

The Broome County Plan for Sustainable Development
Executive Summary
August 2002

THE BROOME COUNTY PLAN FOR SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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Acknowledgements

AngelouEconomics would like to thank the entire Broome County community for its support and input during the creation of this economic development strategy. In particular, the project's advisory committee provided numerous hours of invaluable guidance and insight.

Sponsors:

Broome County Government (through funding provided by the New York State Quality Community Demonstration Program)

Broome County Industrial Development Agency

Broome-Tioga County Workforce Development Board

Economic Development Council of the Southern Tier

Partnership 2000

The Broome Chamber

Project Advisory Committee Members:

Richard D'Attilio, Executive Director
Broome County Industrial Development Agency

Chris W. Burger, Broome County Legislature

Alex S. DePersis, President and CEO
The Broome Chamber

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Patrick Doyle, Executive Director
Broome-Tioga County Workforce Development Board

Kenneth Kamlet, Chairman
Broome County EMC Brownfields Subcommittee

Frank Kelley, Executive Director
Partnership 2000

Julie Sweet, Broome County Planning Commissioner

**Economic Development Council of the
Southern Tier Board* and
Strategic Initiative Committee Members:**

Ryan Aguam* – Office of Senator Thomas W. Libous
George Akel* – Akel Wholesale Grocery
Robert Augenstern* – STERPDB
Richard Botnick* – Botnick 5/Ventures Inc.
Matthew Botnick – Botnick Chevrolet
Bruce W. Boyea – Security Mutual Life Insurance Co. of NY
Richard Bucci* – City of Binghamton
Chris Burger* - Broome County Legislature
Frances Carr – Binghamton University
Donald Colbert* – Binghamton University
Richard D’Attilio* - Broome County IDA
Donald Dellow* – Broome Community College
Alex Depersis* - The Broome Chamber
Ronald Dougherty – Tioga County Economic Development & Planning
Patrick Doyle – Broome-Tioga County Workforce Development Board
Charles Ebel* – IBM Corporation
John Flynn, Jr.* – NYS Department of Labor
Steven Gayle* – Binghamton Metropolitan Transportation Study

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Edwin Gent* – McFarland-Johnson, Inc.
Brent Health* – Local 325, IBEW
Kenneth Kamlet – Newman Development Group, LLP
Frank Kelley* - Partnership 2000
Joanne Kocak* – Sunset Mortgage Company
David Koffman* – Plaza Drive Associates, LLC
Ara Kradjian – Bates Troy Laundry, Inc.
Cathy Maliwacki – Davidson, Fox & Company, LLP
Martin Margherio* – Crowley Foods
Michael Marinaccio* – Council of Governments and Town of Dickinson
Ian McEvoy* – Universal Instruments
Peter McGinn – United Health Services, Inc.
Michael McGowan – McGowan Corporation
Frank Meyer* – Lockheed Martin Systems Integration
Burrell Montz* – Binghamton University
Joseph Moody – Town of Union
Marc Newman* – Newman Development Group, LLC
John O’Neil – Lourdes Hospital
Thomas Rattmann – Columbian Mutual Life Insurance, Inc.
Louis Santoni – The Broome Chamber
Martha Sauerbrey* – Tioga County Chamber of Commerce
Howard Sharp* – BSB Bank & Trust Company
Jeffrey Smith* – NYSEG
Anndrea Starzak – Town of Vestal
Julie Sweet* - Broome County Planning Commissioner
Robert Sweet* – Empire State Development
Jocelyn Thornton – Broome County Empire Zone

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The project team met with more than 300 individuals and organizations from the Broome County community, including the organizations listed below. Their input shaped this strategy, and their future support will be critical to the implementation of the economic development initiative:

Binghamton University	Lockheed Martin
BMTS	Lourdes
BOCES	Marketing Committee of the EDC
Broome Community College	NYSDOL
Broome County Empire Zone	NYSEG
Broome County Environmental Management Council	Office of the County Executive
Broome County Industrial Development Agency	Office of Senator Libous
Broome County Legislature	Press and Sun Bulletin
Broome County Planning Advisory Board	Security Mutual Life Insurance Company
Broome-Tioga County Workforce Development Board	Southern Tier Opportunity Council
City of Binghamton	The Broome Chamber
Council of Governments	Town of Union
Economic Development Council of the Southern Tier	Town of Vestal
IBM Corporation	UHS Hospitals
Infrastructure Committee of the EDC	Universal Instruments
Local outdoor, conservation, environmental organizations	West Side Neighborhood Association

In addition to the organizations listed above, the project team would like to thank all of the citizens who provided emailed and wrote us with their input on The BC Plan.

