

Strategic Plan



2018-2028

Development Authority of the North Country Strategic Plan 2018 - 2028

This plan describes the planned activities and objectives for the Development Authority of the North Country for the ten-year period between 2018 and 2028. It provides broad guidance on strategic goals and activities and will help shape more detailed and shorter-term tactical and operating plans for the organization.

This is the second strategic plan developed by the organization. The first was developed in 1988, at the founding of the Authority and described a set of general plans aimed at economic and community development. The specific goals of the previous plan were:

- 1. Create quality job opportunities for residents of the region.**
- 2. Attract and retain young educated people.**
- 3. Diversify the region's economic base.**
- 4. Do all of this in an environmentally sustainable manner.**

These goals were effective and important but are now considered too generic to drive the Development Authority's strategic activities in the future. This plan offers a set of revised goals and associated activities and measurements that are more useful for the next ten years.

Index

Background	4
Strategic Considerations	5
• Economic Development	
○ Target Industries	
• Community Development	
Strategic Initiatives	10
• #1 – Expand Development of Physical Infrastructure	11
○ Telecommunications	
○ Water and Sewer	
○ Solid Waste	
○ Sustainable Energy	
• #2 – Expand Concept of Infrastructure	16
○ GIS	
○ Municipal Efficiency Studies	
• #3 – Community Development	19
○ Planning and Project Management	
○ Economic Development Partnerships	
○ Housing Development	
• #4 – Infrastructure for Agriculture and Agri-Business	23
○ Loan Funds	
○ Value Chain Infrastructure for Agriculture	
• #5 – Infrastructure for Tourism	26
○ Value Chain Infrastructure for Tourism	
• #6- Criteria for Authority’s Outreach	28
○ Strategic Outreach Decision-Making	

Organizational Background

The Development Authority of the North Country was created in 1985 by the New York State Legislature to develop and manage the infrastructure needed to support the reactivation of the 10th Mountain Division at Fort Drum, and to serve the common interests of Jefferson, Lewis and St. Lawrence counties. The Authority operates as a revenue-based public benefit corporation, independent of state operational funding.

Since the time the Authority was created, the parallel needs of Fort Drum and the region as a whole have resulted in benefits for both. Unlike other single-purpose state authorities, the Development Authority owns and operates a number of revenue-based infrastructure facilities including water and wastewater facilities, an extensive fiber optic network and a regional landfill. The Authority adheres to the highest environmental standards to ensure public health and regulatory compliance.

Due to its geographic scope, the Authority has evolved into a problem-solving partner in regional development and is the region's largest provider of shared services. Staff manages a wide range of business and housing loan programs that encourage growth and contribute to the prosperity of communities. Authority staff with a wide range of expertise provide fee-based technical services to municipalities including management of water and wastewater facilities and Geographic Information System hosting.

Although its primary focus is Jefferson, Lewis and St. Lawrence counties, the Authority has the statutory authority to operate outside that defined region when it serves broader community interests or in response to requests for assistance by state and local governments outside the three-county area.

Mission

The mission of the Development Authority of the North Country is to serve the common interests of Jefferson, Lewis, and St Lawrence Counties by providing technical services and infrastructure, which will enhance economic opportunities in the region and promote the health and well-being of its communities.

Strategic Considerations

The Development Authority provides services and infrastructure to its regional partners in a safe and environmentally-sustainable manner. These services and this infrastructure enhance the quality of life in the region and enable economic opportunities for all of the Authority's partner communities, including Fort Drum.

The Authority has two significant strategic assets that shape its operations, support its delivery of services and constitute the driving force behind its future strategies.

Scale – The Authority has a larger geographic operating scale than any local government organization, which allows it to think bigger, pursue larger and more regionally valuable initiatives, and to develop technical capabilities that are unaffordable for local governments. It also has a smaller and more focused scale than New York State Empire State Development or other state and federal organizations that also play a role in the economic and community development of the region. This allows the Authority to be more aware of regional needs and challenges and the flexibility to be more responsive to regional issues within its mission.

Experience of Execution –The Development Authority has extensive experience planning and executing a variety of programs across a broad range of initiatives. Most organizations in the region tend to be either planners or executors, but not both. The Authority currently plans for infrastructure projects, executes those plans to build the infrastructure, and then operates the infrastructure across its economic life. This range of experience gives the Authority unique technical and organizational capabilities that do not exist significantly elsewhere in the region.

The combination of these two strategic assets produces economy-of-scale benefits for partners. They are considered the competitive advantages that make the Development Authority unique and suggest the best strategic foci for its activities, which fall into two primary categories, economic development and community development.

As the Authority moves forward, it must ensure adequate project planning in order to operate within its capacity parameters. This will include the consideration of contracting for services when appropriate, and the development of sustainable pricing structures for services across all of its divisions.

Economic Development

The region has been characterized by a stable population that is both older and less educated than the general populations of New York State or the nation as a whole. The only significant factor affecting population growth in the past 30 years has been the arrival of the 10th Mountain Division at Fort Drum and a second expansion of troop levels in 2004/2005. These troop level expansions and their economic impacts are concentrated in Jefferson County. Fort Drum remains the largest and most important economic engine in the region, was the impetus for the creation of the Development Authority, and remains a primary focus for the Authority and its partners in economic and community development.

