INTERGOVERNMENTAL COLLABORATION IN ULSTER COUNTY

Shared Municipal Services Feasibility Study for Ulster County

JULY 2010

OPTIONS FOR SHARED PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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Also Reference Separate Reports :

- Summary Report
- Identifying Opportunities for Highway Service Cooperation
- Shared Municipal Services Study Report on Justice Courts
- An Action Plan for Moving Forward

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PATTERN FOR PROGRESS

Ulster County Shared Municipal Services Incentive Project

Introduction

The purpose of this analysis is to assess the potential for establishing shared planning and economic development services among the municipalities participating in the Ulster County Shared Municipal Services Incentive (SMSI) project.

Drawing upon the data gathering performed by SUNY New Paltz's CRREO, the analysis establishes the "as is" conditions regarding the delivery of planning and economic development services in Ulster County area through compiling an inventory of existing plans, strategies and programs of the county and local governments, including both economic development and community planning efforts. This effort will identify those communities with comprehensive plans and economic development strategies in place. To the extent possible, it will also identify those communities with specialized plans in place (e.g., waterfront development plans, corridor plans, Generic Environmental Impact Statements for particular sites, etc.)

"As Is" Conditions

The analysis of "as is" conditions summarizes the staffing in planning and economic development for each participating government, including number of professional positions devoted to economic development and/or planning. This summary also indicates the extent to which each of the jurisdictions uses professional consultants to perform economic development and/or planning tasks.

The Ulster County Planning Board

According to the Charter for Ulster County that was adopted in 2007:

> [Except] as may otherwise be provided in this Charter, the County Director of Planning and Planning Board shall have all the powers and perform all the duties conferred and/or imposed in the Charter, state law or the County Administrative Code upon a county director of planning or a county planning board. The Director of Planning and/or the County Planning Board shall perform such other and related duties as required by the County Executive or County Legislature. These powers shall include, but not be limited to:
>
> A. Advising the County Executive, County Legislature, County departments, and other agencies with respect to any matter relating to the development or redevelopment of the County on which an opinion is requested or upon which the Director of Planning deems it advisable to report;
> B. Preparing and maintaining a comprehensive plan and annual planning program for the County as set forth in § C-52 of this article and attendant provisions of the Administrative Code;
> C. Assisting in the preparation of a capital improvement program as may be set forth in this Charter and attendant provisions of the Administrative Code;
> D. Exercising the powers of review and approval over land use pursuant to § C-51 of this article and attendant provisions of the Administrative Code;
> E. Making available, within constraints of available resources, the professional staff of the Department of Planning for advice regarding planning to the City of Kingston and the towns and villages within the County;

F. Maintaining basic data on the County's population, land use, housing, environmental status, human and natural resources and other such matters and performing studies, analysis, plans and recommendations as may be necessary in the exercise of the powers and performance of the duties set forth in this article; and

G. Acting as host board with regard to the Ulster County Transportation Council.

Source: Charter of Ulster County, § C-47, 2007.

Thus, the Planning Board has been constituted as the planning arm for County government, with the ability (as resources permit) to provide technical planning assistance to the municipalities located within the County. The staff for the Planning Board consists of nine positions:

- Director
- Deputy Director, Economic Development
- Deputy Director
- Principal Planner
- Principal Transportation Planner
- Senior Planner
- Transportation Planner
- Planner
- Administrative Assistant

Ulster County Development Corporation and Ulster County Industrial Development Corporation

According to its website, the Ulster County Development Corporation (UCDC) is a non-profit 501(c)3 created in accordance with New York State law. Its mission is to promote quality jobs and business in Ulster County. It is funded through private fundraising, grants, and contracts with Ulster County and the Ulster County Industrial Development Agency. UCDC currently has five staff positions:

- Executive Director
- Marketing and Business Development Director
- Project Manager & Director of Business Retention
- Comptroller
- Office Manager

UCDC administers UCIDA projects pursuant to a contract between the two. Under this contract, the President of UCDC is named the Chief Executive Officer of UCIDA. UCDC staff assist applicants and review applications. The UCIDA CFO is responsible for the financial administration of UCIDA projects. Applications for the programs are reviewed for approval and decided upon by the UCIDA board, which is a 7-member board appointed by the Ulster County Legislature and separate from the UCDC board.

(Source: www.ulsterny.com)

The mission of the Ulster County Industrial Development Agency is to advance the job opportunities, general prosperity, and long-term economic vitality of Ulster County residents by targeting assistance to foster the creation and attraction of new business and the retention and expansion of existing business. Targeted businesses are anticipated to be good corporate citizens, involved in the community and excellent employers offering comprehensive benefit packages. Working in partnership with the Ulster County Office of Planning, the Ulster County Development Corporation and the Ulster County Chamber of Commerce we offer a variety of incentive based tools to help cultivate success.

UCIDA offers taxable and tax-exempt bonding for business expansion and relocation. UCIDA can also offer real property tax abatements, mortgage recording tax abatements and sales tax abatement during construction. (Source: http://www.ulstercountyida.com)

Staffing for the UCIDA is provided by the Ulster County Development Corporation.

The current configuration of economic development services in Ulster County may be the most common structure used in the United States. The development agency itself is configured as a private-not-for-profit corporation that contracts with the County to provide economic development services. An ancillary organization to UCDC is the Ulster County Industrial Development Agency, a public benefit corporation that can issue industrial revenue bonds to finance private-sector investments. The IDA can also take title to private properties and lease them back to the previous owners, enabling the properties to become tax-exempt for a period of time. Ulster County also has an Empire Zone program, one of New York State's most powerful tax incentive programs to support business expansion and/or relocation. The entire program has been allowed to expire by the New York State legislature and its eventual fate in unknown at this time

Planning and Economic Development among the Participating Towns

Planning

Town planning in Ulster County is still largely managed on a volunteer basis. As shown in Table 1 below, only one of the participating towns (Saugerties) maintains a full-time professional planner. All other towns rely upon a combination of clerical support and various consultants to support the operations and deliberations of their planning boards and zoning boards of appeals.

Town	Board	Last Update of Comprehensive Plan	Last Update of Zoning Code	Staffing	Consultants
Denning	Planning Bd.	2007	1990		
	Zoning Bd. Appeals				
Gardiner	Planning Bd.	2004	2008	1 Part-time secretary	Yes
	Zoning Bd. Appeals			1 Part-time secretary	
Hardenburgh	Planning Bd.	None	1992	None	No
	Zoning Bd. Appeals				
Hurley	Planning Bd.	2006?	1983		
	Zoning Bd. Appeals				
Marbletown	Planning Bd.	2005	1989	1 Part-time volunteer (shared with zoning)	Retain a planner, attorney, and engineer (shared with zoning)
	Zoning Bd. Appeals			1 Part-time volunteer (shared with planning)	Retain a planner, attorney, and engineer (shared with planning)
Marlborough	Planning Bd.	2002	Ongoing	1 Full time secretary	Planning Consultants: Behan Associates Engineers: Dennis Larios,P.E. McCoey, Hauser, & Edsall, P.E; Attorneys: Vanderwater & Vanderwater
	Zoning Bd. Appeals			1 Part time secretary.	
New Paltz	Planning Bd.	Ongoing	2008	20hrs/week secretary shared with zoning. (2/3 planning, 1/3 zoning)	Town Engineer, Attorney, use traffic, environmental, and fiscal consultants on a case by case basis.
	Zoning Bd. Appeals			20hrs/week	Town Attorney

Table 1. Planning & Zoning Efforts in Participating Towns					
Town	Board	Last Update of Compre-hensive Plan	Last Update of Zoning Code	Staffing	Consultants
				secretary shared with planning. (2/3 planning, 1/3 zoning)	always present at meetings.
Rosendale	Planning Bd.	2007	Ongoing	1 Part Time	1 consultant and 1 attorney possibly shared with zoning.
	Zoning Bd. Appeals			1 Part Time	Occasionally borrow planning board consultant/attorney.
Saugerties	Planning Bd.	?	2008	Town Planner	
	Zoning Bd. Appeals			"	
Shawangunk	Planning Bd.	2003	2007?	1 Part-time secretary.	Tim Miller Associates, Rich Hoyt (attorney), Brinnier & Larios (engineer)
	Zoning Bd. Appeals			1 Part-time secretary	If need be Richard Hoyt, Attorney.
Ulster	Planning Bd.	2007		1 Secretary (Shared with Zoning)	Planning consultant: Alan Sorenson
	Zoning Bd. Appeals			1 Secretary (Shared with Planning)	None
Wawarsing	Planning Bd.	2006	2008	None	1 Engineer, 1 Attorney (Shared with zoning)
	Zoning Bd. Appeals			1 Part-time secretary	1 Attorney shared with planning.