The core consulting team for this project included Angelos Angelou, Chris Engle, and Amy Holloway of Angelou Economics, and Peter Liebowitz of Allee King Rosen & Fleming.

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Planning Process

In November 2001, the consulting team of AngelouEconomics and the Broome County Strategic Initiatives Committee began to create the *Broome County Plan for Sustainable Economic Development (The BC Plan)*.

From the beginning, the project involved extensive research. The targeted strategy was to include recommendations geared toward growing specific high impact industries within the region. To identify the target industries best suited for Broome County, the consulting team looked at the community from a variety of angles:

- What are the region's demographic characteristics?
- What infrastructure is currently available in Broome County?
- What state and local incentives can be offered to businesses?
- How does Broome County compare to other similar-sized regions?
- What are Broome County's strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats to development?
- What is the current industry composition of the region? How does it compare nationally?

To answer these questions, AngelouEconomics conducted in-depth research, gathering data from national, state, and local sources. The consulting team also led focus groups and interviews with a variety of organizations and individuals in Broome County.

Based on the research, five target industries were identified. The industries that were selected both compliment Broome County's current strengths and opportunities and have strong potential for future growth.

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The economic development strategy contains recommendations that will increase Broome County's opportunities for growing its target industries and other high impact businesses. Recommendations fall into three categories: workforce development, land use, and marketing. Individual reports on each topic were written to provide detailed supporting information.

The final report, the *Implementation Plan*, compiles all recommendations into a single document. This report offers a roadmap for implementing the recommendations, as well as suggesting a structure for a single economic development organization.

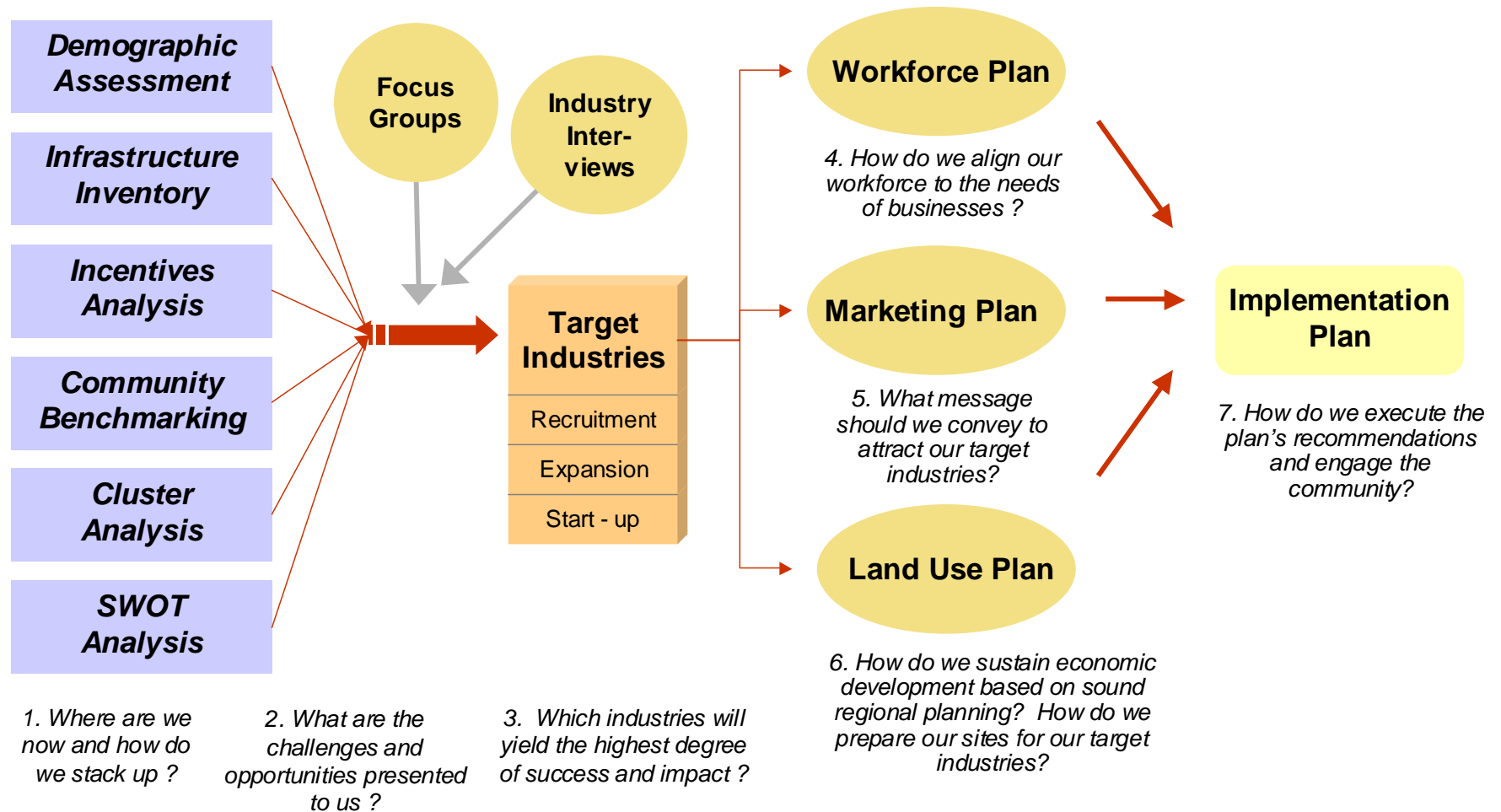
The flow chart on the following page illustrates this planning process. The depth of analysis backing each recommendation makes this the most comprehensive method for creating a long-term economic development strategy.