Unemployment in the region consistently lags that of the state or nation as a whole, but tends to vary in a similar fashion on a similar schedule, suggesting that most economic change in the region is driven by broader external economic forces.

Fort Drum

Fort Drum, home of the U.S. Army's 10th Mountain Division, is the largest single-site employer in the state. The economic impact of the Fort has been declining slightly in recent years but remains a hugely significant element in local economic and community development.

Fort Drum is a vital focus for the Development Authority, which provides water, sewer and telecommunications infrastructure to the post, as well as land use planning support, and has partnered with the post on housing initiatives. During the tenure of this plan, the Authority will remain responsive to the needs of the Fort Drum community and will continue to seek partnership opportunities to ensure Fort Drum continues to be a valuable key asset to the U.S. Army, and to encourage continued investment in the Fort and its mission.

Target Industries

In developing this plan, the Development Authority examined the past performance and future possibilities of six primary industries in the regional economy. These are described in Table 1. Of these six industries, agriculture, tourism, and sustainable energy represent the best opportunities for the Authority to make a difference in economic development during this strategic planning period. The Authority is already engaged in efforts to support these industries, including the administration of regional development loan funds for tourism and value-added agriculture projects.

The North Country Regional Economic Development Council (REDC), one of the Authority's partners in economic development in the region, has identified similar target industries. Table 1 includes the REDC goals (as of 2017) for each target industry in this plan.

TABLE 1

Industry	Past and Future Prospects
<p>Manufacturing</p> <p><u>REDC Goals:</u> <i>Focus on business retention and expansion for existing large manufacturers to ensure their long-term viability</i></p>	<p>Steady decline in employment since 1988, driven by structural challenges that cannot be fixed regionally. Most likely expansion expected to come from food-processing, serving regional markets.</p>
<p>Agriculture</p> <p><u>REDC Goals:</u> <i>Maintain, establish, and expand storage, processing and distribution systems in the region to promote the sales of value-added agricultural products that are sold locally and globally.</i></p>	<p>Steady consolidation of farms and increased capital costs as commodity dairy production becomes increasingly competitive, forcing prices down. Most likely opportunity for growth is expected to come from a conversion to the production of differentiated food products, including wine, beer, and spirits.</p>
<p>Tourism</p> <p><u>REDC Goals:</u> <i>Develop and implement tools to attract private hospitality investment which will drive demand to revitalize and diversify communities and create a climate that will allow entrepreneurs to flourish.</i></p> <p><i>Leverage the North Country's unique relationship with Canada, from tourism to direct foreign investment, to grow as a center for international business and enterprise.</i></p> <p><i>Strengthen the North Country's global sports brand by attracting international sporting events that will stimulate private investment and job growth and spark the refurbishment of sports and hospitality facilities</i></p>	<p>Gradual growth, as measured by bed tax revenues and visitor counts. Largely focused on outdoor recreation and heavily concentrated in the summer months, although some growth in winter activities. Economic benefits limited by the need for an expanded tourism infrastructure and new attractions.</p> <p>Tourism spending nationally and internationally continues to increase, as a function of rising incomes.</p>
<p>Retail</p> <p><u>REDC Goals:</u> <i>Foster development of small business and entrepreneurial activities.</i></p> <p><i>Revitalize the infrastructure and streetscapes of our community cores to create planned, vibrant commerce centers that connect residents, entrepreneurs, employees, and visitors to places they want to live, work and visit.</i></p>	<p>Stable/declining employment and revenues, after a burst of significant growth and investment associated with a Fort Drum expansion in 2004. Regional retailers are challenged by declining/aging populations in some areas and the growth of online retailers.</p> <p>Nationally, retail centers are facing increasing challenges from online retailing, causing many centers to shift from merchandise to experience services.</p>

<p>Sustainable Energy</p> <p><u>REDC Goals:</u> <i>Increase renewable energy generation, distribution, storage capacity, and clean-energy jobs, and reduce community and business costs through energy efficiency improvements.</i></p>	<p>Growing steadily in the region, fueled by new technology (declining costs) and state and federal policies designed to subsidize alternative energy production. Limited currently by low petroleum costs and local community resistance to large wind turbine projects. May be limited in the future by a need for more power transmission infrastructure.</p>
<p>Services</p> <p><u>REDC Goals:</u> <i>Develop a strong workforce development system to support the needs of employers and workers in the targeted clusters through partnerships using a combination of new and incumbent worker training, utilizing youth programs, P-Tech, certification programs, apprenticeship programs, degree programs, and veteran recruitment.</i></p> <p><i>Leverage the North Country's higher education cluster and design and implement incentives for collaborative research and entrepreneurial activity among and between them.</i></p>	<p>Generally strong growth, especially in education and healthcare. Over time, services are becoming more skill and capital-intensive which is expected to result in fewer overall jobs but higher salaries.</p> <p>The region is home to multiple public and private higher education campuses, as well as strong vocational training programs at the secondary and higher education levels. These resources are routinely identified as assets in economic and community development but have relatively small roles in that area to date.</p>

While these industry sectors are selected as the most likely sources of success in economic development in the region over the next ten years, the Development Authority will concentrate on specific aspects where its particular skills and capacities will allow it to work with local and regional partners, including the North Country REDC, to leverage contributions and fill needs that cannot be easily filled by other organizations.