Economic Development

In the area of economic development, virtually every participating town has an economic development committee consisting of volunteers. The Town of Wawarsing is currently sharing the Village of Ellenville's economic development staff position, contributing $5,000 annually to support the effort. At the same time, two of the participating towns maintain revolving loan funds to support economic development:

Town of New Paltz Revolving Loan Fund: Provides financial assistance to businesses within the boundaries of the Town of New Paltz. Loans are available for variable amounts and terms depending on the project needs. The interest rate is four percent (4%). The interest rate is subject to change, although it will always be below prime. Loans must help create and/or retain jobs. The maximum loan amount is one-half (1/2) of available capital in the fund.

Contact: Toni Hokanson, Town Supervisor (845) 255-0604

Town of Shawangunk Revolving Loan Fund: Provides financial assistance to businesses within the boundaries of the Town of Shawangunk. Loans are available for a variable percentage of the total project based on project needs. The interest rate is four (4) points below the prime rate with a minimum of four percent (4%). Loans must help create and/or retain jobs.

Contact: John Valk, Town Supervisor, (845) 895- 2900

(Source: www.ulsterny.com)

The Ulster County Development Corporation (UCDC) provides assistance to companies to match them to the municipal revolving loan funds for which they may be eligible. In addition, UCDC administers the Town of Esopus Revolving Loan Fund and, in the past, has—based upon resolutions from the respective town boards—reviewed applications to the funds in the towns of New Paltz and Lloyd (which is not a participant in this study) prior to the applications being submitted to the local loan committees for consideration. All other local revolving loan funds are administered at the town or village level.

Greater Wawarsing Local Development Corporation

In partnership with the Village of Ellenville, the Town of Wawarsing has created the Greater Wawarsing Local Development Corporation (GWLDC). According to its incorporation papers, the GWLDC's mission is "to relieve and reduce unemployment, to promote and to provide for addition and maximum employment to better and to maintain job opportunities, to instruct or train individuals to improve or to develop their capabilities for jobs, to carry on scientific research for the purpose of aiding the Town of Wawarsing by attracting industry to the community or area or by encouraging the development of or retention of an industry in the township and to lessen the burdens of government and to act in the public interest."

The Corporation's website lists the following services it plans to provide:

   - We'll work with local lenders to try and fit business loan applicants with the right lending program.

   - We are also a Community Business Lending Resource - and that includes our ability to facilitate USDA Loan Guarantees for Business & Industry Loans.

(Source: greaterwawarsing.org/gwldcservices.aspx)

It is anticipated the seed money for the Corporation will come from "defederalized" money in the Town's HUD Revolving Loan Fund. Note: funding provided by HUD for a revolving loan fund is highly

restricted in its uses until the money is lent out and then repaid to the fund by borrowers. The repaid money is no longer considered federal funds and can then be used by the municipality for a wide variety economic-development uses. Funding the operations of the Corporation is one example of such uses.

Planning and Economic Development for the City of Kingston

As the County seat and Ulster County's only city, Kingston maintains much more extensive operations in both planning and economic development.

Office of Planning

According to the City of Kingston website, the Planning Office has main responsibilities in three areas:

> Kingston Planning Board – Regular meetings are held once a month, typically on the second Monday evening, with exceptions made for holidays. Special meetings are held as needed, at the call of the Chairman. The Board undertakes reviews of site plans, subdivisions, special permits, curb cut requests, rezoning applications for both map changes and text amendments, SEQR reviews and zoning variance recommendations upon the request of the ZEO. As staff to the Planning Board our primary responsibilities are to meet with applicants and/or their designated representative to discuss the process and information needed to make submissions. We provide individuals with technical assistance in matters regarding planning, zoning and the SEQR laws. Detail reviews of plans are completed and site inspections made to assist the Board with the decision making process. Follow-up meetings and inspections are completed with Building Officials and Planning staff to insure compliance with approved plans.

> Surplus City Owned Property and Paper Street Sales – Each year the City forecloses on properties for non-payment of taxes. At least one major sale is administered per year, with others scheduled as needed, or on first come first serve basis. In addition to coordinating all sales, the Planning Department is responsible for handling payments, bid deposits, transfers, deed filings and follow-up on activity occurring for renovation/rehabilitation/new construction at each site. Paper streets are also sold according to the Local Laws, as requested by adjacent land owners. This process involves coordination of all adjacent property owners being offered a proportionate share based on their existing parcels.

> (Source: http://www.ci.kingston.ny.us/content/76/78/default.aspx#Planning)

The City's 2009 Budget lists four staff full-time positions for the Planning Office:

- City Planner
- Junior Planning Aide
- Senior Clerk
- Assistant Planner

Office of Economic Development

The City's Office of Economic Development is charged with retaining businesses and tax base in the City as well as attracting new investment and jobs to the City. It promotes the city-owned Kingston Business Park and the Kingston/Ulster Empire Zone (EZ). The EZ program is described below.

> The Kingston/Ulster EZ was initially designated July 27, 1994 and through several boundary revisions now has subzones in portions of the City of Kingston and the Towns of Ulster, Saugerties and Wawarsing.

> The purpose of the Empire Zone is to create and retain jobs and induce investment in properties within the Zone. Consequently, the EZ has targeted firms looking to expand their operations, at businesses looking to provide services and assistance to residents within the zone, and at business start-ups.

> The EZ financial and tax incentives are also intended to make sure that businesses from other states and overseas consider Ulster County as a candidate for their relocation or expansion plans, take another and deeper look at the assets that Kingston/Ulster has to offer, and at locations within the zone as an optimal site for their operations.

> (Source: www.kingstonez.com)

The City of Kingston also maintains a revolving loan fund administered by the Office of Community Development (which also administers the City's HUD-sponsored residential rehabilitation loan program). According to the UCDC website, "the City's Revolving Loan Funds provide financial assistance to businesses within the boundaries of the City of Kingston, to encourage the creation and retention of jobs. The Kingston Local Development Corp. (KLDC) administers the Kingston Revolving Loan Fund and Community Development Revolving Loan Fund, a Section 108 Loan Guarantee Program, an SBA 7A program through the National Development Council and has access to other economic development programs, for example the USDA.

The City's 2009 Budget lists two staff full-time positions for the Economic Development Office:

- Director
- Program Coordinator (Empire Zone)

Summary

The review above suggests there is substantial economic development *capacity* in the County. This is consistent with the results of the recent *Ulster Tomorrow* economic development plan. However, the final report for *Ulster Tomorrow* described economic development services in the county as highly fragmented and often difficult to access:

> The current economic development services delivery infrastructure consists of myriad of [sic] service providers and functions. **Analysis revealed a complex structure with no recognizable**

standardized process (see Figure 2). A user may enter the system at any number of points, seeking advice from any number of agencies. Information may or may not be shared by agencies, resulting in duplication of efforts, repeated processes, and confusion.

<div align="right">Ulster Tomorrow, Technical Report, page 37.</div>

Bringing these resources together in a more coordinated, easily accessible structure is a central focus of the recommendations provided in this report.

Estimates of Expenditures & Revenues

Table 2 provides estimates of spending for planning for Ulster County and each of the participating municipalities using the most budget information. In most cases this is the 2008 actual budget. (The Town of Wawarsing figures are for the 2009 adopted budget and the County figures are for the 2008 revised budget.)

The table summarizes the budget for planning and zoning. It shows expenditures and revenues and net spending (expenditures minus revenues) for all three functions.   The far right-hand column shows expenditures per capita for planning and zoning combined.   At the bottom of the table is found a summary of total spending by all 12 towns participating in this study.

For each municipality listed in Table 2, expenditures are broken down into three categories: "personal services," " outside services" and "other."   Personal services expenditures represent the full-time and part-time staff on the municipalities' payrolls.   The outside services category includes municipalities' spending on professional consulting services (e.g., planners, engineers, etc.) "Other" includes all other planning and zoning spending by each municipality. Note: given the way budgets are compiled and reported by the municipalities, there are possibilities for errors in these data. For example, some towns reported stipends for planning or zoning board members in clearly identified line items. In such cases, these items were included in the "other" category. Some towns did not report such stipends, but did have line items for unspecified contractual services that may include the stipends. Thus, the data may not reflect actual spending by category.   However, the amount in question amounts to a small percentage of each budget and therefore are not likely to substantially change the results of this analysis. Note also that these figures can be expected to vary from year to year. Therefore, the data in Table 2 is best used to illustrate the extent and nature of spending for planning and zoning services _in general_ and not as a precise final determination of exact spending levels.

Note also that the population figures in Table 2 are for the town outside the village for New Paltz, Saugerties and Wawarsing.

