

**Mid-Hudson Regional Economic Development Council
Rockland County Community Forum
October 26, 2011
SUNY Rockland Community College**

Approximately 60 individuals attended the Rockland County Public Forum in addition to several Council Members. Opening remarks and a brief power point were presented by Council Co-Chair Len Schleifer. Council member Marsha Gordon presented the Council's preliminary draft strategies. After that presentation, Co-Chair Schleifer asked for comments from the audience on each strategy. A general public comment period followed. The following summarizes the public comment on the draft strategy document and the open comment period.

Strategy One:

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

Comments:

- This strategy makes sense because it recognizes that different counties have different strengths.

Strategy Two:

Develop strategies to retain and stimulate more mature (purple circles) industries such as distribution, business and professional services, health care and food and beverage.

Comments:

- Retention of existing industries is a challenge. There are major cost inhibitors in the state and companies need to have a reason to stay here.
Council members pointed out that the Inhibitors workgroup has identified several areas to be addressed. The group has also identified statewide issues to bring to the attention of the Chair's Committee.

Strategy Three

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.

- The Council should be careful to protect environmental regulations under SEQRA. We have to deal with development and regulations in a balanced way.

Strategy Four

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

- The Council should take a strong stand on mass transit, specifically bus public transportation, in the context of the new plans for the Tappan Zee Bridge.

Strategy Five

Using housing investment to attract jobs in the region, create construction jobs, and support the overall health of the regional economy through a vibrant housing market.

- There are too many duplicative contractors for energy efficient housing projects. Regulations impede green development.

Strategy Six

Develop an Urban Strategy

Strategy Seven

Enhance the region's talent pipeline through its college 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.

- Access to quality, affordable child care has been identified as an issue that affects this strategy. Availability of child care affects the decision making of young families in terms of where they choose to work and live.
- There should be support for a consortium of training resources to work together and not duplicate services.
- Education is a reason that someone who runs a business would choose to locate it here. Additionally, commenter was distressed to see DEC included as a target for reform in the plan. Over-development needs to be regulated.
- Use one-stop and community colleges as resources for obtaining skilled labor.

There were no comments on strategies eight through fifteen.

Open Comment

- Why isn't the Department of Education part of the CFA?
- Child care should be included in strategy seven and education from birth-12th grade should be included as a strategic priority (not just K-12 education)
- A symbol or design should be created that uniquely identifies the region. A branding strategy should be considered.

- Libraries should be included as an important quality of life indicator. Library infrastructure should also be considered in terms of increasing access to broadband and wireless internet.