stations in the County, each of which are maintained by their respective towns. There are opportunities for the County to work with its municipalities to improve these existing collection systems, increasing transparency in the handling of materials, and foster connections with viable markets for recyclable commodities. Transparent communication about what happens to recycled items can help build public trust and encourage higher participation rates. The County could also launch a public information campaign that focuses on reducing contamination in the recycling stream, which can improve the quality and value of materials for resale. Partnerships with regional and national markets can ensure that collected materials are processed efficiently and sustainably. These improvements will create a more resilient recycling program, while supporting the County's environmental and economic goals.

5.14 - Optimize Waste Hauling and Recycling Systems

There are opportunities to optimize the multiple waste hauling companies that operate within Warren County to reduce truck traffic, extend the lifespan of infrastructure, and minimize the environmental impact on local communities. This can include streamlining collection routes, consolidating services where appropriate, and investing in modern, energy-efficient equipment. By reducing the number of trips required and the associated wear and tear on roads and utilities, the County can achieve significant cost savings while lowering greenhouse gas emissions. These optimizations will also improve the reliability and efficiency of waste and recycling services, enhancing their long-term sustainability. Engaging with stakeholders and residents throughout the process ensures that the systems remain responsive to community needs.

5.15 - Establish a Biannual Solid Waste Coordination Forum

Coordination amongst the local transfer stations in the County is currently limited. A biannual forum with representatives from all of the County's municipalities and transfer stations would provide a regular platform to share updates, discuss challenges, and align programs focused on waste reduction, hauling, and recycling efforts. By fostering open communication and collaboration among municipalities, the forum would help standardize practices, identify shared solutions, and enhance overall program effectiveness. This coordinated approach would enable the County to better address emerging issues, implement innovative practices, and improve resource sharing across jurisdictions. Such forums would also serve to build consensus and ensure that all municipalities are aligned in meeting the County's waste management and environmental goals.

5.16 - Implement projects from the Hazard Mitigation Plan that focus on flood risk reduction and ecosystem protection to enhance community resiliency

Warren County recognizes the critical importance of mitigating flood risks and protecting ecosystems to ensure long-term community resilience. By implementing projects identified in the County's Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP), the County seeks to address vulnerabilities to flooding, safeguard natural resources, and strengthen the community's ability to adapt to changing conditions. These projects may include enhancing stormwater infrastructure, restoring natural floodplains, and implementing green infrastructure solutions that simultaneously reduce flood risks and promote ecological health. Flood mitigation efforts also contribute to economic stability by protecting property and infrastructure, while ecosystem protection preserves the County's natural landscapes, which are vital to tourism and quality of life. These actions align with broader goals to foster sustainable development and safeguard public safety. Through a proactive and collaborative approach, Warren County aims to build a resilient future that balances environmental stewardship with community needs.

GOAL 6: DEVELOP AND MAINTAIN A LONG-TERM PLAN FOR COUNTY INFRASTRUCTURE/ASSETS

6.1 - Develop an asset management/capital improvement plan for all County facilities

The County holds numerous assets that each have different needs for their long-term utility. An Asset Management Plan/Capital Improvement Plan would systematically assess and prioritize the maintenance, renovation, and replacement of County infrastructure, ensuring optimal functionality and longevity. By conducting detailed evaluations of existing facilities and infrastructure, the County can identify critical needs, allocate resources efficiently, and plan for future investments. The Plan will serve as a roadmap for sustaining and enhancing public assets, from administrative buildings to parks and recreational facilities, aligning with the County's long-term goals and budgetary constraints.

6.2 - Develop a long-term plan for underutilized County owned property that identifies highest and best uses that align with community goals

While some County property is in active use, others sit vacant or underutilized. This initiative will involve a thorough assessment of these existing underutilized properties to evaluate their current conditions, potential uses, and alignment with economic, environmental, and social objectives. By engaging stakeholders, including community members, business leaders, and planning experts, the County can gather input and build consensus on the optimal use of these assets. The strategy will prioritize projects that support sustainable development, enhance public services, and promote economic growth. Whether repurposing properties for affordable housing, recreational facilities, green spaces, or commercial development, this plan will ensure that County-owned assets contribute positively to the community's long-term vision.

6.3 - Continue to identify and explore opportunities to address emerging needs that are consistent with the County's asset management/capital improvement plan

County Department needs are ever evolving as State mandates change, the County looks to fill gaps caused by the aging workforce, and we struggle with the impacts of climate change. The County should continue to track needs and opportunities with Department heads and explore advancing priorities that address critical needs. Examples of recently identified needs and opportunities include developing an EMS training facility to support local EMS facilities that do not have sufficient local training facilities, creating an emergency response center, advancing the regional morgue plan, and launching the composting facility pilot program. This list of department needs and opportunities should be referenced when evaluating opportunities for underutilized County-owned properties.