It is strongly recommended throughout The BC Plan, that the entire region brand itself under a single identity. The name "Greater Binghamton" has been suggested as the new brand for the region. Throughout the rest of this Executive Summary, the county will be referred to as Greater Binghamton.

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The Greater Binghamton Planning Process



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Introduction

The initiative described in *The BC Plan* will result in many benefits for Greater Binghamton. Economies founded on high impact businesses experience greater long-term economic growth and wealth creation. A targeted economic development approach will decrease the region's susceptibility to economic downturns.

High impact businesses will utilize and add to Greater Binghamton's highly skilled labor pool. The wealth generated by these businesses and their employees will multiply through Greater Binghamton at a higher rate than other industries, impacting almost every level of the economy.

Greater Binghamton has a strong history of innovation and entrepreneurship. This strategy seeks to build on this tradition by nourishing a climate ripe for R&D and small- to medium-sized businesses. The driving objective of this strategy is to generate sustainable economic growth and prosperity for the citizens of the Greater Binghamton region.

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Report Highlights

All recommendations offered in this report are both (1) sustainable (creating consistent long-term economic growth in a non-damaging way) and (2) strategic (tailored and coordinated for meeting the county's long-term objectives). The implementation of these recommendations should take place over a 5-year horizon.

The most critical activity Greater Binghamton must engage in to begin a successful economic development initiative is to **create a single economic development organization**. This organization would be coordinated by an economic development governing board. The board and its staff would be responsible for guiding the implementation of the recommendations in *The BC Plan*. It would be responsible for marketing the region to target industries and coordinating activities that improve the region's business climate and liveability. Similar to other competitive regions, the governing board should be a one-stop-shop for economic development decision-making. The *Implementation Plan* provides suggestions about the organization's structure and responsibilities.

The consulting team also recommended five industries on which Greater Binghamton should focus economic development. Within these industries, the community should focus on small- to medium-sized businesses conducting R&D, design, or other knowledge-based activities. Five broad industries have been identified that are well suited for Broome's current strengths and that have potential for strong future growth: electronics, communications services, health care, biotechnology, and food processing.

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These industries should become the county's target audience for marketing. Their labor skill requirements should drive workforce development programs in the region. Site development and land use investment should consider the infrastructure requirements of those businesses. *For more detail on each target industry, please refer to the Cluster Analysis and Target Industry Study.*

They are by no means the only industries that will be attracted to the Greater Binghamton region. When the community meets the workforce, business climate, and site requirements of its target industries, it is likely that other industries will follow.

