

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 owns and maintains a range of properties and infrastructure critical to its operations and community services. However, the County currently lacks a comprehensive long-term plan to guide future decision-making regarding the long-term viability and potential alternate uses of these assets. Developing and maintaining such a plan is essential to ensure that the County's infrastructure and property investments are managed effectively and sustainably. By establishing a clear vision and systematic process for managing its assets, Warren County can enhance the functionality, efficiency, and resilience of its infrastructure, support sustainable growth, and better serve the needs of its residents over the long term. Critical infrastructure assessments can identify risks and guide investments, such as retrofitting or relocating facilities to ensure they remain operational during emergencies. For example, the Warren County Hazard Mitigation Plan recommends relocating at-risk County DPW facilities and upgrading undersized culverts and bridges to reduce flooding impacts.

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

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 3**.

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.

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

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 also ready 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 and repurposing existing structures.

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 and 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 LCLGRP 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 DSS and 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 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. 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 up to 250 Warren County residents 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 resiliency 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 and Planning Department 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.

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.

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

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: LCLGRP's Forward Together Plan and Implementation

In 2021, the LCLGRP 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 LCLGRP 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 3** 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

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.