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Mid-Hudson Region Economic Development Council Outlines 5-Year Plan for Growth

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Written by Larry Hertz, Poughkeepsie Journal

The mid-Hudson Valley has the location, skilled workers and natural resources to fuel future economic growth, but business and political leaders have some work to do to maximize its potential.

Those were some of the findings and observations contained in the Mid-Hudson Region Economic Development Council's five-year plan. The 88-page report, released Monday, will be used as a guide for state agencies that provide funding for economic development here, said council Co-Chairman Dennis Murray, president of Marist College.

"This plan will help inform state officials on the things we believe will create jobs. It's a road map for state and federal funding for economic development," Murray said. He said he and top officials of the other regional economic development councils around the state would meet in the coming weeks with the governor's staff to discuss their recommendations.

The report lists the region's major strengths as its proximity to New York City, a diversified economy, a well-educated workforce, an attractive environment, abundant water supplies, and good schools and colleges. Its weaknesses include high wages, taxes and energy costs; a "lengthy approval process" by local governments for construction projects; an aging infrastructure; and a "dearth of shovel-ready sites for business expansion," the report said.

Among the report's specific recommendations for enhancing business growth:

- The upgrade of Stewart International Airport in New Windsor for passenger and cargo service "and potentially for aerospace-related industries."
- Creation of a "cloud computer center" at Marist College, with support from IBM Corp., which would offer local businesses access to sophisticated software applications and information technology.
- Redevelopment of former IBM facilities in East Fishkill and Kingston.