# WARREN COUNTY 2040: WHO WE ARE & WHAT WE DO

## A REFRESHER ON THE CURRENT TRENDS, ISSUES, AND OPPORTUNITIES RELATED TO "WHO WE ARE"…

- **The County's population growth has slowed over time, with declines projected looking into the future.** Throughout its history, Warren County has experienced relatively steady growth – until recently. Since 10980, the rate of growth has slowed, with the population remaining relatively stagnant over the past decade. Looking ahead, the County's population is expected to decline by 5% between 2020 and 2040.
- **There are opportunities to capture some of the growth occurring in the larger region.** Despite current projected population stagnation and decline in the County overall, the Capital Region continues to grow, with neighboring Saratoga County the fastest growing County in the State. Growth in the Capital Region has largely been in the urban areas, a trend is expected to continue through 2040. There are opportunities to capture this growth, particularly in the City of Glens Falls and walkable hamlets that offer the amenities these populations are often seeking.
- **Warren County's population is old and getting older.** While the populations of rural communities across the Country have become increasing older in recent years, this trend is particularly pronounced in Warren County. By 2020, the County's median age was nearly a decade higher than the national average and was the fourth oldest county in the State. This has impacts on all assets of the County from its workforce (with many current employees aging out/retiring), to housing (with needs for smaller, lower-maintenance homes), to social services.
- **Conversely, the youth population continues to decline**, resulting in declining school enrollment in every one of the County's school districts over the past 20 years. Over the past 50 years, the percentage of the County's population of children has decreased by more than 100%.

## A REFRESHER ON THE CURRENT TRENDS, ISSUES, AND OPPORTUNITIES RELATED TO "WHAT WE DO & HOW WE COLLABORATE"…

- **Maintaining adequate staffing levels is of concern.** While County departments are generally adequate staffed today, resulting in an effective workforce capable of meeting departmental responsibilities, looking ahead several issues pose challenges. Several key department heads or long-tenured, critical support staff are reaching retirement age. This reality is further exacerbated by the increased competitiveness of the current job market. Challenges to securing budgets that allow for hiring replacement staff on a timeline that allows for adequate onboarding and training can also lead to a lack of knowledge transfer and periods of understaffed departments.
- **Declining volunteerism is placing greater strain on County services.** A knock-on effect of Warren County's aging population is declining volunteerism. This is currently straining County services, such as Office of the Aging transportation and meal services. In the future, if volunteer-based fire and emergency response services are unable to maintain adequate volunteer corps, the County may have to fill the gaps in services with paid staff, which could result in substantial new expenditures.

- **Investments in IT have improved services and increased efficiency.** Information Technology was essential for navigating the operational changes that Covid-19 brought, but many of these learnings have led to permanent improvements to community services and internal operational efficiencies. Investments in the IT team and systems can continue to allow other departments to "do more with less" and to protect the County from current and future cyber threats.
- **County skills and resources can build local capacity.** Warren County has specialists with skills and knowledge that can build capacity at the municipal level, potentially resulting in cost savings and reducing duplicative services. This is of particular importance as municipalities continue to struggle with challenges recruiting and hiring key staff.
- **State mandates create funding and operational challenges.** State mandates are often well intentioned but underfunded and technically unsupported. Furthermore, mandates will often be accompanied by a starting funding level, but funding will diminish over time while the terms of the mandate do not. This puts the County in the position of having to interpret new laws and what operational changes are needed to meet compliance and can add significant new costs to the County budget.
- **There are opportunities to improve awareness of and collaboration with partner organizations.** The County collaborates – to varying degrees – with numerous partner organizations, which 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.