

**A PLAN FOR  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
IN PISCATAQUIS COUNTY, MAINE  
2004 - 2005**



This Plan is the result of partnerships developed by a diverse group of concerned leaders in Piscataquis County, Maine. It serves to focus the attention and energies of stakeholders toward a common direction and provides a framework for future action. It recognizes that all parts of the County are united within a common economy and that, by working together in a spirit of cooperation and consensus, all residents will benefit. It encourages the assistance of stakeholders outside the County borders and promotes the need for business friendly strategies. It is hoped that this plan will be ongoing, changeable, and that the resulting strategies will be accountable and measurable.

**Roadmap for Adoption**

- ☑ Hold a daylong informational "Learn & Influence" forum on economic trends and development in Piscataquis County- November 13<sup>th</sup>, 2003
- ☑ Creation of draft proposal by the Piscataquis County Economic Development Council Executive Committee- March 26<sup>th</sup>, 2004
- ☑ Adoption of draft by Piscataquis County Commissioners – April 6<sup>th</sup>, 2004
- ☑ Distribution of draft for consideration to stakeholders including:
  - The Piscataquis County Economic Development Council Board of Directors
  - Southern Piscataquis County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors
  - Moosehead Lake Region Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors
  - Moosehead Development Council
  - Mayo Regional Hospital and CA Dean Hospital & Nursing Home
  - The Town Managers and First Selectmen in Piscataquis County (including Selectboards)
  - Penobscot County Council of Governments
  - The Superintendents of MSAD 4, 41, 68 and Union 60 (including School Boards)
  - Eastern Maine Development Corporation
  - Maine Department of Economic & Community Development
  - US Small Business Administration, Augusta
  - Maine International Trade Center
  - Eastern Maine Community College (including the Penquis Higher Education Center)
  - University of Maine (including the Department of Industrial Cooperation)
- ☑ County Commission sponsored public hearing on May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2004 at 7pm in the Superior Courtroom, Dover-Foxcroft. The Piscataquis County Economic Development Council will collect stakeholder feedback for consideration during the May public hearing.
- ☑ County Commissioners vote on final plan on May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2004

Note: This plan will be updated and altered to meet changing circumstances every two years.

## **PISCATAQUIS COUNTY'S ECONOMIC VISION**

*"Piscataquis County will have a strong, diverse, and vibrant economy that offers higher quality jobs to support strong, diverse, and vibrant families and communities."*

A strong economy is one that is wealth generating, able to survive national economic downturns, productive, and efficient. It's also diverse, containing a numerous, healthy combination of manufacturing, service, and retail businesses. Such an economy must be a vibrant one that values creativity, supports leadership, and is knowledge based.

The resulting higher quality jobs will be able to financially sustain individuals, families, and communities.

In order to achieve this vision, Piscataquis County will...

- encourage economic diversity
- support start up entrepreneurs
- retain and strengthen its existing businesses
- attract new businesses
- promote business-friendly "hard" infrastructure
- foster business-friendly "soft" infrastructure
- encourage collaborative economic development activities and policies by local, state, and federal governments
- expand and support the creative economy
- Piscataquis County will offer residents, visitors, artists, businesses and communities across the county an interesting and attractive base of sustainable tourism opportunities connected to nature and ecotourism, outdoor recreation, cultural and forest heritage, rural community life and the creative economy.

## **GOAL # 1**

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### **Piscataquis County will have a diverse economy**

**Objective 1:** Piscataquis County will be the center of manufacturing in Maine

**Strategy a:** There will be easy and readily available information on venture capital financing mechanisms.

**Objective 2:** Piscataquis County will have a strong wood manufacturing cluster.

**Strategy a:** The County will work with State officials to ensure an adequate supply of wood.

**Objective 3:** Piscataquis County will have a strong Precision Manufacturing sector.

**Objective 4:** Piscataquis County will have a strong tele-service sector.

**Strategy:** The County's three industrial/commercial/business parks will have advanced telecommunication infrastructure.