Other recommendations in *The BC Plan* fall into three main categories: marketing, workforce development, and land use. The following sections provide a brief synopsis of each report and highlight top recommendations.

Broome County Recommended Target Industries

Knowledge based, R&D, and design based small to medium sized businesses in the following sectors:

1. Electronics companies specializing in:
 - sensor equipment and software
 - automation equipment and software
 - computer storage devices
 - simulation equipment and software
2. Communications companies, such as:
 - data storage and recovery centers
 - technical customer support centers
 - photonics
3. Private healthcare companies
4. Biotechnology and bioinformatics companies
5. Food processing companies

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Marketing Plan

A marketing effort founded on accurate research and understanding of Greater Binghamton's strengths will increase the number of high impact companies, workforce talent, and entrepreneurs to the community. This will lead to the creation of higher paying, higher quality jobs and a surge of new startup companies.

Increasing awareness of Greater Binghamton and its many benefits is the primary objective the marketing recommendations presented in *The BC Plan*. Though the region may be the birthplace of IBM and Link Aviation (Singer Link), awareness of the region outside of the Southern Tier of New York and northern Pennsylvania is low. Developing name recognition for the region can be accomplished through tactical and strategic marketing.

Marketing should establish awareness of Greater Binghamton as a community with a long tradition of technological innovation and the experience to continue into the future. To accomplish this, the consulting team offers several broad recommendations:

Top Marketing Recommendations

First and foremost, it is essential that Greater Binghamton establish a uniform community identity for economic development purposes. This identity should enhance the region's positive attributes and place high impact businesses and skilled workers at the center of the message.

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(1) Commit to a single marketing identity, theme, and message.

As mentioned earlier in this report, it is recommended that Broome County market the region under the identity of “Greater Binghamton.” This term leverages the recognizable name of Binghamton while not limiting

itself to geographic boundaries (as the term “county” would do.) It is also recommended that Greater Binghamton promote itself as a “home to innovation.” This marketing theme combines the region’s top two strengths: its tradition and experience in innovation and its high quality of life as a home for families.



After an identity is agreed upon, Greater Binghamton should develop a web site to use as the primary source for information and promotion of the community.

(2) Involve education, media, and private sector entities in economic development.

The best economic development campaigns involve individuals and organizations from a broad cross section of the community. Economic development can be viewed as a “four legged stool” – with equal participation and responsibility from the public sector, private sector, educators, and the media. Keeping the community informed about economic development activities, and internally promoting success stories, is an important role for local media. Educators are an important source for information about R&D activities and workforce skills – two questions at the top of every site selector’s list. The private sector should be a region’s best sales department.

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Site selectors are much more receptive to receiving information about a possible new location from their peers rather than public sector economic developers.

(3) Actively market Greater Binghamton in regions outside of the Southern Tier.

Greater Binghamton must engage in active recruitment efforts outside of the Southern Tier. It is recommended that local officials lead marketing missions to regions in which the target industries are highly concentrated. The marketing group should be, again, comprised of volunteers from the public, private, education, and media sectors. Promotional activities could include:

- Regular attendance at target industry trade shows and conferences
- Online and print collateral designed to frequently update prospects about activities in Greater Binghamton.
- An aggressive public relations campaign, leveraging on big news events such as the Endicott Interconnect announcement or BU activities

