



**Anchored in Place:  
A Strategic Plan for the**

# **Hudson River Valley Greenway**

**2026 - 2028**

November 10, 2025

# Team

1:1 Advisory LLC was retained by the Hudson River Valley Greenway to facilitate the strategic planning process, which commenced in March 2025 and concluded in October 2025.

## **Hudson River Valley Greenway**

Created by legislation in 1991, the Hudson River Valley Greenway creates a process for voluntary regional cooperation among 323 municipalities within 14 counties that border the Hudson River. The Greenway is a partnership between the Hudson River Valley Greenway Communities Council and the Greenway Conservancy for the Hudson River Valley. It facilitates the development of a regional strategy for preserving scenic, natural, historic, cultural, and recreational resources while encouraging compatible economic development and maintaining the tradition of home rule for land use decision-making.

### Strategic Planning Committee

The committee includes board members of the Hudson River Valley Greenway Communities Council (Council) and Greenway Conservancy for the Hudson River Valley (Conservancy), and staff.

Margaretta “Meg” Downey, Chair, Council  
Wint Aldrich, Vice Chair, Council  
Sarah Olson, Secretary, Council  
Angela Henry, Dutchess County Representative, Council  
Kevin Burke, Chair, Conservancy  
Betsy Jacks, Vice Chair, Conservancy  
Jayne McLaughlin, Treasurer, Conservancy  
Andy Kitzmann, Executive Director  
Andy Beers, Program Manager  
Beth Campochiaro, Trails and Community Outreach Director

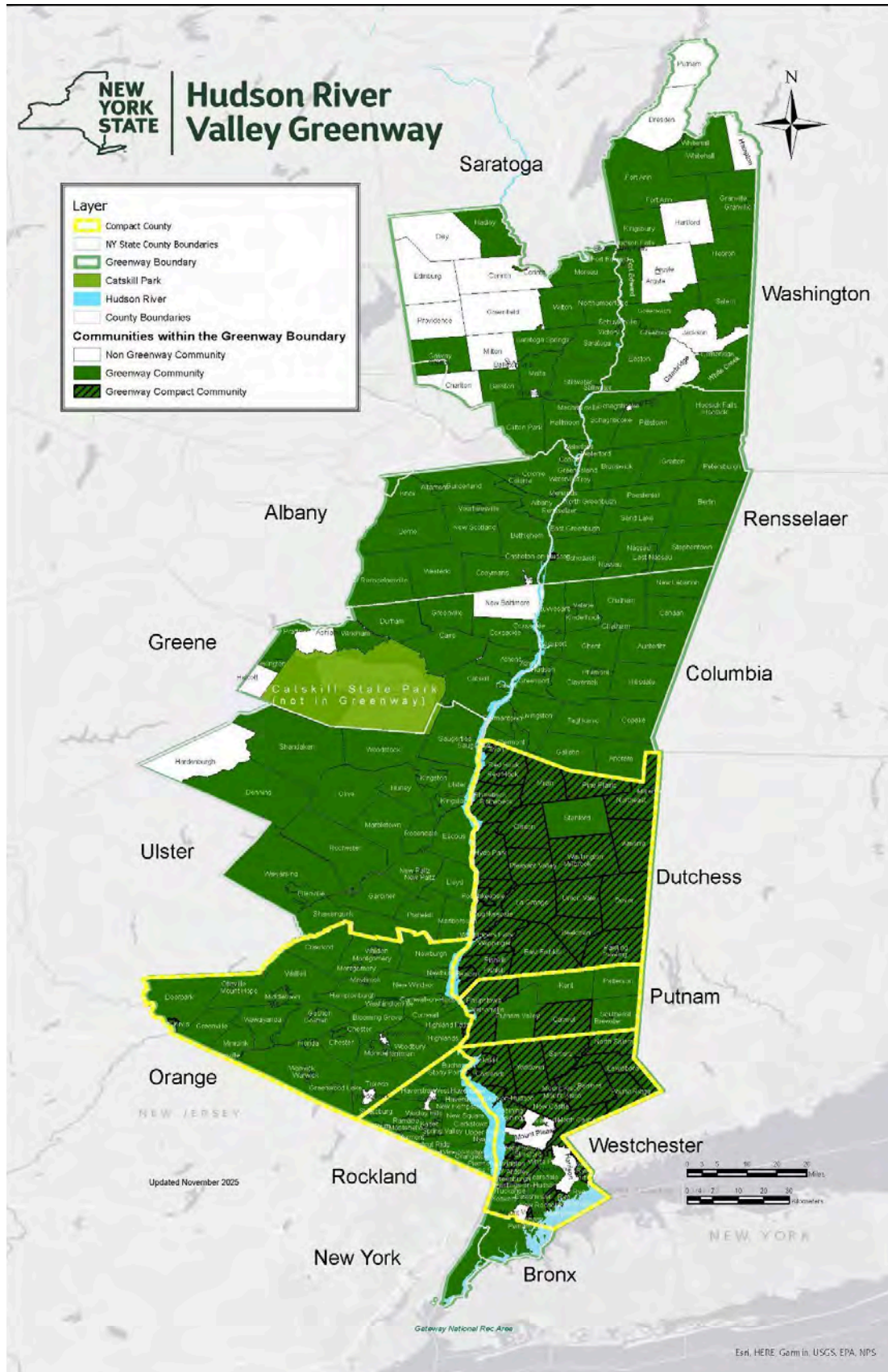
## **1:1 Advisory LLC**

1:1 Advisory LLC is a national philanthropic advising and nonprofit consulting practice.

### Project Team

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Notes: (1) All photos of the Hudson River Valley are by Kerry McCarthy. (2) Map reproduced with permission from the Hudson River Valley Greenway. (3) This plan is accompanied by a separate, detailed implementation tool that includes an itemized timeline, budget, assigned leads, and key performance indicators.



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*“Who’s looking out for the Hudson Valley at large and what that means  
from an economic perspective,  
from an environmental perspective,  
from a tourism perspective,  
from a quality of life perspective,  
from a resident perspective...”*

*The Greenway has the Hudson Valley’s best interest at heart!”*

# 1. Executive Summary

The Hudson River Valley Greenway (Greenway) celebrates, preserves, and enhances the Hudson River Valley by furnishing the grants, technical advice, and policy tools that local leaders need to drive positive change in their communities.

The Greenway cares for its ecological, scenic, cultural, historic, agricultural, and recreational treasures and builds a sustainable economy so that both the land and its people thrive.

While perceived as a trusted, nonpartisan, and forward-looking expert in planning, collaboration, and trail development, its impact is threatened by a competitive landscape and lack of public visibility, leading to public confusion and low stakeholder awareness.

To counter these challenges, this three-year strategic plan (2026-2028) redefines the Greenway as the region’s premier convener and planning leader, solidifying its brand and long-term stability through four interconnected goals:

- **Regionalism.** The Greenway will work regionwide as a central resource for the Hudson River Valley, helping communities connect, share ideas, and tackle challenges together.
- **Promotion.** The Greenway will promote what it does and can do to help the people and places of the Hudson River Valley.
- **Stewardship.** The Greenway will advance a regional vision that supports open space, farmland protection, cultural heritage, waterway access, scenic vistas, and trail connections—while furthering sustainability, resilience, and other local priorities through collaboration.
- **Engagement.** The Greenway will work with local communities and leaders to

ensure that its work is guided by the voices and needs of the Hudson River Valley.