**Objective 5:** Piscataquis County will offer residents, visitors, artists, businesses and communities across the county an interesting and attractive base of sustainable tourism opportunities connected to nature and ecotourism, outdoor recreation, cultural and forest heritage, rural community life and the creative economy.

**Strategy a:** The county and key tourism stakeholders will establish a collaborative tourism development authority that will develop a strategic plan for community and county tourism, a sustainable tourism action plan which enhances rural quality of life and benefits residents, visitors, artists, businesses and communities across Piscataquis County.

**Strategy b:** In cooperation with tourism and community stakeholders, policies and practices will be adopted which manage and protect tourism assets in communities and the county-at-large, including conservation assets in the unorganized townships.

**Strategy c:** Tourism stakeholders, information providers, businesses and communities will adopt and implement industry certified standards for hospitality and customer service while providing high quality visitor experiences in the County.

**Objective 6:** Piscataquis County will have a vibrant, strong arts and crafts commercial sector.

**Strategy (2001):** the PCEDC will identify cultural/heritage resources in order to facilitate commercial networking.

***Achievements:** The PCEDC's CHET Committee published in 2001 a cultural/heritage resource directory.*

**Strategy (2002):** The PCEDC will form a non-profit organization that will assist artisans and crafters with the marketing and promotion of their products.

***Achievements:** The Maine Highland's Guild was formed in 2002 and assists over 90 artisans and crafters.*

**Strategy:** The cultural/heritage resource directory will be updated.

**Objective 7:** Piscataquis County will have a vibrant, strong agricultural sector.

**Strategy (2003):** The University of Maine Cooperative Extension will facilitate the creation of a marketing organization for farmers.

***Achievements:** The Maine Highland's Farm Producers Association has been formed and is investigating effective methods of produce promotion.*

**Objective 8:** Piscataquis County residents will have a wide variety of retail purchasing opportunities; especially in the village centers of the County. This serves to enhance the quality of life of residents.

## **GOAL # 2**

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### **Piscataquis County will support Start-up Entrepreneurs\***

**Objective 1:** All Piscataquis County businesses will have access to free business expansion assistance services.

**Objective 2:** Home based micro-businesses will be strong and successful.

**Strategy:** A campaign will be created to inform residents on the laws, regulations, and opportunities regarding home-based businesses.

**Objective 3:** There will be easily accessible and readily available resources for Piscataquis County business loan programs and capital financing.

**Objective 4:** Young people in Piscataquis County will have a strong background in entrepreneurship.  
**Strategy a:** Entrepreneurship education will be provided in Piscataquis County middle and high schools.  
**Strategy b:** The schools can incorporate skill and knowledge from economic education partners including the Maine Economic Education Council and Jobs for Maine Graduates.  
**Strategy c:** Youth will have access to an entrepreneurial mentorship program.

**Objective 5:** Entrepreneurs will want to come to Piscataquis County to expand or start business enterprises.  
**Strategy:** A website for County high school alumni will be started in order for the County to encourage them to come back.

### **GOAL # 3**

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#### **Piscataquis County will retain and strengthen its existing businesses**

**Objective 1:** Piscataquis County business assistance providers will increase their clientele by 10% by mid 2005 (reason: local businesses will be more stable and able to survive tough economic times better by making them smarter businesses. This is achieved by increasing access to and knowledge of business assistance services)

**Strategy:** The PCEDC will convene current business assistance providers and encourage a common marketing effort. The marketing effort will:

- \* Identify what types of businesses will be sought after (e.g entrepreneurs/new businesses, home-based businesses, retail businesses, service sector businesses, and manufacturing businesses).
- \* Organize common sector-oriented advertising and attraction programs.
- \* Develop a strategy to identify marketing success.

