

Growing Greene

A newsletter from **Greene County Planning and Economic Development**

Fall 2008

Shovel-Ready Business Parks, Empire Zones Attract Significant Investments by DynaBil and Empire Merchants North

Build it and they will come. That saying has certainly proven true in the past six months with two shovel-ready business parks developed by the Greene County Industrial Development Agency (IDA) attracting major investments by Empire Merchants North and DynaBil Industries, Inc. Both parks have also been designated as Empire Zones.

One of the largest distributors of spirits, fine wines and beer in New York, Empire Merchants North announced a deal in September with the Greene County IDA for the sale of 21 acres in the Kalkberg Commerce Park located in the Towns of Coxsackie and New Baltimore. Empire will construct a 250,000-square-foot corporate office/distribution complex on the site with room for future expansion and growth.

The new facility, which represents a total investment of more than \$27.5 million, will allow the company to consolidate three locations into one. With the opening of the new facility, Empire intends to offer employment to its current compliment of 362 associates.

Meanwhile, DynaBil Industries is expanding its operations at the Greene Business and Technology Park in Coxsackie and will add 120 new jobs at the manufacturing plant. The company is investing more than \$6 million as part of the deal that includes a long-term lease on a new 33,000-square-foot facility and a planned Phase II. In the next two to three years, this second phase will grow to add more space and more jobs.

DynaBil, which manufactures complex sheet metal assemblies for the defense and aerospace industries, has been experiencing "explosive growth" since the company earned a position as a critical supplier on programs such as Sikorsky's Black Hawk helicopter and Boeing's 787 Dreamliner aircraft, according to DynaBil's President, Paul J. Burton.



DynaBil's proposed new facility in Coxsackie.

This project received significant support from New York State with a \$750,000 Office of Community Renewal grant to fund the extension of road and infrastructure to the site and a \$400,000 Manufacturing Assistance Program grant from Empire State Development Corporation to support the expanded needs of the manufacturing operation. DynaBil will also benefit from significant assistance from the Greene County Empire Zone.

Greene County Planning and Economic Development has revamped its website to be both more robust and user-friendly.

Director's Message

With the use of the Internet in site selection searches growing dramatically and businesses big and small using the Web for all kinds of information gathering, Greene County Planning and Economic Development has revamped its website to be both more robust and user-friendly.

Our interactive home page now features "quick paths" to major programs and services ranging from our Micro-enterprise Assistance Program to Empire Zones. It also allows a user to search quickly for "most frequently requested applications/publications" such as loan applications and Planning and Zoning Referral forms. An up-to-date meeting schedule is posted as well.

Beyond its improved navigation and updated look, the site includes a dynamic new feature: an inventory of sites and buildings. We have been collaborating with the Greene County Multiple Listing Service and plan to hold a series

of workshops with local realtors to train them on how to update their properties in the database.

In addition, we continue to work in close partnership with the Greene County IDA, which maintains an inventory of its shovel-ready sites and business parks. Our database will also encompass smaller industrial sites and commercial buildings scattered across Greene County.

Please take some time to browse through the website and see the wealth of information it contains about everything from

our GIS mapping services to details on our full breath of loans and incentives. We'd love your feedback.

Warren Hart, AICP
Director

Greene County Planning and Economic Development

Visit us on the web:
www.greenebusiness.com

Greene County Receives \$450,000 Grant To Help Workers Buy First Homes

Even scrimping and saving while working a full-time job, many Greene County residents find it difficult to put together enough money to buy their first homes. Thanks to a new \$450,000 grant that Greene County has received from New York's Office of Community Renewal, first-time home buying may be considerably easier in the year ahead.



A direct result of the Greene County Legislature adopting the Housing Action Plan, the grant is being administered by Greene County Planning and

Economic Development in partnership with local banks and the Catskill Mountain Housing Development Corporation. Plans call for allocating the grant money to as many as 15 different people who may be looking to buy their first home but might not otherwise be able to afford to do so. The partnership plans to work through some of the county's largest companies to ask for help in identifying employees who may be good candidates for the loans.