6.4 - Fund multi-year capital improvement plan as part of annual budget

To ensure the successful implementation of Priority Action 6.1, the County should connect this work to a specific prioritization and budgeting process to ensure that its overall capital improvement needs are funded and addressed. The processes used to develop and maintain the Emergency Management Plan and Hazard Mitigation plan can be a model for this process. Those plans feature multi-lateral coordination and prioritization, assign responsibility to County departments, and assign deadlines for annual updates.

6.5 - Formalize departmental and committee responsibility for transit planning and implementation

The existing departmental and committee responsibilities should be evaluated to ensure that the appropriate parties are actively engaged and collaboratively involved in transit planning, with the aim of influencing key actions and decisions taken. By formalizing these responsibilities, Warren County can establish clear roles and accountability across departments, ensuring each one's expertise is effectively leveraged. This could involve delineating specific duties within existing departments, such as assigning transit-related analysis and planning functions to the Planning Departments, while ensuring operational coordination with Public Works. Additionally, in support of Priority Action 3.5, the County should designate an existing committee or create a new lead committee to coordinate these efforts, providing a central forum for collaboration and oversight. This structured approach will foster a cohesive, well-informed strategy for transit planning that is responsive to community needs and aligned with broader county objectives for sustainability and accessibility.

6.6 - Support investments in County facilities that play a role in the tourism economy (Up Yonda, Fish Hatchery, Bikeway, etc.)

The County possesses several properties that play an active role in the tourism economy and several more that could be further activated for greater tourism or recreational purposes. Its current facilities can be made more accessible and more attractive to residents and visitors and can be better integrated into a digital and physical cross-promotional and wayfinding approach that leads users from one great destination to the next. This action includes investments in ongoing maintenance, programming and staffing in addition to capital improvements.

MAJOR COUNTY-OWNED FACILITIES

Warren County Airport, Town of Queensbury (1,242 acres)

Up Yonda Farm Environmental Education Center, Town of Bolton (77.5 acres)

Municipal Center Complex, Town of Queensbury (54.2 acres)

DPW Complex, Town of Warrensburg (13.11 acres)
Warren County Fish Hatchery, Town of Warrensburg (36 acres)

Warren County Fairgrounds & Countryside Adult Home (combined parcel), Town of Warrensburg, 67.6 acres

ADDITIONAL COUNTY-OWNED PARCELS BY MUNICIPALITY

Bolton – 2 parcels, 19.14 acres

Chester – 2 parcels, 4.03 acres

Glens Falls – 8 parcels, 12.5 acres

Hague – 1 parcel, 11.6 acres

Horicon – 1 parcel, 0.4 acres

Johnsburg – 23 parcels, 205.56 acres

Lake George – 17 parcels, 108.75 acres

Queensbury – 19 parcels, 334.7 acres

Stony Creek – 6 parcels, 68.39 acres

Thurman – 6 parcels, 130.7 acres

Warrensburg – 2 parcels, 19.4 acres

6.7 - Upgrade bridges and culverts to handle extreme weather events, aligning with recommendations from the Hazard Mitigation Plan

Warren County is committed to upgrading bridges and culverts to withstand the increasing frequency and intensity of extreme weather events. Guided by the Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP), these improvements aim to reduce flood risks, protect critical infrastructure, and enhance public safety. Upgraded culverts and bridges will be designed to handle higher water volumes, minimize roadway washouts, and ensure reliable transportation during severe weather conditions. These investments will not only mitigate potential damages but also contribute to long-term cost savings by reducing emergency repairs and disruptions to commerce and daily life. Additionally, the upgrades will incorporate ecological considerations, such as improving aquatic habitat connectivity, where feasible, to support the County's environmental stewardship goals. By aligning infrastructure improvements with hazard mitigation strategies, Warren County is taking proactive steps to strengthen its resilience and adapt to the challenges posed by a changing climate.

6.8 - Continue workforce assessments and employee retention initiatives to support county operations

The County's workforce is its key asset. Without a talented, motivated, properly trained staff, the County cannot reach its full potential by delivering quality services, implementing the recommendations in this Plan, and continuing to adapt to the changing environmental and societal dynamics. These efforts will support Goal 6 and its Objectives, as well as all other Goals and Objectives. By regularly assessing the workforce, the County can identify skill gaps, training needs, and areas for professional development, ensuring that staffing levels are adequate to meet operational demands across all departments. Employee retention initiatives, such as competitive compensation, career advancement opportunities, and a positive work environment, are crucial for maintaining a skilled and motivated workforce. These efforts will help the County maximize its physical and cultural assets and continually improve the vital services provided to residents and visitors.