To achieve these goals, the plan aligns all activities under five operational strategies: Grants programs, Compact program, Greenway Trail Network, Maurice D. Hinchey Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area (NHA), and organizational capacity.

These strategies will result in efforts that include:

- Streamlining the grants program to better reach and serve underinvested communities.
- Revitalizing the Compact program to enhance regional planning.
- Expanding the Greenway Trail Network to ensure equitable access.
- Leveraging the NHA to showcase cultural assets and drive regional tourism.
- Bolstering organizational capacity through staff efficiency and a unified brand identity.

The plan is designed for both fiscal prudence and ambition. *More than half of the plan's actions are designed to require no additional cost beyond the Greenway's current base budget.* Transformative initiatives, such as rebranding or creating a Deputy Director role, will only be undertaken as additional resources are secured.

This strategic plan is both a roadmap for the next three years and a declaration of intent.

It positions the Hudson River Valley Greenway as the indispensable architect of a future where the Valley's iconic beauty and rich heritage are preserved and dynamically integrated into a thriving, resilient, and equitable region.

By embracing this vision, the Greenway will truly become “anchored in place,” securing its legacy as the driving force behind a unified and flourishing Hudson River Valley for generations to come.



## 2. Introduction

***“The Greenway is a place where poets and farmers can thrive together.”***

The Hudson River Valley is defined by the tidal estuary at its heart—a body of water the Mahicanituck people aptly called “the river that flows both ways.” This magnificent waterway, with its salt line reaching the Newburgh-Beacon Bridge, is the enduring anchor of the region's identity.

From the tip of the Battery in New York County to the birthplace of the U.S. Navy in Washington County's Whitehall, this Valley has shaped the American narrative and inspired the collective imagination for centuries.

The Valley's landscape is inextricably woven into the nation's historical and cultural fabric. It served as a critical theater for the American fight for independence in the 18th century and inspired the first great American art movement—the Hudson River School—in the 19th century.

Today, a collection of historic sites and landscapes, including Indigenous footpaths and archeological areas, early settlements from the Dutch and French Huguenots, Gilded Age estates, abolitionist sites, and presidential homes share America's stories of arts, culture, history, and industry.

This dynamic modern community honors its past without being preserved in amber.

The region has become a center for world-class art, culinary excellence, and the farm-to-table movement. The Valley's bucolic towns, pioneering farms, and agricultural centers are a vibrant hub for tourism and business.

The Greenway provides essential moorings for the entire region. It connects the many local institutions, historical sites, trails, and natural resources to the mighty Hudson.

Now, in the face of evolving regional needs, including climate resilience, equitable public access, sustainable growth, and economic vitality, the Greenway will sharpen its focus and amplify its impact, ensuring the River remains a source of vitality and beauty for generations to come.

This strategic plan marks the Greenway's commitment to supporting the people, places, and communities who are working to ensure the distinctive character of the Hudson River Valley endures, even as it evolves.

## 3. Methodology

To create this strategic plan, 1:1 Advisory:

- Conducted Interviews with [51 stakeholders](#), including Greenway board members from its primary governing entities, the Hudson River Valley Greenway Communities Council and Greenway Conservancy for the Hudson River Valley, Inc.; staff members; grantees; nonprofit leaders across diverse sectors; regional environmental funders; elected municipal and state leaders; and state government agency employees handling matters related to the environment, agriculture, and tourism.
- Facilitated six meetings of the 10-member strategic planning committee, which included both Greenway board and staff members.
- Participated in two meetings of the full Greenway board, including a daylong retreat held at Boscobel House and Gardens where staff were active participants.
- Conducted extensive desk research and analysis of the competitive landscape.

This plan is grounded in the words of the Greenway's key constituents and multiple stakeholders, and roots its work in service to the communities with which it collaboratively learns.

The quotes interspersed throughout this report are drawn from the stakeholder interviews.

## 4. Mission, Vision, Values

Through this planning process, the Greenway updated its mission statement, keeping it within the boundaries set by legislation, and developed new vision and values statements.

### Mission

The Greenway is a public partnership whose mission is to help celebrate, preserve, and enhance the Hudson River Valley.

### Vision

The Greenway envisions a Hudson River Valley that cares for its ecological, scenic, cultural, historic, agricultural, and recreational treasures and builds a sustainable economy so that both the land and its people thrive.

### Values

- **Work Regionally.** The Greenway supports coordinated approaches to spark new ideas and investments and promote the Hudson River Valley region and identity.
- **Collaborate.** The Greenway forges and nurtures meaningful partnerships to promote and support local governments, nonprofits, and businesses across diverse sectors.
- **Connect.** The Greenway links communities to resources, shares learning, strengthens regional identity, and champions collective actions that benefit the Valley.

# 5. Organizational History and Structure

## History

The Hudson River Valley Greenway was an ambitious conservation idea, first sparked in the 1950s and championed by influential figures like Laurance S. Rockefeller and Henry Diamond. The vision took shape following Governor Mario Cuomo's 1988 State of the State address, which provided the political momentum to form the Hudson River Valley Greenway Council and commission key studies.

On December 31, 1991, Governor Cuomo signed the authorizing legislation into New York State law. This act established a distinctive system built on voluntary regional cooperation among the counties bordering the Hudson River. Its core mission then was to preserve vital resources, foster a strong regional identity, and establish a continuous Hudson River Trail network all while respecting local home rule. This effort expanded in 2001 with the creation of the Hudson River Greenway Water Trail, which was later recognized as one of the nation's first National Water Trails by the Department of the Interior in 2012.

These successes were instrumental in gaining federal recognition. In 1996, Congress authorized the Maurice D. Hinchey Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area. This designation, established in partnership with the National Parks Service, formally acknowledged the Valley's nationally significant cultural and natural resources and solidified the Greenway's essential role in coordinating regional preservation and tourism efforts.

## An Organizational Partnership

The Greenway is a public partnership comprising the following legal entities:

