



SECTION IV. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Town of LaFayette's median household income is \$65,301, higher than Onondaga County's median of \$50,129 and New York State's \$55,233, according to the Census Bureau's 2005-2009 American Community Survey (ACS). Also per the 2005-2009 ACS, LaFayette's unemployment rate was estimated at 4.3%, compared to Onondaga County's 6.1% and New York State's 7.0%. Unemployment rates overall have since risen to 7.4%, in Onondaga County in August of 2011. It would seem that LaFayette residents are doing well financially compared to Onondaga County, however, 31% of the Town's population has a low to moderate income. In other words, 31% of town residents live in households that make less than 80% of the median income. For example, in Onondaga County, a family of four, earning less than \$51,450, is considered a low to moderate income household.

In addition to a 31% low to moderate income population, another issue the Town faces is that LaFayette is primarily a bedroom community to the City of Syracuse and does not provide a significant number of jobs to its residents within the Town. The 2005-2009 ACD notes that LaFayette residents travel an average of 21.1 minutes to get to work each day. While this is not much higher than the county's average of 19 minutes, it is a sign that many residents travel outside of the Town to work. Traffic patterns on Interstate 81 and at exit 15 indicate the same trend. According to the NYS Department of Transportation, each day approximately 2,000 cars enter I-81 at exit 15 and travel northbound, then at some later point in the day return south.

The Town of LaFayette's largest employer is the LaFayette school district, employing approximately 200 people. Onondaga County's five largest employers include the Upstate University Health System, Syracuse University, Wegmans, Saint Joseph's Hospital, and Crouse Hospital. According to 2005-2009 ACS data, the largest employment sector filled by LaFayette residents is "Educational services, and health care and social assistance". 833 people, or 30.5% of working Town residents are employed in this field. While many of them work for the LaFayette School District, it can be assumed many more commute to Syracuse, as four of the County's top five employers fall into this category, and these employers are easily accessible from LaFayette.

While many of LaFayette's residents will continue to commute to Syracuse in the future, it is important that the Town have a healthy economy that can provide jobs for its residents and provide support to the Town's tax base. In order to counteract these economic circumstances and rebuild and reinvent the Town's economy, it is imperative that a strong and focused economic development program is in place. Currently, the Town does not have an economic development department or staffing. Instead the Onondaga County Office of Economic Development (OCOED) is responsible for promoting economic development throughout the County, including the Town.



Where possible, the Town's economic development program should advocate for county tax incentives and reduced fees for entities creating jobs and bringing wealth to the community. Public water must be provided to businesses and properties around the Hamlet area. It is also important to support existing and small businesses with their growth plans.

Some of the economic development issues facing the Town, and available economic opportunities, are detailed below.

EXISTING BUSINESSES

There are approximately 100 existing businesses in the Town of LaFayette. Based on a review of a Chamber of Commerce mailing list, which includes most of the Town's businesses, the majority of LaFayette's businesses are service based, construction and home repair, retail, or agriculture and equine based. Others businesses include restaurants, real estate services, auto repair, financial, and health services. There are only two manufacturing companies in the Town, who collectively only employ ___ persons.

In 2011, a student enrolled in Syracuse University's Maxwell School worked with the Town to complete a Business Survey in LaFayette to help understand what barriers businesses face. The survey was mailed to 80 businesses, and 22 responded (a 27.5% response rate). Some of the more significant results are noted below:

- 36% were home based
- 59% have been in business for over 21 years
- 75% said there are goods and services they cannot get in LaFayette
- Businesses stated customers were: local (73%) or visitors/commuters (23%)
- 59% did not have a website for their business
- 36% planned to add employees in the near future

The survey asked businesses for suggestions to improve the business environment in the Town. Many of the answers fell into three categories:

- Pro-business: more freedom for businesses to expand and new ones to come in
- Fix the four-corners: clean it up and improve the hamlet area
- Water and Sewer: having water and sewer would help some businesses with their operations, and would increase the population base, therefore increasing businesses' customer bases

Prior to the 2011 survey, a Business Demand Survey was completed in 2007, also by a Syracuse University student. The goal of the survey was to collect information regarding the level of demand for various businesses, products, or services. Residents were particularly interested in having more restaurants and a grocery store in the Town. In addition, a majority were also interested in a fitness center, building supply store, more banking options, and more handyman/woman services.



Small Business - In December 2009, the New York State Task Force on Small Business issued a report with recommendations. The report identified specific barriers to small business growth, which included the cost of doing business in New York, the difficulty accessing financial capital, including operating and start up capital, and the availability of technical assistance.

