

Economic Development and Vision Plan for the Town of Eaton

Living and thriving in Eaton!



Cochran Advisors December 28, 2024

Executive Summary

This Economic Development and Vision Plan outlines a comprehensive strategy to enhance the economic vitality of the Town of Eaton, Madison County, New York. The town faces several challenges and opportunities, including the need to address infrastructure limitations, expand tourism, promote local businesses, and enhance community engagement. By addressing these key areas, the town can lay out a vision for the future, foster long-term growth and provide its residents with improved services and amenities.

Key Goals

1. **Expand Tourism:** Increase the number of tourist events and enhance the town's visibility to visitors.
2. **Address Infrastructure Needs:** Resolve water system issues that limit local business growth.
3. **Revitalize Community Identity:** Develop a new visual identity, or enhance the current, and improve the welcoming nature of the town.
4. **Foster Community Engagement:** Create spaces and opportunities for residents to gather and engage.
5. **Support Sustainable Growth:** Develop policies that promote affordable and permanent housing while respecting the town's rural character.

1. Expanding Tourism Through Events

To promote the Town of Eaton as a vibrant destination, the town will implement a series of seasonal festivals, with a minimum of one festival per quarter. These events will attract visitors from outside the town and celebrate Eaton's unique culture and community spirit.



Proposed Festivals

- **Winter (January-March): *Eaton Winterfest***
 - Ice sculptures, snowshoeing trails, live music, winter market, and bonfires.
- **Spring (April-June): *Eaton Dairy Festival***
 - Dairy focused theme, flower markets, local craft vendors, and partnerships with SUNY Morrisville and Cornell Cooperative Extension.
- **Summer (July-September): *Eaton BBQ & Blues Festival***
 - BBQ competitions, live blues music, local craft beer tasting, and family-friendly activities including canal paddling.
- **Fall (October-December): *Harvest Heritage Days***
 - Pumpkin patches, hayrides, farmers market, historical tours, and fall festivities.

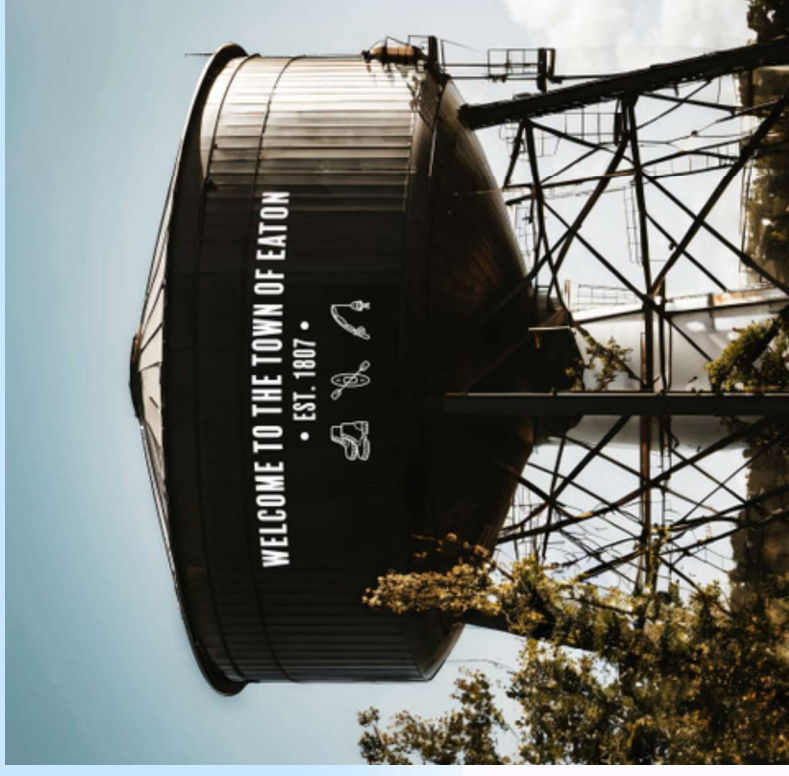
These festivals will create year-round economic activity and opportunities for local businesses to thrive. Collaborations with local businesses, schools, Cornell Cooperative Extension and SUNY Morrisville will be essential for successful planning and execution.