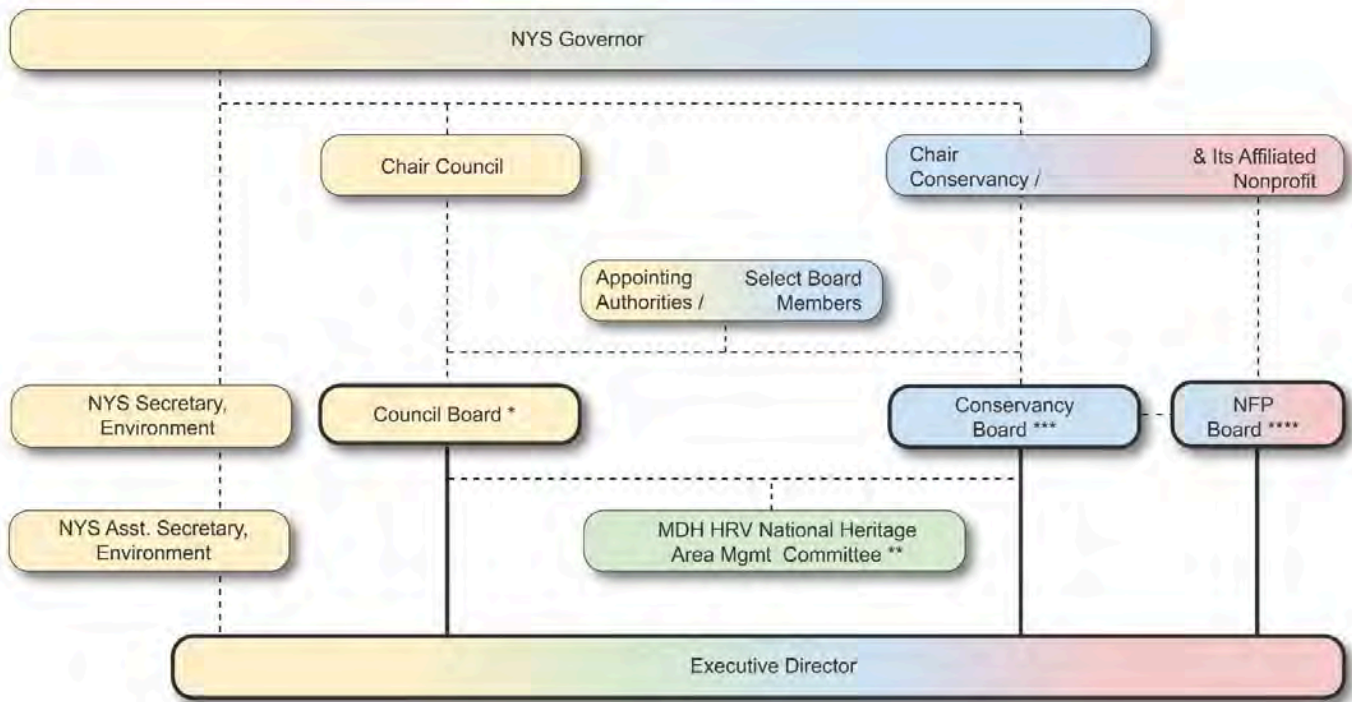
- **Hudson River Valley Greenway Communities Council** (Council), a part of the New York Governor's Executive Department. Its primary legislative purpose is to coordinate with local governments on developing and enhancing local land-use planning techniques and creating a voluntary regional planning compact for the Hudson River Valley. Through the Greenway Communities Program, the Council manages appropriated state funds, offering grants and technical assistance to support community planning activities.
- **Greenway Conservancy for the Hudson River Valley, Inc.** (Conservancy) is a New York State public benefit corporation whose staff manage all Greenway

activities. It coordinates efforts to establish a Hudson River Valley trail network, promote the Valley as a single tourism destination area, assist in the preservation of agriculture, and strengthen state agency cooperation with local governments. The Conservancy also has a nonprofit arm, Greenway Heritage Conservancy HRV, Inc., with the Conservancy's board members serving concurrently as the directors of the nonprofit.

- **Maurice D. Hinchey Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area (NHA).** This Congressionally designated entity was authorized in partnership with the National Park Service and includes communities in 10 counties bordering the Hudson River from Westchester to Albany. Its purpose is to recognize, preserve, protect, and interpret the nationally significant cultural and natural resources of the Hudson River Valley for the nation's benefit. Historically, it receives an annual federal appropriation, which is used for Conservancy staff, programs, and grantmaking. The 1996 legislation calls for the NHA to be managed by a Heritage Area Committee with representatives from the Council, Conservancy, and the heritage community.
- **Greenway Heritage Conservancy HRV, Inc.** This nonprofit is the founding organization and is retained in the Greenway Act of 1991 under the control of the Conservancy and is the formal management entity for NHA. It can actively fundraise for new work and initiatives.

# Organizational Chart

This organizational chart maps the relationships between each entity and the reporting structure in which the Governor, who appoints the chairs of the Council and Conservancy, is one of many appointing authorities (e.g., Hudson River Valley county executives and others) for board members.



**Key:**

- Hudson River Valley Greenway Communities Council
- MDH HRV National Heritage Area
- Greenway Conservancy for the Hudson River Valley, Inc.
- Greenway Heritage Conservancy HRV, Inc.
- Reporting
- - - - -** Appointing

**Notes:**

- \* 27 Members
- \*\* 21 Members
- \*\*\* 26 Members (17 Voting / 9 Non-voting)
- \*\*\*\* Constituted by Conservancy Board

## Key Programs

The Greenway celebrates, preserves, and enhances the Hudson River Valley by furnishing the grants, technical advice, and policy tools that local leaders need to drive positive change in their communities.

The Greenway fosters economic development and public access by building and supporting trails that connect people with the region's natural, scenic, and recreational treasures and promoting the Valley's wealth of cultural and historic sites.

Its key programs include:

- **Grantmaking.** The Greenway awards on average 50 grants a year ranging in size from \$5,000 to \$250,000 for community planning, trail development and construction, interpretation, and heritage and cultural preservation. Recent grants include funding for the reconstruction of the Lake Awosting Carriage Road, a walking tour at Sing Sing Prison Museum, and research on Indigenous connections to the Albany Pine Bush Preserve.
- **The Compact Program.** The Greenway encourages counties and towns to form voluntary regional agreements, or "compacts," to address shared goals like resource protection and development. Compact plans are developed by counties and voluntarily adopted into local law by participating municipalities. The Greenway provides grants and technical assistance to ensure local concerns are part of broader regional planning. Five of the Greenway's 14 counties and another 61 municipalities have signed a compact. In addition to providing technical advice from staff planners, the Greenway also provides related grantmaking that has, for example, helped support planning for new town zoning, green energy laws, a feasibility study of curbside collection of food scraps, and other planning needs.
- **The Greenway Trail Network.** The Greenway works in partnership with government agencies and community groups to create and promote use of a land and water trail system that connects to the multi-use Empire State Trail and the Hudson River Greenway Water Trail. In 2024, it planned or created 108 miles of land trails.
- **Maurice D. Hinchey Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area.** Through grants and public programs, the Greenway helps interpret, preserve, and promote the natural and cultural resources of this federally designated region. The Hudson River Valley Ramble is its signature annual event series celebrating the Valley's trails, history, and culture.

### Greenway Counties

Albany+  
Bronx  
Columbia+  
Dutchess\*+  
Greene+  
New York  
Orange\*+  
Putnam\*+  
Rensselaer+  
Rockland\*+  
Saratoga  
Ulster+  
Washington  
Westchester\*+

\*Greenway Compact Signatories

+National Heritage Area Counties



## 6. Situational Analysis

***"It's a crowded field. There's a lot of players in the Hudson Valley doing a lot of good work, but to get a voice, to rise above that... it's all about communication and that takes capacity and time and consistency."***

The Greenway is a vital but largely under-recognized entity within a highly competitive regional landscape. While perceived as a trusted, non-partisan, and forward-looking partner in planning, collaboration, and trail development, its impact is threatened by inertia, limited branding, and a lack of public visibility, leading to public confusion and low stakeholder awareness.

To maximize its substantial economic and planning value and secure its future amidst external threats like government funding volatility, the Greenway will aggressively redefine its identity as the regional convener and planning expert, unify and amplify its brand, and immediately launch a comprehensive communications strategy.

### The Environment: A Crowded and Complex Field

The Greenway operates within a highly competitive, resource-rich, and complex landscape, characterized by a mix of powerful State agencies, well-funded conservation nonprofits, and specialized regional planning groups who address economic development, tourism, resource conservation and advocacy, and regional/local planning. (See [Appendix](#) for peer profiles.)

