

**Capital District Regional
Planning Commission**

Strategic Plan

**One Park Place
Albany, New York**

December 8, 2004



Prepared for:

Capital District
Regional Planning Commission
One Park Place
Albany, New York 12205

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Planning Commission**

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December 8, 2004

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1.0 Executive Summary

1.1 Why This Strategic Plan Was Written

The purpose of strategic planning is to enable organizations to anticipate and respond to change. It is the objective of this strategic plan for the Capital District Regional Planning Commission (CDRPC) to frame the opportunities and challenges in its operating environment, and to position the Commission for success during its fourth decade of service to the communities of the Capital Region.

In 2003, CDRPC had its first new Executive Director in over twenty years. Chungchin Chen first joined CDRPC in 1970 and became the Executive Director in 1980. He was replaced by Rocco Ferraro, AICP, who first came to CDRPC in 1985. Mr. Ferraro served as Director of Planning Services for the Commission prior to his appointment as Executive Director.

In addition to a new Executive Director, CDRPC is also facing changes in the way it does business, and in the services it provides. CDRPC is responding to more requests for data services and planning assistance and to an expanding client base. CDRPC has responded, in part, by enhancing its technology based information services. Though the technology provides better access to the data, this same technology eliminates or reduces personal contact between the client users and staff.

Given the changes, both at the leadership level and in the scope of the services it provides, CDRPC Commissioners decided now is the appropriate time to revisit the organization's mission and work plan. The purpose of developing the Strategic Plan is to provide CDRPC with the necessary strategies to move forward to implement its mission to serve the Capital Region.

1.2 How this Strategic Plan was Prepared

In late 2003 the Board solicited proposals for the development of a Strategic Plan. The Board subsequently selected The Chazen Companies to prepare the plan. The Chazen Companies is an engineering and land planning organization with extensive experience in Strategic Planning. The Chazen Companies is also very familiar with the work products of

CDRPC as well as many of the stakeholders who regularly interact with the CDRPC Board and Staff.

The Strategic Planning process involved the establishment of a Strategic Planning Committee (the Committee). The Committee was comprised of the Executive Director and two Board members from each County and facilitated by an AICP certified planner. The Committee met once or twice a month between March and October. The Committee was responsible for all elements of the strategic planning process including:

- Identifying external stakeholders, who represented a broad range of geographic, political, social, cultural and economic interests across the Capital District.
- Identifying four peer organizations that shared similarities in terms of work plan, regional development and organizational constraints.
- Developing the questions used for the interviews that Chazen conducted with all of the Commissioners, staff, stakeholders, and peer organizations.
- Determining the scope of information to be covered at the retreat.
- Guiding the preparation of, and reviewing, the Draft and Final Strategic Plan document.
- The Committee regularly shared development of the document with the full Commission members who had an opportunity to review and comment and provided valuable input in the development of the final plan document.

The Commission and Staff participated in a two-day retreat in early May, 2004. The results of the surveys of Commissioners, Staff, stakeholders, and peer organizations were reviewed. The Commissioners and Staff created an inventory of the strengths, weaknesses, trends, conditions, opportunities and challenges facing the Capital District Regional Planning Commission. The critical issues facing the Commission fell into four categories:

- Mission
- Communication, Cooperation and Collaboration
- Internal Structure
- Regional Issues

The Commission charged the Committee with the assignment of crafting a mission statement and identifying specific strategies and tasks to address the critical issues.

On August 18, 2004, the Committee presented a draft Mission Statement to the Commission. The Commission amended the statement to reflect a greater emphasis on the Commission's desire to foster dialogue on solutions to regional problems and adopted the mission statement included in this document.

On October 20, 2004, the Committee presented a draft Strategic Plan to the full Commission for comment and discussion. Following suggested revisions, the Commission adopted this 2004 Strategic Plan for the Capital District Regional Planning Commission on December 8, 2004.

1.3 Key Findings

One of the biggest advantages of completing a Strategic Planning process is the ability of the organization to assess its strengths and weaknesses. The following is a summary of the key findings of this process.

- CDRPC Staff is highly regarded for their professionalism, technical proficiency, accessibility and responsiveness.
- CDRPC is highly regarded by the communities that it serves as a reliable source of data.
- Local governments need to improve and consolidate services which may provide opportunities for CDRPC in the delivery of information services.
- There is a regional interest in the development of regional policies.
- Communication between the Counties and the Commissioners needs to be improved.
- There is a small staff relative to the work load indicating that if additional tasks are to be incorporated into the staff's work load, the size of the organization's staff will need to be increased.
- Parochial attitudes are an obstacle to regional thinking.

2.0 Organizational Assessment

2.1 History of the Capital District Regional Planning Commission

CDRPC was established as a regional planning board in 1967 by a cooperative agreement between the counties of Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Schenectady. Its original purpose was to perform and support comprehensive planning work, including surveys, planning services, technical services, and the formulation of plans and policies to promote sound and coordinated development of the entire region.

Over time, the purpose or mission of the Planning Commission has evolved in response to changes in the region's needs, funding sources, organizational structures, and information technology. While continuing to provide a wide variety of comprehensive planning services, CDRPC has taken responsibility for regional activities associated with water quality planning, aviation system planning, regional data, mapping and information services, coordinator of the Economic Development District, and Foreign-Trade Zone administrator. In addition, the Commission is responsible for the administration of the 24 bed Capital Region Secure Juvenile Detention Facility.

Since its establishment in 1967, CDRPC has undertaken a variety of comprehensive planning efforts. Most recently, the Commission provided technical assistance to several communities in the preparation of their Town Master Plans, conducted wellhead protection and watershed planning studies in Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga and Schenectady counties, and participated in the preparation of the Eastern Gateway Canal and New York State Barge Canal plans.