 Again, in every case, these figures should be treated as approximate estimates of spending in each of the municipalities. When we reviewed the budgets to compile the table, there were indications that the methodologies used by the towns to compile their budgets varied somewhat.   For example, some municipalities included spending on supplies and equipment in the budget categories, others did not. It

is not clear if these variations reflected actual differences in spending or simply different means for categorizing expenditures in the overall budget.

That being said, the table shows substantial variation in spending per capita among the municipalities. Other than the Town of New Paltz, the City of Kingston has much higher spending per capita than any of the towns, reflecting the much greater scale and density of the City. In total, in 2008, the Towns spent $9.57 per capita for planning and zoning.

As Table 2 indicates, outside of the City of Kingston and Town of New Paltz, no municipality spent more than $150,000 on planning and zoning. Indeed, as described above, only one of the participating towns (Saugerties) maintains a full-time professional planner, with all other towns relying upon a combination of clerical support and various consultants. Yet there was more than $2.4 million spent on planning and zoning among the participating governments, including $875,000 among the twelve towns, $291,000 by the City of Kingston and $1.6 million by the County. As illustrated in Table 3 below, this amount of spending could support a significant level of professional staffing.

Table 2. Expenditures and Revenues by Municipality					Per Capita Expenditures
	Population2008	Total Planning & Zoning	Planning	Zoning	Planning & Zoning
Kingston City	22,441				
Expenses		291,952	288,172	3,780	13.01
Personal Services		242,555	241,175	1,380	
Outside Services		28,467	28,467		
Other		20,930	18,530	2,400	
Revenues		31,500	30,000	1,500	
Net		(260,452)	(258,172)	(2,280)	11.61
Denning	518				
Expenses		1,500	1,500	-	2.90
Personal Services					
Outside Services			1,500		
Other					
Revenues		-	-	-	
Net		(1,500)	(1,500)	-	2.90
Gardiner	5,729				
Expenses		35,100	33,267	1,833	6.13
Personal Services		2,671	2,212	459	
Outside Services		26,338	26,131	207	
Other		6,091	4,924	1,167	
Revenues		9,650	8,650	1,000	
Net		(25,450)	(24,617)	(833)	4.44

Table 2. Expenditures and Revenues by Municipality					Per Capita Expenditures
	Population2008	Total Planning & Zoning	Planning	Zoning	Planning & Zoning
Hardenburgh	216				
Expenses		2,250	1,125	1,125	10.42
Personal Services		250	125	125	
Outside Services		2,000	1,000	1,000	
Other					
Revenues		100	100	-	
Net		(2,150)	(1,025)	(1,125)	9.95
Hurley	6,512				
Expenses		35,600	31,500	4,100	5.47
Personal Services		5,100	3,500	1,600	
Outside Services		30,500	28,000	2,500	
Other		-			
Revenues		5,000	4,500	500	
Net		(30,600)	(27,000)	(3,600)	4.70
Marbletown	6,009				
Expenses		24,290	16,240	8,050	4.04
Personal Services		9,440	4,240	5,200	
Outside Services		14,850	12,000	2,850	
Other		-			
Revenues		18,000	12,000	6,000	
Net		(6,290)	(4,240)	(2,050)	1.05
Marlborough	8,297				
Expenses					10.03

Table 2. Expenditures and Revenues by Municipality					Per Capita Expenditures
	Population2008	Total Planning & Zoning	Planning	Zoning	Planning & Zoning
		83,227	71,727	11,500	
Personal Services		56,277	47,477	8,800	
Outside Services		26,950	24,250	2,700	
Other		-	-		
Revenues		93,000	23,000	70,000	
Net		9,773	(48,727)	58,500	1.18
New Paltz	7,196				
Expenses		167,180	155,338	11,842	23.23
Personal Services		7,695	6,459	1,236	
Outside Services		158,670	148,879	9,791	
Other			-		
Revenues		85,520	84,820	700	
Net		(81,660)	(70,518)	(11,142)	11.35
Rosendale	6,244				
Expenses		46,780	39,180	7,600	7.49
Personal Services		9,280	6,680	2,600	
Outside Services		37,500	32,500	5,000	
Other		-	-	-	
Revenues		14,235	13,500	735	
Net		(32,545)	(25,680)	(6,865)	5.21
Saugerties	15,750				
Expenses		138,585	129,485	9,100	8.80

| Table 2. Expenditures and Revenues by Municipality | | | | | Per Capita Expenditures |
	Population2008	Total Planning & Zoning	Planning	Zoning	Planning & Zoning
Personal Services		42,600	42,600		
Outside Services		58,995	56,495	2,500	
Other		36,990	30,390	6,600	
Revenues		50,900	50,000	900	
Net		(87,685)	(79,485)	(8,200)	5.57
Shawangunk	12,712				
Expenses		113,221	91,721	21,500	8.91
Personal Services		43,771	27,271	16,500	
Outside Services		69,450	64,450	5,000	
Other		-	-	-	
Revenues		40,000	35,000	5,000	
Net		(73,221)	(56,721)	(16,500)	5.76
Ulster	12,661				
Expenses		135,090	58,800	76,290	10.67
Personal Services		74,640	2,000	72,640	
Outside Services		48,000	48,000		
Other		12,450	8,800	3,650	
Revenues		33,000	30,000	3,000	
Net		(102,090)	(28,800)	(73,290)	8.06
Wawarsing*	9,814				
Expenses		89,446	75,711	13,735	9.11
Personal					

Table 2. Expenditures and Revenues by Municipality					
					Per Capita Expenditures
	Population2008	Total Planning & Zoning	Planning	Zoning	Planning & Zoning
Services		32,446	24,711	7,735	
Outside Services		55,000	50,000	5,000	
Other		2,000	1,000	1,000	
Revenues		67,500	7,500	60,000	
Net		(21,946)	(68,211)	46,265	2.24
County**					
Expenses		1,692,935	1,692,935		
Personal Services		511,384	511,384		
Outside Services		1,179,891	1,179,891		
Other		1,660	1,660		
Revenues					
Net		(1,692,935)	(1,692,935)		
Total, Towns	91,658				
Expenses		872,269	705,594	166,675	9.52
Personal Services		284,170	167,275	116,895	
Outside Services		529,753	493,205	36,548	
Other		57,531	45,114	12,417	
Revenues		416,905	269,070	147,835	
Net		(455,364)	(436,524)	(18,840)	4.97
Median					8.85
*Adopted 2009 Budget					
**Revised,2008					
Source: Compiled by Fairweather Consulting using budgets provided by each municipality.					

Table 3 estimates the professional staffing that could be supported just from the $813,933 spent by the 12 towns on personals services and outside consultants on planning and zoning. Divided evenly among the 12 towns, spending on planning and zoning could support one planner position for each town at a salary of $36,789 with 30 percent additional benefits and a $20,000 operating budget.

Clearly this is an oversimplification of the situation. The services encompassed by this spending include such professionals and planners, engineers, etc. The precise mix of services required by each town will vary from case to case.   For example, a town may need to secure specialized assistance for a community issue or project that may not be available if total spending were pooled and used to hire a permanent shared planning staff.   Nonetheless, Table 3 is put forth as an indication that, when aggregated among all the towns, current spending on planning and zoning could support more than the limited professional planning capacity currently maintained by almost all of the towns in this study. This fact will be the basis for potential scenarios presented later in this report concerning ways to restructure planning services in Ulster County.

Table 3. Projected Per Town Staffing Levels Potentially Supported by Current Town Expenditures.	
	Planning & Zoning*
Avg. Spending/Town	67,826.90
Salary	36,789.92
Benefits	11,036.98
Expenses	20,000.00
Source: Compiled by Fairweather Consulting using budgets provided by each municipality. *Includes only spending for Personal Services and Consultants.	

Best Practice Models in Planning

This section summarizes the most innovative and interesting models and strategies for the delivery of planning, focusing on situations that are of a scale and geography comparable to Ulster County. The approaches presented here are of three basic types:

Centralized Planning Resources through which planning services are provided to constituent municipalities through a single, higher level of government (i.e., the higher level of government actually does the planning)

Councils of Government through which planning services are provided by an intermediary organization composed of the jurisdictions that are recipients of the services

Shared "Back Office" Services through which the participating jurisdictions conduct their own planning operations, but share information processing functions that may include project tracking, geographic information systems (GIS), etc.

These three approaches focus largely on planning-related services. Our analysis also reviews best practices for organizing economic development services. This is provided below in a separate section.

Approach 1: Centralized Planning Resources

Under this approach, services are provided to individual jurisdictions by a larger, encompassing jurisdiction. There are several varieties of this model, including comprehensive state-wide programs to provide local planning services (such as offered by the Maryland Department of Planning), and programs where county planning commissions provide services for local and intermunicipal plans (such as the role of Pennsylvania's Montgomery County Planning Commission's role in multi-municipal planning in that state). In New York State, two examples of county planning departments directly providing technical planning services can be found in Albany County, where planning services focused on stormwater management issues and Delaware County, in which special funding allowed the county planning department to directly provide services to municipalities.