For more details, call Karl Heck at 719-3290.

Watershed Regional Mapping Project Under Way

With the help of a \$50,000 grant from the New York State Department of State, Greene County Planning and Economic Development is spearheading an innovative watershed regional mapping project for the nine mountaintop communities located within the New York City watershed.

The project leverages state and county resources to provide tools for community planning boards to use to address water quality issues as part of their review process.

New Inn, Restaurant, Apartments and Retail Space In Coxsackie Get Quantum Fund Boost

When native New Yorker and retired Texas businessman Thomas Giamboi returned to the Hudson Valley after being gone for nearly 20 years, he discovered a "hidden gem with a natural beauty that just can't be replicated easily." The discovery led him on a two-year quest to find the perfect place to begin a new real estate venture where he could "make an impact."

Today, Giamboi is breathing new life into a row of connected buildings in downtown Coxsackie, thanks in part to a Greene County Quantum Fund loan of \$260,000 that has helped his newly formed company, Coxsackie Waterfront Properties, LLC, acquire four adjacent properties: One Mansion Street, 49 Reed Street, 45 Reed Street and an adjoining vacant lot.

In a project projected to cost more than \$1.2 million, Giamboi is restoring and refurbishing the historic three-story brick buildings into a mixed-used development that will include a new inn, restaurant, apartments, offices and retail space. Demolition work has already begun with the new restaurant and inn projected to open by May 2009 in time for the summer tourist season.

"The Quantum Fund loan is an integral part of why I decided to invest in Greene County," said Mr. Giamboi. "This project represents a substantial financial investment and I don't think I could have made the math work without this low-interest loan."

"It was also very important to me that everyone in Greene County was very business friendly and that I was welcomed and my project embraced," he continued. "I liked the fact that Greene County has a loan fund to invest in its future and has a shared vision about smart growth."

Plans call for a new restaurant to be created at 45 Reed Street with a deck in the rear of the building that will allow

for outdoor seating with stunning views of the Hudson River. The second and third floors will be remodeled to create eight comfortable rooms for the inn, all with private baths, bay windows, porches and river views.



"I liked the fact that Greene County has a loan fund to invest in its future and has a shared vision about smart growth."

- Thomas Giamboi
Coxsackie Waterfront Properties

At One Mansion Street, the existing tenants will remain, while the back portion of the building will become a commercial kitchen for the restaurant and the third floor will be renovated as an apartment with river views. A new tenant will be sought for the vacant first floor at 49 Reed Street and the second floor will be renovated as offices.

The Coxsackie project is Giamboi's second real estate venture in Greene County. In partnership with his sister and brother-in-law, Maria and Rich Rosado, he previously bought the Glen Falls House in Round Top, which has been a traditional Catskill resort since 1902.

Convinced he wanted to invest further in the area, Giamboi started criss-crossing Greene, Ulster, Putnam and Dutchess counties looking for the right community and redevelopment opportunity. He explained that Coxsackie had all the attributes he was looking for: it was on the Hudson River, it had its own Thruway exit, it was only 15 minutes from the Hudson train station, it had the right mix of commercial and residential development and it had not completely matured yet.

"I really believe that downtown Coxsackie has the character and the right attributes to become a very vibrant place in a couple of years," he commented. "I think it's going to be a real winner, so I took the plunge."

In addition to the Quantum Fund loan, Greene County Planning and Economic Development awarded a Main Street Revitalization Program façade grant to the previous owners of 49 Reed Street for repointing of the brick and stone buildings. It is likely that the county will also provide tourism services for the new development project, providing a complete economic development package.

Housing Action Plan Adopted; Progress Being Made Already

A new Housing Action Plan was adopted by the Greene County Legislature in July and work is already under way to implement some of the recommendations. The plan quantifies and assesses the county's current housing market, proposes highly specific action steps to streamline and focus the development process and sets guidelines that can be used by developers and municipalities to meet the housing needs of Greene County residents across a broad spectrum of housing choices.



A Plan for Housing
Prepared for the Greene County Department of Planning & Economic Development with funding provided by the Office of State Development, Housing & Community Renewal and the Greene County Legislature.