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Workforce Development Plan

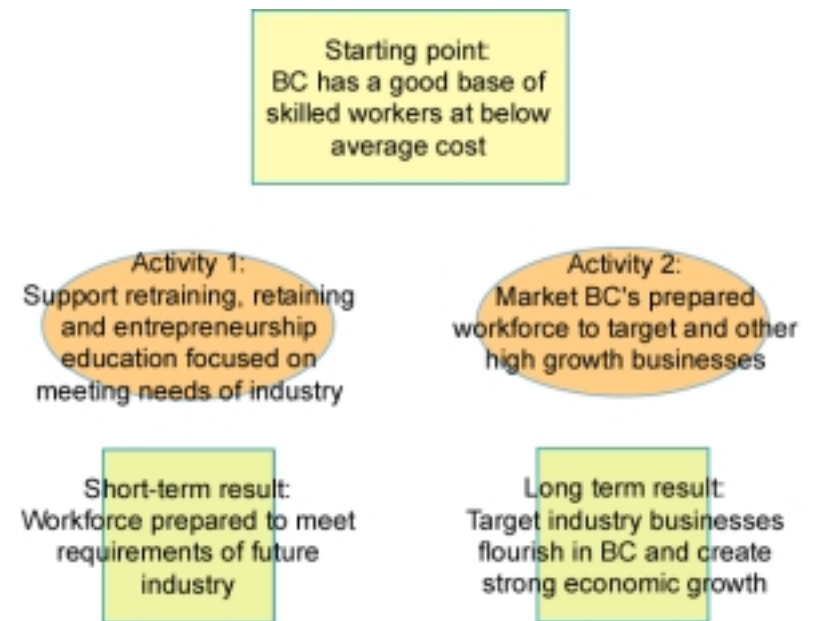
Workforce and economic development are closely linked. A strong workforce leads to business recruitment. A healthy industry base generates and retains an accomplished workforce, leading to increased incomes, job creation, and entrepreneurship.

Greater Binghamton leaders should set workforce development as a top priority and actively market its existing pool of technically skilled workers. The region's main concern has not been, as it has in other communities, a shortage of workers or record low unemployment. Greater Binghamton has an ample supply of technically skilled workers as a result of downsizing. The region also contains a good supply of mid- to senior-level workers. Three broad recommendations emerged that build on these traits:

Top Workforce Recommendations

- 1. Focus workforce development activities on meeting the needs of target industries.**

The *Workforce Development* portion of *The BC Plan* identifies the occupational skill requirements of Greater Binghamton target industries. These activities could include programs aimed at retraining the current workforce,



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encouraging students to focus on target industry fields, and retaining skilled workers that might otherwise leave the region.

2. Create an environment that attracts and retains a diverse, talented pool of young professionals.

It has been difficult retaining young professionals in Greater Binghamton. Many young workers cite a shortage of multifamily housing and entertainment options as reasons not to live in the region. It is recommended that Broome leaders survey young professionals and college students to better understand why they would / would not live in the region. Creating a Young Professionals organization and empowering young people to participate in the leadership of the community is an excellent initial step. Long term, local leaders must address the demand for higher-end single and multifamily housing, particularly in downtown areas. Entertainment options will increase as the region improves its CBDs and outdoor recreation opportunities.

It is especially important for the community to become more accepting of the young person's lifestyle. A thriving population of young people is a strong indicator of a region's creativity and willingness to take risks – both attractive qualities to high impact businesses.

3. Educate the community about entrepreneurship and encourage individuals to start their own businesses.

Greater Binghamton contains a lot of innovative, experienced individuals. Entrepreneurship can be an important tool to retaining skilled workers who might otherwise leave the region in search of employment. The region's history of technology and entrepreneurship should carry on into the future. It is recommended that Greater Binghamton leaders start the Greater Binghamton Entrepreneurs Association and support groups such as the Valley of Innovation initiative. Entrepreneurship training and information should be made available at workforce development centers. Within the near future, Binghamton University (BU) and local leaders should work together to establish an electronics and / or a bioscience incubator and technology commercialization center. Leaders should promote the

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region to New York angel and venture investors to increase local access to capital. Investors should be included as a target audience for Greater Binghamton's marketing and invited to speak at and participate in the Entrepreneur's Association.

The BC Plan places much emphasis on expanding the potential of the existing workforce. With outstanding higher education institutions such as BU and BCC, Greater Binghamton has an extremely marketable workforce. It is important to fine-tune those skills to meet target industry needs and open the door for entrepreneurial activities.

Land Use Plan

Regional land use planning is critical to a sustainable economic development strategy. Land use recommendations attempt to balance Greater Binghamton's economic development goals with environmental and quality of life considerations. It is essential for local leaders to continue improving the liveability of Greater Binghamton, to attract and retain quality workers and families. The county should also engage in land use activities that deter urban sprawl and improve conditions in its urban core.

Recommendations in the *Land Use* portion of *The BC Plan* focus on two main objectives:

- To improve the liveability of Greater Binghamton to attract and retain a highly skilled workforce
- To improve the quality of infrastructure and sites to attract and retain high impact businesses

While the *Land Use Plan* contains many recommendations, several surface as being essential to the success of an economic development:

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Top Land Use Recommendations

(1) Engage in corridor-based land use improvements.