A historical perspective, as prepared by David Vincent, past Chairman of the Board of Commissioners is found in Appendix I.

2.2 SWOT Assessment

One tool frequently used to assess an organization's health is the SWOT Analysis. SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. The SWOT analysis allows an organization to identify its current conditions, trends, priorities, strengths and weaknesses.

The Chazen Companies conducted a survey of all the Commissioners, the staff and selected stakeholders representing a broad range of perspectives. Appendix II identifies the name and affiliation of the 38 stakeholders who provided information relative to the SWOT analysis.

The Board and Staff participated in a two day facilitated retreat in May 2004. A primary objective of the retreat was to review the information provided by the external stakeholders. After reviewing the results of the stakeholder interviews, the Board and Staff identified the prevalent strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges of the organization. The following is a synthesis of the information relative to the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges of the CDRPC as identified at the May retreat.

Organizational Assessment	
<p style="text-align: center;">Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CDRPC Staff is highly regarded for their professionalism, technical proficiency, accessibility and responsiveness. • CDRPC is highly regarded by the communities that it serves as a reliable source of data. • CDRPC has a solid relationship with other agencies, particularly with the Region's MPO. • CDRPC has a broad base of regional knowledge. • Institutional Memory Bank as a result of almost four decades of service to the region. • Good staff morale. • Diversity of the Board. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local governments need to improve and consolidate services. • Regional interest in the development of regional policies. • Partnerships with regional entities. • Promotion of organization and regional assets. • Internal reorganization.
<p style="text-align: center;">Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor Communication between Counties and Commissioners. • Small staff relative to the work load. • Size of Board unwieldy for conversation at the board level, board meetings not interactive. • Lack of defined roles for Commissioners. • Discussions about complex topics are hampered by time constraints. • Board lacks cohesiveness. • Board not engaged in regional policy decisions. • Work plan appears to be driven by dollars not by policy or mission. • Value-added contribution not apparent to the potential end users. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ County officials do not sufficiently value the services. ▪ Parochial attitudes. ▪ Competition for funds and services by other organizations. ▪ Ratable chase. ▪ Tight budgets of the county and other governmental agencies. ▪ Planning expertise/technology more widely held now than in the past.

3.0 Mission Statement

In response to the issues, trends, challenges and opportunities facing the Commission, and in light of its unique strengths as an organization, the Board has refocused the Capital District Regional Planning Commission's mission to take a more activist role in fostering dialogue in the region. The adoption of its first formal mission statement will allow the Board and Staff greater flexibility in determining the types of projects that are compatible with the purpose and priorities of the Commission. The Commission's mission statement is as follows:

The Capital District Regional Planning Commission (CDRPC) is a regional planning and resource center serving Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Schenectady counties. CDRPC provides objective analysis of data, trends, opportunities, and challenges relevant to the Region's economic development and planning communities. CDRPC serves the best interests of the public and private sectors by promoting intergovernmental cooperation; communicating, collaborating, and facilitating regional initiatives; and sharing information and fostering dialogues on solutions to regional problems.

4.0 Critical Issues

At the Commission's retreat held in May, 2004, the Commissioners identified the critical issues confronting the Capital District Regional Planning Commission relative to the following:

- Mission
- Communication, Cooperation and Collaboration with Others
- Internal Structure
- Regional Issues

Following the retreat, the Strategic Planning Committee addressed the critical issues, developed strategies and identified specific tasks to assist in the implementation of the mission.

4.1 Critical Issues Relative to Our Mission

4.1.1 What is our role in the development of a regional land use development plan?

Our primary role is as a partner with the Capital District Transportation Committee (CDTC). The CDTC is the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) fulfilling federal requirements related to coordinated transportation planning in Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga and Schenectady counties of New York. CDTC must maintain a long-range regional transportation plan as a guide to planning and implementation decisions. The plan must address social, economic and environmental factors and the inter-relationship of transportation and land use. The use of any Federal highway or transit funds in the Capital District must derive from and be consistent with CDTC's plan. CDTC's long-range plan is called ***New Visions for Capital District Transportation.***

The CDTC strategy for exploring these linkages and developing regional policies has been to create a Quality Regions Task Force and five working groups. The Quality Regions Task Force was created three years ago to provide follow up to the ***New Visions*** documents. CDRPC is assisting CDTC in the facilitation and the technical report writing for three of the five working groups.

The five Working Groups are organized around the following topics:

1. Alternative Growth Scenarios
2. Big Ticket Items
3. Larger Than Regional Issues
4. Working with Local Governments
5. Engineering Solutions for Systems Design

We no longer have a mandate to develop a regional plan as suggested in the purpose statement for the CDRPC included in the 1967 4-County agreement. Without support and/or a mandate from the member counties, it is neither possible nor worthwhile to attempt to develop a Regional Master Plan.

4.1.2 What is our role in the development of a regional economic plan?

We do not have a role in the development of regional economic plans per se. We do have a role in the development of regional economic policies in our capacity as the Policy Board of the Economic Development District for the counties of Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Schenectady. We will continue to provide technical support services and regional data and analysis as requested.

4.1.3 What is our role in the development of regional land use and economic development policies?

As cited above, the CDRPC policy board functions as the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Committee of the Capital District. To comply with the Federal requirements of broad representation on the governing board, the size of CDRPC's board was expanded to five members from each county in 1983. The CEDS is a continuing planning process for regional economic development pursuant to federal guidelines as established by the Economic Development Administration. As part of its ongoing planning and research functions, CDRPC maintains regional economic and demographic databases which provide the basic information necessary for economic analysis.

