MID-HUDSON REGIONAL COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN:
GOALS AND SUPPORTING STRATEGIES

I. **Target job creation investments in identifiable industry "clusters" (red circle industries) such as biotech, high-tech manufacturing, and information technology.**

Biotech

1. Establish a life science "incubator" in the region that offers start-up firms low-cost, well-equipped lab space as well as business support and access to broader biological research infrastructure.

2. Improve access to capital for start-up life science firms by:

    A. Fully funding and expanding two new early-stage capital investment funds, the NYS Common Retirement Fund's ($15 million) and the Innovate NY Fund ($25 million), for while these are a good start, many state seed fund programs exceed $100 million or more;

    B. Renewing and expanding the Qualified Emerging Tax Credit (up to $250,000 per year for four years), which has funded facilities operations and training but will expire this year unless reauthorized by the Legislature;

    C. Allowing available R&D Tax Credits to be bought and sold between companies, as this would monetize credits held by unprofitable young companies. Consider including Net Operating Losses (NOLs) to this formula as this would create further opportunities for young companies to monetize their losses;

    D. Developing and funding a program of state matching grants for New York-based companies that win U.S. Small Business Innovation Research/Technology Transfer (SBIR-STTR) grants.

3. Provide specialized training to further develop the local workforce (see also Goal VII). Encourage publicly supported training for skill development and enhancement to deepen the labor pool and defray in-house training costs for small, cash-limited firms.

4. Deepen relationships with New York City's world-class research universities, which can be the source of employees, ideas, collaborations, and patents for many biotech and other life science firms.

5. Restore full funding for the Centers for Advanced Technology (CAT) program, which capitalizes on the $2 billion annual investment by the federal government in New York's academic research infrastructure by bridging the gap between early stage discovery and commercial development. Funds for life science workforce training programs, such as the Building Skills in New York State (BUSINYS) training grant program, should be expanded immediately, as this can be an immediate spur to job growth.

6. Seek NY State funds for more competitive marketing programs and business start-up assistance programs, as both are needed to raise the profile of the Mid-Hudson region and

make the process of locating in the region easier for start-up and growing life science companies.

7. Convene regional stakeholders to explore opportunities to repurpose the excess capacity/surplus real estate at Pfizer's Pearl River facility and provide funding in 2012 for a third-party feasibility analysis.

Global High-tech Manufacturing

8. Offset the relative high costs of real estate and other cost disadvantages with a threefold strategy:

    A. Invest in shovel ready development sites to mitigate the time and expense typically associated with construction projects in the region;

    B. In collaboration with county IDAs and local development corporations, provide low cost building loans and tax abatement plans to improve affordability;

    C. Provide incentives similar to those provided under the former Empire Zone program to assist all manufacturers seeking to expand or relocate to the region.

9. Create a regional center to provide base studies, applied science and engineering, business systems support, business process support, and a facility to help foster some shared research or collaborations between companies. This would be the applied manufacturing equivalent of the CNSE (Center for Nanoscale Engineering) in Albany.

10. Provide tax credits for capital purchases in recognition of the sector's high investments in capital equipment.

Information Technology

11. Assist large, established companies and research organizations in growing and continuing their leadership by:

    A. Developing a regional public Cloud Center to foster development projects and new application of cloud and analytics technology;

    B. Promoting collaboration between university Computer Science and Information Technology faculty and research companies in the region. Engaging undergraduate and graduate students with IT professionals on early-stage development, test deployment, and proof-of-concept projects.

12. Foster growth of mid-sized businesses and attract new businesses to the region by:

    A. Providing access to the services of a regional Cloud Center at very affordable rates;

    B. Encouraging development projects that ensure future growth and expansion of services, including specialized, value-add products and services based on cloud technology.

13. Enable small businesses to devote their attention to growing their businesses (avoiding the distractions and expense of building their own internal IT infrastructure) by delivering affordable IT services and expertise. Examples might include CRM (Customer Relationship Management), inventory management, information management, market research including buying trends, price sensitivity, back office functions, human resource information systems, and learning platforms or collaboration tools.

14. Provide IT services to businesses across all clusters, regions, and market segments through access to shared services, software applications, infrastructure support and content as a service.

15. Offer incubation and support for early-stage development and innovation projects, especially SMBs, start-ups, veteran-owned, minority-owned and women-owned businesses. Provide support, collaboration, and infrastructure to new and existing IT companies, drawing out-of-state companies to the area as well, that want to offer services through the cloud.