**Objective 2:** Piscataquis County manufacturers will have high productivity.

**Strategy:** In order to encourage productivity enhancing investments among County manufacturers, the Piscataquis Properties Corporation will work with EMDC and partner communities to obtain Pine Tree Zone status from the State of Maine. Existing businesses that indicate interest will be included on the application and their improvements will be largely exempt from State taxes.

**Objective 3:** Piscataquis County manufacturers will have access to a pool of qualified workers.

**Strategy:** There will be a yearly job fair in order to create networking opportunities between businesses and job seekers.

**Objective 4:** Piscataquis County manufacturers will have access to and knowledge of government contract opportunities.

**Strategy:** The PCEDC will coordinate with the Market Development Center in linking County manufacturers with Maine's Native Tribes who receive advanced contract bid preferences.

**Strategy b:** The PCEDC will work with the Market Development Center to help County manufacturers obtain government contracts.

### **GOAL # 4**

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#### **Piscataquis County will attract new businesses**

**Objective 1:** The County will aggressively market itself as a reliable and profitable place to invest.

**Strategy a:** The PCEDC will support a regional approach to business attraction marketing.

**Achievements:** *The PCEDC has joined BRDA and holds a seat on its Board of Directors.*

**Strategy b:** The PCEDC will maintain a professional appearing, business oriented, and informative website.

**Strategy c:** the PCEDC will have up-to-date marketing materials (brochures, trade booth, etc.)

**Objective 2:** Businesses interested in expanding to the County will have an available inventory of building space to choose from.

\* **Entrepreneur-** *one who organizes, manages, and assumes the risks of a business or enterprise*

**Strategy (2002):** The PCEDC will work to fund a speculative building project by forming a building corporation whose funding comes from Piscataquis County municipalities.

**Achievements:** *The building corporation (the Piscataquis Properties Corporation, formed in 2002) was unable to generate municipal funding for a speculative building program.*

**Strategy (2003):** The PCEDC will work to fund a speculative building project through a Piscataquis County bonding process.

**Achievements:** *The PCEDC worked to get the State government to allow County bonding for economic development purposes. However, the bond referendum process has been delayed until 2004.*

**Objective 3:** Piscataquis County will be able to offer competitive incentives to attract businesses.

**Strategy a:** Piscataquis County municipalities will obtain Pine Tree Zone status.

**Strategy b:** Piscataquis County municipalities will have a common TIF policy.

**Strategy c:** Piscataquis County will have a plentiful number of properties within the State's Pine Tree Zone Program.

**Strategy d:** Piscataquis County will be considered for future rounds of the Congressionally authorized HUD Empowerment Zone program.

**Objective 4:** The County will attract a tele-service company for relocation or expansion into the Pine Crest Business Park.

**Strategy:** The PCEDC will develop a business attraction plan to attract businesses from this sector.

**Objective 5:** The County will attract a precision manufacturer for relocation or expansion into an Eastern Piscataquis Industrial Park.

**Strategy:** The PCEDC will develop a business attraction plan to attract businesses from this sector.

**Objective 6:** The County will attract a wood composite technology company for relocation or expansion into the Greenville Industrial Park.

**Strategy (2001):** The PCEDC will work with allies to create a wood composite business incubator that will attract wood composite entrepreneurs.

**Achievements:** A wood composite incubator administrative structure has matured and an 18,000 square foot building will be constructed in 2005.

## **GOAL # 5**

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### **Piscataquis County will have business-friendly "hard" infrastructure**

**Objective 1:** The three major population areas of Piscataquis County will have available, developed land to offer as an incentive to expanding Businesses.

**Strategy a:** The Towns of Brownville and Milo will develop an industrial park in the Eastern part of the County.

**Strategy b:** The Town of Greenville will fully develop and expand the Greenville Industrial Park (water, wastewater).

**Strategy c:** The Pine Crest Development Corporation will develop a future needs plan for the Pine Crest Business Park.