Smaller businesses are vital to the Town's economy. 82% of businesses in LaFayette employ less than five people, and none of the survey respondents employed more than 21 people. Successful small businesses, whether existing or startup, need access to both capital and training. Onondaga Community College (OCC), located in Syracuse, has a Small Business Development Center (SBDC) accessible to small businesses in the region, including LaFayette. They provide direct one-to-one counseling, at no charge, on business problems facing existing businesses or individuals considering starting a small business. They also provide educational programs targeted to the needs and interests of small businesses. This is an important resource businesses in the Town can avail themselves.

Many of the small businesses in the Town of LaFayette are home based businesses. Some of these businesses could be in a position now, or at a future time, to expand outside of the home. One way to bring more activity to the Hamlet is to encourage these businesses to move into buildings and offices in the Hamlet area, including in formerly residential structures. Again, the OCC Small Business Development Center can be a resource in assisting businesses with taking the steps necessary for a successful move.

Agriculture - Farming and farm related businesses are an important part of LaFayette's economy. 17.6% of land in the Town is actively farmed. The 2000 Census states that 62 people, or 2.4% of the Town's population is employed in "Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining". While this may seem like a small number, a larger proportion of the Town's businesses are farms, greenhouses, or farm related businesses.

Addressing the needs and issues farms and related businesses face will strengthen the Town's economy as a whole. See Section III: Agriculture.

HAMLET

The Hamlet includes the greatest concentration of businesses in the Town. These range from small homegrown businesses to branches or stores that are part of large corporations. Oftentimes, a community focuses its economic development efforts on attracting new manufacturing facilities, which employ large numbers. The reality is that the vast majority of new jobs created in the country are created by small businesses such as those found in the Hamlet. In the 2007 Business Demand Survey, 78% of respondents said they would prefer development in the LaFayette Hamlet as opposed to the Jamesville Hamlet or elsewhere.

Building a strong Hamlet economy and supporting small businesses should be a primary focus of the Town's economic development efforts. Efforts to expand existing



and attract new businesses should focus on the Hamlet area. However, the Town must be cognizant of the fact that economic development in a Hamlet takes a very different approach than typical economic development efforts, and may include measures that, historically, may not have been considered economic development, such as façade renovations or community events. Specific actions to revitalize the Hamlet are detailed in Section V: Hamlet Development.

Public Water - Access to public water in the hamlet area is key to attracting new businesses and expanding LaFayette's economic base. Many businesses need public water in order to operate or expand their services. In addition, as many businesses acknowledged in the 2011 Business Survey, public water will potentially increase the population of the hamlet area, increasing the customer base for businesses. One in three respondents to the 2011 Business Survey said municipal water would help their business. In addition, it was a common theme found in answers to an open-ended question asking what would help their business grow and prosper.

Commercial Park - The Town needs to provide sites that will provide an opportunity for new or expanding businesses to locate, which is connected to public water, and preferably with easy access to Interstate 81. The Town should work cooperatively with property owners and developers to plan for and create a commercial park.

There are several vacant parcels in and around the Hamlet that could be appropriate for a commercial park, especially if public water was extended to the Hamlet area. On the east side of I-81, there are parcels between 5 and 33 acres in size, and on the west side of Interstate, there are possible locations from 30 to 40 acres in size. Some of these lots are just outside of the Hamlet zoned area, however, depending on their neighboring uses, developing a Commercial Planned Development district, as allowed for in the Town's existing zoning ordinance, could be appropriate.

TOURISM

LaFayette's location immediately off of several transportation corridors, and the thousands of people who drive by everyday, provides an opportunity for economic development. LaFayette can take advantage of its location by encouraging businesses who would both serve Town residents, and serve visitors and travelers. This would provide businesses with a larger customer base than if they primarily served Town residents.

LaFayette's location on Route 20, also provides other business opportunities. The annual antique show in Bouckville, east of LaFayette, and various antique stores in Cazenovia and Skaneateles in either direction, provide an opportunity for LaFayette to develop additional antique businesses and become a part of an "antique trail". In addition, Route 20 draws a number of long distance bicyclers. Currently there are few businesses in the Town that serve their needs or provide needed amenities.



The weekend of Columbus Day is traditionally the date of LaFayette's annual Apple Festival, which draws tens of thousands of visitors every year. The festival draws visitors from around New York State, and crafters and artisans from numerous states. It provides an opportunity for not-for-profit organizations to undertake fundraising, and provides some local businesses with additional revenues. Visitors to the apple festival enjoy the rural atmosphere and beautiful scenery that characterize LaFayette, providing beneficial exposure for the community. The festival takes place on the Apple Festival grounds, owned by LaFayette Apple Festival Inc., and include several large fields, and a few buildings and farm structures, including a cider mill.