- **Powerful State Agencies:** The largest forces are New York State agencies with vast budgets and statewide reach, making them essential partners, whose grant programs are often confused with the Greenway's by government and nonprofit leaders. These include agencies focused on economic development and infrastructure (e.g., the Empire State Development Corporation's "I LOVE NY" tourism division, the Department of State's capital and revitalization programs), park and environmental stewardship programs (e.g., the Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation grants for recreational assets and historic sites, the Environmental Protection Fund's grants for parks and preservation, and the Department of Environmental Conservation's Hudson River Estuary Program's technical assistance and grants for climate adaptation and habitat restoration.)
- **Land Acquisition Giants:** Privately funded powerhouses like Scenic Hudson and the Open Space Institute drive large-scale land protection, actively acquiring and managing land through purchase and conservation easements.

- **Specialized Advocacy and Trail Support:** Riverkeeper relies on legal action and grassroots membership to safeguard clean water. Parks and Trails New York is a statewide advocate, running grant programs for local nonprofit "Friends" groups. The Erie Canalway is a comparable federally recognized National Heritage Area with a focus on tourism and heritage along its linear corridor.
- **Regional Planning and Policy:** The Hudson Valley Regional Council, an organization composed of county governments, and the nonprofit Hudson Valley Pattern for Progress act as think tanks and conveners. They focus on providing technical assistance and data-driven solutions for broad regional issues like sustainability, economic vitality, and municipal cooperation.

This environment is further characterized by:

- **Fragmented Funding:** Several grant opportunities exist, but they are highly specific in their requirements and eligible uses, making them difficult for small communities to navigate.
- **Overlap in Mandate, Divergence in Method:** All entities support the Valley, but their methods diverge significantly from land preservation and acquisition to regulation, planning, or capital development.
- **Local Government as the Target:** Achieving a regional strategy can be challenging as funding and assistance are ultimately directed toward municipalities.

## Stakeholder Perception and Core Findings

Despite operating within a crowded field, stakeholder interviews consistently reveal the Greenway's strong core identity—it is trusted, forward-looking, and a nonpartisan steward of quality of life, actively "making community development flow with economic development and recreational tourism."

It is seen as a "silent supporter" committed to regional planning. Its significant, yet undervalued, impact includes an estimated \$103<sup>1</sup> in economic benefit for every dollar of public funding it receives. The Greenway functions as "a research and development firm, piloting new programs that are later adopted by other agencies."

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<sup>1</sup> From the 2017 Economic Impact Study of the Hudson River Valley Greenway and the National Heritage Area

## SWOT Analysis: Strategic Conclusions

The analysis of the Greenway's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (see [Appendix](#) for details) highlights a strong internal foundation characterized by its nonpartisan regional focus, and a proven track record in planning and collaboration. This strength, supported by state backing and financial reserves, drives significant regional economic impact.

However, progress is undermined by critical internal weaknesses, including organizational complacency, limited branding/outreach, and a static approach to programs. These issues, coupled with diminished county engagement and a lack of fundraising infrastructure and evaluation mechanisms, present barriers.

While external opportunities to expand capacity, build regional leadership, and enhance visibility are vast, they are consistently threatened by the risk of low public awareness, vulnerability to government cuts, and a struggle to differentiate the Greenway from its better-funded and better-branded peers. This lack of clear identity also presents a barrier to diversifying resource generation.

Based on the analysis, the Greenway needs to prioritize the following actions to ensure its stability and maximize its regional impact:

- **Assume Regional Authority:** Lean into its comprehensive regional planning role to share the lessons and tools that result in green community-led designs, walkable towns, preserved farms and viewshed, and desirable planned housing. The Greenway uniquely plans across county boundaries.
- **Unify and Amplify Brand:** Unify and leverage its brand so stakeholders understand that the Greenway is the organizing entity behind the NHA, the Water Trail, the Empire State Trail, The Ramble, and other key assets.
- **Implement a Communications Strategy:** Extol achievements via a comprehensive communications plan to ensure stakeholders understand the Greenway's value and can learn from past successes.
- **Prepare for Fundraising:** Lay the groundwork and build the fundraising infrastructure and culture to increase resources.
- **Refresh Grantmaking Program:** Make the grantmaking program more meaningful by increasing the size of awards, lowering match requirements where possible, exploring a peer review process, and actively recruiting new proposals.
- **Invest in Capacity:** Create administrative efficiencies that free staff from unnecessary paperwork and invest in dedicated staff potential by providing training and encouraging expertise sharing.
- **Activate Engagement:** Create a robust stakeholder engagement process that keeps staff in contact with land use officials, gains more compact signatories, and rewards new communities with funding.
- **Complete the Network:** Identify and fill the gaps in the Greenway Trail Network by prioritizing grant, compact, and technical assistance in those regions.

## Resource Generation

The Greenway's financial landscape is defined by an almost exclusive reliance on public appropriations, creating vulnerability amidst the current volatility in federal funding, despite strong, counterbalancing support from New York State. While the Greenway's organizational structure was designed to accommodate resource generation from both public and private sources, it lacks any dedicated fundraising capacity and is almost universally viewed by stakeholders and peers as a state agency, even though its organizational structure is more complex.

This perception creates a substantial barrier to entry into private fundraising. (See the [Appendix](#) for more details.)



# 7. Strategic Plan Goals

The Hudson River Valley Greenway's strategic plan lays out a comprehensive three-year road map focused on enhanced **Regionalism**, thoughtful **Promotion**, dedicated **Stewardship**, and robust **Engagement**.

This plan organizes its efforts around five core areas—**Grants**, the **Compact** program, **Greenway Trail Network**, **National Heritage Area**, and **Organizational Capacity**—to ensure the Greenway's resources are leveraged efficiently.

The plan is designed to make the organization more accessible, equitable, and effective by streamlining grant processes, actively listening to community needs to inform the next phase of the Compact program, prioritizing trail extensions into historically underinvested communities and increasing water access, focusing on collaboration amongst cultural heritage sites, implementing an assertive communications plan, and strengthening governance.

The Greenway aims to serve as a central, effective resource that helps communities connect, share ideas, and collaboratively advance open space protection, sustainable development, and equitable access across the 14-county Hudson River Valley.

## Goal 1 Regionalism

**The Greenway will work regionwide as a central resource for the Hudson River Valley, helping communities connect, share ideas, and tackle challenges together.**

### a. Grants

- i. Design and implement an ongoing evaluation process to assess the impact of the Greenway's programs, including tracking grantmaking over time and making modifications as needed.
  1. Assess the impact of Greenway grants by annually documenting projects funded, private and public sector dollars leveraged, and community usage.
  2. Implement a triennial grantee survey.
  3. Annually report on the regional grantmaking impact to the public.
- ii. Ensure grants serve the full Greenway region.
  1. Map 10 years of grant applications and grantmaking and compare it to demographic and economic data to identify funding gaps and assess service to historically underinvested communities.

2. Build an outreach strategy that welcomes applications from counties and sectors (e.g., agriculture) not applying to grant programs.
  3. Ensure guidelines include examples that invite applications from areas that are missing in the grant pool (e.g., farmers markets, community greenspaces, heritage partnerships with municipalities).
  4. Offer in-person and digital how-to-apply town halls for the non-participating regions and seek co-sponsoring local partners to assure attendance.
  5. Provide staff with technical assistance to help applicants build a match that includes in-kind contributions.
- iii. Streamline grant offerings so that the community, compact, trails, and heritage grant programs become a simplified grant program (i.e., Greenway Grants)—with plainer guidelines, contracts, and reports.
  - iv. Meet regularly with regional partners to identify community projects where Greenway funding can leverage their work and increase access; then, encourage those projects to apply.
  - v. Foster and support cross-jurisdictional regional projects, helping counties collaborate on conservation, agriculture, and ecosystem services (e.g., pollinator conservation, wildlife corridors, and regional tourism development.)
  - vi. Encourage applications and partnerships that advance the goals of the Green Amendment to the State Constitution that provides clean air and water and a healthful environment.