Albany County

Albany County has an intermunicipal agreement with eleven local governments to address stormwater pollution through the MS4 program. The Economic Development, Conservation and Planning Department is involved with coordinating both interdepartmental and intermunicipal aspects of the County's mandatory stormwater management program.

In partnership with eleven other regulated municipalities, the County applied for and was awarded two grants from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation to support this effort.

Source: http://www.albanycounty.com/edcp/swp.asp

Note: Ulster County has a similar agreement in effect with its municipalities.

Delaware County

27 out of the 29 municipalities in Delaware County participate in the County Planning Department's Town Planning Advisory Service (TPAS). The TPAS program is a community-based regional planning service in which individual communities contract with the Delaware County Planning Department to obtain professional planning services and technical assistance. The County Planning Department's website describes the program as follows:

> The Service was developed as a partnership between the Delaware County Planning Board and the A. Lindsay and Olive B. O'Connor Foundation. The pilot was initiated in 1975 with two planners dedicated to working with Bovina, Davenport, Delhi, Franklin, Roxbury and Stamford because it was recognized that the all-volunteer planning boards needed assistance transforming their ideas about their communities into logical plans of action. The original goal was to assist local planning boards with subdivision and zoning reviews as well as provide technical assistance in developing land use laws to protect the rural character of the communities.
>
> While local land use issues are still of central importance to TPAS work, the regulatory environment that the County and municipalities are situated in requires even greater technical expertise than in the past. TPAS staff are positioned to effectively deliver additional County programs, like those offered through the Delaware County Action Plan (DCAP), and still provide the monthly guidance and technical planning expertise to the municipal boards. Today, the assistance provided to the participating communities includes, but is not limited to:
>
> - Current and Comprehensive Planning
> - Municipal Capital Projects
> - Grant Writing
> - Hazards Planning
> - Sourcewater Protection
> - SEQRA Compliance
> - Land Use Training and Outreach
> - Mapping Services
> - Stream Corridor Planning
>
> Source: http://delawarecountyplanning.com/TPAS.aspx

Approach 2: Consolidation of "Back Office" Functions

Under this approach, the direct planning function is retained by the local government. However, the records-keeping associated with planning is shared. The shared information processing functions could include storing and tracking development applications and associated support materials. In order for this to occur, the participating jurisdictions would need to develop uniform forms and procedures associated with planning board applications. This would require substantial "up front" investments in creating a uniform nomenclature for each participating planning board. However, even before that is

done, planning boards could begin sharing the geographic information systems required to conduct project reviews, comprehensive plans and other related activities. The Southern Tier West Regional Planning and Development Board has created a system that could serve as a model for Ulster County.

Southern Tier West Regional Planning and Development Board's Community GIS Project

Community GIS provides GIS capacity to local governments utilizing the internet. These are small rural communities that cannot implement GIS on their own because of cost, personnel, and time issues. Community GIS overcomes those barriers by providing GIS capacity through a cooperative effort. The following description comes from the Community GIS website (www.communitygis.com):

> Community GIS is a program administered by Southern Tier West that provides local governments with GIS and mapping capabilities at a low, reasonable cost. With the exception of a computer and the Internet, the local governments need no additional hardware or software. STW hosts all data and only makes updates as requested by the local governments. Members are trained to collect their own data with GPS Units provide by STW through continued membership to the program. STW can be hired to do data collection for an additional fee. Through membership, all trainings can be performed as needed on a continual basis. Through membership, local governments have access to all necessary equipment (GPS Units, Laser Range Finder, Large Scale Plotter, Digital Cameras). Through membership, local governments can also take advantage of any data STW already has access to.

> The Community GIS Project relies on economy of scale to provide a reliable, high-quality project to you for very low cost. Community GIS is based on a membership concept. Any municipal government located within the Southern Tier West region of Chautauqua, Cattaraugus, or Allegany Counties is eligible for membership. By becoming a member, your municipality will have continual access to GIS data from anywhere via the internet.

> Becoming a member can be accomplished in a few easy, but important and necessary steps:

> - Your community must have a use for the system. You must understand the basic premise behind GIS and be able to demonstrate how you will use the system in your community. Practical uses include economic development, infrastructure management, planning, assessment, code enforcement, and public safety. [Note: while the primary users of this system have been highway and public works offices, the system is available for use by planning consultants retained by member municipalities.]

> - Your community must commit financially to the project. Southern Tier West offers several options on how to take advantage of Community GIS. They are described under "Fee Structure" below.

- Ensure that whomever will be utilizing the system has reliable internet access and a web browser; preferably Internet Explorer 6.x. High-speed access is not required; however higher speeds will greatly improve performance.

- Work with Southern Tier West staff to develop a viewer to best suit your community needs in terms of data, tools, and the interface.

Fee Structure

Option 1. Population Based: This involves a one-time access fee based on the population of the petitioning community. There will be a one-time viewer creation fee as well as an annual maintenance fee. Groups of communities or coalitions, whether formal or informal, can join the program as a single petitioning unit. If you choose this option, access and annual maintenance fees will be based on the combined population of the coalition. The coalition can decide how many viewers (web pages) they want (e.g., one for the entire partnership or individual ones for each member of the partnership). There are three population thresholds being used to determine the fee structure. Communities (or groups of communities) are divided into three categories: small (less than 1500), medium (1501-5000) and large (more than 5000). The access fee for the program is as follows: small $2,500; medium $3,000; and large $4,000. The fee per viewer is $1,000 and an annual fee of $500.

Option 2. Tier 3 CAP Membership: This provides Community GIS participants (single community enrollees only) with the ability to access a range of other Southern Tier West programs and services at significantly reduced costs. For an annual fee of $1,500, a Tier 3 CAP Member gets complete access to and full participation in the Community GIS Program. In addition, the Tier 3 Member will receive: a Certificate of Appreciation; a listing on STW's website and inclusion in the Annual Report; complimentary registration for 4 to the Annual Local Government, Planning & Zoning, and Wind Energy Conference; $15 per person discount to the Annual Local Government, Planning & Zoning, and Wind Energy Conferences and any/all municipal training programs; complimentary invitations for 2 to the Southern Tier West Annual Dinner Meeting/Reception ($70 value); complimentary design/posing/maintenance of a website for the community (if requested) ($400 value); and 20 complimentary hours of technical assistance from Southern Tier West staff ($2,500 value)

[NOTE: The costs of this system are subsidized by the fact that a portion of the Southern Tier West Regional Planning Board staff time that supports Community GIS is paid for by funding received from the Appalachian Regional Commission. In addition, John Buzzard, the program administrator indicated that they encourage municipalities to join under Option 2 for $1,500 annually. Should the municipality discover that it does not make use of the full services available under Option 2 (e.g., technical support, training, etc.) it can always shift to an "Option 1" membership for a lower annual cost with fewer support services.]

Additional source: John Buzzard, jbuzzard@southerntierwest.org, (716) 945-5301 Ext. 208.

Based upon discussions with Mr. Buzzard, we estimate that a similar system like this in Ulster County might involve the equivalent of one full-time staff position at $50,000 plus fringe benefits at 30 percent of salary plus additional expenses of approximately $20,000 per year, for a total of $85,000 annually. If the County were able to enroll 20 municipalities in such a program at an annual fee of $2,500, the program could be self-sustaining with an annual $35,000 contribution from the County. (Note: Community GIS receives operating subsidies from the Appalachian Regional Commission.)

While this example is focused on GIS, it is possible that other "back offices" services could be shared among municipalities. This could include the intake and management of applications forms for site plans, subdivisions and other development activities.

Approach 3: Councils of Government

Councils of governments (COG) are intergovernmental organizations created to provide services an area consisting of a county or of several counties. Established by intermunicipal agreements, COGs are constituted as independent units of government. COGs typically address issues such as regional and municipal planning, economic and community development, cartography and GIS, hazard mitigation and emergency planning, aging services, water use, pollution control, transit administration, and transportation planning. The functions of a COG can vary from simply serving as a regional convening body for local governments, to an intermediary organization providing direct services to the constituent jurisdictions. COGs are governed by boards of directors whose members are drawn from the county, city, and other government bodies within its area. In New York State's Tug Hill region, the Tug Hill Commission has used this approach with widely recognized success. The Commission has used Councils of Government as intermediary bodies providing shared planning services to participating jurisdictions. The information in this section has been derived from the Commission's website (www.tughillcouncil.com).

> The Commission is overseen by a board of nine unpaid volunteers, all residents of the region. They are appointed three each by the governor, speaker of the state assembly, and majority leader of the state senate. The nine commissioners are chosen by appointing authorities so that two come from each of the four counties that overlap the region, with a ninth member serving "at large."