16. Provide workforce development and consulting services on emerging technologies (see also Goal VII) through:

    A. Existing technology training programs at regional community colleges;

    B. The NSF-funded Institute for Data Center Professionals (IDCP) formed in 2004 and offering online courses and certificates in many areas of IT and Data Center technologies, including business analytics, virtualization, project management, networking, security, energy efficiency, and other emerging technologies.

II. **Develop strategies to retain and stimulate more mature (purple circle) industries such as distribution, business and professional services, healthcare, and food and beverage.**

Distribution

1. Initiate a marketing campaign to raise awareness of the inventory of distribution sites in the Mid-Hudson. This campaign would take the form of advertisements in national journals, raising awareness to national distributors for major retailers, both in the physical as well as the on-line space. The campaign will highlight the proximity of the Mid-Hudson to the major economic centers of the Northeastern United States, including Boston, New York, Washington DC, and Philadelphia.

2. Create a program similar to the former Build Now NY Program, which shared the costs with property owners for developing a site to a shovel-ready status. This would be an incentive for companies to invest in modifications to existing structures while receiving government assistance that is necessary to augment the costs.

3. Create customized workforce training programs that target distribution careers to improve and enhance labor force skills here in the Hudson Valley (see also Goal VII).

Business and Professional Services

4. Identify locations for siting, particularly those that would support viability of revitalization or Transit Oriented Development (TOD) projects, and otherwise enhance growth in the sector.

5. Market the Mid-Hudson Region on a wider basis to professional services located outside the state, but in the tri-state area. Some excellent efforts have been made by individual counties to market on a more national level, but the recognition of the unique identity of the "Hudson Valley" as a region has grown substantially over the past 10 years, and there are significant opportunities to market this identity more aggressively in attracting businesses in the professional and business/financial service cluster.

6. Seek state programs to incentivize (thus reinforcing) the tendency of the sector to offer internships/training to young people.

7. Encourage significant governmental commitment to infrastructure improvements (local access roads, parking, utility upgrades) to enhance the viability of Transit Oriented Development opportunities along existing rail corridors in the region.

Healthcare

8. Invest in workforce training, encompassing the traditional method of tuition advancement/reimbursement and a more novel approach of bringing the scientific classrooms required for healthcare students into rotational availability. This would expand teacher availability while facilitating healthcare workers' access to classes. Emphasis should include growth areas of IT, nursing, and various tech jobs needed in all healthcare facilities, and a growing number of physician offices.

9. Provide stimulus funding and remove regulatory roadblocks to enable a more rapid transition of existing healthcare facilities into affordable housing. This affordable housing could have a healthcare component, such as assisted living with transitional settings that provide increasing levels of care for our growing elderly population. Alternatively, it may feature a blended environment offering multiple services for a portion of the Medicaid population, which is difficult to manage without a residential component.

Food and Beverage (specific strategies under development)

III. **Leverage the region's outstanding natural resources in a "natural infrastructure" strategy that views agriculture, tourism, and the environment (green circle industries) as quality of life attributes that are critical to attracting and retaining high-quality jobs for all key industry sectors.**

1. Support waterfront projects that are consistent with Hudson Valley Greenway principles, the Department of State-funded Revitalizing Hudson Waterfronts, and local comprehensive plans and zoning.

2. Support agriculture by creating regional food aggregation and distribution hubs and by increasing state funding for farmland preservation to leverage federal and private dollars.

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3. Invest in creation of destination hotels to capitalize on and enhance existing attractions and support more overnight stays that would lead to greater and longer tourist visitation from outside of the region and greater local expenditure.

4. Fund a permanent office to promote the Hudson River Valley brand of Follow the River and Discover the Hudson Valley.

5. Give priority to land conservation and public park projects that:

    A. Restore or build on the heritage, culture and natural resources of the region;

    B. Create linkage between city and town centers, transit stations and open space or cultural and heritage sites;

    C. Link farms with city and town centers;

    D. Protect lands and ecological resources that are in-holdings or buffers to existing state and other parks and consistent with Saving the Land that Matters Most priority system;

    E. Catalyze or enhance sub-regional eco-tourism assets and corridors.

IV. Improve key regional infrastructure to make the region more business-ready.

1. Develop an Infrastructure Bank that combines state, federal, and union pension funds to finance projects that have a demonstrable rate of return to taxpayers and pension-fund investors and also provide jobs.

