

Mohawk Valley Regional Economic Development Council

SWOT Analysis

August 24, 2011

1. What are the Region's Strengths and Weaknesses?

a. Regional Strengths:

- Diverse economic base
- Well positioned for high-tech development with region's information technology/cyber security and defense industrial clusters and proximity to CNSE/Global Foundries/SEMATECH/IBM and proposed Marcy Nanocenter at SUNYITeffort
- Strong employment cluster in Finance, Insurance, Banking Back Office operations with capability for additional growth
- Health Care and Medical Services within region are major employers with opportunities for additional growth
- Major tourism destinations with the Adirondacks, Cooperstown, heritage sites, and Turning Stone Resort
- Art and cultural amenities,
- Quality of life, affordability (cost of living and cost of labor), scenic beauty and distinctive architecture of many buildings that adds to region's charm and attractiveness
- Region's agricultural base provides for opportunities to attract new farming populations to maintain and invest in existing farms, opportunities in agri-business, clean-tech and renewable energy initiatives (e.g., bio-mass), and attract additional dairy and food processing production facilities that need to be close to locally grown food supplies.

- Transportation infrastructure and proximity to major urban markets and population centers through a well developed state highway and federal interstate system
- Key regional business parks and development sites
- Number of institutions of higher education (community colleges, SUNY schools, and Private Colleges and Universities) within region that provide basis for building a 21st century work force
- Adaptability of region's community colleges and public – private colleges to support work force development initiatives (e.g., MVCC A&P Program. Utica College Insurance Program, Information Technology/Cyber-security Training Initiatives, Semiconductor manufacturing training programs, and tailored training programs for specific businesses and industries).
- Quality of K-12 education in region

b. Regional Weaknesses:

- State regulatory and business climate, overall state and local taxation, and high energy costs are major drags on economic activity that have accelerated rates of disinvestment by businesses and contributed to the out-migration of population.
- Antiquated and fragmented system of local governmental structures that are not well suited for a 21st century economy
- Aging sewer and water infrastructure systems in urban and rural settings
- Lack of infrastructure funding to maintain key roads and bridges, and complete pivotal road improvement projects throughout Mohawk Valley Region
- Aging population and shrinking work force in key age cohorts, and projected demographic trends (e.g., lower median incomes, educational attainment, poverty and lower educational attainment than NYS averages) that challenge the region's ability to ensure that it will have a world class 21st century work force
- Region's physical deterioration with vacant industrial/commercial buildings, Brownfield sites, and structures that require extensive subsidies to adapt for

viable reuses or cost to demolish to reclaim the land for other community and economic development priorities

- Aging housing stock and neighborhood deterioration in cities and older towns and villages
- Downtowns and central business districts lack vibrancy and economic activity
- Lack of reliable passenger train and affordable air travel to and from major urban markets
- Declining local tax bases and diminished state and regional resource capacity for investments in transportation, infrastructure, and funding for community and economic development priorities
- Inadequate incentive programs from NYS to support key economic development attraction strategies for businesses with high CapEx requirements (e.g., semiconductor, Cleantech, Pharmaceuticals and Bio).
- IT infrastructure needs to be improved in rural areas to provide
- Cynicism and negative attitudes

2. What are the Region's Opportunities and Threats:

a) Opportunities:

- Use institutions of higher education to support regional economic development strategies for R&D, work force development that supports economic development, entrepreneurship, and other initiatives that formalize partnerships with communities and economic development organizations.
- Leverage greater economic development opportunities from the Air Force Research Laboratory to build an innovation economy around cyber-security and information technology
- NYS investment in Semiconductor and Nanotechnology and potential to expand investment into the Mohawk Valley with the development of Marcy

Nanocenter at SUNYIT and the SUNYIT Center for Advanced Technology and Quad C Initiative

- Position region to attract additional growth from Finance, Insurance and Banking Back Office operations to take advantage of region's productive and affordable labor force particularly among operations in high cost urban centers.
- Identify additional opportunities to spur economic growth within Health Care and look at ways to strengthen this sector of the region's economy.
- Expansion of aviation activity at Griffiss International Airport for General Aviation, aircraft maintenance, training, and air cargo.
- Strengthen and expand economic development in rural communities through new opportunities in farming, agri-business development opportunities, food processing and renewable energy investment (bio-mass, cellulosic ethanol, and forestry products).

b) Threats:

- Defense Department budget cuts and potential consolidation threats that could impact AFRL operations at Griffiss, which would have negative economic consequences across the boundaries of several Regional Economic Development Councils in Upstate New York.
- Lack of funding to support required investment to upgrade aging infrastructure systems, maintain roads and bridges, and complete required regional transportation improvements that are essential for long term economic development.

- Lack of changes to system of local governance perpetuates status quo but hinders the region's ability to forge regional consensus, streamline government by eliminated overlapping and fragmented governmental structures, achieve regional funding solutions to advance long term regional economic development strategies
- Health Care sector is facing competitive pressures with health care reform , difficulty in physician recruitment, and the Mohawk Valley Region is also faced with pressures of maintaining quality health care.
- Existing catalogue of economic development programs and tax incentives are inadequate to attract certain transformative global economic development projects that have large CapEx requirements.

We welcome you comments on the draft SWOT. Please comment through our Suggestions Box on the right of the Mohawk Valley Tab. Thank you