The Apple Festival grounds sit empty for much of the year outside of the annual Apple Festival, except for a few events such as blue grass music festivals and tractor pulls. However, the grounds and buildings could be used more often or year-round as a means to create an agritourism industry in the Town of LaFayette. Agritourism is a niche tourism area that is growing in the United States. It may include farm stays, apple picking, learning wine and cheese making, tasting honey, riding horses, or shopping at farm stands or local markets. LaFayette should work with the owners of the Apple Festival grounds and area farmers to determine possible uses for the Apple Festival grounds during the rest of the year. They should consider how the grounds could provide links to those farms or other agritourism activities to boost the overall Town economy.

In order to continue to benefit from increased tourism traffic, whether it is antique shoppers, bicyclers, Apple Festival visitors, or other travelers, the Town must encourage the expansion of visitor services such as overnight accommodations and restaurants, and must leverage existing events to ensure that the maximum impact is attained. For example, there are currently no bed-and-breakfast or inn style accommodations anywhere in the Town. This could be an excellent reuse for some of the Town's larger older homes which can be difficult to maintain as a single family home, and would also fill a niche in the local tourism market.

ZONING

The Town should review its Zoning Ordinance to be sure it is consistent with economic development goals and there are no impediments to establishing new businesses or expanding existing businesses. For more details see Section XII: Zoning and Land Use.

RESOURCES FOR BUSINESSES

The Onondaga County Office of Economic Development, CenterState CEO, and several partner organizations have programs and financial incentives available for new or expanding companies who are creating jobs. Some of these programs include the Recharge NY Program, GSBDC Revolving Loan Fund, CNY Quasi-Equity Fund, CNY Enterprise Development Fund, Onondaga County Revolving Loan Fund, and the CNY WORKS OJT Program. In addition, as mentioned previously, Onondaga Community



College has a Small Business Development Center which offers one-to-one counseling and training programs.

GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES

GOAL 10: Retain and expand existing businesses in the Town of LaFayette.

IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES:

- A) Promote and encourage the retention and expansion of businesses that provide goods and services needed by Town residents and that are consistent with the Town's character.
- B) Work with the Onondaga County Office of Economic Development (OCOED) and other agencies to assist in retaining and expanding job opportunities in the Town. Assure that businesses are aware of County programs and they are easily accessible to Town businesses.
- C) Provide public water and broadband service to the hamlet area.
- D) Reduce the cost of doing business in the Town by controlling the costs such as property taxes and Town services.
- E) Work with the LaFayette Chamber of Commerce to implement an ongoing communication program with businesses in the Town to assist in problem solving, joint marketing, shared business support, and other areas.
- F) Encourage home-based businesses to expand into buildings in the Hamlet area, including formerly residential homes.

GOAL 11: Increase the number and variety of businesses in the Town, especially in the Hamlet area.

IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES:

- A) Work with Onondaga Community College Small Business Development Center to provide technical assistance for start up businesses in the Town.
- B) Develop a commercial/business park with convenient access to Interstate 81, to promote business development in the Town.
- C) Work with the OCOED to recruit businesses to the Town that will provide well paying job opportunities with adequate benefits.
- D) Encourage development of small niche businesses, particularly in residential buildings near the Hamlet center.



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- E) Work cooperatively with developers to attract a grocery store, restaurants, and other retailers and services in the Hamlet area that will serve the needs of Town residents.

GOAL 12: Increase the economic impact of existing Town assets.

IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES:

- A) Capitalize on the numerous travelers on nearby transportation routes to increase the customer base for new and existing businesses.
- B) Encourage the development of antique stores along the Route 20 antique trail, especially in the Hamlet area.
- C) Encourage the development of one or more bed-and-breakfasts or other overnight accommodations in the Town, especially in the Hamlet area.
- D) Work with LaFayette Apple Festival Inc. and area farmers to develop an economic use for the Apple Festival grounds and buildings at other times of the year.
- E) Work with area farmers, including equine related farms and apple orchards, to develop an agritourism industry in the Town.
- F) Working with the Onondaga Cycling Club, or other bicycle organizations, to develop a biking map and bike friendly amenities in the town.

GOAL 13: Ensure land use and zoning policies support economic development in the Town.

IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES:

- A) Streamline the approval process for establishing a new business or making changes to an existing business.
- B) Review the zoning ordinance and reduce impediments to economic development.