**Objective 2:** Every village center in Piscataquis County will aesthetically pleasing and be in a well kept condition.

**Strategy:** Piscataquis County village centers will become Main Street Communities, either separately or jointly.

**Objective 3:** All Piscataquis County businesses will have access to high speed internet Service and all employees will have the technical ability to telecommute.

**Strategy:** Piscataquis County municipalities will lobby Verizon to provide the service wherever possible.

**Achievements:** *High speed internet service is available within three miles of every Verizon communication hub in the County.*

**Objective 4:** All Piscataquis County businesses will have access to high quality wireless phone service.

**Strategy:** will lobby area wireless phone operators to upgrade their towers from the current analog format to a digital format.

**Objective 5:** Piscataquis County businesses will have a strong and reliable road system that readily facilitates commercial needs.

**Strategy a:** The Piscataquis County Commissioners will lobby the State to allow heavier loads on Rt. 15 north of Greenville.

**Strategy b:** The Piscataquis County Commissioners will work with allies to lobby the State to improve Rt. 155 between Lagrange and Howland.

**Strategy c:** Piscataquis County's municipalities and the Piscataquis County Commissioners will compile an annual list to promote business enhancing transportation projects.

**Strategy d:** So that every municipality will have access to State of Maine highway funds, \_\_\_\_\_ will host a meeting of municipal officials to introduce them to the Biennial Transportation Investment Policy in which to funnel their requests.

**Objective 6:** Piscataquis County will support the creation and modernization of infrastructure projects outside the County that have positive economic effects on local economic conditions and enable access global markets.

**Strategy a:** Piscataquis County will support the creation of an East-West Highway in order to better facilitate and encourage commercial traffic in northern Maine.

**Strategy b:** Piscataquis County will support the modernization of the East-West Rail corridor to encourage rail traffic through the County.

**Strategy c:** Recognizing the value of the State's three port strategy, Piscataquis County will support the enhancement of port facilities in Searsport, Eastport, and Portland.

## **GOAL # 6**

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### **Piscataquis County will have business-friendly "soft" infrastructure**

**Objective 1:** Piscataquis County will encourage an economy based on the creativity of its residents.

**Strategy a:** The County and key stakeholders will establish a collaborative Creative Economy authority that will develop a five year work plan that enacts the below strategies (b, c, d, and e)

**Strategy b:** Support and encourage creative businesses and organizations.

**Strategy c:** Support programs and projects that build creative communities, such as downtown revitalization, performing arts centers, cultural and heritage events.

**Strategy d:** Attract, train, and retain a local creative workforce through partnerships with schools and organizations.

**Strategy e:** Support organizations that educate students and residents about arts and culture as an economic generator that produces vital goods and services through tourism, community building, and an improved quality of life.

**Objective 2:** Workers will have opportunities for higher learning and skill development.

**Strategy a:** Create a center of higher learning in Piscataquis County.

**Achievements:** *The Penquis Higher Education Center was opened in 2002 and has a 250% increase in enrollment in 2003 from the previous year.*

**Strategy b:** Adult students will have access to child care services while taking classes.

**Objective 3:** Residents will have a general knowledge of business economic and personal finance.

**Strategy a:** County school districts will provide students a background in economics and business.

**Strategy b:** Media outlets will showcase business success stories, business education opportunities, and articles featuring helpful business information.

**Objective 4:** Workers will have knowledge of and access to job obtaining skills.

**Strategy:** Worker training providers will have resume writing seminars, interview technique classes, and business etiquette forums (perhaps with the before mentioned job fair?).

**Objective 5:** The County will have an involved, knowledgeable class of civic and charitable leaders who have pride in Piscataquis County.