## **b. Compact**

- i. Conduct a regional listening tour (e.g., interviews, town halls, surveys) of residents, grantee partners, peer organizations, and public officials to identify current community needs that can inform an updated Compact program for the region, counties, and municipalities.
  1. Hire a consultant to lead the work.
  2. Assess need for additional regional planners to provide technical assistance to local government entities to develop and implement compact activities.
  3. Share results with the public.
- ii. Serve as a regional connector to enhance municipal planning support and collaboration.
  1. Convene county planners and local officials to share ideas, best practices, and collaborate on land use and planning issues.
  2. Facilitate regional and local planning dialogues through workshops and forums.
  3. Act as a connector to help communities and partners learn from and inspire each other and work together on regionwide issues such as environmental stewardship, sustainable development, and economic

vitality.

4. Create and distribute a regional vision tool kit with adaptable how-to planning modules and case studies that can inspire county and municipality signatories for the plan.

### **c. Greenway Trail Network**

- i. Improve the Empire State Trail's connections in the Greenway region to the Hudson River and its communities, as well as between municipalities, and to other existing trails (e.g., Harlem Valley Rail Trail), enhancing the network of accessible routes with existing state funding.
  1. Identify and map prospective projects while ensuring historically underserved communities benefit.
  2. Create new connections to the Hudson River Valley Greenway Trail Network.
  3. Expand the Greenway's ability to provide technical assistance to local governments and nonprofits to accelerate planning, design, and construction of Greenway trails.
- ii. Map access on the west side of the River to prioritize trail gaps and identify where future grantmaking and trail designations might help.
- iii. Build on the lessons of the Albany-Hudson Electric Trail's volunteer trail stewardship program to create a Hudson River Greenway Water Trail stewardship program.
  1. Identify community leaders to serve as regional volunteer committee co-chairs for water trails. The committee will have county chairs and members for water trails who help mobilize and recruit volunteers from local boating clubs and community groups.
  2. Create job descriptions and assignments for volunteers.
  3. Research and create a digital mechanism for volunteers to upload trail reports and means by which to share information and address necessary improvements.

### **d. National Heritage Area**

- i. Expand The Ramble's reach.
  1. Leverage digital tools (apps, interactive maps in the digital town square where audiences are already visiting), region-wide campaigns, and traditional materials to broaden the audience and make Ramble events easier to discover and plan.
  2. Seek advertising and sponsorships for the Ramble to raise visibility.
  3. Expand partnerships and regional focus by collaborating with county tourism agencies, local municipalities, community organizations, and Tribal Nations to create themed, multi-community experiences and expand the Ramble's reach.
  4. Innovate with engagement programs such as "get out on the trail" challenges, community competitions, and youth engagement programs to spur public involvement.

- ii. Develop a regional heritage tourism strategy that connects historic sites (current and new partners) to tell a comprehensive regional story with multiple points of engagement.
- iii. Create cultural heritage and agricultural tourism partnerships to draw visitors and economic impact to the Valley.
  - 1. Research and build relationships with potential tourism partners throughout the region (e.g., county tourism offices, I♥NY Empire State Development Corporation, State Department of Agriculture and Markets.)
  - 2. Convene tourism partners to identify what they need to create meaningful regional partnerships with Greenway grantees and what data they can collect to support advocacy. Be prepared to use grantmaking to augment their regional goals.
  - 3. Research prospective, aligned corporate partners; design and implement a corporate sponsorship program if market conditions allow.

#### **e. Capacity**

- i. Secure resources and build an internal culture that prioritizes revenue generation.
  - 1. Develop and implement a plan to secure more strategic investments from the state.
    - a. Develop a “menu” of prioritized projects and operations needs to present to the Governor’s Office and NYS Division of Budget.
    - b. Work with the Chamber and NYS Division of Budget to increase the Conservancy’s personnel services line to accommodate all NHA supported staff positions.
  - 2. Engage key board members in strengthening gubernatorial support.
  - 3. Seek renewable capacity building funds (e.g., Deputy Director position) annually to underwrite revenue generation efforts via National Park Foundation.
  - 4. Hire a deputy director to increase public and private partnerships.
- ii. Improve governance structures across all organizational bodies.
  - 1. Create a board matrix to map current skills, demographics, and geographies represented on the board and identify areas of need/opportunity.
  - 2. Establish and adopt nominating procedures that provide due diligence on board candidates.
  - 3. Strengthen recruitment process for board members by proactively identifying prospective board members for consideration by appointing authorities to ensure diversity and fill gaps.
  - 4. Maintain a full slate of board members.
  - 5. Bring the NHA’s governance structure into compliance with founding legislation and have it be primarily constituted with Greenway board members for efficiency. Consider creating an advisory board of heritage sites to inform decisions.
  - 6. Create efficiencies in governance where possible. For example, the

Conservancy board serves as the board of the Conservancy nonprofit. Use the executive committee to reflect the joint leadership of both the Council and Conservancy and meet the NHA's geographic diversity requirements so that it also can serve as the NHA's governing body.

7. Initiate board education materials and processes for all board members that includes an onboarding orientation and annual refresher to the organization structure, processes, history, goals, objectives, and accomplishments.

## Goal 2: Promotion

**The Greenway will promote what it does – and can do – to help the people and places of the Hudson River Valley.**

### a. Grants

- i. Document and share lessons learned from grant projects to attract more and higher quality applications from across the region.
- ii. Attend community events throughout the Valley to promote the Greenway's work to prospective applicants.
- iii. Speak at conferences to share examples of successful grantmaking that others can learn from and that can model success for prospective applicants.
- iv. Lead and participate in grant application workshops and meet-the-funder events throughout the Valley.

### b. Compact

- i. Proactively engage with county planning commissions, local governments, and elected representatives to strengthen relationships.
  1. Meet with elected officials biennially to promote Greenway resources (e.g., grants, technical assistance) and to sign new compacts.
  2. Engage board and staff to speak at Town board meetings to show success stories and invite participation in Greenway programs.
    - a. Prepare Board members to become effective ambassadors for outreach and engagement at local levels.
    - b. Track their engagement and feedback.
  3. Send staff to relevant conferences.

### c. Greenway Trail Network

- i. Meet with community land and water trail leaders and municipal leaders to encourage Greenway trails designation and new connections to the Greenway Trail Network.
- ii. Create a consistent, branded, multilingual signage system for trails.
  1. Address inconsistencies in signage to recognize the Greenway.
  2. Work with current trails to determine how to add (or reduce) trail signage.
  3. Celebrate the adoption of new signage with partners on social media.
  4. Provide trail users with information about nearby attractions via QR code on the signage.
    - a. Migrate information to "trusted" digital spaces where people already spend time and can find it.
    - b. Add information that lets trail users know about attractions

- convenient to the trail.
    - c. Create opportunities to encourage trail users to become community trail "influencers" who promote the Greenway on social media.
  - iii. Plan community engagement programs (e.g., paddle events, community competitions, and youth engagement programs.)
  - iv. Regularly survey Greenway constituents to gain broad community input to inform and improve its work (e.g., survey Albany-Hudson Electric Trail users on where more user-friendly infrastructure like bicycling repair stations are needed.)

