







Economic Development Strategic Plan Strategies and Action Items Section

In June 2023, CBICC began work to develop a comprehensive Economic Development Strategic Plan for Centre County. Goal of this plan is to create a common and coordinated vision for smart economic growth in Centre County.

The following goals and action items are a result of public input from the Economic Development Council, focus groups with area stakeholders including: entrepreneurs, anchor employers, Penn State University, and numerous meetings with partner organizations and local businesses from all over Centre County.

This input has shaped strategic actions that reflect a shared vision for the future of Centre County's growth and economic prosperity. As such, we were able to capture these needs and organize them into four overall categories below:

	<div style="background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">Business Retention and Expansion</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local and Regional Business Support Entrepreneurship and Innovation Statewide Synchronization 		<div style="background-color: #0056b3; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">Targeted and Emerging Industries</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targeted Industries New Business Attraction Leveraging Commercialization
	<div style="background-color: #808080; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">Workforce and Education</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workforce Development Talent Attraction Talent Retention 		<div style="background-color: #ffc107; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">Built and Natural Environment</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Downtowns, Sites, and Infrastructure Housing Tourism and Outdoor Recreation

From these four categories, the following provides a list of Goals and Strategic Action Items that reflect next steps in addressing each area of need. Beginning in Fall of 2024, the full report will be made public and provide background data, findings and expanded details on each action item. We are excited that this will be a valuable road map for organizations, business leaders, and local governments to establish a clear vision for Centre County's economic future.



Business Retention and Expansion

Goal A: Streamline and expand resources for early-stage businesses.



Action 1Ai: Formalize a multi-organization concierge service to help entrepreneurs and small businesses navigate the pathway to start and sustain a business in Centre County.

Action 1Aii: Create a resource guide for early-stage businesses that all business resource providers can share.

Goal B: Prioritize consistent business engagement with entrepreneurs and high-growth companies.

Action 1Bi: Expand countywide networking events to engage established employers with startups.

Action 1Bii: Identify high-growth companies and launch an engagement effort to understand their needs.

Action 1Biii: Increase access to capital by building tighter connections between entrepreneurs and Penn State, particularly aligned with Pennsylvania's targeted industries.

Goal C: Synchronize business retention and expansion efforts with state, national, and global initiatives.

Action 1Ci: Conduct an annual survey of all employers to learn what is keeping them in Centre County and what they need to grow.

Action 1Cii: Build out a customer relationship management (CRM) system to support business engagement.

Action 1Ciii: Initiate an inclusive countywide BRE program that builds a diverse business community.



Targeted and Emerging Industries

Goal A: Develop and Promote a brand identity for Centre County



Action 2Ai: Develop a regional brand identity that goes beyond Penn State and State College and complements both.

Goal B: Develop a Sensor Technology Industry Cluster.



Action 2Bi: Establish an advisory group to embed sensor technology advances in all Pennsylvania targeted industry sectors.

Action 2Bii: Continued emphasis on research and development, translational research, and commercialization of sensor technologies, and support the start-up, expansion, and attraction of sensor and instrument companies.

Action 2Biii: Incentivize Penn State researchers to increase translational research related to ag tech.

Action 2Biv: Formalize a Penn State-Carnegie Mellon research collaborative whereby advanced sensor technological developments at Penn State provide real-time data that can feed into the AI systems controlling robotic equipment developed at Carnegie-Mellon.

Goal C: Amplify the role of Penn State in the community to optimize its economic impact.

Action 2Ci: Provide time for quarterly updates from Penn State representatives at the Chamber's Economic Development Council meetings.

Action 2Cii: Increase Penn State alumni engagement in identified targeted industries.



Workforce and Education

Goal A: Develop targeted talent development and attraction initiatives.

Action 3Ai: Formalize more networking and professional development events between Penn State students, young professional groups, and local employers to build relationships with entry-level talent.

Action 3Aii: Launch a talent attraction campaign aligned with the county's targeted industries.

Goal B: Formalize a network of Centre County employers committed to addressing workforce needs.

Action 3Bi: Providing real-time labor market insights to workforce development and educational training partners.



***Action 3Bii:* Engage with employers to identify and address barriers to talent attraction, and retention such as childcare and transit challenges.**

Goal C: Expand and assess career pathways and awareness among all educational providers.

Action 3Ci: Create a survey targeting secondary and postsecondary students to understand their perceptions of the local career opportunities.

Action 3Cii: Ensure middle schools and high schools have collateral to highlight the many paths into the workforce.

Action 3Ciii: Formalize career pathways for in-demand occupations between Centre County employers and academic programs throughout Central Pennsylvania.



Built and Natural Environment

Goal A: Amplify Happy Valley as Central PA's tourism, outdoor recreation, and sports destination hub.

- Action 4Ai:* Engage creative entrepreneurs from the outdoor industry and connect with regional outdoor recreation partners such as the PA Office of Outdoor Recreation, Wilds Cooperative of PA, and the Southern Alleghenies.
- Action 4Aii:* Promote agritourism businesses and programming across Centre County.
- Action 4Aiii:* Expand and improve entertainment, meeting, arts, and sports venues to strengthen the vitality of Centre County.
- Action 4Aiv:* Brand and market Centre County as a destination and host for national and international youth, collegiate, and adult sports competitions.

Goal B: Pave the way for more attainable housing units.

Action 4Bi: Leverage the Centre County Housing Task Force to understand catalytic opportunities to preserve more affordable housing units.

 ***Action 4Bii:* Grow workforce housing supply in each municipality by a target percentage by 2030.**


Goal C: Invest in placemaking and social gathering spots throughout the county.

Action 4Ci: Assist Centre County's downtown hubs to access funding and resources for main street and façade improvements.

Action 4Cii: Offer grants for popup businesses and social districts in downtown corridors across the county.

Goal D: Invest in site readiness projects.

Action 4Di: Formalize a process to maintain an updated property inventory for use by Focus Central PA.

 ***Action 4Dii:* Identify, evaluate and pursue potential development sites including land owned by the Commonwealth at the Rockview State Correctional Institution, and within the Planned Airport District for shovel-ready development.**

Action 4Diii: Partner with local municipalities and government organizations to evaluate the existing zoning needs, future growth areas, transportation challenges, and streamlining permitting and planning processes.

Action 4Div: Coordinate an initiative to attract and retain air-service at the State College Regional Airport through targeted marketing, promoting available airport parcels, incentives, and local, state and federal partnerships.