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**Executive Summary**

## I. Executive Summary

### Overall Objective

The objective of this study is to define long range economic development options for Schoharie County that increase local job opportunities and expand the tax base by leveraging local resources and other economic activity throughout the Capital Region.

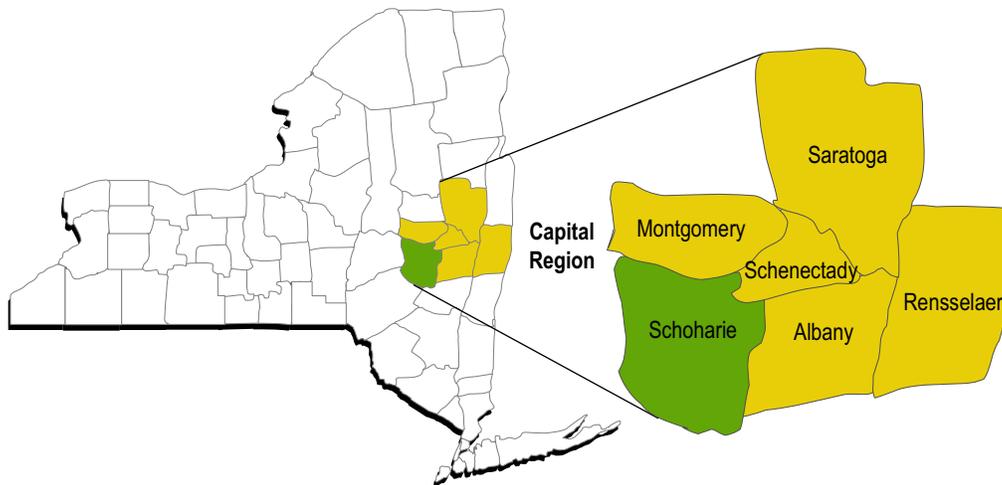
### Methodology

The study begins with a review of the Capital Region's economy – both past and present – to get a perspective on the economic segments and specific industries that have been strong in the region along with an outlook for the future. A number of economic indicators were evaluated, including, population growth, unemployment rate trends and median household income levels. In the next phase, resources that are available to Schoharie County to support economic development were reviewed and evaluated. In the final phase, a summary is provided on issues impacting the current economic situation along with details for developing an economic development strategy and a proposed strategy for the county.

### Overview on the Capital Region and Schoharie County

Schoharie County is located in eastern New York State within the Capital Region which includes the six-county Albany/Schenectady/Troy metropolitan statistical area (MSA) as noted in Figure 1.1 below. The underpinning of the Capital Region's economy includes: New York State government, traditional manufacturing (which is rapidly diminishing), regional retail trade,

1.1 – The Capital Region and the Albany/Schenectady/Troy MSA



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financial services/insurance, professional/business services, and agriculture in rural areas. The overall region has experienced only moderate growth over the past 40 years with the exception of Saratoga County which is one of the fastest growing counties in the state. Recently, federal, state and private resources have been investing heavily in both university R&D at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI) and at the State University of New York (SUNY) at Albany as well as in private labs in order to develop new products from emerging technologies.

Schoharie county has been an agricultural, commercial and industrial center since it was first settled by the Germans and Dutch in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. Over the years, it has not only been the breadbasket for the colonies and later a major dairy farming region but also a center for innovation with the manufacturing of a variety of farm implements and household goods. Over the past 60 years, factory jobs within the county have continued to diminish forcing workers to commute to nearby counties for jobs such as at the former ALCO locomotive works and the GE plant in Schenectady. Over the past few years, the county has lost the majority of its local manufacturing jobs with the closure of Guilford Mills in Cobleskill and Storyhouse in Charlotteville. The county now seeks alternatives to replace lost jobs and expand their tax base.

### Resources That Support Economic Development

A detailed review of the county's resources is presented and evaluated in Section III. Key resources include access to an interstate highway (I-88), availability of flat land at a low to moderate cost, access to SUNY Cobleskill, an available labor force, as well as natural beauty



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and a small-town quality of life with easy access to metro area amenities.

### **Economic Development Strategy**

In Section IV, an economic development strategy is developed for the county by first looking at what makes a sustainable economy and what is the economic relationship between Schoharie County and the rest of the Capital Region. Next, the current situation is evaluated to focus on the key factors that influence the formulation of a strategy as background information. Key inputs to an effective strategy are reviewed along with alternatives and their benefits and potential adverse impacts. A strategy was then outlined for the county that defines both economic opportunities as well as some community develop action items that are needed to achieve the strategy. An outline of the proposed economic development strategy is as follows:

### **Overall Objectives**

- Rebuild and expand local employment opportunities for residents of the county by attracting and supporting businesses that offer challenging and good-paying jobs
- Enhance the tax base of the county to off-set the current tax burden for schools, services and infrastructure on local residents
- Improve local access to goods and services to enhance the quality of life
- Provide a community that attracts medical professionals to the Bassett Hospital, top quality teachers to local schools and SUNY Cobleskill, business entrepreneurs, and other professionals that support the community
- Preserve the natural beauty and historic sites/heritage of the area, the ability to maintain a family farm, and the small-town environment

### **Key Elements of the Strategy**

#### **1. Target Sectors/Industries**

- > Technology-Related Manufacturing
- > Information Technology
- > Traditional Manufacturing
- > Financial Services/Back Office Operations
- > Distribution Warehousing
- > Recreation/Tourism

## **I. Executive Summary (cont'd)**

### **2. Improving the Competitive Positioning of the County**

Based on comparisons with adjacent counties, Schoharie County has two key competitive issues: (1) The tax rates (particularly in the villages) are equal or higher than other locations within the region. To reduce these rates, the villages and towns should seriously consider consolidating their governments and related services. (2) The county does not have an Empire Zone capability to lower taxes and provide needed incentives. Efforts to date have not proven fruitful but should continue to be pursued.

### **3. Primary Location(s) for Growth and Development of a Master Plan**

Considering that many location decisions are made based on access to transportation and labor resources, it is evident that the primary growth locations should focus on the I-88 and U.S. Route 20 corridors. A second tier priority should be for other communities in the county such as Middleburgh and Gilboa.

In order to facilitate and manage the growth strategy and locations, a master land use plan should be developed for the two corridors and begin a formal next-generation zoning program that helps set expectations and contains certain types of growth within defined areas.

### **4. Types of Facilities Required**

- > Flexible Office Space
- > Flexible Manufacturing Space
- > Warehouse Sites
- > Lab Space
- > Sports Area

### **5. Enhancing Quality of Life Attributes**

- > Housing
- > Retail in Cobleskill

### **Action Plan for Implementing an Economic Development Strategy**

A fifteen point action plan is provided at the back of the report that provides both short and long term items that focus on both economic and community development.