The Development Authority will also be responsive to requests for assistance from partner agencies and municipalities in areas outside these target industries, where such assistance fits with the Authority's overall mission and capabilities.

Community Development

While the Development Authority works with local, state and federal economic development agencies to foster economic growth in the northern New York region, this plan addresses the Authority's broader role in overall community development. By improving regional standards of living and expanding opportunities in healthcare, housing, and more effective local government, the Development Authority is able to improve the lives of community members. This, in turn, encourages people to live in our communities and to expand economic opportunities.

Other economic development agencies operating in the region typically define their role in strictly economic terms, as required by New York State. Even then, their measures of economic impact are narrowly defined and usually measured solely by job creation/retention. This tends to limit the scope of their projects and investments to loans/grants to businesses in the region and marketing activities to attempt to attract new businesses to their areas or encourage growth of existing businesses. Some agencies may become involved in workforce training efforts or the creation/management of industrial parks or other economic development services, but only to support the primary function of attracting new business/creating new jobs.

The Development Authority's interest in broader community development, versus solely economic development, makes it unique in the region, particularly on a regional scale, and gives the Authority more flexibility in responding to economic and community development needs.

The Authority also has the opportunity and capacity to expand its regional community planning assistance to help municipalities meet statutory obligations, as demonstrated by its oversight and coordination of the Joint Land Use Study for Fort Drum.

Strategic Initiatives

This section of the report identifies a set of six strategic initiatives that represent the primary foci of the Development Authority's activities and expansion over the next ten years. These initiatives are selected to give the Authority a focus on the most promising opportunities for regional development, that also play to the Authority's strategic strengths and competitive advantage.

Each initiative is divided into specific subsections, with a set of near term (1 – 5 years) and longer term (5-10 years) goals.

Strategic Initiative 1

Expanding the Development of Physical Infrastructure

The Development Authority is already the leader in physical infrastructure development in the region, developing, owning and operating infrastructure projects in landfill/materials management, sewer and water, and telecommunications. Over the next ten years, the Authority will continue to develop new elements of physical infrastructure and to expand and improve those it currently operates, seeking to reduce operating costs and expand the service footprint to existing customers/municipalities.

Specific Objectives:

1. The Authority will pursue telecommunications infrastructure development and maintenance where the additional information transport capacity meets regional demands or is important in fostering regional economic growth or increased community development. The Authority will seek opportunities to enhance the value of telecomm networks and infrastructure by linking with telecomm systems outside the northern New York region where appropriate to enhance service levels and capacity.
2. The Development Authority will explore the expansion of existing sewer and water infrastructures to examine opportunities to own/operate water sources and sewer treatment facilities and to create regional systems modeled after existing systems such as the Route 3 Sewer Line. The goal of these activities is to ensure that public health and environmental standards are being met in a cost-effective manner for municipalities and customers served in the region.
3. The Development Authority will make continued investments in existing infrastructure projects, including the expansion of the regional landfill and the reduction of solid waste through better management of solid waste streams, and the diversion of products that can be redirected to alternative options for processing. The Authority will seek ways to divert different kinds of recyclable wastes from the waste stream.
4. The Authority will expand its technical services (including GIS and SCADA) to assist local municipalities with the appropriate siting of sustainable energy sources in the region. It will also explore infrastructure development opportunities associated with sustainable energy generation and distribution. This may include power substation projects and other investments in energy distribution, as well as generating capacities that use regional inputs including wind, water, biomass, or solar power.

Telecommunications

The Development Authority currently provides telecommunications infrastructure to serve partnerships in both the commercial telecomm industry and to various school systems to allow remote education/shared services between facilities and campuses. Interviews with telecommunication customers have identified the need for increased bandwidth and service range, as well as an emerging demand for technical assistance in information technology and services within existing fiber networks.

Over the next ten years, the Authority will expand the available bandwidth and scope of its fiber optics infrastructures, explore new service delivery infrastructures including broadcast towers, and develop leveraged opportunities to provide municipal and educational customers with standardized technical solutions and network designs. The Authority will also use its unique technical services to explore partnerships with utilities that will enable them to enhance their capabilities and better serve regional users.

1 – 5 Year Goals

1. The Authority will seek opportunities to expand its investment in fiber optic bandwidth to better support cloud-based and streaming services and to extend access to broadband connectivity to new customers across the region.
2. The Authority will explore the feasibility and value of owning/operating wireless towers in the region, as part of the development and extension of broadband and other telecommunications services in the region. Tower acquisition will be driven by both technical and financial considerations, as well as interest by partners in the region, including Fort Drum.
3. The Authority will work with regional utilities to explore opportunities to provide services that will benefit regional users.

5 - 10 Year Goals

1. The Authority will explore mechanisms, in partnership with other agencies in the region, to facilitate the development of online entrepreneurial activities and start-ups, using the expanded broadband services made available in the region.
2. The Authority will pioneer the development of services/network designs for municipalities in the region, providing them with technical assistance in implementing a standardized low-cost IT model. The Authority may see an opportunity to provide network administration for interested municipalities that adopt the standard IT/network model.

Development Authority Investment Requirements

To meet these goals, the Authority will need specific new capabilities and investments:

- Increased funding for telecomm infrastructure, including fiber optics and possibly telecomm towers. Towers will require increased knowledge of legal and structural issues associated with high-aspect towers and similar structures.
- Enhanced ability to design and administer IT networks and to train municipal workers in those designs. This could be done in partnership with regional education partners.
- Sustainable revenues balanced by the need to maintain a competitive pricing structure.