#### **d. National Heritage Area**

- i. Promote the NHA's economic impact.
  1. Contract an assessment of the economic impact of the Greenway that includes breakdowns by county and by service area (e.g., trail use, tourism, cultural heritage.) Document and communicate the Greenway's economic value, including real estate premiums, tourism revenue, and community investment potential.
  2. Share the data so that stakeholders can advocate for their own sectors.
  3. Issue a press release detailing key findings to generate positive media attention.
- ii. Reinvest in heritage marketing, agri-tourism, and regional packaging as a unified destination to attract more tourists, and ensure these efforts are coordinated with the legislated interpretive themes of Freedom and Dignity, Nature and Culture, and Corridor of Commerce.
  1. Build relationships with tourism promotions agencies (e.g., Discover Albany) throughout the Valley to assess needs and capacity to participate.
  2. In partnership with Empire State Development and I ♥ NY tourism, award a grant to conduct a region-wide tourism trends study.
  3. Craft a comprehensive, experience-driven strategy to create tangible and memorable visitor interactions in the NHA that may include experiential on-water programs, curated itineraries and maps, partnerships with bicycle rentals, and others.
  4. Track and report visitor engagements with clear metrics to demonstrate economic and cultural value.
  5. Promote agri-tourism.
    - a. Create awareness materials highlighting agricultural resources and opportunities in the Hudson River Valley.
    - b. Work with partners to package existing tourism experiences (e.g., farmers markets, farm-to-table restaurants, wineries) and connect them to other Greenway programs and trails.
    - c. Work with vendors and tour operators to connect visitors to agricultural tourism experiences, such as "pick your own" experiences.

## e. Capacity

- i. Develop and implement a comprehensive and accessible communications, public relations, engagement, and marketing plan that identifies and maximizes the use of existing high-traffic external platforms (e.g., partner websites, apps, and social media) to share Greenway content with the public.
  1. Streamline web presence so that programmatic microsites are reachable via the primary website to unify the brand.
  2. Improve public awareness and engagement through enhanced digital presence (e.g., mobile app, social media) and consistent, branded signage.
  3. Explore the possibility of migrating the website and email addresses to a new URL to communicate the Greenway is a public partnership.
- ii. Create a unified brand (visual and language) identity for the Greenway and all of its programs (e.g., NHA.)
- iii. Compile a storybank of Greenway case studies and human interest stories to encourage new applications, show results, and document economic and social impact across all programs.
- iv. Effectively and simply communicate what the Greenway is, what it does, who it serves, and how the community, government partners, and the public can participate.
- v. Track and incorporate Valley-wide economic impact, livability, and health/wellness studies to build a compelling and ongoing case for the Greenway and its impact.



## Goal 3: Stewardship

**The Greenway will advance a regional vision that supports open space, farmland protection, cultural heritage, waterway access, scenic vistas, and trail connections—while furthering sustainability, resilience, and other local priorities through collaboration.**

### a. Grants

- i. Conduct regular site visits with applicants and grantees.
- ii. Align grantmaking with broader regional planning goals while addressing sustainability, resilience, and growth challenges.
- iii. Use grantmaking as a mechanism to fill gaps in the water trail network.
- iv. Implement an evaluation process with grantees to assess the Greenway's effectiveness as a grantmaker.

### b. Compact

- i. Evaluate the Compact program's success.
  1. Working with the advisory committee of board, staff, and community members, chart a strategic revisioning of the Compact program to align it with current needs and trends.
  2. Hire a consultant to assess the program through interviews, focus groups, and surveys with public officials and grantee partners.
  3. Develop a mechanism for ongoing evaluation.
- ii. Create a new framework for county and municipal compacts.
  1. Update the compact to include new guidance on "centers and green spaces," public access to water-based recreation and improved bike and pedestrian infrastructure, sustainability, resilience, projected river rise, and conservation with contemporary best practice examples.
  2. Refresh the county compact framework with community input.
  3. Revise the framework for municipalities to become Greenway communities if their counties are not signatories.
  4. Promote the new framework with clear guidance on the development and adoption of the compacts and their relationship to local comprehensive plans.
- iii. Invite local governments to adopt the updated compact.
  1. Invite existing county signatories to adopt an updated compact.
  2. Invite existing municipality signatories to sign on to updated county compacts.
  3. Develop and implement a plan to recruit new compact signatories.
  4. Investigate options to expand the Greenway to include currently excluded communities in the Catskill Mountains.

- iv. Develop and implement a recertification process for signatories.
- v. Provide technical expertise to municipalities and support more connections to the Albany-Hudson Electric Trail, Empire State Trail, and other trail networks (e.g., Appalachian Trail, the Long Path.)

### **c. Greenway Trail Network**

- i. Champion a maintenance strategy for the Hudson River Valley Greenway Trail network.
  - 1. Develop and implement a comprehensive trail management plan articulating trail design and maintenance standards to ensure consistent user experiences on all designated Greenway trail sections.
  - 2. Provide technical assistance to state agencies, local governments, and nonprofits that administer designated trails.
  - 3. Explore the possibility of providing grants to support trail maintenance so that grants support the entire trail development process—planning, design, engineering, permitting, construction, and maintenance.
- ii. Address staff capacity for long-term capital construction activities for trail development within the Hudson River Valley.
- iii. Update the Greenway Trail plan.

### **d. National Heritage Area**

- i. More prominently highlight the Greenway's role in supporting historic preservation and regional tourism across communications.
- ii. Leverage the historic assets of the Hudson River Valley for joint programming (e.g., maritime history, cultural assets on the riverfront, African American history) and marketing opportunities.

### **e. Capacity**

- i. Conduct a business process review and implement recommendations to save staff, applicants', and grantees' time with operational efficiencies (e.g., limit the number of staff members that review grant proposals.)
- ii. Streamline financial management by consolidating reporting to create and implement a unified reporting framework across all business centers.
- iii. Assess the value of maintaining state-level office computer access for all staff.
- iv. Ensure all staff have a hybrid office option and access to on-site space.

# Goal 4 Engagement

**The Greenway will work with local communities and leaders to ensure that its work is guided by the voices and needs of the Hudson River Valley.**

## a. Grants

- i. Streamline grant processes so staff spends more time in the community and less time on paperwork.
  1. Assess and clarify staff roles in grant application review to create administrative efficiencies.
  2. Engage external community reviewers as needed to fill knowledge gaps.
  3. Explore how technology can create efficiencies.
- ii. Substantially increase grant award amounts to make the application process more attractive to all municipalities and nonprofits, while retaining lower request thresholds to accommodate smaller communities and projects.
- iii. Set criteria for identifying historically underinvested communities, then through outreach, broaden and diversify application and grantee pool to include them.
- iv. Explore community-centered grant processes.
  1. Staff joins and regularly attends related professional association workshops and conferences to learn about successful community-centered application processes.
  2. Research ways to make grant processes more community-centered (e.g., community grant panel review, community advisory panels to identify regional priorities, simplified application and reporting processes that are welcoming to new groups.)
  3. Seek community input where possible to inform policies and procedures through in-person networking and routine formal surveys (e.g., survey applicants to determine the best times of year to take applications.)
- v. Provide the Greenway boards with an information summary on grant applications recommended by the Grants Committee to inform final decisionmaking and empower board members to promote grant opportunities and strengthen their ambassadorial role.
- vi. Utilize grant funding to meet matching requirements for larger, critical, regional projects in other state projects, as allowable.
- vii. Strategically target key communities where nonprofit partners are working deeply to further leverage the Greenway's impact.