July 2008
Presented by
FIVE STREET

"Developing a mix of quality housing options that are affordable to households across various income ranges is a key ingredient to maintaining vibrant communities and meeting the needs of Greene County's 21st century workforce," said Karen Deyo, Greene County Legislator and Government Operations Committee Chair. "This plan provides a roadmap for the county and municipalities to work hand-in-hand to create more housing options for our residents, from first-time home buyers to senior citizens."

The 120-page Housing Action Plan spells out nearly 40 specific actions to achieve specific goals. Among the actions recommended are:

- Encourage second-floor housing on Main Streets to create mixed-use buildings.
- Work with developers to encourage mixed-income home and rental projects.
- Encourage municipalities to allow density bonuses to developers in exchange for more community benefits.
- Explore the feasibility of establishing a Community Housing Trust, which would acquire land on which affordable housing can be built for those making less than 80% of median income.
- Promote housing rehabilitation programs and incentives.
- Work with municipalities, non-profits and county agencies to implement home ownership assistance programs.
- Encourage major employers to provide home ownership assistance.
- Allow housing developments for seniors such as continuing care retirement communities.
- Allow seniors to stay in their homes by permitting accessory apartments and elder cottages.

Greene County Planning and Economic Development is taking a lead advocacy role for workforce housing in partnership with county agencies, departments and not-for-profit organizations that deal with housing. The first Housing Action Team meeting was held in mid-October, with the 10 organizations represented establishing goals and identifying nearly 20 current or potential projects that could benefit from collaboration and partnership.

"A healthy regional economy depends not only on jobs, but also on places for the workforce to live and contribute to the community," said Warren Hart, Director of Greene County Planning and Economic Development.

A complete copy of the report can be downloaded at: www.greenebusiness.com.

All Aboard New Rip Van Winkle Express

Greene County's new Rip Van Winkle Express has been turning heads since the colorful new bus hit the road the last week of August. With the old bus needing to be retired after more than 200,000 miles of service, the county decided that the time was right to rebrand its public transit system and use one of the Catskill's most iconic images – Rip Van Winkle – to boost its exposure, appeal and bus ridership. Use of the famed storybook character is also in line with recommendations made in the county's Comprehensive Economic Development Plan.

Handicapped accessible, air conditioned and a bit bigger than the old bus, the new Rip Van Winkle Express is open to the public, with discounts offered to senior citizens. With the price of gas these days, you may want to give it a try. A new transit guide is soon to be published. Details on the bus schedule, routes and fares are available at www.greenebusiness.com.

Main Street Revitalization Program Keeps Working to Improve Greene County

Greene County's Main Street Revitalization Program (MSRP) continues to make significant contributions "to improving the vitality of our Main Streets. Among projects now under way are:

■ Durham Schoolhouse

Sibyl Schwarzenbach received a \$5,000 grant to refurbish the vacant, one-room schoolhouse in Durham as an art gallery and community facility. Façade renovations, which are now about half done, include new doors and windows.

■ Pine Grove House

A \$4,000 MSRP grant is assisting with cornice repair and painting of the Pine Grove House in Palenville as important steps in reopening the old hotel.

■ Cairo Main Street Strategy

Greene County Planning and Economic Development is working with Dadras Architects and retail expert Michael Berne to develop a Main Street Strategy for Cairo. The study is analyzing what needs to be done to upgrade existing buildings to make them more attractive as retail spaces, as well as looking at ways to draw more traffic from Route 23. Expected to be complete in early 2009, the study is also identifying



redevelopment opportunities for vacant, dilapidated and underutilized properties in a target area on Route 23B from Route 23, where the two new banks are located to where it connects back to Route 23 on the west side.

Even smaller MSRP projects, such as the bright yellow awnings for the



Catskill Community Center and the hanging flower baskets that adorned Tannersville and East Durham this summer, can make a big difference when it comes to the "curb appeal" of our villages and towns.

Greene County Planning and Economic Development is currently working on an application to receive additional funding from the New York Main Street Program that is administered by the New York State Office of Community Renewal. Watch for details on applications for 2009 grants.