> The Commission is authorized by New York State legislation first passed in 1972 (Chapter 972, Laws of 1972), and most recently amended in 1998 as Article 37, Section 847 of the New York State Executive Law (Chapter 440, Laws of 1998). Article 37 provides for an every five year report to the governor and state legislature on the quality of and need for (or not) continuation of the Tug Hill Commission and its programs, based on a survey of some 400 local officials and community leaders from the Tug Hill region. Terms of Commission members are five years, coinciding with the every five year evaluation of its programs.

> **Staffing:** Eleven Commission staff specialists and three support staff work out of the central office in Watertown. Seven part-time and full-time "circuit riders" work out of their homes throughout the region, under the direction of local councils of governments.

Approach: Most Tug Hill towns and villages belong to one of five councils of governments (COGs). Each is served by one or more "circuit riders" who, working out of their home offices, help in sharing good ideas between communities and help individual towns and villages take advantage of a more regional perspective in trying to enhance their communities. Circuit riders also help communities in identifying and solving problems and, when more specialized assistance is needed, call upon commission staff for help in land use planning, finding grants and loans for community improvement, and providing technical assistance and training opportunities for local officials.

The five councils of government (**COG**s) in the Tug Hill region are:

- Cooperative Tug Hill **C**ouncil (**CTHC**)
- North Shore Council Of Governments (**NorCOG**)
- Northern Oneida County Council Of Governments (**NOCCOG**)
- River Area Council of Governments (**RACOG**)
- Salmon River Council of Governments (**SRCG**)

Ulster County already has made productive use of the Council of Government function. In 2007, the County created the Ulster County Transportation Council to establish priorities among and to oversee federally aided transportation projects in Ulster County. The Council's membership is comprised of six permanent voting members including the County Executive (who serves as chair), the mayor of City of Kingston, the supervisors of the towns of Saugerties and Ulster and representatives from the NYS Department of Transportation and the Thruway Authority. In addition, there are seven members whose terms alternate every two years between village and town representation. These members include Lloyd, New Paltz, Plattekill Rosendale and Woodstock, along with the villages of Saugerties and Ellenville. Finally, seven municipalities are represented on the Council by a single rotating representative. These include the towns of Denning, Gardiner, Hardenburgh, Marbletown, Olive, Rochester and Shandaken.

As will be discussed in the recommendations section, a similar structure may be useful to promote shared services for planning.

Best Practices in Economic Development

A recent study sponsored by the International Economic Development Council (IEDC) described how the process of economic development must change its focus from creating any job to focusing on creating high-quality jobs:

> Job creation remains a key measure of success for economic development efforts. But the time in which all jobs were "good jobs," to a certain extent, is over. Growth in the economy is becoming increasingly bifurcated, featuring high-tech, high-wage jobs on one hand and low-wage jobs in the service sector on the other. Many "middle class," medium-wage jobs have been downsized, automated or have gone off shore. Economic developers find themselves struggling to create jobs that deliver the kinds of wages and benefits that were standard in the industrial era.

The report concludes that this change in *focus for* economic development requires a change in the *process of* economic development:

> The research reveals an evolution in the field of economic development; from a narrow focus on industrial recruitment and job creation measured in numbers to a system-based approach based on partnerships, greater inclusion, and addressing more difficult and more complex challenges than ever before. What started as an investigation into quality job creation, became a study on how economic development was changing to respond to a harder, more complex economic environment, to rebuild the middle class and to strengthen the ability of the regional economy to generate a range of opportunities for businesses and people alike. The role of the economic developer in this system is to connect the dots, develop resources, solve problems and keep the community centered on its economic health.

> International Economic Development Council, *Creating Quality Jobs: Transforming the Economic Development Landscape,* March 2010, p.207

In a sense, *Ulster Tomorrow* represented the County's initial foray into this new world of economic development. The structure the County chooses should reflect the requirements of that new world. Indeed, *Ulster Tomorrow*'s call for a "super economic development agency" reflected a recognition that a new, more comprehensive approach was required. But 21st Century economic development requires more than comprehensiveness. Our work in economic development indicates that four criteria need to be served simultaneously in a new economic development system.

- *Scope:* Does the structure enable the County's economic development effort to undertake or coordinate a sufficient range of activities to address all aspects of the new approach to economic development?

- *Focus:* Does the structure enable the County's economic development effort to devote sustained attention to each of the various aspects of economic development?

- *Flexibility:* Does the structure allow the County's economic development effort to quickly secure and deploy the resources it needs to effectively deal with the various aspects of economic development? Simply put, will the economic development effort be able to hire the kind of expertise it needs when it needs it? Such an effort will require fast-track hiring processes with a "bottom-line" orientation.

- *Private Sector Support:* Private sector support is important for an economic development effort for two reasons. First, if the economic development organization is seen as operating in a "private sector" mode, it is more likely that the services offered by the agency will have greater acceptance and credibility among its private sector clients. In addition, in these times of scarce resources, the County's economic development effort should be able to leverage private sector funding to its efforts on behalf of the County's business community.

These criteria will be used to evaluate the options for organizing Ulster County's economic development efforts.

Goals for Shared Services in Planning and Economic Development for Ulster County

During the course of this project, interviews were held with key players in the county's economic development efforts, including the chief elected officials for each of the participating municipalities. In addition, Fairweather Consulting interviewed county officials directly involved in economic development. These included:

- Melinda Beuf, Director of Project Management, Ulster County Development Corporation

- Dennis Doyle, Director, Ulster County Planning Board

- Stephen Finkle, Director, Economic and Community Development, City of Kingston

- March Gallagher, Deputy Director for Economic Development, Ulster County Planning Board

- Lance Matteson, Director, Ulster County Development Corporation

- Adele Reiter, Chief of Staff, County Executive

- Susan Ronga, Deputy Budget Director

Two goals for planning and economic development services emerged from these interviews. They are:

Goal 1: Improve the capacity to encourage and achieve responsible economic growth for Ulster County.

Goal 2: Reduce the ongoing costs of providing planning and economic development services, wherever and whenever possible

On the surface, these goals are fairly consistent with each other. But given the economic challenges and competitive disadvantages facing Ulster County and the other counties in the Hudson Valley and New York State, it is entirely possible that an appropriate response to Goal 1 may involve increasing the costs of services. For example, one way to promote economic development is to provide expeditious processing and review of development applications. This in turn may require additional staff time as well as investment in improved record keeping.

Recommendations: Options for Reconfiguring the Delivery of Planning and Economic Development Services

The recommendations outlined below are in response to the project goals, the existing conditions of service delivery and the current best practices in planning and economic development. Three options are presented. They can be considered as separate alternative approaches to improving service delivery in planning and economic development. Alternatively, taken together, they comprise a comprehensive approach toward improving and more closely integrating planning and economic development in Ulster County.

Planning Services:

Option 1: Shared "Back Office" Services through the County Information Services

As described under the "best practices" section, one way to improve delivery of planning services is to enhance or streamline the "back office" functions that support the operations of local planning boards. While these may not involve cost-reductions in the short term, such actions can support improved and expeditious decision-making on the part of local planning boards.

The logical central focus for this effort is the County Department of Information Services. It currently provides support to many Ulster County towns with records management functions. These recommendations would be an extension of that effort. If undertaken as part of a single, coordinated effort, this cooperation with Information Services could result in more uniform standards for record-keeping across municipalities. This could contribute to improved consistency and predictability of project reviews and approvals across jurisdictions in the County. Two major areas of "back office" operations appear to be the best opportunities for such shared services:

Geographic Information Systems

As in the case of the Southern Tier West Regional Planning Board, Ulster County Information Services can create a single GIS for municipalities that can provide a common set of geographic data to support local decision-making. This system would enhance GIS services beyond the current "Parcel Viewer" function now available. It could allow the users to conduct geographic analyses (e.g., compare current land use with existing zoning, define constrained lands using various criteria, etc.). Like the Southern Tier West Regional Planning Board's system, it could also allow users to add additional data layers that they require through the use of Global Positioning Systems or by other means.

It is our understanding that such an initiative is already underway in the County.

Planning Board Filings

Another key function that could be improved through shared information technology is processing and retention of applicant filings with the Planning Board and/or Zoning Board of Appeals. Working through Ulster County Information Services, participating municipalities could create a common entry form for applications for such items as subdivisions, site plans, conservation easements and other potential board actions. A web-based application could be established that would require applicants to enter the requisite data before the planning board could schedule a formal appearance of the applicant and/or begin formal review of their application.