2. Prioritize anchor projects. In the Southern part of the region - the rebuilding of Tappan Zee Bridge and in the middle of the region, the strengthening of the capacity of Stewart Airport to grow to support ancillary businesses- are anchor projects. With the federal government's recent announcement of the Tappan Zee as one of 14 projects nationwide to receive expedited approvals through the advocacy of the Governor, we are confident the new bridge will preserve the mass transit options for the future. We also identify that sewer and water be brought to Stewart airport to further enhance infrastructure at that facility. This may be accomplished through infrastructure installation and connection to the nearby City of Newburgh, which has excess water capacity.

3. Regionalize water and sewer infrastructure planning and management. Work with the county planning departments to map and integrate existing infrastructure to help identify places where water and sewer are already available and where there is additional capacity.

4. Offer economic incentives to private firms to provide broadband service to underserved rural areas.

5. Create a program similar to the former Build Now NY Program, which shared the costs with property owners for developing a site to a shovel-ready status.

6. Promote infrastructure investments in priority growth areas and established city or village centers to take advantage of our region's existing infrastructure.

7. Support Transit Oriented Developments (TODs) to provide more sustainable, mixed-used

development around railroad stations. TODs can generate jobs, expand the tax base, improve public transportation, and establish a base of retail establishments and housing options.

V. **Use housing investment to attract jobs to the region, create construction jobs, and support the overall health of the regional economy through a vibrant housing market (specific strategies under development in consultation with regional housing stakeholders).**

VI. **Develop an urban strategy (specific strategies under development in consultation the with region's mayors).**

VII. **Enhance the region's talent pipeline through its colleges and universities, One-Stop-Centers, BOCES, and school systems. Support investments that build long term strategies for growth as well as short term responses to emerging needs.**

   1. Invest in the region's capacity for innovation, entrepreneurship and business expansion by establishing a network of Innovation Centers in the region's public and private colleges that provide access to national, state and regional resources for new business development, similar to exemplary best practice models in North Carolina, Georgia and Massachusetts. Share incentives for faculty mentoring, access to national resources (such as NCIIA and MEP), regional business competitions and learning opportunities in bio tech, IT, entrepreneurship and other high priority areas in line with the Strategic Plan.

   2. Increase the responsiveness of the workforce training system to emerging business needs by investing in the region's One Stop Centers to provide enhanced business outreach and design customized workforce training solutions, refocusing existing resources more directly on existing business needs. Support the development of cross-county job referrals in line with a new regional approach to workforce development.

   3. Improve the flexibility of the workforce development system to respond to emerging middle skill jobs requiring short-term retooling of an individual's skill set by evaluating incremental additions of coursework and on-the-job experiences to existing programs at the associate, bachelors and masters level and by adapting the skills sets of highly skilled, work-authorized immigrants.

   4. Build the long term talent pipeline and capacity for economic growth by ensuring that the region's K-12 students develop 21st century skills aligned with specific industry clusters, drawing on models such as NY's Project Lead the Way, NYS Department of Labor's Career Zone and STEM programs, and Harvard's Pathway to Prosperity.

VIII. **Serve small and medium-sized businesses by making it easier for them to access public- and private-sector resources for access to capital; workforce training; and business and technical consulting.**

   1. Create a Mid-Hudson Small Business One Stop Resource Website that contains information from each of the counties as well as state and federal resources available to small businesses. The site would contain an online form that each business owner or potential entrepreneur fills out answering specific questions about their business needs and that when completed gives the person a menu of resources that they could use specifically for their needs. Each chamber

of commerce, business association, municipality, and any other business service organization should have this on their website and use it as a tool with their membership and potential members. The completed project would be an absolute one stop resource center for all small businesses in the Mid-Hudson Region. This site would also create solutions to many of the that small business face:

A. *Access to capital* - Once the business identified a need for capital in that specific portion of the form a list of available capital lenders/granters should lead them to local, state, and federal links specific to their industry needs. Capital sources should include existing New York and/or Federal public/private funding programs that can be leveraged for the Region or strategy created for modification to include further incentives.

B. *Regula tions & Permitting* - For existing or start-up businesses the issue of permits and regulations is a struggle and the online form would ask a series of questions in such a way to identify what permits would be needed in order to start the business what the total cost would be for a business to open within a specific industry. Existing business would have the option of signing up to receive updates on all government regulations (local, state, & federal) as they change.

C. *Traini ng and Technical Assistance* - Once the individual has defined their industry and business needs through the online form the list of available resources for training and education in their area would be displayed.