**b. Compact**

- i. Rebuild meaningful connections with key stakeholders, including political representatives.
- ii. Prioritize waterfront access initiatives (e.g., hand launch access on both sides of the River with parking) via collaborative strategies and addressing challenges related to railroad access.
- iii. Explore ways to integrate diverse recreational interests in the Greenway's land use planning.

**c. Greenway Trail Network**

- i. Prioritize the inclusion of Empire State Trail extensions in historically underinvested communities. Focus on connecting communities, particularly urban areas, through the development of complete streets and spur trails to ensure equitable access.

**d. National Heritage Area**

- i. Regularly convene representatives of historic and cultural assets across the Valley to create opportunities for collaboration and information sharing.

**e. Capacity**

- i. Plan for resource generation activities.
- ii. Explore new capital project funding through the NYS Bond Act program and present to the NYS Division of Budget for consideration.
- iii. Identify NYS Consolidated Funding Application categories to implement larger projects, like economic impact studies, website and branding initiatives, and other consultant driven tasks identified in this plan.
- iv. Actively seek to join peer boards and committees to ensure the Greenway's voice is part of the larger community conversation.
- v. Create a stable, connected, and accessible network of capacity-building resources in the Hudson River Valley.
- vi. Build both individual organization and collaborative capacity to advance regional Greenway goals.
- vii. Use board meetings as community engagement opportunities with dynamic agendas and guest speakers in diverse locations that showcase the Hudson River Valley, and allow the board members to connect in deeper ways with each other and with the results of their work.

The woodlands that showcase the geological features of the northernmost section of the Shawangunk Mountains. The short White Dot Trail leads to a scenic overlook.



**River to Ridge Trail**

The Open Space Institute's multi-use trail traverses the lowland farm fields adjacent to the Walkill River to the Eastern edge of the Shawangunk Mountains. This trail, which offers users numerous scenic vistas, connects to the Mohonk Preserve (with 70 miles of carriage roads and 40 miles of trails) as well as Minnewaska State Park Preserve (with 35 miles of carriage roads and 50 miles of trails).



**Empire State Trail**

The 750-mile multi-use trail was first envisioned in 2017 and continues to be developed. Once complete, it will connect New York City to the northern section of Lake Champlain and will also run from Albany to Buffalo. The trail is designed for hiking and biking as well as snowshoeing and cross-country skiing.



**Historic Huguenot Street**

Historic Huguenot Street is a 10-acre National Historic Landmark District that features a museum, a reconstructed 1717 French Church and the Huguenot community's original burying ground as well as a replica Esopus Munsee wigwam. Stone houses in the district were built by the community's original Huguenot families.

**MAP KEY**

- Walkkill Valley Rail Trail
- River to Ridge Trail
- Giants Ledges Trail
- Empire State Trail
- Mohonk Preserve
- WVLT's Joppenbergh Mt.
- Parking
- Business District
- University
- 1 to 21 Mile Markers



Hudson River Greenway Trail

NEW YORK STATE OF OPPORTUNITY

Hudson River Valley Greenway



## 8. Timeline

The separate detailed implementation tool outlines annual planning tasks. Highlights include:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Primary Theme</u>	<u>Top Priorities &amp; Key Actions</u>
2026	<b>Foundational Growth &amp; Regional Engagement</b>	<b>Regional Focus:</b> Ensure grants serve the entire region and foster cross-jurisdictional collaboration. <b>Trail &amp; Tourism:</b> Improve Empire State Trail connections and develop a regional heritage tourism strategy. <b>Outreach:</b> Proactively engage with local governments and county planning commissions. <b>Internal:</b> Secure resources and improve governance structures.
2027	<b>Program Refinement &amp; Strategic Expansion</b>	<b>Grantmaking:</b> Design an ongoing evaluation process and streamline offerings into a simplified grant program. <b>Community Input:</b> Conduct a regional listening tour to inform an updated Compact program. <b>Branding:</b> Create a unified brand identity for the Greenway and its programs. <b>Stewardship:</b> Develop a Hudson River Greenway Water Trail stewardship program.
2028	<b>Long-Term Sustainability &amp; Comprehensive Evaluation</b>	<b>Evaluation:</b> Continue the ongoing grant evaluation and implement an evaluation process with grantees. <b>Infrastructure:</b> Create a consistent, branded, multilingual signage system for trails. <b>Partnerships:</b> Invite local governments to adopt an updated Compact framework. <b>Trail Gaps:</b> Use grantmaking to fill gaps in the water trail network.

## 9. Budgetary Impact

The implementation of this strategic plan is founded on a financially disciplined approach, prioritizing activities achievable within the existing operating and capital budget framework while also setting ambitious goals dependent on strategic investment.

More than half of the plan's actions are designed to require no additional cost beyond the Greenway's current base budget. Given the expected financial pressures over the next three years on state and federal budgets, the plan strategically emphasizes activities achievable through staff time and existing capacity. This focus ensures that the Greenway remains ambitious and committed to its mission without being overly dependent on immediate funding increases.

While a majority of activities are budget-neutral, certain key investments are necessary to create efficiencies, increase visibility, and expand operational reach. Many of these costs are driven by the need for new software, increased marketing and outreach expenses, and travel costs required to ensure staff presence across all 14 counties.

The strategic plan outlines the following projected expenses above the 2025 budget:

<b>Expense Category</b>	<b>2026</b>	<b>2027</b>	<b>2028</b>
<b>Baseline Increase (Operating Expenses)</b> (e.g., <i>Marketing, Local Travel, Software</i> )	\$66,000	\$195,000	\$150,000
<b>Fundraising Dependent (Program/Capacity Building)</b> (e.g., <i>Branding Initiatives, Staff Positions, Research Studies</i> )	\$0	\$275,000	\$485,000
<b>Total Projected Additional Expenses</b>	<b>\$66,000</b>	<b>\$470,000</b>	<b>\$635,000</b>



# 10. Conclusion

***“The Greenway helps Hudson Valley communities truly think strategically about their planning. Because you can only lose it once. There are so many real estate pressures; there’s never been more...We need thoughtful development, and we need to be able to balance that scenic, rural character. Once it’s gone, it’s gone forever.”***

This strategic plan reaffirms the Hudson River Valley Greenway’s indispensable role as the region’s central, nonpartisan, and collaborative leader. Operating in a crowded field, the Greenway’s distinctive value lies in its ability to transcend county boundaries and coordinate diverse efforts—from conservation and recreation to planning and economic development—under a single unified vision.

By focusing on the four strategic goals of **Regionalism, Promotion, Stewardship, and Engagement**, the Greenway is actively positioning itself to become an even more powerful engine for equitable, sustainable, and coordinated progress across the 14-county region.

This plan marks a renewed commitment to the Greenway’s partners—the local governments, nonprofits, business leaders, and community members—and its work to help them safeguard and steward the Valley.