Creating such a system would have several significant benefits for both planning and economic development in Ulster County.   By transforming applications and approvals into an accessible, searchable database, the system can Improve local record-keeping and "institutional memory." For example, over the years, many planning officials have expressed concern that it is difficult to keep track of projects that were approved but not built or to ensure that land included in a conservation easement does not later become the subject t of a development application.   This function will become increasingly important as more towns adopt such measures as conservation subdivisions and purchase or transfer of development rights, all of which require careful tracking of land subjected to development restrictions.

This system would also require standardization of application process across municipalities. While this would be a costly and time-consuming process, it would result in county-wide approvals process that reduces uncertainty in the application process for applicants. Applicants would be better informed about the requirements of the application process itself. (It is not uncommon for applicants to have projects delayed due to incomplete application. Sometimes this is due to the applicant's negligence, other times to the particular municipality's lack of clarity in their own application process. In either case, since the system would not allow formal process to begin until the applicant has submitted all necessary data in the form, it would reduce such "false starts" in the application process and reduce the costs for applicant to understand application requirements and ensure that they have submitted a complete application.

 Note also that this system can be even further enhanced by tying the data to the parcel information in a shared County-wide GIS.

Cost would be a major obstacle to overcome in implementing this system. However, it is possible that these efforts could be supported through grants from the New York State Archives Local Government Records Management Improvement Fund (http://www.archives.nysed.gov/a/grants/grants_lgrmif.shtml) as well as through an implementation grant from the Shared Municipal Services Incentive program.   Once the system was established, participating municipalities could pay annual subscription service, with application fees paid by applicants supplementing or replacing this cost to the municipalities.

Option 2: Creation of "Circuit Riders" for Planning Services through a Council of Governments

As discussed under "best practices," it is common for municipalities to share planning services by pooling funding to create "circuit rider" positions. These are full-time paid professional staff positions whose services are shared across several municipalities. The analyses in tables 2 and 3 indicate that the 12 towns included in this study currently spend enough on planning and zoning services to support close to a full-time planner for each town, along with $40,000 in additional expenses. Among those municipalities there is enough funding currently committed to support at least a part-time circuit rider position for each town.

This suggests it would be possible to create a circuit rider system for municipalities that would require participating governments to spend no more than they currently spend for planning and zoning. Table 5 shows the amount of technical planning assistance that would be available if a system were created in every municipality spend no more than they did in the past year. In Table 5, we have assumed that those municipalities that spend more per capita than the average for all towns will have their spending reduced so that it is halfway toward the average per capita spending. For example, in 2008, the Town of New Paltz spent $166,365 on planning and zoning. If the town's planning was reduced to the average per capita for the twelve participating towns, it would be dramatically reduced to $63,900, a 61 percent reduction. Under the scenario in Table 5, New Paltz's spending is assumed to fall 30 percent to $115,133. This "hold harmless" scenario produces total spending among all twelve towns of $757,750, 6.9 percent less than actually spent in 2008.

	Population 2008	Actual Planning & Zoning**	Projected Planning & Zoning**	Adjusted Planning & Zoning**	Per Capita Expenditures Planning & Zoning
Table 5. Projected Planning-Related Contributions to COG by Municipality based upon "Hold Harmless" Adjustment of Per Capita Spending for All Towns					
Denning	518				
Expenses		1,500	4,600	1,500	2.90
Gardiner	5,729				
Expenses		29,009	50,874	29,009	5.06
Hardenburgh	216				
Expenses		2,250	1,918	2,084	10.42
Hurley	6,512				
Expenses		35,600	57,827	35,600	5.47
Marbletown	6,009				
Expenses		24,290	53,360	24,290	4.04
Marlborough	8,297				
Expenses		83,227	73,677	78,452	10.03
New Paltz	7,196				
Expenses		166,365	63,900	115,133	23.12
Rosendale	6,244				
Expenses		46,780	55,447	46,780	7.49
Saugerties	15,750				
Expenses		101,595	139,860	101,595	6.45
Shawangunk	12,712				
Expenses		113,221	112,883	113,221	8.91
Ulster	12,661				
Expenses		122,640	112,430	122,640	9.69
Wawarsing*	9,814				
Expenses		87,446	87,148	87,446	8.91
Total, Towns	91,658				
Expenses		813,923	813,923	757,750	8.88
Median					8.20

*Adopted 2009 Budget

**Revised, 2008

***Includes only spending on personal services and outside consultants.

Source: Compiled by Fairweather Consulting using budgets provided by each municipality.

Thus, it may be possible to create a circuit rider system for the towns participating in this study to provide substantial professional planning assistance to each of the towns from the current level of spending by those towns. Note: this analysis has deliberately excluded the City of Kingston which already has a full time staff.

Implementing the Circuit Rider System

Creating such a system for planning services must address several issues:

1. Creating a Council of Governments (COG) to host the program. This would involve a process similar to the creation of the Ulster County Transportation Council. The intermunicipal agreement would have to be created identifying the participating municipalities, defining the purpose of the COG and outlining the system of governance and representation, and establishing a method for financing the activities conducted under the auspices of the COG. (The most common approach would be to assess each community a charge based upon estimated use of the circuit rider service, with additional charges assessed if the community required time above and beyond that estimate.)

Table7. Projected Per Town Staffing Levels Potentially Supported by Current Town Expenditures under "Hold Harmless" Scenarios for Planning & Zoning.	
	Planning & Zoning
Avg. Spending/Town	63,145.82
Salary	33,189.09
Benefits	9,956.73
Expenses	20,000.00
Days of professional assistance available per year at $100/hour for 8-hour days	53.93
Source: Compiled by Fairweather Consulting using budgets provided by each municipality.	

2. Establishing staffing levels to provide circuit rider services. This would involve working with the participating towns to estimate their needs for planning services for the coming year. This would indicate the number of hours involved in providing the circuit rider services, from which a staffing plan and budget could be developed.

3. Securing the professional staffing needed to provide the circuit rider services. This can be done through a variety of means. For example, the COG could contract with the Ulster County Planning Board for such services. Alternatively, it could be implemented through a contract with a professional planning firm for professional planning services through a contract evaluated and renewed on an annual basis.

4. Ensuring an efficient and effective geographic distribution of services for the circuit rider program. Figure 1 provides an example of how the circuit rider services can be grouped geographically to reduce overhead related to travel time. Denning and Hardenburgh could be served by one circuit rider. Hurley, Marbletown and Rosendale by another, and so on. Note that both Wawarsing and Marlborough are relatively isolated among the 12 participating towns, and would be best served if additional towns participated in such a program.

Figure 1.
Sample geographic configuration of circuit riders
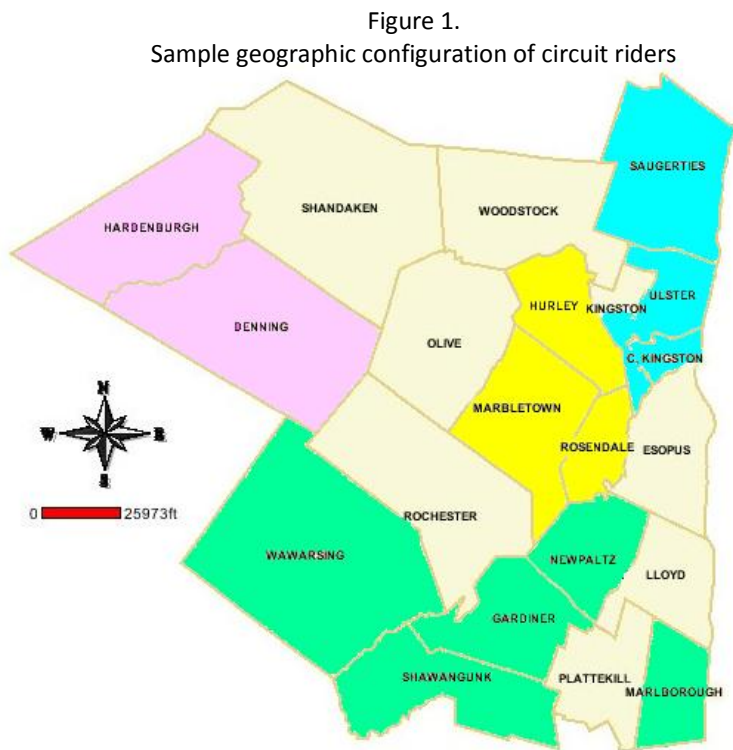
This system has its advantages and disadvantages. The primary disadvantage is that it does limit the choice municipalities have in terms of which particular planners are used during the course of a year. This disadvantage can be mitigated with careful review of the qualifications of the organization providing the planning services prior to reaching an agreement with the organization providing the services. The advantages of this approach include providing each community with enhanced professional planning services, while building a cadre of professional planners with detailed long-term understanding of the planning issues facing each community and the issues that extend across communities in Ulster County. This advantage is further realized to extent to which the COG uses the Ulster County Planning Board as the agency to provide such services.