This role is strictly relegated to federally-funded programs. CDRPC, in its role as the CEDS Committee, develops the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for the Capital District, identifying important regional projects which can then become eligible for

funding under various federally funded programs when funds become available. We will continue to develop the CEDS which identifies projects eligible for funding.

4.1.4 How can we develop regional plans and/or policies while respecting the competing interests of our member counties and the diverse municipalities within our region?

We need to articulate policies on land use, economic development and related topics applicable to sustainable development in the 21st century.

4.1.5 Should we revisit the 4-County Agreement and incorporate language from the new enabling legislation, 12b?

Yes, CDRPC should revisit the 4-County agreement and revise its by-laws, incorporating the language from the Section 12b of the State enabling legislation. The revised statement should be presented to the A & F Committee for approval and then forwarded to each of the County Legislative bodies for approval.

4.1.6 What is our role in the development of local land use plans and policies within the region?

CDRPC should continue to provide support services to the municipalities as requested. This support includes data, technical analysis, mapping services and policy recommendations.

4.1.7 Should we have a policy relative to the discussion of land use and related topics between staff and stakeholders and/or the press?

Where no policy exists, staff should be encouraged to speak freely, particularly in regards to their own area of expertise. Where the Board has developed a policy, staff should not disagree with or misrepresent the Board policy. However, if there is more than one opinion on a particular topic, staff should identify the broad range of views and give the pros and cons of an issue.

4.2 Critical Issues Relative to Communication, Cooperation and Collaboration

4.2.1 How should we collaborate with other regional entities?

There appear to be at least three types of regional organizations falling into one or more of the following categories: those organizations that have a similar and/or compatible mission; those with which we have an existing contractual relationship; and those whose mission is not similar and/or compatible and with which we have no formal relationship.

We should start by taking an inventory of the various regional entities. Then we should request that all regional organizations provide us with ongoing information about their scope of work, copies of annual reports and copies of press releases in a timely fashion. Finally we should prioritize our level of participation recognizing that we cannot attend every meeting of every regional entity.

4.2.2 What can we do to improve the communication between the Board and staff?

Communication between Board and Staff is good and has recently improved. We should schedule yearly facilitated retreats to examine regional issues and provide opportunities for the Board and Staff to interact.

When staff is making a presentation, Commissioners from that County should be invited to attend. On a regular basis, staff should provide the commissioners with a calendar of upcoming presentations and/or meetings so that Commissioners can attend when it is convenient and appropriate.

Commissioners should regularly receive the contact list for all commissioners and staff.

4.2.3 What can we do to engage the County Leadership of all four counties?

The Board Chairman and members of the Commission, particularly the A & F Committee members, should send an invitation to specific County Leadership to attend a meeting and/or presentation when an item of relevance to that County Leader is on the agenda.

Upon the advice of a marketing specialist regarding form and frequency, there should be regular communications from the CDRPC to the Executive Branch and the Leadership Branch of each County to make sure that they know what we do.

An agenda packet for each Commission meeting should be sent to each County Executive and the Mayor of each of the four largest cities.

Incorporate current methods of marketing with hotlinks on our web site.

4.2.4 What can we do to make our Board meetings more interactive?

We need to find the balance between taking care of the perfunctory tasks as quickly as possible and keeping the Board members involved.

We should ensure that there is ample time for questions from the Board during staff presentations. We should also focus the presentation, when it is particularly long or complex, on discrete sections so that there is sufficient time for the Board to ask questions.

4.2.5 What can we do to promote our work, improve our visibility, and make our work more accessible to all of the municipalities?

We should work with a professional marketing specialist to develop strategies and procedures for increasing our visibility. In light of the fact that the primary vehicle for accessing our information is over the web, we need to improve our web image. We should work with a web designer to develop a more modern and attractive web

site. We should also provide more web links to the municipalities in our service area. We should ask each of the municipalities in our service area if they will provide a link from their web site to ours.

We should work with a professional marketing specialist to evaluate our communications in terms of the overall look of our web site, our press releases, our cover memos, and our report covers.

We need to incorporate 21st century technology and appeal into our materials. We should make use of either a professional web designer or an intern with expertise in web design and graphics.

We should write more Press Releases. We should distribute our Press Releases to all of our clients and collaborators. We should have a Press Release section on the web site and keep it updated.

We should schedule an Open House and invite the municipalities; elected officials at the local, state and Federal level; and media. We should also invite regional leaders from industry, business, real estate, education, transportation and other sectors to attend. The Open House should feature our staff, our data resources, our GIS capabilities and our technical capabilities.

4.2.6 How can we have franker conversations and explore complex topics within the constraints of the Board's limited time together?

The Commission has a limited amount of time that it can meet together as a group. Occasionally, there are issues that deserve and require more time to explore than we are able to provide in a two-hour meeting every month or two. When it becomes evident, at either the Commission meeting or in an A & F Committee meeting, that a particular topic will require more detailed discussion or investigation than we are able to devote during the course of a Commission meeting, we should either appoint an Ad Hoc committee or ask the A & F committee to explore these issues in detail and report back to the Commission.

When a particular topic warrants the input of all the Commissioners, we should encourage more conversations among the Commissioners either on line or by telephone between meetings.

Each A & F member should communicate with the other members of his or her respective County prior to each meeting to ensure that all points of view are presented and each Commissioner has an opportunity to explore any topic in detail.

4.2.7 What is our role in communicating, collaborating and cooperating with State and federal agencies?

Our Executive Director is doing an excellent job communicating, coordinating and collaborating with State and federal agencies. We should continue to encourage the Executive Director to get more personally acquainted with elected officials.