Two Restaurants Expand with Help from Quantum Fund

Two Greene County restaurants – beloved by locals and visitors alike – are expanding, thanks in part to low-interest Quantum Fund loans from the county's revolving loan fund.



Cameo's Restaurant in Athens plans to double its seating with the help of a \$135,000 Quantum Fund loan that will help owner Joshua Lackie buy the building where his restaurant currently rents space at the southwest corner of Washington and Second Street. By adding approximately 1,000 square feet of adjacent space, Lackie will be able to add 70 more seats to his Italian restaurant, which also

does a brisk take-out and delivery business for pizza and pizza-related items. Plans call for transforming the current dining room into a small bar/bistro with a full liquor license. The expansion will also allow the restaurant to accommodate private parties when it is complete next spring.

"It was a very easy process getting the Quantum Fund loan," Mr. Lackie recalled, noting that Greene County Planning and Economic Development staff assisted him with the paperwork. "The fact that both the county and the bank were helping to finance the project is what really made it work so smoothly. There were no hurdles," he commented.

Scribner Hollow Lodge, in Hunter was awarded an \$80,000 Quantum Fund loan to help with extensive renovations and expansion of its catering facilities for weddings and other special events. Although the resort's Prospect Restaurant has earned a stellar



reputation for its gourmet food and wine dinners, the dining facility was too small for many functions, according to owner Guy Chirico. The renovation, which included new HVAC, fixtures and equipment, created a bold new décor featuring a fireplace, Tiffany lighting and Stickley furniture. The investment will allow the resort to become a year-round destination for weddings, large corporate meetings and other catered events, Mr. Chirico said.

Snap Fitness to Open on Main Street in Catskill

When Sandro Cagnin started looking for a location to open a Snap Fitness franchise, he started by looking in Poughkeepsie, Kingston and other larger cities in the Hudson Valley. But it wasn't long before he zeroed in on a former church on Main Street in Catskill for the fitness facility.

"We did our homework on demographics and the competition and decided we could do well here," he recalled. "We really liked what we saw happening on Main Street." "Plus, we were welcomed with open arms by Greene County and that made a big difference to us," Mr. Cagnin commented.

Cagnin Fitness received a \$60,000 Quantum Fund loan to help purchase equipment and furnishings for the refurbished church, which Cagnin bought in June with a partner. Part of a nationwide franchise of fitness centers that allow 24/7 access with a secure key card system similar to those used to gain access to ATMs in bank vestibules, the gym will offer cardio, strength and other equipment, along with tanning facilities, lockers and a massage room. A motion-activated, remote-control camera provides around-the-clock surveillance and people working out in the gym can also activate a two-way voice security system when the center isn't staffed.

"The fitness industry is one of the fastest growing businesses in the U.S.," Mr. Cagnin said. "I liked the concept of Snap Fitness,



because the key to getting people to exercise is to make it fast, affordable and convenient. It needs to be a place that is around the corner from your office or on your way home from work," he added. Cagnin noted that the Snap Fitness franchise is growing rapidly, with nearly 900 Snap Fitness centers slated to open in the U.S. and Canada before the end of the year, bringing the total number to approximately 2,000.

Cagnin, a graduate of the Culinary Institute of America and resident of Rhinebeck, New York, has been working in the hotel business in France for the past several years. "I was ready to come home," he recalled, "and Greene County's warm welcome and the Quantum Fund loan made it easier for me to do. They're as committed to the success of my business as I am and that's a good feeling."

Construction is now under way to retrofit the church, including reinforcing some of the floors to carry the weight of the heavy equipment. A Main Street Revitalization Program façade grant helped the previous owners paint exterior trim, fix windows and do some repointing so the exterior was in decent shape. Cagnin hopes to have a soft opening by December 15 and be open for business by January 1 when people flock to fitness centers to fulfill New Year's resolutions.

A variety of memberships will be offered starting at \$45 per month with no contract required. For details, visit www.snapfitness.com/catskillny or call (518) 943-3232.