Water and Sewer Infrastructure

The Development Authority currently provides services and infrastructure to support water and sewer facilities for municipalities in the region. The Development Authority plans, executes, and operates water and sewer distribution/collection and treatment facilities. The Authority does not own water sources or sewage treatment plants, although it does provide technical assistance in the design and operation of these facilities.

Over the next ten years, the Development Authority will continue to provide these services to municipal customers. The Authority will also explore the opportunities and advantages of owning source and destination facilities, with an eye toward developing larger regional and more efficient sewer and water infrastructures that could provide municipalities with better services at a more affordable cost.

1 – 5 Year Goals

- | |
|---|
| 1. The Development Authority will seek opportunities to assist new municipal customers with sewer and water services and to enhance service levels and reduce costs through improved processes. |
| 2. The Authority will explore the feasibility of and opportunities to pilot one or more water source plants and/or sewage treatment plants, to demonstrate capabilities and gain experience in the operation of these service facilities. |
| 3. In response to a growing need in the region, the Authority will explore the opportunity to partner with educational institutions to develop programs to train and license water and wastewater plant operators. |

5 - 10 Year Goals

- | |
|--|
| 1. The Authority will explore the development of a regional water/sewer service model that could offer better services at competitive costs to existing municipalities. |
| 2. The Authority will be responsive to requests for sewer/water services from municipalities outside the tri-county region where those requests represent a good fit for the Authority's mission and where they could result in increased economies of scale for Authority operations and communities. |

Development Authority Investment Requirements

To meet these planned goals, the Development Authority will need specific new capabilities and investments:

- Increased funding for the ownership of at least one sewer or water facility.
- Expanded ability to model broad regional systems and identify opportunities for economies of scale and efficiency through integration.
- Enhanced technical capacities in the management of water sources and waste treatment facilities on larger scales than previously developed.
- Development of training capabilities to provide appropriately credentialed staff.

Solid Waste Infrastructure and Management

The Development Authority currently operates the regional Materials Management Facility located in Rodman, Jefferson County. This landfill is the primary disposal destination for solid waste collected in the tri-county region. It is the only such landfill operated in the region and is vital to managing solid waste at an affordable cost. Interviews with solid waste handlers/managers in the community reveal that they see this landfill as a unique asset and plan to continue using it. The biggest concern among solid waste customers is meeting the increasing complexity of recycling requirements levied by state agencies.

Over the next ten years, the Development Authority will expand the landfill to allow its continued use while focusing efforts on waste diversion and source reduction. The Authority will concentrate on identifying innovative ways to divert solid waste away from the landfill waste stream and prevent its ultimate arrival at the landfill. These diversion tactics will include new approaches to the recycling, reuse and repurposing of waste, as well as possible alternative processing, and exploration of options for source reduction.

1 – 5 Year Goals

1. The Development Authority will begin the process of expanding the regional landfill to support continued use.
2. The Development Authority will seek opportunities to divert existing waste streams from the regional landfill and into more environmentally and economically valuable uses.
3. The Development Authority will explore opportunities for source reduction policy advocacy, education and alternatives.

5 - 10 Year Goals

1. The Development Authority will complete the expansion of the regional landfill.
2. The Authority will work with new and existing regional partners to identify opportunities to recycle/reuse and divert one or more agricultural or industrial waste streams from the landfill. Priority will be given to a new use that fits into an existing element of the regional economy.

Development Authority Investment Requirements

To meet these planned goals, the Authority will need specific new capabilities and investments:

- Increased awareness of recycling technologies and potential uses/demands for recycled solid waste regionally or nationally.
- Bonding to support landfill expansion.
- Potential tipping fee increases to sustain operational and future capital expenses, while keeping the pricing structure competitive.

Sustainable Energy

The Development Authority has been active in the field of sustainable energy since partnering with a private company in 2008 to build a plant at the regional landfill that converts methane gas (a byproduct of the waste decomposition process) into electricity. In 2009 that successful effort was recognized by the Climate Action Reserve as the first carbon reduction project to earn carbon credits outside the state of California. Since then, the Authority has explored other sustainable energy projects, but growing regional and statewide interest in various forms of sustainable energy – solar, wind, hydro, biomass, etc. – will likely present additional opportunities in the future.

In preparation, over the next ten years, the Development Authority will focus on expanding its own use of sustainable energy internally, and evaluating various sources and programs in preparation for potentially expanding the range of technical and organizational services it offers to developers of sustainable energy projects.

1 – 5 Year Goals

- | |
|--|
| 1. The Development Authority will work with partners in industry, higher education, and local economic development agencies to learn about sustainable energy sources and practices and potentially to provide technical assistance on energy projects where applicable. |
| 2. The Development Authority will use its emerging capabilities in Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping/integration to identify best-fit locations and siting strategies for sustainable energy projects in the region. |
| 3. The Authority will explore potential internal applications for sustainable energy sources at its own facilities. |

5 - 10 Year Goals

- | |
|---|
| 1. The Development Authority will explore the possibility of investing in/managing electrical distribution and substation infrastructure, where this will foster specific developments in sustainable energy production and sale. |
|---|

Development Authority Investment Requirements

To meet these planned goals, the Development Authority will need specific new capabilities and investments:

- Expanded knowledge and current awareness of trends and emerging technologies in alternative energy in the region.
- Enhanced technical expertise in electrical power distribution infrastructure and operations.