Action Steps

- Create a festival committee to oversee planning and execution.
- Secure partnerships with local businesses for event sponsorship.
- Establish marketing strategies using social media, a community calendar, and collaboration with local educational institutions to attract tourists

2. Addressing Infrastructure Challenges

The Town of Eaton's economic development is limited by infrastructure challenges, particularly with its water systems. A major concern is that Ray Brothers BBQ, a popular local business, cannot access enough water due to limitations with their well water system.



Proposed Solutions

- **Assess and Upgrade the Water Systems:**

- Work with local utility providers to identify areas for improvement and secure grant funding for necessary infrastructure upgrades.
- Investigate the feasibility of expanding water systems or developing alternative water sources and collaborate with adjacent municipalities.

- **Support Local Business Growth:**

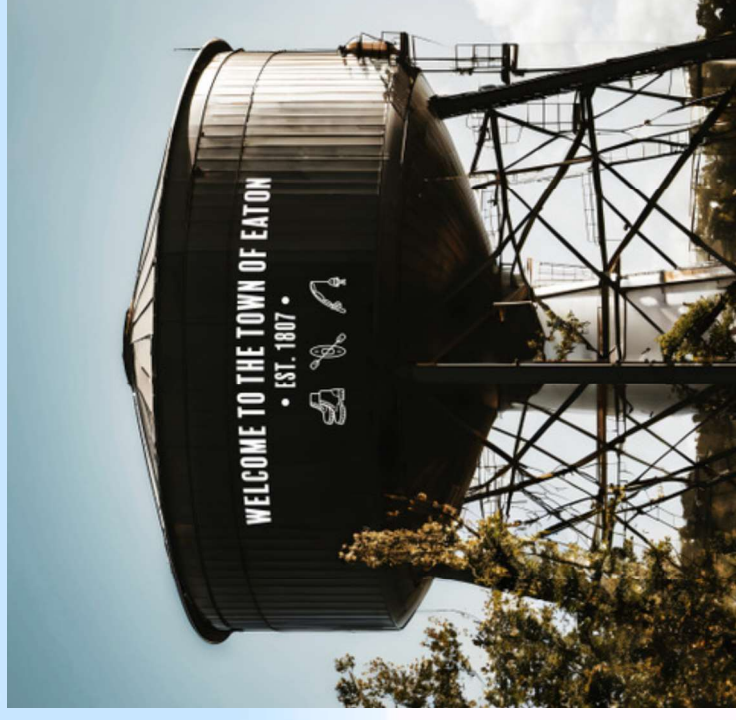
- Provide grants or low-interest loans to businesses like Ray Brothers BBQ to assist with the costs of upgrading their water and sewer connections.

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Branded Water Tower

- **Proposed Water Tower:**

- As part of the town's infrastructure improvements, we propose constructing a branded water tower near Ray Brothers BBQ. This water tower will serve both practical and promotional purposes.
- Design: The water tower should feature the Town of Eaton's new logo, along with distinctive visual elements that represent the town's agricultural heritage and natural beauty. The tower will serve as both a utility asset and a landmark for travelers heading to Eaton, becoming a signature feature of the town's landscape.

