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## **FINGER LAKES REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL SUBMITS FINAL STRATEGIC PLAN AND PRIORITY PROJECTS**

### ***Five-year plan drives job creation, supports millions in investment***

The Finger Lakes Regional Economic Development Council today submitted its final strategic plan and list of priority projects, completing a comprehensive process that reflects the diversity of the region's economy and builds upon its strengths to accelerate the Finger Lakes' economic transformation.

The five-year plan supports projects that create more than 7,000 new jobs and leverages more than \$1 billion in investment in the nine-county region, composed of Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Orleans, Seneca, Wayne, Wyoming and Yates counties.

"This plan represents the Finger Lakes region's economy and puts forth a strong, yet feasible, strategy to accelerate the region's transformation to a diverse, knowledge-based economy," said Finger Lakes Regional Economic Development Council co-chair and University of Rochester President Joel Seligman. "We owe a special thanks to Governor Cuomo and Lt. Governor Bob Duffy for galvanizing our nine counties to develop a shared economic development vision for the region now and for the future."

"Our plan is the result of innumerable hours of work by the council members, work group members and staff who dedicated their time and expertise toward a focused, comprehensive blueprint for economic development," said Finger Lakes Regional Economic Development Council co-chair and Wegmans Food Markets CEO Danny Wegman. "The catalytic projects in the plan were rigorously reviewed and should be implemented immediately to further position

the Finger Lakes region as a national leader in innovation and commercialization with the long term goals of increasing job creation.”

The Finger Lakes region’s plan, “Accelerating Our Transformation,” leverages the region’s strategic advantages in academic research, workforce talent and high quality of life to position the area as a national leader and innovator in a diverse array of next generation technologies. The plan, adopted unanimously by the regional council, focuses on strategies that optimize business creation, retention and expansion; strengthens academic and industry partnerships; aligns workforce development efforts with the needs of key industry sectors; and invests in community and industrial development and infrastructure. The plan can be found at: <http://nyworks.ny.gov/content/finger-lakes>.

The strategic plan is the product of a planning process that involved the Regional Council members, more than 160 stakeholders from across the nine-county region and more than 1,000 citizens who added their voice through interactive forums and the Empire State Development website. The plan is based on three core concepts: to accelerate job creation and reinforce the region’s high quality of life by implementing a five-year plan to strengthen key innovation hubs in the region’s diverse economy, including higher education, food processing, targeted fields of advanced manufacturing, business services and telecommunications, energy innovation, tourism and the arts; to recommend transformational projects as priorities in the five year plan; and to improve regional connections that can lead to achievement of greater efficiency and lower costs among Finger Lakes governments .

The Governor has made \$1 billion available for the 10 Regional Councils, including \$200 million in competitive funding. A Strategic Plan Review Committee will analyze and compare each region’s Strategic Plan. Based upon this review, four regions will be awarded \$40 million each in capital funding and tax credits to be applied toward the priority capital projects identified in their plans. The remaining allocations will be divided among the other six regions.

To meet that competitive challenge, the Finger Lakes Regional Economic Development Council identified ten transformational projects that it recommends for state support. The projects represent critical opportunities to build upon the region’s strengths and competitive advantages and immediately accelerate job creation and economic growth. The projects are described in greater detail below.

Created by Governor Cuomo, the Regional Economic Development Councils represent a fundamental shift in the state's approach to economic development—from a top-down development model to a community-based approach that emphasizes regions’ unique assets, harnesses local expertise, and empowers each region to set plans and priorities.

Each regional council created a plan for the development of their region, which provides a regional vision for economic development, addresses critical issues and opportunities, and lays out an implementation roadmap for future growth. The state will work with the regional councils to align state resources and policies, eliminate unnecessary barriers to growth and

prosperity, and streamline the delivery of government services and programs to help the Regional Councils carry out their plans for development.