6.9 - Continue to coordinate with Human Resources and County Administration to strengthen recruitment, retention, and employee development programs

Human Resources and County Administration are the two key departments charged with meeting the needs of the County with a quality workforce. Strengthening coordination between Human Resources and County Administration is essential to improving recruitment, retention, and employee development across Warren County government. By strengthening existing partnerships, the County can implement more effective hiring strategies, streamline onboarding processes, and enhance professional growth opportunities for employees. This unified approach will ensure that workforce planning continues to align with departmental needs, supports long-term operational goals, and promotes a positive workplace culture. Ongoing coordination will also allow for the development of targeted retention strategies, such as competitive benefits, leadership training, and career advancement pathways. By proactively addressing workforce challenges, the County can reduce turnover, maintain institutional knowledge, and enhance service delivery.

GOAL 7: IMPROVE GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION & TRANSPARENCY

7.1 - Hold regular community listening sessions around the County

Warren County should take a proactive role in fostering community conversations around critical issues that, while they may seem local, have far-reaching implications and require a comprehensive understanding of the big picture. Hosting regular community forums on topics such as mental health, housing shortages, and the impacts of climate change can help bridge the gap between local concerns and broader regional and global contexts. These conversations would not only improve connections among residents, local organizations, and government entities but also the increase understanding of the County's role in addressing these challenges.

7.2 - Streamline coordination with local partners

Warren County is home to numerous local, County-wide, and regional organizations that are advocating for the health and well-being of the County's people and environment. The County collaborates – to varying degrees – with these partner organizations, which each bring unique areas of expertise and focus. Collaboration between these organizations and the County is generally positive, and collaboration between the partners has also increased, particularly since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. There continues, though, to be opportunities to better align the partner organizations' efforts to present a unifying front and to leverage the skillsets that these organizations bring to the table. Establishing a more streamlined method for coordination, through joint meetings or appointed liaisons would not only better help communicate key issues to the Board of Supervisors but would also help improve collaboration and awareness and better direct residents to the appropriate organizations for their needs.

7.3 - Continue and expand opportunities to share key information about government spending and key initiatives

Warren County has been making great strides to increase transparency around County operations and budgeting. As one example, the County's new online budget tracker represents a significant step forward, providing residents with access to detailed information about government expenditures and financial decisions. The Tourism Department's current efforts to increase transparency around occupancy tax spending is another example. These efforts should be continued and expanded. By improving access to financial data and fostering a culture of openness, the County can strengthen public trust, encourage informed community participation, and ensure that taxpayer dollars are used effectively to support the county's goals and priorities.

7.4 - Hold a series of summits/information sessions to inform and update the public about key Warren County 2040 priorities

While the official "Warren County 2040" planning will end with the adoption of the Plan, the two years of work, input, and collaboration that produced the Plan should also be a guidepost that the County can use to continue conversations around the key issues and opportunities identified during the planning process. The County should plan a series of summits and information sessions to share the results and priorities for Warren County 2040. A summit could be an annual, comprehensive update on plan progress that is intended for all audiences. Information sessions can be more bite-size, breaking out key sections of the plan and priorities for key audiences (i.e. an information session on natural resources with a water management stakeholder or group of stakeholders, or a community-specific presentation for a local municipality or region within the County). In this way, the County can ensure that Warren County 2040 is a living planning process that can adapt to needs and opportunities as they evolve.

Case Study: LCLGRPB's Forward Together Plan and Implementation

In 2021, the LCLGRPB completed the Forward Together Economic Resiliency Plan, which focused on understanding the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the region's economy, identifying forward looking strategies for the region's businesses, and establishing how the region can seize on market opportunities that emerged during the pandemic.

The plan included 39 recommendations and eight priority actions focused around the topics of "Connecting Our People, Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Building, Child Care Access, Housing Access & Stability, Main Streets & Community Centers as Economic Engines, and Career Building & Skills Training."

Since completing the plan, the LCLGRPB has hosted an annual "Forward Together" conference focused around these topic areas that highlight the important work the organization and its partners are doing to advance priority actions.

7.5 - Encourage a standing County update section on local meeting agendas

Local meetings' primary focus is and will remain local business and budgets. However, as this plan demonstrates, there are many overlapping issues, opportunities, and priorities coordinated between County and local governments, which are central to residents' quality of life and account for a greater portion of a typical household's tax commitments. The County will continue to drive communication and engagement efforts at the County level, but these efforts can be supported by greater information sharing at the local level. As Warren County 2040 reporting and key performance indicators are formalized, a standard report that can be shared during local municipal meetings should be developed and shared in time to be incorporated into the regular standing agenda.