Strategic Initiative 2

Expanding the Concept of Infrastructure

The Development Authority has a primary responsibility for developing physical infrastructure as a tool to reduce the operating costs of businesses, households, and public agencies in the region. Over the next ten years, however, the Authority expects a growing demand for infrastructure based on information and organization, rather than just physical assets. Information is vital to support good public and private decision-making in the region and to give local and regional leaders a clearer picture of needs and opportunities in the area. It will begin the development of new concepts in infrastructure where the infrastructure is built from information and organization rather than steel and concrete. These new-concept infrastructures will be linked and leveraged with physical infrastructure as well.

Specific Objectives:

1. The Development Authority will explore the development of organizational infrastructure, built around its existing or emerging technical expertise in various areas. These areas will include organizational support for grant management, grant strategy, and grant-writing in the context of technical assistance projects, as well as for other initiatives valuable to agencies within the community.
2. The Development Authority will continue to develop organizational infrastructure for the conduct of municipal efficiency studies and analysis. The Authority will develop tools and software that support the production of consistent high-quality analysis of consolidation and municipal efficiency opportunities for regional communities.

Geographic Information System

The Development Authority currently provides Geographic Information System (GIS) services to a growing number of municipal customers. The Authority also uses this GIS capability for internal planning and analysis of infrastructure projects.

The goal of the GIS program is to coordinate and standardize management of spatial data and associated information for the benefit of internal Authority operations as well as the Authority's external customers, allowing users to make informed decisions. The program also extends to technical service projects and web-based GIS hosting for municipal customers. Over the next ten years, the Development Authority will expand the capacity and design of its GIS to support an extremely broad and increasingly comprehensive system that integrates vast amounts of information about the region's communities and economies, and will take appropriate steps to keep its system current.

1– 5 Year Goals

1. The Development Authority will pursue grant funding to support regional GIS initiatives, which benefit both municipalities and the Authority. In order for the GIS program to remain relevant, content must be continuously added to the system. Grant-funded, regional GIS initiatives represent an opportunity to add new content at no-cost. As the state continues to incentivize functional consolidation of governments, this represents an opportunity for the Authority to build its GIS technical services portfolio.
2. The Development Authority will expand upon its ability to offer its Internet Mapping Application (IMA) for viewing on mobile devices by deploying a mobile application for customer data editing and collection.
3. The Development Authority will educate potential users about the capabilities and opportunities presented by its GIS program, working with regional higher education and regional utilities where appropriate.

5 - 10 Year Goals

1. The Development Authority will continue to grow its GIS portfolio, capitalizing upon the unique economy of scale and regional scope that will allow it to offer GIS hosting services to communities that do not have access to such comprehensive, affordable services.
2. The Development Authority will market its GIS hosting and data development services to regional utilities, including municipal power companies and Competitive Local Exchanges.

Development Authority Investment Requirements

To meet these planned goals, the Authority will need specific new capabilities and investments:

- Additional investment in future technological advancements to ensure the Authority's GIS Internet Mapping Application remains relevant, serves increasing internal and external customer needs, and integrates easily with mobile applications.
- Development of a pricing structure that will generate sustainable revenue to support operations.

Municipal Efficiency Studies

The Development Authority currently provides contracted services to support municipal consolidation/efficiency studies. Interviews with municipal customers frequently identified consolidation as a significant issue facing municipalities in the future and most were interested in having the Authority help them with these studies in various ways. Most municipal leaders anticipate increasing pressure from state authorities to explore both formal municipal consolidation and less formal shared services between municipalities.

Over the next ten years, the Authority will expand and organize its services in the area of consolidation and shared services, with a cross-divisional approach. While being responsive to municipal requests, staffing considerations and capacity will dictate the scheduling of these studies.

1 – 5 Year Goals

1. The Authority will develop a set of guidelines and procedures for conducting an efficiency study and using the study results to support municipal decision-making. These guidelines will also address similar decisions for shared services between municipalities.
--

5 - 10 Year Goals

1. The Authority will track the results of efficiency studies and use its technical capabilities to assist municipalities in their decision-making and to improve the guidelines for municipal efficiency studies.
--

Development Authority Investment Requirements

To meet these planned goals, the Authority will need specific new capabilities and investments:

- Expanded awareness of consolidation issues and requirements.
- A periodic investment in time to track and analyze the data and support needed to make consolidation decisions.

Strategic Initiative 3

Community Development Beyond Economic Development

The Development Authority has a shared responsibility to foster economic development in the region, but the concept of economic development as it has been defined and pursued during the past 30 years is no longer adequate to allow effective strategic planning in the region. Economic development has typically been measured in narrow terms – jobs created or investment by private firms - and the ability to execute supporting plans of development has been constrained by the restrictions this approach mandates. Over the next 10 years, the Authority plans to work with its economic and community development partners to expand its thinking to shift the emphasis to broader measures of success and a re-focus on community development to enrich communities, improve the quality of life for residents and respond to shared needs and problems. The Authority will pursue projects in which its capacity and regional scope allow it to bring beneficial programs into communities that would not be able to afford or obtain them on their own. These measures work hand-in-hand with economic development efforts to help create places where people want to live through improved access to natural resources, improved housing stocking and removal of community blight.