We should invite elected officials like Representative Sweeney and McNulty, Senators Schumer and Clinton and the Governor to our open houses, to tour our office and regularly make them aware of our resources.

Our Executive Director should continue to meet with all elected officials on a regular basis.

4.3 Critical Issues Relative to Our Internal Structure

4.3.1 What can we do to orient the Board members relative to their roles and responsibilities?

We should implement a three pronged intentional approach for providing orientation to new Commissioners consisting of the following elements:

- Create a packet for new Commissioners which includes, at a minimum, the following:
 - Strategic Plan
 - Annual Report
 - Bylaws
 - Work Program
- New Commissioners should attend an orientation meeting with the Executive Director and the A & F Commissioner from the new Commissioner's County.

- The A & F committee should take charge of developing a package for the County Legislative Leadership. This package should include the items in the New Commissioner package as well as some County specific information on the expectations and responsibilities of a Commissioner. The expectations and responsibility section may vary from County to County.

4.3.2 Does our existing 4-county regional definition match up with the broader regional issues & programs?

While our existing 4-county regional definition is not a perfect match with some elements of the broader regional perspective, there is no other conceivable regional definition that would be a better match.

In terms of addressing concerns at the County level relative to our relevance and value as a regional planning service, we believe that our efforts to increase our visibility and to provide regular information about our services, products and data will help to ameliorate this problem.

We should develop criteria and guidelines for including additional counties and/or other regional organizations within the Commission. The criteria should address:

- Membership costs/dues
- Total size of Commission (i.e. if we go to five counties, perhaps we should only have four Commissioners per County).
- Ex-officio membership for organizations such as the CEG, local or County-wide Chamber of Commerce, Tech Valley, CARES, etc.

4.3.3 Should we redefine quorum?

Given the limitations driven by the State's Open Meeting laws, we believe that we should keep our existing definition of quorum.

4.3.4 Should we revisit our employee policies and guidelines?

We should establish Executive Limitation Policies. Once those have been established, we should encourage the Executive Director to complete the review and revision of the existing policies and

guidelines. The Executive Director should then present the revised Employee Policy Handbook to the A & F committee for comment and approval consistent with the Executive Limitation Policies.

4.4 Critical Issues Facing the Region and Our Role in Addressing These Issues

4.4.1 How should we identify which issues are of concern in the region?

At any given time, there are a multitude of issues that the elected, appointed and otherwise selected leadership at the various local, county and regional organizations throughout the Capital District must address. The issue of water quality and quantity and recent mandatory changes to the management of stormwater runoff are current examples of issues with which decision makers across the region are grappling. Other issues, such as historic preservation, agricultural stewardship or urban revitalization may be critical in one part of the region, but not of any concern to the decision makers in other parts of the region. We have several ways of identifying critical issues in the Region:

1. The Executive Director meets with the county planning staff on a regular basis to discuss critical issues of regional significance.
2. Information is shared and exchanged among staff, the Commissioners, clients and stakeholders of CDRPC.
3. Issues become critical when the State or Federal government develops a mandate or regulation with regional implications which requires implementation at the local level.

4.4.2 What is role relative to the region's critical issues?

Our role is four-fold relative to the critical issues of the region:

1. To provide the necessary data research and planning support services to assist in the development of policies and implementation strategies at the regional and local levels.
2. To work with county and local decision makers to outline solutions to problems of regional significance.

Capital District Regional Planning Commission Strategic Plan

3. To provide guidance, training, and support services to the decision makers in order that they may make better planning and service delivery decisions for their constituencies.
4. To explain the effect of decisions on adjacent municipalities and the region as a whole.

5.0 Strategies

A major part of successful living lies in the ability to put first things first. Indeed, the reason most major goals are not achieved is that we spend our time doing second things first. Robert J. McKain

Three strategic objectives will drive the transition that is critical to the mission of the Capital District Regional Planning Commission:

- Collaborate with the regional economic development and planning organizations by more actively participating in the work of other regional organizations.
- Promote our work, improve our visibility and make our work products more accessible by hiring a marketing specialist to assist with the appearance, form and frequency of our communications with others.
- Establish Executive Limitation Policies and clarify our Employee Policies.

Although the CDRPC is already engaged at some level in the implementation of these three key strategies, a primary purpose of this plan is to focus the attention of the Board and the staff on the tasks necessary to fully implement these strategies. Specific tasks have been assigned to each strategy to guide its implementation. In addition the Commission identified other strategies and tasks that are already a part of the work of the Commission. The tasks have been prioritized so as to identify which tasks need to be completed first. Urgent tasks are ones that need to be addressed as soon as possible. High priority tasks should be addressed after the urgent tasks have been completed. Ongoing tasks will need to be addressed on a continual basis.

TASK	STRATEGY	PRIORITY
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RELATIVE TO OUR MISSION

Strategy 1: Continue to participate in the development and maintenance of a long range regional transportation plan, which addresses social, economic, and environmental factors and the inter-relationship of transportation and land use.

Task 1.1	Articulate policies on land use, economic development and related topics applicable to sustainable development in the 21 st century.	URGENT
Task 1.2	Incorporate language from the 12b enabling legislation. Present to A & F Committee for approval and comment, present to full Commission, for ratification and then send to Counties for adoption.	HIGH
Task 1.3	Provide regional data and analysis as requested.	ONGOING
Task 1.4	Continue to develop the CEDS which identifies projects eligible for Federal funding.	ONGOING
Task 1.5	Actively partner with the Region's MPO, the Capital District Transportation Committee.	ONGOING

RELATIVE TO COMMUNICATING, COOPERATING AND COLLABORATING

Strategy 2: Collaborate with the regional economic development and planning organizations.