Figure 2 lays out two alternative internal structures for the Council of Government. The diagram on the left shows how the COG could be organized if the circuit rider and other services were provided by professional staff positions created within the COG. The diagram on the right shows the internal COG structure should the COG out-source its services to other agencies or organizations.

Figure 2

ALTERNATIVE POTENTIAL INTERNAL STRUCTURES OF COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENT

COG w/Own Professional Staff	COG w/Outsourced Planning Services
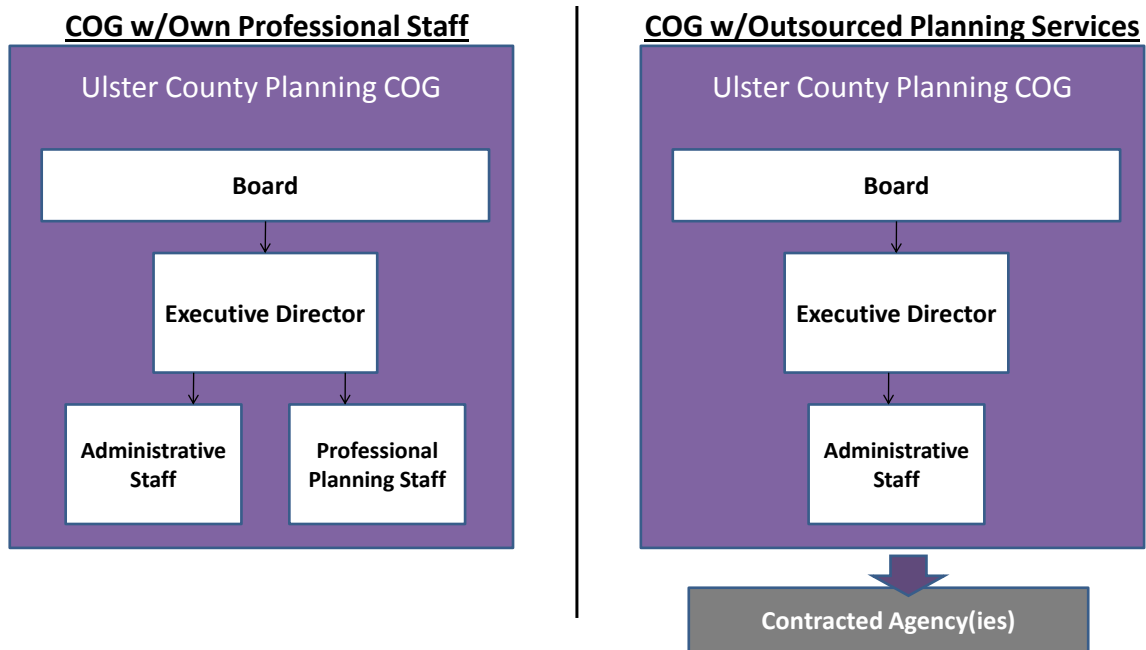
Economic Development Services: Implementing Ulster Tomorrow

As indicated earlier, there is substantial capacity for planning and economic development in Ulster County at the present time. One of the keys to improving Ulster County's performance even more is to bring greater coordination and clarity to the service provision system. That was one of the central recommendations of *Ulster Tomorrow*:

> A streamlined system would introduce process into the structure through the creation of a "Super Economic Development Agency" . . . A streamlined system brings together representatives from each service provider to create an efficient and effective "body of knowledge," capable of addressing any user's needs in a collaborative manner. There would be one, and only one, user point of entry. Here, the agencies would collaborate and implement their processes simultaneously to meet users' needs, reducing duplication and confusion, while increasing ease of use. A communication plan would structure communication across agencies and between the "Super Agency" and users, thereby producing more efficient and effective results.
>
> Ulster Tomorrow, Technical Report, page 37.

Ulster Tomorrow saw this "super economic development agency" as the nexus of the County's economic development effort. The agency would bring together the "demand" side of economic development (businesses, developers, communities with development aspirations) with the "supply" side of economic development (economic development agencies, local planning boards, state and local assistance programs, etc.). Figure 3 below summarizes the important relationships that must be preserved and

strengthened in the County's economic development delivery system. Each of these interests must have a clearly structured role in the process, with clear and consistent channels of communication that serve each party's interest.

It is important for government to receive clear and consistent messages about what the private sector expects in order to succeed in Ulster County. At the same time there must be means for local governments to clearly and consistently express their hopes and concerns about economic development to the economic development professionals working in and on behalf of the County.

Figure 3.
KEY RELATIONSHIPS FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN ULSTER COUNTY
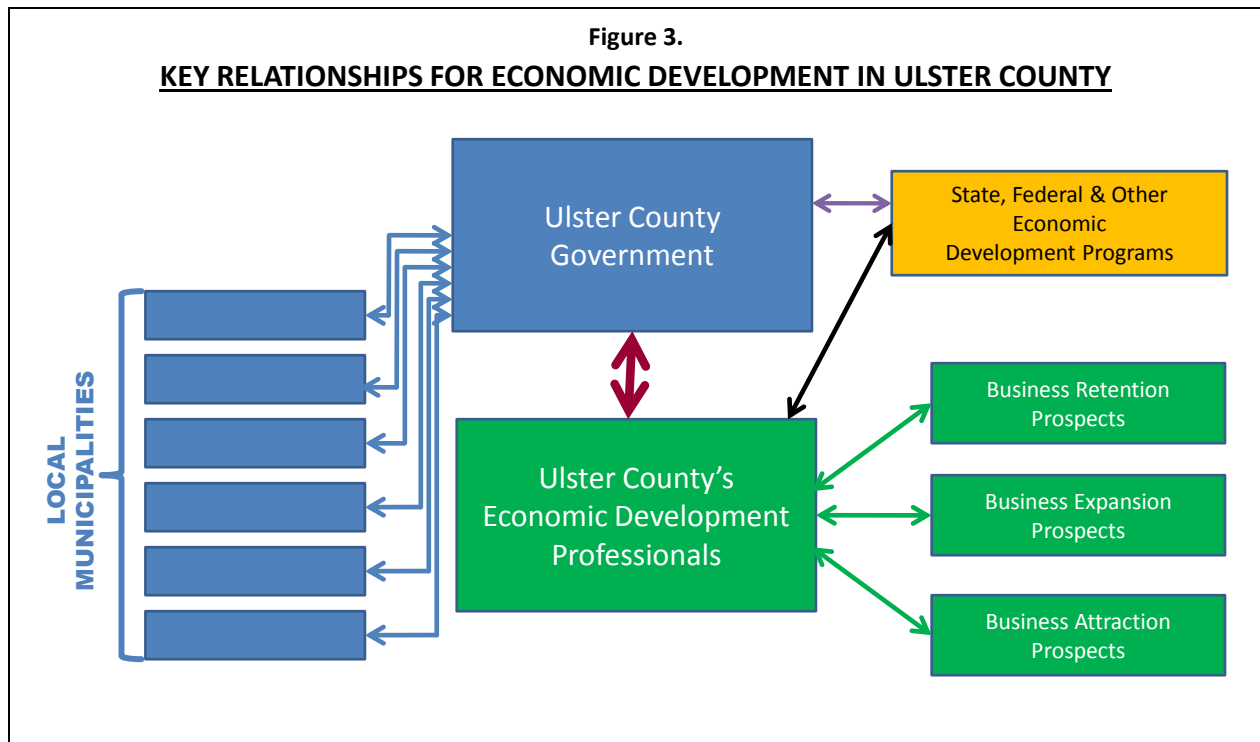
A 2000 nationwide survey of economic development organizations by the International Economic Development Council found essentially five main types of economic development organizations[1]: not-for-profit economic development corporations, government agencies, chambers of commerce, port authorities, and regional planning organizations. Among these choices, two remain viable options for a county-level economic development effort that goes beyond the types of business support services associated with chambers of commerce. This section lays out the two options for structuring Ulster County's economic development services: creating a county department or keeping UCDC as the central focus of the effort. The summary below describes the outcomes associated with each option, indicating the extent to which each options responds to the four criteria of scope, focus, flexibility, and

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[1] International Economic Development Council (nee Council for Urban Economic Development). *Trends in Economic Development Organization, 2000*, February 24, 2003.

productivity. Each of the structural options is then discussed in greater detail. The section concludes with recommendations for dealing with the issues raised by this discussion.

Structural Option 1: Reconstitute the County Economic Development Organization as a Department in County Government

Under this option, the economic development activities now undertaken by the Ulster County Development Corporation would be assumed by a county department of economic development. The staff would be county employees, subject to civil service regulations. The director of that department would report directly to the County Executive. Its outcomes are expected to be as follows:

Scope: A department structure does not fully encompass all aspects of the new approach to economic development. Staff would be required to spend significant time and energy working ever more closely with the Workforce Investment Board, the County Tourism Promotion Agency, and other organizations to address each these aspects. Consequently, it may be difficult to achieve any more integration of services than already exists under the current configuration.