Specific Objectives:

1. The Development Authority has the technical capacity to develop and oversee large-scale projects for rural communities that lack such resources and to serve as a regional resource for land use planning. The Authority will use those resources to partner with communities on the implementation of a variety of state and federal programs such as Local Waterfront Revitalization Plans, Brownfield Opportunity Area grants and local municipal efficiency recommendations that communities choose to implement. Additionally, the Authority will serve as a regional resource for Smart Growth principles and land use planning and compatibility in those communities that do not have such resources.
2. The Development Authority will continue to partner with other economic development agencies on state and federal programs to attract and/or retain businesses in the region and to assist with redevelopment projects.
3. The Development Authority will work with municipalities to help identify and apply for funding to improve the region's existing housing stock. While the Authority has been a key partner in the construction of much new housing to accommodate Fort Drum growth over the last two decades, the focus now will be on improving or repurposing the existing, aging housing stock.

Planning and Project Management

The Development Authority has built a reputation for successful community development project management through efforts like the Lyons Falls Brownfield Opportunity Area implementation plan, and in the planning arena through coordination of the Fort Drum Joint Land Use Study. The Authority's strength lies in its ability to manage large-scale projects for communities that do not have the resources to undertake these projects on their own. Working in partnership with communities, Authority staff offer their capabilities and technical expertise to both seek funding and guide project implementation, resources small rural communities typically do not have.

Over the next ten years, the Development Authority will continue to assist communities in grant-seeking to help finance large-scale community development projects, as well as work with communities to implement those projects. The Authority will become a regional resource for land use planning, assisting communities seeking guidance on good planning principles. Additionally, as more communities explore opportunities for municipal efficiency, the Authority can assist implementing recommendations.

1 – 5 Year Goals

1. The Development Authority will work with communities that choose to implement the recommendations made in the Fort Drum Joint Land Use Study.
2. The Development Authority will develop a website focused on land use compatibility and zoning that can serve as a regional resource for North Country communities.
3. The Development Authority will seek opportunities to partner with communities on funding and implementing large-scale projects such as Local Waterfront Revitalization and Brownfield Opportunity Area projects.
4. The Development Authority will assist communities when requested with the implementation of recommendations made in municipal efficiency studies.

5 - 10 Year Goals

1. Work with local, state and federal partners to help facilitate the current and future operational missions of Fort Drum.

Development Authority Investment Requirements

To meet these planned goals, the Development Authority will not need specific new capabilities and investments.

Economic Development Partnerships

The Development Authority currently supports regional economic development in partnership with local Industrial Development Agencies and other organizations. Specifically, the Authority manages loan funds and marketing/promotion programs to attract investment to the region.

In the future, the Development Authority will continue to implement state and federal programs to assist local communities and utilize its loan funds and promotional programs to attract and retain businesses, as well as to enable redevelopment projects.

1 – 5 Year Goals

- | |
|--|
| 1. The Development Authority will work with economic development partners to increase the visibility of the region by marketing to target industries. |
| 2. The Development Authority will identify niches in the region, whereby the Authority can apply for state or federal funds to implement needed economic development programs. |

5 - 10 Year Goals

- | |
|--|
| 1. The Development Authority will continue to capitalize grant/loan funds to grow existing businesses. |
| 2. The Development Authority will continue to evaluate workforce and targeted industries. |

Development Authority Investment Requirements

To meet these planned goals, the Development Authority will not need specific new capabilities or investments in the short-term, however, new capabilities and investments may be necessary in the long-term.

Housing Development

The Development Authority administers several successful housing programs that have helped develop much-needed housing in the region, both market- and low-income housing. While new housing was constructed to meet immediate needs created by the previous expansion of Fort Drum troops, housing inventory is now adequate and the focus is on improving the condition of existing housing stock throughout the North Country. Much of the housing inventory is aging and owners and communities do not have the financial resources to undertake rehabilitation projects on their own.

Over the next ten years, the Development Authority will work with municipalities to help identify and apply for funding to improve their existing housing stock. New York State supports these programs and, as demand increases, the supply of construction contractors to do the work will become constrained.

1 – 5 Year Goals

- | |
|---|
| 1. The Development Authority will create a pilot acquisition/rehabilitation partnership program in Watertown through the Community Rental Housing Program that can be replicated throughout the tri-county region. Under this program the Authority will acquire impoverished homes, and work with a community partner to rehabilitate and sell them. |
| 2. The Development Authority will work with municipalities to identify and apply for funding to improve or repurpose existing housing stock. |
| 3. The Development Authority will build a pool of contractors to work on regional housing rehabilitation projects and will explore potential incentives to encourage participation in the pool. |
| 4. The Development Authority will replicate the acquisition/rehabilitation program in other communities across the North Country. |

5 - 10 Year Goals

- | |
|--|
| 1. The Development Authority will work with municipalities to identify opportunities to improve their housing stock. |
|--|

Development Authority Investment Requirements

To meet these planned goals, the Development Authority will need specific new capabilities and investments:

- The Authority will explore contracting for services in different geographic locations to provide support to facilitate the community housing programs.