7.6 - Strive to further engage underrepresented groups

Warren County has made commendable strides in fostering a diverse and inclusive community through its partnerships with local non-profit organizations and businesses. From meeting the needs of those with intellectual disabilities, better supporting international visa workers, or building capacity to settle and integrate immigrant populations, diversity and inclusion can enhance cultural diversity and workforce availability. The County can build on these successes through intentional outreach and dialogue with these communities, through cultural festivals or celebrations that showcase the County's diversity, and through tailored partnerships and services that improve quality of life for underrepresented groups. This will not only create a welcoming environment for future generations but also cultivate a sense of belonging that can drive community engagement and economic vitality. By facilitating connections and promoting collaboration among these groups, Warren County can position itself as a leader in community development and social equity.

IMPLEMENTATION & ACCOUNTABILITY

To effectively implement the vision, goals, objectives, and priority actions outlined in this plan, the County Planning Department will spearhead an approach centered on transparency, collaboration, and measurable progress. The strategy will include an annual progress report, routine public meetings, interdepartmental coordination, department-specific action plans, and metrics to assess both progress and the effectiveness of implemented actions. This section provides the implementation framework.

MAKING PROGRESS

To facilitate progress and provide clear roles and responsibilities, Department-specific reference sheets are provided in **Appendix 2** that outline the specific priority actions that fall under each Department. These "to-do lists" should be shared with each Department, and updates on the status of each Department's priority actions should be incorporated into the regular Department Head meetings.

MONITORING PROGRESS

Monitoring progress on the Plan's implementation will consist of two components: progress at implementing the Priority Actions, and the success of meeting the Plan's Goals and Objectives. While the former is fairly self-explanatory, for the latter, a preliminary list of potential metrics was developed for each Goal that can be tracked to measure progress.

Goal 1: Attract and Retain Younger Residents While Accommodating an Aging Population

Metrics

- Population shifts
- Changes in demographic trends (e.g., age distribution data)
- Satisfaction surveys on County services for aging residents and younger populations

Goal 2: Improve Housing Access & Quality

Metrics

- Annual increase in affordable housing units
- Number of new construction permits issued for diverse housing types
- Tracking of short-term rental impacts on housing availability and affordability

Goal 3: Support Thriving Communities, Hamlets, & Downtowns

Metrics

- Economic activity indicators (e.g., new businesses in hamlet areas, foot traffic data)
- Investments in streetscape and public transportation improvements
- Community surveys assessing quality of life and satisfaction with community spaces

Goal 4: Strengthen and Support Existing and Emerging Economic Sectors

Metrics

- Growth in tourism revenue, focusing on year-round activities
- Percentage increase in County employment in target sectors
- Impact of workforce development programs on local employment rates

Goal 5: Maintain and Enhance Environmental Quality

Metrics

- Investments in environmental resilience (e.g., climate adaptation projects)
- Initiatives to protect natural resources (e.g., invasive species control efforts)
- Coordination and collaboration efforts with environmental partners

Goal 6: Develop and Maintain a Long-Term Plan for County Infrastructure/Assets

Metrics

- Completion of a County-wide capital asset inventory
- Percentage of capital projects that align with the long-term plan
- Improvements in infrastructure quality and efficiency
- Number of new hires and open positions

Goal 7: Improve Government Communication and Transparency

Metrics

- Resident engagement metrics (e.g., public meeting attendance, survey responses)
- Effectiveness of communication strategies (e.g., website traffic, social media engagement)
- Number of partnerships and collaborations with community organizations

COMMUNICATING PROGRESS

The Planning Department should develop an Annual Progress Report detailing the County's progress in implementing priority actions. This report should cover:

- **Status of Priority Actions:** Highlight the progress made on each priority action and identify any obstacles.
- **Goal-Specific Metrics:** Update on the metrics established to assess not only implementation progress but also the success of the actions in meeting each goal's objectives.
- **Challenges and Adjustments:** Documentation of any challenges faced in implementation and recommendations for adjustments to strategies or timelines.

The Annual Progress Report will be shared with the Board of Supervisors, County Departments, and the public to ensure transparency and accountability.

To encourage community engagement and feedback, Public Progress Meetings should also be held annually or biannually (see Priority Action 7.4). These meetings would serve as a platform for:

- **Public Feedback on Implementation Progress:** Residents can provide feedback on ongoing initiatives and discuss community priorities.
- **Updates on Key Initiatives:** County officials and project leads would present updates on significant projects, allowing for real-time input and adjustments.
- **Community Input on Future Actions:** Residents would have opportunities to suggest and prioritize new or adjusted actions that align with the Plan's goals.

These meetings would reinforce community involvement and ensure that residents feel connected to the implementation process.

APPENDIX 1

APPENDIX 2

APPENDIX 3