Focus: Constituting the County's economic development efforts as a department is no guarantee that the effort will be better focused. Whether it is as a department or as a separate not-for-profit agency, as responsibilities are added (e.g., technology commercialization, talent attraction/retention, quality of life, etc.), it may be increasingly difficult for staff to maintain adequate focus in any one of these areas, whether the organization is a County department or a not-for-profit. Constituting the economic development effort as a County agency could raise other problems associated with focus. For example, it is typical for a County government agency to focus its efforts on ensuring that it secures the approval of the County Executive and the various legislative committees to which it may report. But economic development is different from traditional government functions. Its services are not directed primarily to citizens and their elected representatives. While these two groups remain important to economic development efforts, their primary focus must be on the needs of the private sector. Placing economic development in a governmental setting always runs the risk of a loss of focus on the needs of the private sector.

Flexibility: Creating economic development services as an agency of County government could create some real losses in flexibility. The County's economic development effort permanent staff positions would be part of the County's civil service. Hiring new personnel can involve a more lengthy process than in the private sector. For example, if the County's economic development effort wanted to hire a technology commercialization specialist, many months would be involved defining the position, classifying it in the civil service system and ensuring that is was exempt or developing an appropriate test for that position.   In the past, some counties sought to avoid this by using the Industrial Development Agency as the agency that maintained a staff that provided contracted services to the county. The requirements of the new public authority reform legislation takes away much of the potential flexibility in such an arrangement.

Private sector support: A government agency has real disadvantages in trying to build private sector support. While there are certainly good examples of County agencies that have credibility among

private businesses (one need look no farther than Greene County), it is easy for private businesses to be suspicious of a government agency involved in economic development. Questions are raised about the ability of a government bureaucracy to follow through quickly on requests for assistance. In other instances, private sector clients can become concerned that the department will become hamstrung by partisan disagreements in the legislative body that oversees County government. Finally, private businesses are always reluctant to give financial support to a government agency that is already supported through their tax dollars.

Structural Option 2: Maintain and strengthen the existing structure built around UCDC

Under this option, the County's economic development efforts would remain focused in a separate not-for-profit corporation. They would remain as described above in the "As Is Conditions" section on page 2. As described below, this structure performs somewhat better than a County department structure when evaluated under the criteria of scope, focus, flexibility and private sector support.

Scope: *Ulster Tomorrow* pointed out that UCDC did not have a comprehensive scope. Hence, it called for the creation of an economic development super agency. Indeed, as the thrust of economic development broadens, staff is be required to spend significant time and energy working ever more closely with the Workforce Investment Board, the County Tourism Promotion Agency, and other organizations. But being outside of government enables UCDC to do this as an outside broker of services, rather than as a governmental department in a fixed chain of command. In that sense, as a separate not-for-profit agency, UCDC has greater capacity than a department of County government to build the partnerships required to attain the scope it needs.

Focus: As a separate not-for-profit agency, UCDC has real advantages in terms of establishing and maintaining focus. Its relationship to the County government and the public interest can be clearly defined and monitored through its ongoing contracts with the County. This creates a clear and enforceable "bottom line" for UCDC's performance. It also removes the Corporation from direct involvement in the deliberations and conflicts involved with agencies that are directly accountable to elected officials. As indicated above, that kind of involvement is necessary and even desirable for agencies that are providing services to the general citizenry. It is far less desirable when the agency is intended to provide service to private sector business.

Flexibility: As a stand-alone not-for-profit agency, UCDC is freed from the civil service strictures related to hiring, compensating and deploying personnel. As such, it provides the County's economic development effort with the flexibility to respond rapidly and effectively to the challenges and opportunities associated with the rapidly changing field of economic development.

Private sector support: In the last few years, UCDC has made dramatic strides in securing private sector support. The *Ulster Tomorrow* process and the new leadership at the corporation have led to a real change in how UCDC is perceived in the business community. These advantages would be lost if UCDC were converted to a department within County government. For example, the 2000 IEDC survey mentioned earlier found that almost 50 percent of not-for-profit economic development agencies

received private sector contributions, while fewer than 10 percent of the government economic development departments received private sector funding.

Conclusion—Maintain and Strengthen the Current Economic Development Structure

Ulster County conforms to best practices in terms of its general structure for economic development service delivery. As is the case with Ulster County, it is quite common in New York State and elsewhere to have the county economic development office established as a separate not-for-profit corporation that leads the county's industry attraction, retention and expansion efforts, while providing staff support to the industrial development agency through a contract with that agency.

The use of the not-for-profit structure has several advantages. It enables the economic development office to provide tax deductions for contributions from the local business community to support the corporation's operations. In addition, by being constituted as a private organization, the corporation is freed from civil service requirements when hiring and deploying staff. As such the current structure provides greater focus and flexibility while providing a greater potential for securing private sector

Figure 4.

ULSTER COUNTY'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLATFORM
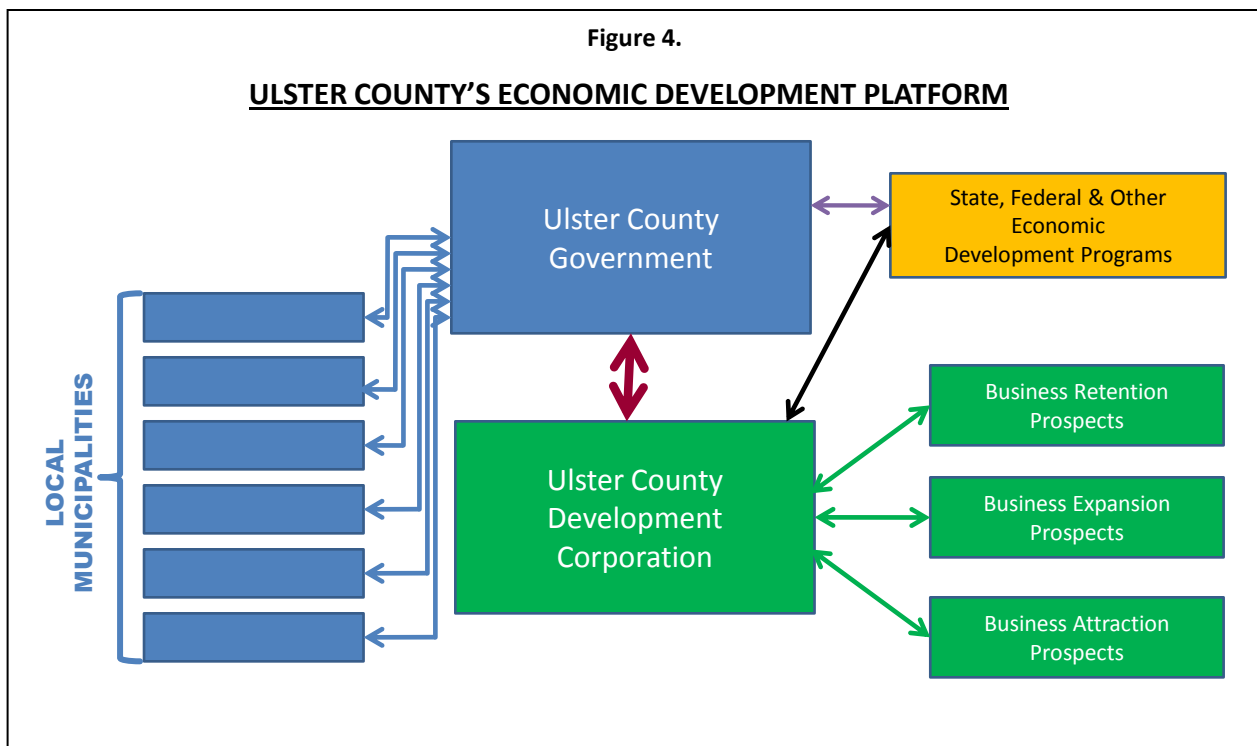
support and funding.

In essence, the current economic development structure is a viable platform to continue to implement and expand upon the work of *Ulster Tomorrow*. As illustrated in Figure 4, one of the critical tasks is to use the current structure to continue to build the public and private relationships so essential to success in the ongoing competition to retain and attract innovative companies and high-quality jobs.

NOTE: getting the right balance in this type of public/private partnership can require incremental adjustments over time. For example, in Columbia County, the Columbia Hudson Partnership in Columbia County has been recently reorganized so that the Partnership's executive director is now appointed by the County. As Ulster County moves forward, it too must continually review and evaluate the public/private partnerships in its economic development platform and periodically consider ways to fine-tune the economic development platform to maintain and/or strengthen the crucial relationships outlined in Figure 4.