**Strategy:** Create a leadership development course for County residents.

**Achievements:** *The Penquis Leadership Institute was formed in 2001 and has graduated 16 people. The current class also has 16 participants.*

**Objective 6:** Graduating high school students will be able to fully complete their education in Piscataquis County.

**Strategy a:** PHEC will be able to offer associates, bachelors, and graduate degree programs at the Center.

**Strategy b:** PHEC educational opportunities will be provided to graduating high school seniors.

**Objective 7:** Piscataquis County businesses will have be knowledgeable of and have access to training opportunities for their employees.

**Strategy a:** Human Resource Directors from the County's largest businesses will meet regularly to learn about or coordinate training opportunities for their employees.

**Strategy b:** Private businesses will be encouraged to develop internal tuition assistance policies in order to foster continued workforce education.

**Objective 8:** Piscataquis County will increase its population so that businesses will be able to add employees.

**Strategy a:** A County website for area high school alumni will be started in order for the County to encourage them to come back.

**Strategy b:** Elementary students will be instructed in Piscataquis County history and unique heritage so that they will have pride in the County. The pride may help them decide to stay.

**Strategy c:** There will be offered a targeted loan forgiveness program for professionals who attended Maine Colleges and Universities and who desire to live in Maine after graduation.

**Objective 9:** Piscataquis County youth will aspire to highly educated, economically secure lifestyles.

**Objective 10:** Piscataquis County employees will have access to safe, flexible, and affordable child day care services.

## **GOAL # 7**

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### **Piscataquis County will encourage collaborative economic development activities and policies by local, state, and federal governments**

**Objective 1:** Piscataquis County's State and Federal legislators will be knowledgeable about the County's manufacturing environment and concerns.

**Strategy:** There will be yearly informational forum between the Piscataquis Legislative Delegation, Congressional staff, and the County's manufacturing community.

**Objective 2:** The State and Federal governments will produce laws that are good for Piscataquis County's business environment.

**Strategy (2001):** The PCEDC will promote the funding of a center of higher education in Piscataquis County.

***Achievements:** The Legislature passed and the Governor signed an appropriations bill with funding for a center of higher learning at the former Mayo Street School.*

**Strategy (2003):** The PCEDC will promote the passage of a law allowing Piscataquis County to borrow for economic development purposes.

***Achievements:** LD1351 "An Act to Encourage Economic Development in Piscataquis County was passed the Legislature and was signed by the Governor. A November 2004 bond referendum is anticipated.*

**Strategy a:** The PCEDC will promote the expansion of the Pine Tree Zone initiative to include: earlier sales tax exemption timetable, power savings, and other enhancements to the original legislation.

**Strategy b:** The PCEDC will promote the appropriation of State funds for out-of-State business attraction.

**Strategy c:** The PCEDC will promote Federal, State, County, and local funding for construction of an Eastern Piscataquis Industrial Park.

**Strategy d:** The PCEDC will promote Federal EDA funding for rail, water, and wastewater lines into the Greenville Industrial Park.

**Strategy e:** All Piscataquis County municipalities and the County will have similar tax increment financing policies.

**Strategy f:** Piscataquis County will utilize its bonding authority to pay for local economic development projects throughout the County.

## **GOAL # 8**

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### **Piscataquis County will expand and support the creative economy**

**Objective 1:** Create, expand, and retain **creative businesses and organizations** which include commercial manufacturing and micro-businesses, non-profit arts and cultural institutions, and individual artist entrepreneurs. All contribute to make a diverse and sustainable economy, and can be a significant source of employment\*.

**Strategy a:** Support existing organizations with a mission to build and assist creative small businesses such as The Maine Highlands Guild, The Incubator Without Walls Program, Cooperative Extension's Small Businesses Development programs.

**Strategy b:** Develop technology infrastructure to help attract young "techno-savy" entrepreneurs to the region through bringing high speed internet and wireless access to business parks and create wireless hook up zones in offices and downtown spots.