Task 2.1	Request that all regional economic, planning and development entities provide CDRPC with information relative to scope, annual reports, work plans, and press releases.	HIGH
Task 2.2	Prioritize our level of participation with the various regional economic development and planning organizations.	HIGH

Strategy 3: Improve communications between Board and Staff

Task 3.1	Schedule yearly facilitated retreats for Board and Staff.	HIGH
Task 3.2	Invite Commissioners to local presentations taking place in a Commissioner's county.	HIGH
Task 3.3	Maintain a policy relative to professional opinions on planning related topics that staff shall never denigrate or misrepresent the policies of the Board.	HIGH
Task 3.5	Make Board meetings more interactive by allowing ample time for questions when there is a presentation.	ONGOING

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TASK	STRATEGY	PRIORITY
Strategy 4: Promote our work, improve our visibility and make our work products more accessible.		
Task 4.1	Develop a RFQ for a marketing specialist to assist with communications, including the look, frequency and form of contacts.	URGENT
Task 4.2	Contract the services of a marketing specialist to develop a marketing program.	HIGH
Task 4.3	Develop a RFQ for a web designer to provide advice relative to our web page	HIGH
Task 4.4	Contract with a web designer to upgrade and possibly maintain our web page. Incorporate more 21 st century technologies and graphic designs into our web page.	HIGH
Task 4.5	Increase and improve communications between County leadership and Staff by providing regular bulletins using a form and schedule developed by a marketing specialist.	HIGH
Task 4.6	Send an agenda and a personal invitation to each County Executive/Administrator and the Mayor of each of the four big cities for each CDRPC regular business meeting.	HIGH
Task 4.7	Upon the advice of a marketing specialist, write more press releases. Distribute all press releases to a wider audience including local, State and Federal agencies and partners.	HIGH
Task 4.8	Upon the advice of a marketing specialist, develop a policy relative to web links. Request reciprocity where applicable.	MEDIUM
Task 4.9	Schedule Open Houses to feature our staff, our data resources, our GIS capabilities and our technical expertise. Invite local, State and Federal partners and clients as well as the Governor, US Senators, Congressmen and elected State officials.	MEDIUM
Task 4.10	Executive Director should continue to become acquainted with elected officials and schedule regular meetings.	ONGOING

RELATIVE TO OUR INTERNAL STRUCTURE

Strategy 5: Make Board Meetings More Efficient and Interactive

Task 5.1	Develop and administer an orientation for new Commissioners consisting of: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Welcome Packet which should include:<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Strategic Planb. Annual Reportc. By-Lawsd. Work Programe. Contact Sheet2. An orientation meeting with Executive Director and the A & F Commissioner from the respective county.3. A package for County Legislative Leadership consisting of:<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Welcome Packet.b. Memo on the expectations and responsibilities of a Commissioner.	HIGH
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Task 5.2	Make better use of the A & F Committee and/or appoint Ad Hoc committees to explore specific issues in detail and then report back to the Commission, in order to allow the Commission to explore complex topics within its limited time together.	HIGH
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Task 5.3	Continue to operate under a Code of Conduct.	ONGOING
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Task 5.4	Continue to maintain a balance between perfunctory and issue oriented discussions at Board meetings.	ONGOING
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Task 5.5	Encourage more offline and between meeting conversations amongst the Commissioners.	ONGOING
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Strategy 6: Develop a policy for evaluating the composition of the Commission.

Task 6.1	Develop criteria and guidelines for including additional counties and/or other regional organizations within the Commission including: <ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Membership costs/duesb. Total size of Commissionc. Ex-officio membership for organizations such as CEG, Chambers of Commerce, Tech Valley, CARES, etc.	MEDIUM
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Strategy 7: Clarify our Employee Policies

Task 7.1	Establish Executive Limitation Policies, which states the Board's values on what it would find unacceptable on defined topics.	URGENT
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Task 7.2	Complete the review and revisions of the existing policies and guidelines.	HIGH
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RELATIVE TO THE ISSUES FACING OUR REGION AND OUR ROLE IN ADDRESSING THEM

Strategy 8: Ensure that our work plan and products are reflective of the needs of our constituents, partners and clients.

Task 8.1	Prepare training programs for critical issues identified as issues of concern across the region.	ONGOING
Task 8.2	Communicate the ramifications associated with changes in State and Federal regulations with the Commissioners. Discuss the level of effort and types of support that CDRPC can provide to local municipalities in response to changes at the State and Federal level.	ONGOING
Task 8.3	Seek regular and ongoing input from, and provide feedback to, the Commissioners regarding the existing and future work program.	ONGOING

Appendix I: History

Capital District Regional Planning Commission
A BRIEF HISTORY

David Vincent
May 2004

Anecdotal sources suggest that Albany Mayor Erastus Corning, 2nd was the primary visionary and driving force behind the concept and ultimate creation of the Capital District Regional Planning Commission (CDRPC) in the mid 1960s. Citing the authority of two articles of the New York General Municipal Law: Article 12-B providing for the establishment of a regional or county planning board, and Article 5-G providing for the performance of joint municipal cooperative activities, the four counties of Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga and Schenectady adopted an inter-municipal agreement in 1967 creating CDRPC. The 1967 agreement states:

“2. The purposes of this Commission shall be to perform planning work consisting of, among other things, surveys, land studies and technical services, and it shall study the needs and conditions of the planning in the area served by the respective municipalities making up the Commission, and to prepare a comprehensive master plan for the development of the entire area of the participating counties and to encourage the development of comprehensive planning within the area to be served.