Tracking Greene County Loans

With more than 70 loans now active in its revolving loan fund, Greene County Planning and Economic Development decided the time was right to invest in special grant management loan software. The new software, which is up and running well, helps the department keep close tabs on its loan portfolio, tracking everything from interest rates to repayment schedules. The software generates up-to-date reports that are helpful to the county's Economic Development Committee as members analyze future loan prospects.



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Catskill Named One of "10 Coolest Small Towns"

Catskill was named one of the "10 Coolest Small Towns" in America in the September 2008 issue of Arthur Frommer's *Budget Travel* magazine, which noted: "These towns all have fewer than 10,000 people – but they can rival larger cities when it comes to good food, culture and quality of life."

"Considering the tens of thousands of small towns across America, it's an incredible accomplishment for Catskill to be singled out," said Daniela Marino, Director of the Greene County Tourism Promotion Department. "It's a testament to the renaissance of Catskill in recent years and all that the village has to offer in terms of natural beauty, history, art, culture, shopping and dining."



New Conference Center Opens at Hunter Mountain



After the new Kaatskill Mountain Club opened a few years ago, Hunter Mountain President Russell R. Coloton, Jr., noticed a marked increase in demand for larger conference space at the ski resort. Recent work at the mountain's Base Lodge gave him the perfect opportunity to create a modern, spacious conference center within existing space.

The new Schoharie Rooms East and West, totaling 2,240 square feet, can accommodate groups ranging in size from 20 to 110, depending upon the configuration of the rooms. Equipped with state-of-the-art audio-visual equipment and high-speed Internet access, the conference rooms are adjacent to the Copper Tree Restaurant and a large alcove where food and beverages can be served. The conference center also offers immediate access to the quad chair lift.

During ski season, Hunter Mountain will be offering a special package that includes use of the conference facility, a lift ticket and continental breakfast for just \$79 per person. "Groups love the idea of meeting, getting out on the slopes for a few hours and then perhaps coming back to the conference center to wrap up business," Mr. Coloton observed.

Since the new conference center opened in August by hosting a group from Ducks Unlimited, business and inquiries have been brisk, the Hunter Mountain President said. "We've had everything from large groups of attorneys to weddings and birthday celebrations," he noted. "We think this is going to be very good for business for both Hunter Mountain and Greene County."

Hudson River Corridor Study Completed

A shared regional vision for appropriate growth and development of the seven communities comprising the Hudson River corridor was the goal of the year-long Hudson River Corridor Study that was completed and presented to the Greene County Legislature this summer.

Working to integrate local comprehensive plans, the project also included the preparation of county-level policies and standards to guide the Greene County Planning Board in the review of projects, along with an update and revision of the Greene County Planning and Zoning Referral Guide.

"The Hudson River Corridor Study provided an opportunity to identify a project priority list, to align resources of county departments and agencies and to spark interest in intermunicipal collaboration," said Ray Brooks, Greene County Legislator from Athens. "All four towns and three villages had input and by pulling together as one, we'll stand a better chance of competing for state and Federal grants for corridor improvements that will benefit all of us in the long-run."

A new brochure summarizing the study, along with detailed fact sheets and the study itself, are available at www.greenebusiness.com.

Hazards Mitigation Plan In the Works

A comprehensive All-Hazards Mitigation Plan for Greene County is now in the works. Spearheaded by Greene County Planning and Economic Development, the detailed plan will allow the county and participating municipalities to be eligible for future mitigation funding from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

Significant progress on the 18-month project has already been made. All 19 municipalities have passed a resolution to participate in the project; a contract was awarded to the consulting firm of Tetra Tech EM Inc., of Rockaway, New Jersey; risk and vulnerability assessments have been completed; and the Steering Committee and Planning Partners Committee has identified the following hazards to focus on:

- Flooding
- Severe storms
- Severe winter storms
- Ground failure
- Earthquakes

With much of the groundwork now done, the project will turn to the development of a hazards mitigation plan in accordance with state and Federal standards. For details, visit www.greenegovernment.com/hazmit.htm.