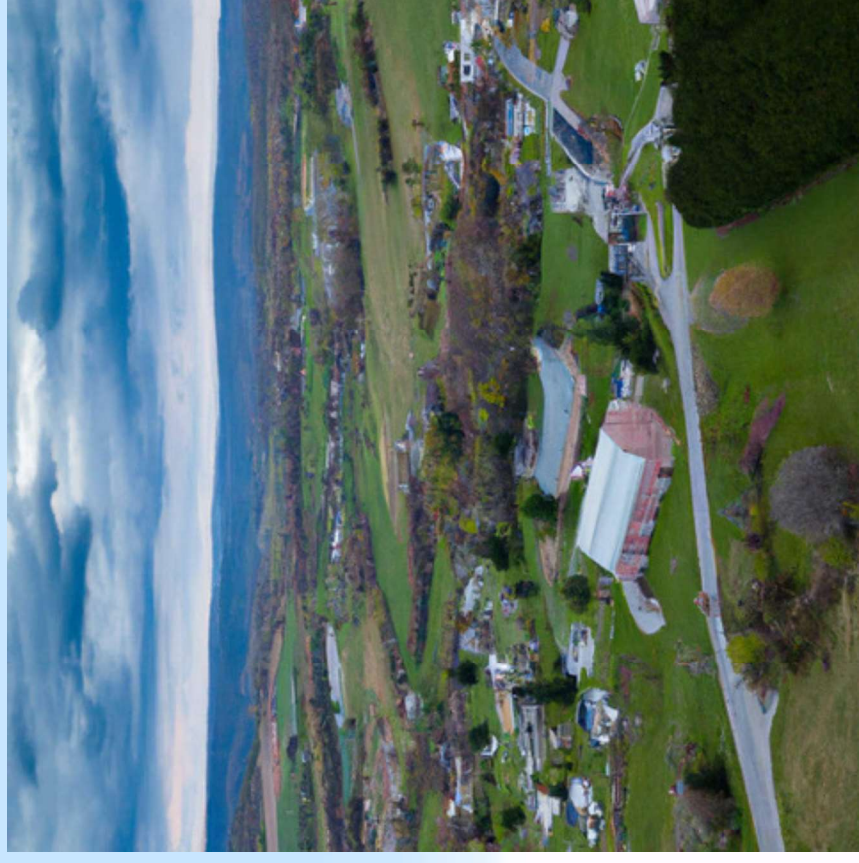


Action Steps

- Coordinate with utility providers to assess the feasibility of the water tower and determine its location near Ray Brothers BBQ.
- Hire a design team to develop branding elements for the water tower.
- Secure funding and permits for the construction and branding of the water tower.

3. Revitalizing the Town's Visual Identity

A strong and welcoming visual identity is essential to attract visitors and businesses. The current lack of distinctive signage and town branding limits Eaton's ability to present itself as a vibrant, attractive community.



Proposed Actions

- **Design New Welcome Signs:**

- Replace existing standard road signs with large, visually appealing welcome signs at all key entry points to the town.
- Work with local designers to incorporate the town's history, natural beauty, and modern aspirations into the sign designs.

- **Launch a Branding Campaign:**

- Develop a modern logo or use the current appealing logo, tagline, and visual style guide to be used across town materials, websites, and promotional materials.
- Partner with local organizations to spread awareness of the new identity.

Action Steps

- Hire a branding agency or local designer to create (or enhance) a visual identity.
- Plan the installation of new signage in key locations, including around the water tower.
- Launch a marketing campaign to promote the new identity.

4. Fostering Community Engagement and Public Spaces

To strengthen the sense of community and provide residents with greater access to public services, the town should consider relocating or upgrading its town offices to a more accessible, community-oriented facility.



Proposed Actions

- **Relocate or Upgrade Town Offices:**

- Find or develop a location that includes public meeting spaces, community services, and is easily accessible to all residents.
- This facility should become a central gathering space for town events and activities.