3. In carrying out its purposes, the Commission shall provide the leadership in developing a coordinative, comprehensive master plan for the development of the entire area to be served by the Commission, and to encourage and assist public and private agencies and persons to undertake a coordinative, comprehensive planning program.”

The Commission’s 1968 annual report states:

“The Commission’s primary objective is to develop policies, plans, programs, and methods of coordination and implementation in the Region, which will permit the expected regional growth to take place within a framework that will be in the best interests of the public, the private sector, and the four counties involved.

The primary functions of the Commission are to:

- Provide organizational machinery for effective communication and coordination among all governmental bodies, agencies, and interested persons in the Region.
- Collect, exchange, and disseminate information of a region-wide interest.
- Bring into focus the region-wide problems and to formulate regional policies for solving these problems.

- Develop a comprehensive master plan for the proper growth and development of the Region.
- Review locally developed projects in order to ensure proper coordination among such projects with local and regional plans in accordance with Section 204 of the Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development Act of 1966.
- Serve as spokesman for the member governments in regional matters.

The Commission is financed by annual appropriations from the four counties on a per capita basis, supplemented by state and federal funds. The federal assistance is granted under Section 701 of the Housing Act of 1954, as amended. The state funds are provided by the State Office of Planning Coordination.”

In 1977 the four-county agreement was amended adding to its purpose statement certain caveats reserving the right of the governing bodies of each of the member counties to exercise final approval of any comprehensive plan, and empowering the Commission to “adopt specific functional plans which shall be subject to approval of counties affected.” The amendment also added three elements to the Commission’s powers and duties:

“To perform area-wide clearinghouse functions pursuant to Circular A-95 of the U.S. Office of Management and Budget for the implementation of Section 204 of the Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development Act of 1966 and Title IV of the Intergovernmental Cooperation Act of 1968.

“To receive and expend grants from private foundations or agencies and to apply for and accept grants from the federal government or the state government, including applications and grants pursuant to Title 701 of the Federal Housing Act of 1954, as amended, and to enter contracts for and agree to accept such grants upon the approval of each of the respective governing bodies of the participating counties.

“To appoint Advisory Committees to assist in carrying out the principal functions of the Commission.”

The 1977 amendment also gave the Commission a new reporting mandate:

“The Commission shall make a written annual report to the County Executives, if any and the Legislative bodies of the participating counties before March 1st of each year. Such report shall contain a full statement of the financial condition of the Commission at the close of the previous calendar year.”

In 1984 the four-county agreement was amended to authorize the Commission “To conduct studies and to make the necessary action for the promotion of Economic Development of the Region. Such actions may include making application for and receiving grants of authority for a foreign trade zone and subzone(s) within the Capital District area pursuant to the Foreign Trade Zone Act of June 18, 1934, as amended.”

In the same year, the Commission’s size was expanded in order to qualify for designation by the federal Economic Development Authority as an Economic Development District. The amendment reads: “The Commission shall consist of twenty members. Each county shall appoint five members on the Commission who shall be residents of the county from which they are appointed. There shall be two minority representatives who are recommended by the Region’s minority groups and appointed by the counties in which they reside. No less than fifty-one percent (51%) of the total board membership of the Commission shall be elected or appointed local government officials, and no less than twenty percent (20%) of the total board membership of the Commission shall represent the private sector.”

The Commission’s first chairman was Mayor Erastus Corning, 2nd, who chaired from 1967 through 1971. Since 1972, the Commission’s officers have rotated consecutively through its four member counties. Since its founding, the Commission has had four executive directors: Louis Lex, Jr., S. Thyagarajan, Chungchin Chen, and Rocco Ferraro. The Commission’s first offices were located in the Albany Airport Terminal, and subsequently relocated to Clifton Park, Albany, Troy, Schenectady, and Colonie.

During 1968, its first full year of operation, CDRPC had a staff of 3 full-time and 2 part-time employees and a budget of \$42,000, all of which came from member-county contributions. The 1968 annual report identifies areas of focus: a regional solid waste management study (\$255,000 study funded by NY State Department of Health, undertaken by the Boston-based engineering firm Metcalf & Eddy), 701 Comprehensive Planning, a census coding guide, regional population analysis, regional base mapping, public education (authoring a report “History of the Capital District Region”), and intergovernmental coordination and 204 review.

The 701 program was created under the Federal Housing Act of 1954 and provided federal matching grants for communities to prepare comprehensive plans. The ratio of funds was 50% federal and 50% state or local funds.

“204 review” refers to local project review responsibilities of the Commission under Section 204 of the Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan

Development Act of 1966. In order to obtain certain types of financial assistance from the Federal Government, the municipality must show that the intended investment is consistent with the regional comprehensive planning program. In 1968, these projects included highways, sewer and water facilities, recreation, and open space programs.

By 1970 CDRPC staffing was at 7 full-time employees (including Chungchin Chen). In December of 1970, CDRPC published a detailed and comprehensive document entitled "Goals for the Capital District." Its stated purpose was "to give initial guidance and direction to regional planning and decision-making. It is also an attempt to provide a common outlook for those many diverse and interdependent activities that together shape the Region's future physical and social environment." Interestingly, the document offers "One final qualification. Compared to other levels of government and many private institutions, the Capital District Regional Planning Commission has very limited powers to implement the goals and policies contained in this report. Obviously such an effort must be a cooperative and coordinated process and must reflect a common understanding and a continuing commitment."

The 1971 annual report presented a 1972 budget of \$155,000, of which \$98,500 was member-county contributions. Mentioned prominently in this report was the continuing effort, under "701 Planning," to write a regional development plan. In addition, solid waste management and crime control studies were major elements of the Commission's work.