Strategic Initiative 4

Infrastructure for Agriculture and Agri-Business

The Development Authority has a shared responsibility for fostering economic development in the region, in partnership with local economic development agencies and agricultural support agencies. Over the next ten years, one area that appears promising is agriculture. The sector is a strong contributor to regional economies and is important to state economic development plans. The agricultural industry has the potential to grow faster than manufacturing or other regional industries, but only if entrepreneurs and investors can be offered a business and informational infrastructure to support growth.

While the dairy industry will continue to play an important role in the North Country economy, future efforts will need to also focus on the incorporation of value-added agriculture. This shift will require a completely different skill set, with a focus on food production, marketing and distribution.

Specific Objectives:

1. The Development Authority will continue to operate its existing agriculture loan funds to support entrepreneurs in the industry. Loan funds will be supplemented with additional grant and loan funds as they become available, to foster growth.
2. The Authority will explore the development of value chain infrastructure to support the growth of value-added and differentiated food production, for both local consumption and export to regional markets. This is expected to include the promotion of food-processing capacity, as well as training and research into marketing and distribution of local agricultural products. This new approach to agriculture needs very different skills and different inputs and information than the traditional production of commodity milk and grains.

Agriculture Loan Funds

The Development Authority currently operates loan funds to help finance value-added business activities in agriculture. The funds are available to both entrepreneurs for start-up activities or for existing businesses to finance growth. These funds are established in conjunction with a larger set of loan funds for more general business applications that are managed by local economic development agencies including industrial development agencies and sometimes chambers of commerce.

Over the next ten years, the Authority will continue to operate these funds but will also seek to expand funding to meet more needs in the agriculture industry. The Authority will also seek to assist agriculture projects and developers as part of the strategic goal of offering grant management assistance to municipalities. This will encourage partner agencies in the region to seek additional grant funding to support these initiatives.

1 – 5 Year Goals

1. The Development Authority will continue to administer the existing loan programs and look for opportunities to expand these and to further integrate them with similar programs on behalf of partners in the region.
2. The Development Authority will begin collecting information on available private, state, and federal grants to support regional economic development and particularly agriculture, and incorporate this information into a guide on grant availability, making this information available to municipalities wishing to expand their agriculture business footprint.

5 - 10 Year Goals

1. The Development Authority will continue to operate loan and possibly grant funds in support of agriculture, in partnership with other interested agencies.
2. The Development Authority will seek opportunities to participate with relevant partners in the development of broader regional strategies to promote the agricultural industry, and particularly value-added production, in a coordinated fashion. This may include working with the higher education community to provide training in marketing approaches that are important to value-added producers of differentiated agricultural products but which are seldom used by commodity producers.

Development Authority Investment Requirements

To meet these planned goals, the Development Authority will need specific new capabilities and investments:

- Detailed understanding of the evolving nature of value-added agricultural markets and competitive strategies for tapping those markets.
- A forum for coordinating with regional partners and proposing combined approaches.

Value Chain Infrastructure for Agriculture

The Development Authority has relatively little direct relationship with regional agriculture beyond operating several loan funds and participating in promotional efforts. The Development Authority, like the Regional Economic Development Council and other local agencies, has identified agriculture as being a promising opportunity for economic and community development in our region, but currently no agency has taken a comprehensive look at basic organizational infrastructure required to develop the agricultural industry beyond its current commodity-production model.

Over the next ten years, the Development Authority will work with partners to study the evolution of agriculture regionally and nationally and explore opportunities to fill gaps in required skills, physical and organizational infrastructure, and to help local entrepreneurs find markets and partners.

1 – 5 Year Goals

- | |
|---|
| 1. The Development Authority will work with other partners to identify gaps in the value chain for the production and sale of value-added agricultural products and to develop approaches for filling those gaps, including the need for food-processing plants, distribution channels, and the treatment of waste. |
| 2. The Development Authority will work with other partners to develop plans to attract and support value-added agricultural entrepreneurs in the region. This approach must recognize the difference between value-added and commodity agricultural production. |

5 - 10 Year Goals

- | |
|---|
| 1. The Development Authority will continue to work with partners to fill gaps in a growing value-added industry that has very different needs from current models. |
| 2. The Development Authority will work with partners to leverage successful value-added ventures in promotional efforts to attract more entrepreneurs to the region and the industry. |

Development Authority Investment Requirements

To meet these planned goals, the Development Authority will need specific new capabilities and investments:

- Detailed understanding of the evolving nature of value-added agricultural markets and competitive strategies for tapping those markets.
- A forum for coordinating with regional partners and proposing combined approaches.

Strategic Initiative 5 Infrastructure for Tourism

The Development Authority has a shared responsibility for fostering economic development in the region, in partnership with local economic development agencies, and one of the areas that has been identified by the Regional Economic Development Council and others as promising over the next ten years is tourism. The tourism sector is already a strong contributor to the regional economy and is a key element in the region's economic development plan. The growth potential in tourism is significant, but only if entrepreneurs and investors can be offered a business and informational infrastructure to support growth.

The Authority administers the North Country Transformational Community Tourism Revolving Loan Fund to support the development and enhancement of tourism-related facilities throughout the region. The fund has resulted in several significant, successful tourism developments throughout the region that can serve as a model for future lodging and attraction development.