D. *Access to and technical assistance with Government Contracts*- The process for becoming a contractor with the state is very daunting to businesses and once it's finally completed, it's difficult for businesses at access the capital necessary to carry out the proposal since the turn-around time on reimbursement for contracts is very slow, this could mean businesses struggle or go under simply trying to carry out a government proposal. In addition to the ability to sign up to become a government contractor on this site, the Council suggests partnering with one of the many lending facilities to provide no interest government contract funds to businesses with state guarantees.

2. Offer incentives for a business that wants to open or expand into an existing building similar to the tax breaks available to businesses that are building new buildings. This will create incentives to fix up depreciating existing inventory. An alternative would be for localities with properties up for tax auction to retain ownership in order to be able to offer any incentives they felt would best recruit businesses into these properties.

3. Implement additional State Tax Holidays throughout the region in order to promote shopping local and getting small business some much needed customers. Holidays would not only be on clothing as they have in the past but all Sales & Gas taxes for a short specific amount of time in different areas of each region. This would promote tourism and shopping on the off peak times as well as ensure the money is staying in our region.

4. Identify the five main criteria that make for a business friendly environment that municipalities can use as a guideline in order to become more business friendly. Municipalities that adhere to these guidelines and have a proven track record for fostering a business friendly environment should be the ones that are prominently promoted through our business recruitment organizations such as Empire State Development, The Hudson Valley Economic Development Corporation, and our local Economic Development agencies.

5. Meet with private equity and venture capital organizations to better learn what their industries require to locate and/or expand regionally to boost access to capital.

6. Build a "pipeline" of funding opportunities for different clusters in the region to identify enough company deal flow to increasingly attract the resources of venture capital firms. Implement events inviting private equity/venture capital firms to see presentations by local companies seeking funding.

7. Create an outreach support program for peer-to peer mentoring and networking for all levels of business and different industries.

8. Identify programs in other parts of the country that are successful in increasing public/private capital such as the "Jump Start" program in Ohio, "Georgia Works" program in Georgia, "Venture Capital Tax Credit program" in Indiana and Delta Regional Authority. Review these programs for information and ideas that may be applicable to our region.

9. [For related strategy with respect to providing SMBs access to IT services, see IT strategies in Goal I.]

IX. **Make the region and NY State more business friendly by removing tax and administrative policies that are major disincentives to businesses locating and staying in the region. Task Regional Council co-chairs with pursuing the following state-wide issues:**

1. Eliminate the MTA tax outside New York City.

2. Reform SEQRA.

3. Include targeted industries in Excelsior program.

4. Reform Department of Environmental Conservation permitting process.

X. **Develop non-mandated programs that encourage, educate, and foster green development projects as part of developing a green Hudson Valley economy.**

1. Reward projects that address:

   A. Sustainable practices, especially outreach;

   B. Energy;

   C. Transportation;

   D. Land use;

E. Water resources;

F. Waste;

G. Recycling;

H. Green procurement.

XI.   **Embrace inter-regional partnerships that leverage cross-region resources (specific strategies under development in consultation with regional stakeholders).**

XII. **Make the Mid-Hudson region more attractive to young educated professionals in order to stop "youth flight" and "brain drain" in the region.**

1. Pursue affordable housing strategies (see Goal V).

2. Emphasize entertainment and recreation through downtown development (See Goal VI).

3. Establish meaningful linkages between the region's many institutions of higher education, businesses, and young professionals so that more graduates will settle where they studied (see Goal VII).

4. Utilize the many organized "40 under 40 " groups in the region to further understand and implement the strategies

XIII. **Build on the unique location of the Hudson Valley (located between the majestic Hudson River, the Delaware River, and Long Island Sound) and promote waterfront development in order to enhance tourism, recreation, and trade.**

1. Promote overnight accommodations, restaurants and recreation that appeals to diverse populations

2. Create opportunities for open spaces that attract citizens to enjoy the River and the Sound

3. Educate visitors about the Waters' natural environment

4. Link urban centers via waterfronts...greenways, ferries, parks

5. Encourage water-based trade opportunities appropriate for our economy

6. Support waterfront projects that are consistent with "Revitalizing Hudson Waterfronts," local comprehensive plans and zoning, state smart growth law, and that are transit-oriented

XIV. **Support MWBEs (Minority and Women Business Executives) (specific strategies under development in consultation with regional stakeholders).**

XV. **Align public-private support for regional economic development (specific strategies under development in consultation with regional stakeholders).**