The absence of annual reports for the years 1972 through 1977 (these reports were not mandated until the 1977 amendment to the four-county agreement) make it difficult to easily measure the staff and budget growth of CDRPC during this time period. A detailed "(Preliminary) Regional Development Plan" had been completed by 1975. This represented an enormous undertaking by the Commission staff to develop, publish and promote a regional plan, one of its founding purposes. Nevertheless, full endorsement by the four counties proved to be elusive. Ultimately, the plan was adopted in 1978 and carefully described as "a policy guide after receiving official endorsement by the legislative bodies in each of the four counties." Note *endorsement*, not *adoption*.

By 1978, the staff had grown to nearly 20, which included (since 1974) the operations of the Capital District Transportation Committee (CDTC). Total revenues reached \$586,655, of which county contributions were \$136,764. 239 projects were reviewed in 1978 under the Federal Project Review System (A-95), the purpose of which was "to facilitate coordination among similar projects and to assure consistency with local and regional objectives."

In 1980, CDRPC sponsored a one-day regional conference and workshop with a goal of producing a “Regional Agenda for the 1980’s.” More than 100 local leaders participated, identifying five areas of concentration for the Commission: (1) develop and maintain a regional data bank, (2) facilitate understanding of the new federal block grant system, (3) promote the region for economic development, (4) continue providing regional overviews on regional development and growth issues, and (5) provide technical assistance to local government.

In its annual report, 1981 is described as “an important transitional year for the Commission.” The Reagan years brought a “New Federalism” that eliminated many federally mandated planning requirements, resulting in a considerable downsizing of Commission activities. In addition, administrative duties for CDTC were transferred to the Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA). The 1982 Commission staff numbered 10, with CDRPC revenues of \$460,684 of which \$150,439 was county contributions.

In 1983, CDRPC sponsored a regional conference on alternatives to incarceration, with 200 local policy and criminal justice leaders in attendance. This followed the publication of a well-received yearlong study by CDRPC on 16-21 year old inmates of the region’s four county jails. The same year, the Commission, with support from the four county Chambers of Commerce, published the first edition of “A Profile of the Capital District,” an extensive demographic profile of the region.

In 1984, the Commission board was expanded to 20 members in preparation for final designation in 1985 by the US Economic Development Authority as an Economic Development District. In addition, CDRPC became the grantee and administrator of the region’s Foreign Trade Zone, with the Galesi Group partnering as the operator. Commission priorities in 1984 were the same as those established in the 1980 regional conference. By 1985, CDRPC had a staff of 6 full-time and one part-time employee. Its expenditures were \$283,991, of which \$184,906 was county contributions. The A-95 project review mandate had been extended through 1983, but was replaced in 1984 with a new state-mandated review process.

The size, scope and focus of the Commission have remained fairly consistent from 1984 through today. Throughout the 1980’s and into the 1990’s, the Commission sponsored numerous regional forums and workshops on a variety of topics, including SEQOR, zoning variances, local planning boards, local site review, local government fiscal systems, IDAs, Census users, and many more.

While local and regional issues have always dominated the Commission's focus and attention, changing federal and state priorities have driven programmatic changes at CDRPC. Economic development, criminal justice, aviation and airports, watersheds, canals, groundwater protection, solid waste, affordable housing, a World Trade Center, Census data and demographics, and much more, have been and many continue to be important program elements at CDRPC.

In 1986, a much-expanded second edition of the "Profile of the Capital District" was published. Over the years CDRPC has become the premier data center for the region – widely acclaimed and highly respected. In 1991 the Commission published an important study "A Profile of Change in the Capital District." In 1995 we took our data services on the World Wide Web at CDRPC.org.

In 1997, the 30th anniversary of CDRPC, ground was broken for the construction of CDYCI, our regional secure youth detention center. This project was the result of enormous effort on the part of both CDRPC staff and commissioners and has received national recognition as a regional cooperative project. Also in 1997, CDRPC co-sponsored a regional forum at Albany Law School to discuss "ways to best plan for growth, development, and a health economy in the Capital District." From the annual report: "While the Forum's participants expressed no outright support for a new comprehensive regional plan, there was strong consensus in favor of developing additional planning capacity in the form an enhanced regional information system and increased cooperation among the existing regional service organizations. There was also strong support for more clearly articulating and marketing the Region's many assets. Most participants expressed their support for the Planning Commission's current programs and felt that any additional services and programs should be provided by the Capital District's existing regional organizations such as CDRPC."

In 1998, as an outcome of the Commission's commitment to a regional GIS system, CDRPC published a highly detailed "Capital District Atlas," with 26 maps depicting development patterns and economic and social characteristics of the region.

In 1999, the third edition of "A Profile of the Capital District" was published. The first few years of the new decade have brought many new Commissioners to the board of CDRPC as "senior" members have moved on. In 2002, the Commission published an innovative, updateable "Regional Indicators Report", an ongoing attempt to measure two dozen economic and quality of life indicators in our region. The biggest change came with the 2003

retirement of the Commission's longest-tenured staff member ever, Chungchin Chen, who had been with CDRPC for 33 years, 23 as its executive director.