- **Develop a Community Park and Other Outdoor Spaces:**

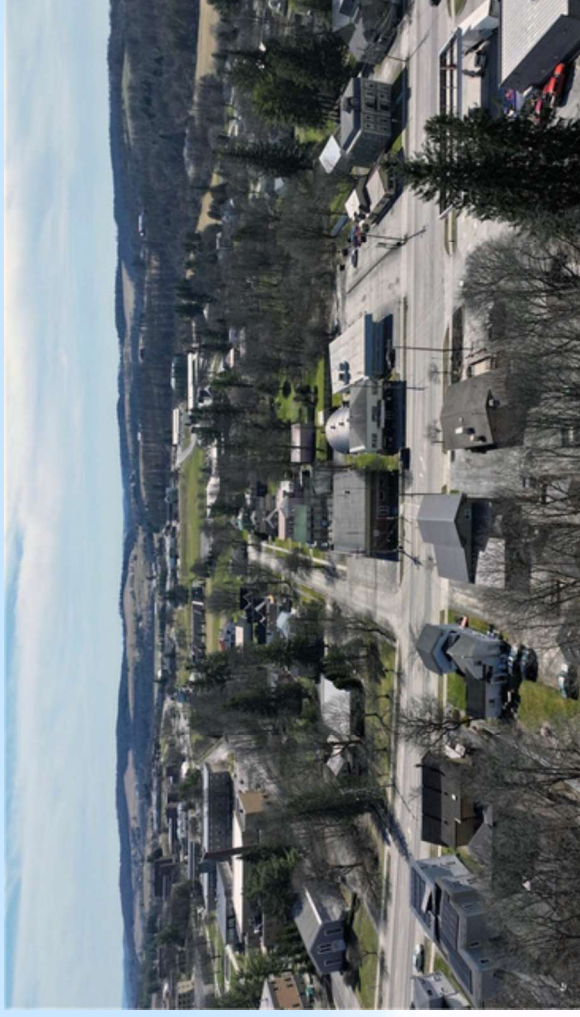
- The Town of Eaton will finalize the construction of a town park. The park should include a walking path, public fitness machines, and a pickleball court to encourage recreation and bring the community together. The park should also allow for thematic elements that drive community activity such as murals and/or public art.
- The Town of Eaton will develop other outdoor space such as canal access points that allow for fishing and canoe and kayak launching. This helps emphasize the focus on outdoor recreation within the town.

Action Steps

- Identify potential locations for relocating or upgrading the current town offices.
- Work with a local architect or design team to create plans for the new or upgraded public facility.
- Develop a plan for the new park and outdoor spaces, including community input on desired amenities.

5. Supporting Sustainable Growth and Housing

The town should update its building codes to promote both permanent and affordable housing. This will address housing shortages and ensure that new developments are aligned with the town's long-term vision for growth.



Proposed Solutions

- **Update Building and Property Usage Codes:**

- Evaluate current codes and make changes to support sustainable growth, such as requiring manufactured homes to be placed on permanent foundations.

- **Promote Affordable Housing Development:**

- Incentivize developers to build affordable housing by providing tax incentives or grants for affordable projects.

Action Steps

- Form a committee or utilize the current town board to review and revise building codes.
- Engage with developers to assess opportunities for affordable housing projects.

Conclusion

This Economic Development Plan outlines a comprehensive approach to fostering growth, improving infrastructure, and enhancing the quality of life for residents and visitors in the Town of Eaton. By implementing the strategies outlined in this plan, the Town of Eaton can look forward to a brighter economic future with thriving businesses, vibrant festivals, a stronger community identity, and improved infrastructure. The inclusion of a branded water tower will not only address infrastructure challenges but also serve as a lasting symbol of the town's revitalization.

Next Steps

- Present this plan to the Town Board for approval.
- Establish working committees for each section of the plan.
- Begin outreach to local businesses, schools, and residents to gather input and build momentum.

COCHRAN ADVISORS

Founded by Chris and Heidi Cochran, Cochran Advisors has one goal: to assist local leadership create a new model of economic uplift by helping cities find and grow their sustainable industry of excellence.

We've been working with cities and community leaders across the country for nearly a decade and one thing we have learned is that there is no single approach that works in every community. Just because something worked in a rural western state it does not mean that the same tactics would work in an East Coast inner-city.

We believe that economic development should also be about more than just tech start-ups, accelerators, venture capital, and large companies relocating.

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