As experienced daily by the citizens of Greater Binghamton, quality of life issues associated with unmanaged or sprawl growth, unattractive development, deterioration of older areas, traffic congestion, and community fragmentation tend to center around key arterial corridors. Local leaders should focus land use planning around specific corridors in the county, in particular:

- Airport Road (CR 69) from Route 17 to Binghamton Regional Airport
- Routes 11/12, from Main Street to Chenango Bridge Road
- Route 7/I-88, North, from Robinson Street to Chenango Bridge Road
- Route 7, South, from Susquehanna River crossing to Corbettsville
- Route 17C, from Front Street to Owego

Local leaders should continue to enhance the appearance of major gateway corridors entering Greater Binghamton. It is also important to explore new ways to regulate land and spur diverse development.

(2) Improve Greater Binghamton's land stock by strategically redeveloping brownfield sites and expanding infrastructure to support new development in carefully selected locations.

For Greater Binghamton in particular, with limited new development sites in its urban areas, brownfields sites are an essential element of a successful economic development strategy. As such, brownfield redevelopment should be a top priority for the county. To begin, Greater Binghamton should expand the role and profile of the Environmental Management Council's (EMC) existing subcommittee on brownfields (Brownfield Task Force). The Brownfield Task Force should continue their efforts to prioritize sites based on redevelopment potential/marketability, regional

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significance, and difficulty of remediation. The task force should pursue funding and resources for the redevelopment of local sites from sources such as: revolving loan funds, tax increment financing, reduction or elimination of defaulted or overdue property taxes, and additional EPA and EDA programs.

Greater Binghamton should also focus on building the infrastructure capacity of selected greenfield and underutilized properties. Consider the infrastructure requirements of the target industries and, referring to the recommendations presented in the Land Use portion of The BC Plan, prioritize investment on those sites. Strongly consider the development of a business park system, utilizing a series of underutilized and select greenfield sites in the region.

(3) Transform CBDs into vibrant community cores for business, entertainment, and living.

Dynamic and vital urban centers are critical to creating an attractive environment for sustainable economic development. Each of Greater Binghamton's key central business districts have qualities on which vibrant urban centers could emerge. The CBDs (Binghamton, Endicott, and Johnson) could become a location for new higher-end multifamily housing, retail, and entertainment options. County and other economic development leaders should support and take a role in coordinating downtown arts/culture activities within the three CBDs. BU, BCC, and Greater Binghamton leaders should consider a downtown location for an incubator(s), technology transfer centers, and an international student center. These amenities will create an environment that will attract and retain young professionals and entrepreneurs, and improve the county's sense of identity.

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Conclusion

Economic development requires a long-term vision. To be successful, commitment to the activities described in *The BC Plan* must transcend jurisdictional boundaries. Our emphasis on internal marketing at the launch of the economic development campaign is oriented at increasing community support to a level that will sustain the initiative for many years to come. Success may not come immediately, but it is guaranteed to occur in the future if the community implements the recommendations included in this strategy.

At the start of *The BC Plan*, the consulting team found Greater Binghamton without a unified economic development vision. Interviews and focus groups revealed an overall negativity, as the community reflected on past job losses and economic slowdown. Economic development activities lacked coordination and little marketing of the county was taking place.

The consulting team also discovered a community steeped in a history of innovation and entrepreneurship. Through discussions with local corporations, the team uncovered an experienced, technically skilled workforce that is loyal to living and raising their families in the community. It also found a major university and top ranked community college engaged in cutting edge research and development. The most important discovery has been that Greater Binghamton has marketable qualities that – if built upon – can strongly compete for high tech, high impact businesses.

The preparation of *The BC Plan* has engaged many Greater Binghamton establishments – from public officials, to educators, private sector executives, and the media. It has become the starting point for conversations and improving

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relations between various organizations. Media coverage of the planning process has already generated requests for more information about the community by companies located outside of Greater Binghamton.

It is time to look optimistically to the future. The region must continue to engage in a concerted economic development effort to revitalize its economy. The Greater Binghamton region has the talent, experience, and spirit of innovation desired by high impact businesses. If these attributes are successfully built upon, as recommended in The BC Plan, the region will experience unprecedented economic growth and prosperity.