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**Finger Lakes Regional Economic Development Council Priority Projects**

*Additional information on these projects can be found in the strategic plan, available at <http://nyworks.ny.gov/content/finger-lakes>.*

- **U.S. Renewables Group/Empire State Accelerated Innovation Fund**  
The region's top priority is to maintain and expand Eastman Business Park in Rochester as a pivotal regional economic development resource. In this plan, the council has identified two potential ways to do this. One will create a cluster of cleantech businesses at Eastman Business Park led by U.S. Renewables Group. In five years, this project is projected to create 1,200 jobs directly and an equal number indirectly. The centerpiece of this initiative is a new \$300 million state-of-the-art bio-fuel generating plant.
- **NY-BEST Commercialization Center**  
A second project will create an advanced energy storage commercialization center at Eastman Business Park. The NY-BEST Commercialization Center will involve more than 80 companies from across New York State and provide critical testing and manufacturing facilities necessary to develop the next generation of fuel cells. If located in the Finger Lakes region, this initiative is expected to create 223 direct jobs in the state during the first five years of operation.
- **Finger Lakes Business Accelerator Cooperative**  
The Finger Lakes Business Accelerator Cooperative will create an interconnected “hub and node” network that consolidates and streamlines support and incubation resources across all nine counties. The cooperative will support the creation of early stage companies, spurring employment growth of more than 1,000 direct jobs in the first five years of operation.
- **The Golisano Institute for Sustainability at RIT**  
The Golisano Institute for Sustainability at the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) will be expanded. The institute, which will make RIT an international leader in programs that embody the principles of sustainability in product development, will create an estimated 1,075 direct jobs. The Center for Governmental Research estimates that the institute could catalyze the creation and expansion of related firms in the region that could account for thousands of additional jobs over the next five years.

- **University of Rochester Health Sciences Center for Computational Innovation**  
 The University of Rochester's Health Sciences Center for Computational Innovation—a partnership with IBM to create the most powerful computer system dedicated to health research in the world—will be expanded. The center will enable the university to grow its research funding by more than \$134 million and accelerate the development of the region's life sciences sector. The Center for Governmental Research estimates that this initiative will create 800 direct and indirect jobs.
- **Regional Internal Harvesting and Economic Gardening**  
 The Finger Lakes Internal Harvesting and Economic Gardening initiative will provide an innovative, region-wide business retention and expansion program that will connect and coordinate all of the region's economic development organizations and agencies. The initiative - which will target growth-oriented companies and help them expand - will create 500 new jobs over the next five years.
- **Seneca AgBio Green Energy Park**  
 The Seneca AgBio Green Energy Park will expand to enable three companies to locate their manufacturing operations at the site. This project will focus on the conversion of agricultural byproducts and waste into biofuels and biomaterials and will accelerate plans to redevelop the former Army depot in Seneca County and create 60 new direct jobs in this rural community.
- **Finger Lakes Museum**  
 A signature destination museum will be created to catalyze growth in regional tourism and promote conservation. The Finger Lakes Museum will have a central campus in Keuka Lake State Park and satellite programs throughout the region. Once completed, the museum is projected to draw 130,000 visitors, reinforcing the appeal of existing tourism assets, including the region's many state parks and the Finger Lakes wine trails.
- **Finger Lakes Health Collaborative**  
 The nationally recognized Finger Lakes Health Collaborative will be expanded. The collaborative is led by the Rochester Business Alliance and the Finger Lakes Health Systems Agency and involves more than 50 local organizations. The current project of the collaborative consists of a community-based effort to reduce the incidence of high blood pressure and related conditions. The project will have both an immediate benefit and is part of a long-term strategy to reduce health care costs in the region by \$8.5 million per year.
- **Midtown Redevelopment and Tower**  
 The City of Rochester plans to accelerate the redevelopment of the Midtown site through the adaptive reuse of the former Midtown Tower into a mixed commercial, office, and residential space. This \$73 million tower project is central to plans to redevelop the 8.2 acre Midtown site and will create and retain 690 direct jobs.