Appendix II Key Stakeholders

External Stakeholders of the Capital District Regional Planning Commission¹	
Entity	Name of Contact Person
Albany County of Economic Development	Mark Fitzsimmons and Joseph Pennisi
Rensselaer County Dept. of Economic Development, Conservation & Planning	Linda Vondeheide
Saratoga County Planning Department	Larry Benton
Schenectady County Planning Department	Mark Storti
Albany County Executive Office	Mike Breslin and Mike Perrin
Saratoga County Administrator	David Wickerham
Schenectady County Manager	Kevin DeFebbo
Bethlehem Commissioner of Public Works	George Leveille
Mayor's Office of Schenectady	Sharon Jordan
Mayor's Office of Saratoga Springs	Brad Birge
Supervisor – Saratoga County	Supervisor Ken DeCerce of Halfmoon
Supervisor - Rensselaer County	Supervisor Beth Knauf Secor of Schodack
Supervisors Office of Colonie in Albany County	Mary Burke
Town Planner – Schenectady County	Kevin Corcoran
CDTC	John Poorman
NYS ESD (State Data Center & ESD Capital Region Office Rep.)	Bob Scardamalia
Federal Economic Development Administration State Representative	John Marshall
Saratoga County Economic Development Corporation	Ken Green
Downtown Schenectady Improvement Corporation	John Samatulski
Center for Economic Growth	Kelly Lovell
Council of Community Services	Doug Sauer
ARISE	Andreas Kriefall
Capital District Homeownership Collaborative	Eric Dahl
SUNY – Albany Planning Department	Ray Bromley
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Rensselaer Tech Park & Commercial Real Estate Development	Mike Wacholder and John Merrill
Albany-Colonie Chamber of Commerce	Lyn Taylor
Rensselaer Chamber of Commerce	Linda Hillman
Former Executive Director	Chungchin Chen
Former Commissioner	John Buono
Former Commissioner of Planning, Schenectady County	Dave Atkins
Stewart's Real Property Division	Tom Lewis
Thruway Authority Headquarters	Wendy Allen
Saratoga Associates	Dan Sitler
CB Richard Ellis (Commercial Realtor)	John Tracy
CARES	Linda Glassman

¹ This list was developed by the Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) of the CDRPC. In some cases the person identified by the SPC directed us to another person in their office. In other cases, the person identified was never reached despite numerous attempts. This list represents the people who provided information relative to the CDRPC.

Appendix III
Peer Comparison

Peer Comparison

As part of the background research and preliminary analysis conducted to assess the current status and operational functionality of the CDRPC, a peer comparison was conducted. The peer comparison consisted of telephone interviews with four entities that share similar organizational missions and/or structures with the CDRPC. These four entities included two upstate New York State Regional Planning Councils, the Genesee/Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council and the Central New York Planning and Development Board; the New York State Association of Counties; and the Capital Region Council of Governments, in Hartford, Connecticut. The following matrix, *Selected Peer Organizations* identifies the criteria which were examined to determine areas of similarity between CDRPC and the selected peer organizations.

Selected Peer Organizations					
	CDRPC	Genesee/Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council	Central NY Regional Planning and Development Board	Capital Region Council of Governments	NYS Association of Towns
Serves	78 municipalities	192 municipalities	140 municipalities	Hartford, CT	62 counties
	4 counties,	9 counties, Regional Transportation Council and other Community Organizations	5 counties	28 surrounding communities (also the MPO)	
Population	794,293	1,199,000	700,000	700,000	18,000,000
Staff	6	9	7	17	20
Budget	\$550,000	\$800,000	\$1,000,000	\$4,208,173	\$2,500,000

The Capital District Regional Planning Commission is one of thirteen state-wide regional planning authorities. Of the other twelve, two were identified as having common criteria to the CDRPC. The Central New York Regional Planning and Development Board (CNYRP&DB) serves a region with a comparable population both in terms of size and demographics. The Genesee/Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council

(G/FLRPC) has a relationship with the Genesee Transportation Council, that region's Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), which is similar to CDRPC's relationship with the Capital District Transportation Committee, the MPO for the Capital District. Both the CNYRP&DB and the G/FLRPC have rural, urban and suburban populations within their respective regions.

Hartford, Connecticut's Regional Planning Authority, the Capital Region Council of Governments (CRCG) shares many similarities with the CDRPC. Like New York, Connecticut land use laws are based on Home Rule Status. This element of local authority provides a level of complexity in the development of regional plans. Some regional planning organizations view this as an obstacle. Others, like CRCG view it as an opportunity. Because their policies and plans do not have the force of law, but are merely advisory, the Board of the CRCG feels empowered to be as creative as possible and to propose policies they believe to be in the best interests of the entire region.

Appendix IV
Existing Primary Program Categories

Existing Primary Program Categories

The 2004 Capital District Regional Planning Commission work plan included the following projects and programs:

Regional Information System

- Affiliate data center operations
- Population & household projections
- Data management and web site maintenance
- Mapping systems applying Geographic Information Systems (GIS)
- Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) in association with CARES, Inc.
- Enrollment projections for selected school systems

Quality Region Initiative - Joint Effort with Capital District Transportation Committee (CDTC)

- Update to the “New Visions Regional Transportation Plan” adopted in 1997
- Participation on Quality Region Task Force and five working groups (Facilitating/Technical Report writing for three of them)
- Analysis and report on regional growth patterns and trends

Economic Development

- Federal Economic Development district since 1987
- Grantee/Administrator of Foreign Trade Zone (FTZ) since 1985
- Grant application assistance to Albany Center for Economic Success (ACES) Orange Street Incubator expansion
- Economic impact modeling

Water Quality

- Watershed based stormwater management program
- Support services associated with MS4 watershed regulation requirements
- “Albany Pool” combined sewer overflow study

Secure Juvenile Detention Center

- Administration/Management through separate Capital District Youth Secure Detention Facility Board (CDYCI) consisting of five Commission members plus one additional appointment from each of the four counties of the 24 bed facility.