

MARK Project, Inc.

Revitalizing the Esopus/Delaware Region: A Regional Economic Development Strategy for the Central Catskills



Funded in part through the state's Local Waterfront Revitalization Program, this project was a collaboration between seven municipalities, the MARK Project, and the Catskill Center for Conservation and Development to prepare a regional economic development and community revitalization plan. E.M. Pemrick and Company and Community Planning & Environmental Associates were retained to assist in the development of the plan, which aimed to capitalize on the region's natural, scenic, agricultural and recreational assets.

The scope of work for the project included:

- a review of more than 50 plans and studies completed in the central Catskills region over the last 15-20 years, in an effort to identify common issues and opportunities;
- surveys of local businesses and second homeowners;
- the development of a regional profile and inventory of environmental, recreational, cultural, and historic resources and land use characteristics;

- preparation of a regional economic and market analysis with a focus on the tourism industry; and
- GIS mapping to highlight broadband service areas, waterfront access points, public and preserved lands, tourism attractions, and other characteristics.

In accordance with a comprehensive public participation plan, small group meetings were held to discuss goals and possible actions in each of the seven communities. The project team also facilitated an economic revitalization conference with various stakeholders, including municipal leaders and representatives of regional agencies and organizations. The objectives of the conference were to share information about existing economic development, waterfront revitalization, and community improvement initiatives in the region, and discuss how participants could more effectively coordinate programming and market available resources to address regional economic development needs.

The public participation process helped to reaffirm the direction economic development should take and prioritize actions. The outcome of the project is a detailed action plan for sustainable economic development that promotes village, hamlet and Main Street revitalization and enhanced access to waterways while protecting significant scenic and natural resources.