Specific Objectives:

1. The Development Authority will continue to operate its existing tourism loan funds to support entrepreneurs and developers. The loan funds will be supplemented with additional grant and loan funds as they become available to foster growth in the regional tourism industry.

2. The Development Authority will seek opportunities to expand its support of tourism in the region, including the inclusion of potential tourism needs in its physical and informational/organizational infrastructure plans, and working with partners to identify tourism sector needs and seek solutions.

Value Chain Infrastructure for Tourism

The Development Authority has developed a growing relationship with regional tourism through the operation of its tourism loan funds and through strategic promotion efforts of those funds with regional tourism agencies. The Development Authority, like the North Country Regional Economic Development Council and other local agencies, has identified tourism as a promising opportunity for economic and community development in the region, but, beyond sporadic, localized efforts, no agency has taken a comprehensive look at basic organizational or corporate infrastructure required to develop the tourism industry beyond its current outdoor recreational model.

Over the next ten years, the Development Authority will study the evolution of tourism regionally and nationally and explore opportunities to fill gaps in required skills, physical and organizational infrastructure, and to help local entrepreneurs find markets and partners. A focus of efforts will be the development of quality lodging, as the initial critical component to any tourism strategy.

1 – 5 Year Goals

- | |
|--|
| 1. The Development Authority will work with other partners to identify gaps in the value chain for the development and expansion of tourism venues in the region. |
| 2. The Development Authority will work with other partners to develop a lodging physical infrastructure model, and the tools developers will need to implement it. |

5 - 10 Year Goals

- | |
|--|
| 1. The Development Authority will continue to work with partners to fill gaps in a growing tourism industry that may have very different needs from the region's current model. |
| 2. The Development Authority will work with partners to leverage successful tourism ventures to attract more entrepreneurs to the region and the industry, and to leverage tourism investments to improve the community and attract/retain younger people in the region. |

Development Authority Investment Requirements

To meet these planned goals, the Development Authority will need specific new capabilities and investments:

- Detailed understanding of the evolving nature of tourism markets and lodging and competitive strategies for tapping those markets.
- A forum for coordinating with regional partners and proposing combined approaches.

Strategic Initiative 6

Establishing Criteria for the Authority's Outreach/Service Area

The Authority has statutory authorization to enter into contracts with municipal, state and federal governments. This authorization does not have a regional restriction and in practice, the Authority has administered loan funds and programs on behalf of the federal government and New York State which have included many counties beyond the tri-county region:

- The Authority's original telecommunications network connected the North Country to Syracuse (Onondaga County) through Oswego County. In addition, the development of the Fort Drum and ACTION telemedicine networks, BOCES networks, the North Country Library System network, and the regional public safety network have reached beyond the three-county region. The Authority's ever-expanding telecommunications network covers multiple counties and links the North Country to Syracuse, Utica, Albany, and New York City.
- The Development Authority administers several multi-county loan funds, including the Value-Added Agriculture Loan Fund, the Regional Development Loan Fund, and the North Country Transformational Community Tourism Loan Fund. The New York Power Authority selected the Authority to administer the \$10 million North Country Economic Development Fund. The Authority also manages the finances and administers loan funds for the seven-county North Country Alliance.
- The Development Authority is providing GIS services to municipalities in the counties of Oswego, Franklin and Hamilton, in addition to Jefferson, Lewis and St. Lawrence.
- The Authority was selected to perform grant administration and technical services for the federal Northern Regional Border Commission, which includes Franklin, Lewis, St. Lawrence and Jefferson counties.

The success and reputation of the Authority continues to generate requests for services and assistance from municipalities throughout the region and referrals from various state and federal agencies. While the Authority has been responsive to these requests, moving forward the organization will maintain its structured approach to requests for services.

In evaluating these requests, the Authority will use the following criteria:

- The Authority is invited to participate, or provide services, by municipal, state, or federal government officials;
- The provision of services will benefit the region and the Authority and;
- The provision of services beyond the tri-county region will not require Authority financial resources and will be externally revenue-supported.

Outreach Service Area

The Development Authority was created to serve a very specific geographic area within New York State, defined as Jefferson, Lewis, and St. Lawrence counties. Since the organization was founded, however, the Authority has encountered a number of opportunities to serve outside that region, including requests from federal and state government agencies to administer programs on their behalf. These opportunities are typically either the offering of existing/standard Authority services to communities in proximity to the original region, or, in the case of telecommunications, to provide services across a very broad area of the state that result in economies of scale and improved services within the original footprint.

Over the next ten years, the Authority will use the criteria described in this initiative to evaluate emerging opportunities outside the currently-served region and to act accordingly. The Authority will not specifically seek out opportunities to serve a broader geographic space but will be responsive to emerging possibilities.

1 – 5 Year Goals

1. The Development Authority will respond to emerging opportunities using the criteria in this plan.
--

5 - 10 Year Goals

1. The Development Authority will continue to assess the effectiveness of the published criteria and may make changes if they will result in improved service.
--

Development Authority Investment Requirements

To meet these planned goals, the Development Authority will need specific new capabilities and investments:

- Enhanced capacities to support a larger base of clients in a larger region of service. This additional capacity is expected to be funded by enhanced revenue associated with specific regional expansion opportunities.
- Enhanced awareness of opportunities/needs beyond the current service area.

Adopted by Development Authority Board of Directors March 28, 2018