(key player: PCEDC – technology grants)

**Strategy c:** A public/private "Center for Manufacturing and Workforce Excellence" (See Objective 3 below).

**Objective 2:** Support programs and projects that build *creative communities*, such as downtown revitalization, performing arts centers, and cultural, heritage, and nature-based events. These contribute to local pride and a better quality of life which attracts businesses and skilled workers, and retains citizens as well as tourists\*.

**Strategy a:** Expand CHet to include key stakeholders in the county (including the contingent of citizens who attended The Blaine House Conference for the Creative Economy in May 2004) to establish a collaborative Creative Economy authority that will develop a five year work plan that will most efficiently meet the Creative Economy objectives.

(Key players: CHetNET group, Creative Economy attendees, cultural organizations, towns, PCEDC.)

**Strategy b:** Finish renovation of The Center Theatre and market it with other performing arts venues (Key players: Center Theatre, town of D-F, Wayside Theatre, East Sangerville Grange, Milo Town Hall, Greenville Depo, event organizers)

**Strategy c:** Work with communities to create and/or support downtown revitalization committees in all towns and help them to gain grant funding to improve their downtowns.

(Key players: all towns)

**Strategy d:** County-wide marketing and press material will be produced to actively promote current arts, cultural, and food events to visitors (perhaps through the Chambers of Commerce and The Maine Highlands). In addition, education of local students and citizens about arts and culture as an economic generator that produces vital goods and services through businesses, tourism, community building, and improved quality of life will be undertaken.

(Key players: CHet, The Piscataquis Observer, The Moosehead Messenger, all event organizers, restaurants)

**Strategy e:** Create County-wide "Arts and culture" awards that can go to an outstanding individual "promoting the arts", to a local business for promoting "arts for the economy", a school for "arts education" projects, and to a non-profit organization for "promoting arts in the community"

(Key players: CHet and PCEDC)

**Strategy f:** Complete a county-wide grant to support current regional efforts and events promoting/preserving cultural heritage.

(Key players: CHet, The Maine Highlands Guild, Lake Hebron Artisans, Historical Societies, Theatre and music event organizers).

**Objective 3:** Attract, train, and retain a local *creative workforce* through partnerships with schools and organizations. Creative workforce training and skills can apply directly to an occupation, but can also be highly relevant in occupations outside the traditional definition of creative industries. A creative workforce is a regional competitive advantage.

**Strategy a.** A public/private "Center for Manufacturing and Workforce Excellence" will be created whose mission is to:

- 1) encourage the investment of productivity enhancing equipment and practices;
- 2) encourage a culture of creativity in manufacturing and a creative workforce
- 3) organize basic skills development among all manufacturing employees
- 4) promote joint training initiatives;
- 5) assist manufacturing entrepreneurs to develop their businesses successfully;
- 6) write and administer GTI and Maine Quality Centers training funds for member corporations;
- 7) develop seminars, workshops, and classes related to manufacturing excellence; and
- 8) initiate working relationships between manufacturers, creative consultants (designers, etc) and business assistance groups (The University of Maine, Maine International Trade Center, Manufacturing Extension Partnership, Department of Economic & Community Development, assorted utilities, etc.)

## **GOAL # 9**

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**Piscataquis County will offer residents, visitors, artists, businesses and communities across the county an interesting and attractive base of sustainable tourism opportunities connected to nature and ecotourism, outdoor recreation, cultural and forest heritage, rural community life and the creative economy.**

**Strategy a:** The county and key tourism stakeholders will establish a collaborative tourism development authority that will develop a strategic plan for community *and* county tourism, a sustainable tourism action plan which enhances rural quality of life and benefits residents, visitors, artists, businesses and communities across Piscataquis County.

**Strategy b:** In cooperation with tourism and community stakeholders, policies and practices will be adopted which manage and protect tourism assets in communities and the county-at-large, including conservation assets in the unorganized townships.

**Strategy c:** Tourism stakeholders, information providers, businesses and communities will adopt and implement industry certified standards for hospitality and customer service while providing high quality visitor experiences in the county.