By embracing this strategy, the Hudson River Valley Greenway will truly become “anchored in place,” securing its legacy as the driving force behind a unified and flourishing Hudson River Valley for generations to come.



“The Greenway  
could be  
the emblem of a  
unified,  
prosperous, and  
beautiful valley—  
beautiful to live in,  
beautiful to work in.”

# 11. Appendices

## SWOT Analysis

1:1 analyzed the interviews to articulate the Greenway’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats—an exercise that begins to chart strategic direction.

<p><b>STRENGTHS (internal)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Sustained focus, regional perspective spanning 14 counties</li> <li>● Empowered organizational structure with public benefit corporation’s independence</li> <li>● Credible nonpartisan approach</li> <li>● Flexibility to bridge gaps between community, nonprofit, and state resources</li> <li>● Collaboration and convening power</li> <li>● Trusted, respected resource for municipal planning and technical expertise</li> <li>● Success with trail development</li> <li>● State support (especially gubernatorial)</li> <li>● Financial reserves provide stability with looming federal cuts</li> <li>● Results, case studies, and lessons for successful green community planning</li> <li>● Contributes to regional economic impact of the Heritage Area</li> <li>● Knowledgeable staff</li> </ul>	<p><b>WEAKNESSES (internal)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Organizational complacency (lacks dynamism, pizzazz)</li> <li>● Static approach to programs and outreach</li> <li>● Limited branding, outreach, and communications strategy</li> <li>● Diminished county engagement</li> <li>● Invariable grantee base with too small grant awards</li> <li>● Compact program needs a refreshment before getting others to sign on</li> <li>● Organizational governance does not reflect the diversity of the region</li> <li>● Limited staff capacity</li> <li>● Confusion around complex organizational structure</li> <li>● Absence of private fundraising program</li> <li>● No evaluation mechanisms</li> </ul>
<p><b>OPPORTUNITIES (external)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Enhancing visibility and engagement (unified brand, board members as ambassadors, engage towns directly)</li> <li>● Leverage strengths for placemaking (use trails to demonstrate impact, connect water and land trails, make Compact program more meaningful)</li> <li>● Build capacity and resources (build fundraising culture internally and with partners)</li> <li>● Expand programmatic focus (develop education program, partner in community housing, facilitate state-local efforts, create Hudson River Valley trail map, create engaging destination with clear reasons to visit and encourage tourism that supports agriculture)</li> <li>● Achieve regional leadership</li> </ul>	<p><b>THREATS (external)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Low public awareness</li> <li>● Changing political priorities</li> <li>● Vulnerability to government cuts</li> <li>● Risk of absorption by state agencies</li> <li>● Generational disconnect</li> <li>● Difficulty differentiating from other regional entities</li> <li>● Being “a mile wide and an inch deep” given scale of region and mandate</li> <li>● Compact program needs clarity</li> <li>● Becoming seen as non-essential</li> <li>● No support to maintain trails planned, designed, and built by grants</li> <li>● Potentially antagonizing peers by fundraising</li> </ul>

# Interviewees

The following individuals were interviewed from March to June 2025 to inform this plan:

- |                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| 1. Wint Aldrich           | Greenway Council board, Parks & Trails New York          |
| 2. Jeffrey Anzevino       | Scenic Hudson  |
| 3. Cody Arana             | Hudson River Valley Greenway staff                       |
| 4. Andy Beers             | Hudson River Valley Greenway staff                       |
| 5. Anil Beephan           | Greenway Council board                                   |
| 6. Amy Bracewell          | Roosevelt-Vanderbilt-Van Buren National Historic Sites   |
| 7. Kristen Brown          | Greenway Conservancy board                               |
| 8. Tracy Brown            | Riverkeeper  |
| 9. Kevin Burke            | Greenway Conservancy board                               |
| 10. Beth Campochiaro      | Hudson River Valley Greenway staff                       |
| 11. Jennifer Carlquist    | Greenway Council board                                   |
| 12. Dylan Carey           | Parks & Trails New York                                  |
| 13. Kevin Case            | Mohonk Preserve  |
| 14. Carla Castillo        | Greenway Council board                                   |
| 15. Jennifer Coccozza     | Dutchess County Department of Planning & Development     |
| 16. Linda Cooper          | New York State Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation |
| 17. Jane Daniels          | Greenway Conservancy board                               |
| 18. Shannon Day           | Hudson River Valley Greenway staff                       |
| 19. Meg Downey            | Greenway Council board                                   |
| 20. Jay DiLorenzo         | Preservation League of New York State                    |
| 21. Bob Elliot            | Greenway Council board                                   |
| 22. Sara Emmert           | I Love NY/Empire State Development Corporation           |
| 23. Arturo Garcia-Costas  | New York Community Trust                                 |
| 24. Heather Gierloff      | New York State Department of Environmental Conservation  |
| 25. Elaine Hayes          | Mount Gulian Historic Site                               |
| 26. Angela Henry          | Greenway Council board                                   |
| 27. Hon. Michelle Hinchey | Greenway Conservancy board, New York State Senate        |
| 28. Rebecca Hughes        | New York State Canal Corporation                         |
| 29. Betsy Jacks           | Greenway Conservancy board                               |
| 30. Dan Jeanson           | Hudson River Valley Greenway staff                       |
| 31. Scott Keller          | Hudson River Valley Greenway (retired staff)             |
| 32. Andy Kitzmann         | Hudson River Valley Greenway staff                       |
| 33. Jonathan Kramer       | Hudson River Foundation                                  |
| 34. Erik Kulleseid        | Open Space Institute                                     |
| 35. Susan Landfried       | New York State Department of State                       |

- |                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| 36. Cindy Lanzetta      | Greenway Conservancy board                               |
| 37. Karen Lee           | National Park Foundation                                 |
| 38. Ann Loeding         | Hudson River Maritime Museum                             |
| 39. Daniel Mackay       | New York State Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation |
| 40. Jayne McLaughlin    | Greenway Conservancy board                               |
| 41. Lyndsay McMahon     | New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets     |
| 42. Dennis Murray       | Marist College emeritus                                  |
| 43. Hon. Steve Noble    | Mayor, City of Kingston                                  |
| 44. Sarah Olson         | Greenway Conservancy board,                              |
| 45. Bob Radliff         | Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor                 |
| 46. Melanie Rottkamp    | Destination Dutchess                                     |
| 47. Linda von der Heide | Greenway Council board                                   |
| 48. Eoin Wrafter        | Dutchess County Department of Planning & Development     |
| 49. Troy Weldy          | Columbia Land Conservancy                                |
| 50. Paul Steely White   | Parks & Trails New York                                  |
| 51. Damali Wynter       | New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets     |

# Competitive Landscape: Peer Profiles

In the spring of 2025, 1:1 Advisory conducted desk research on 12 partner and peer organizations in and out of New York State government.

Understanding who the Greenway's peers and colleagues are helps define its distinct market position, identify unique program offerings, and pinpoint areas of potential overlap or duplication. This review underscored the important role the Greenway plays as a regional, nonregulatory, nonpartisan, and cross-county convener, grantmaker, and technical partner.

## State Agencies

- **The Empire State Development Corporation's** New York State Division of Tourism focuses on state-level economic development and promotes New York State as a travel destination via the "I LOVE NY" brand, supporting a massive tourism industry that generated \$88 billion in direct visitor spending in 2023. This agency oversees county tourism departments and currently collaborates with the Greenway by cross-promoting events and featuring the water trail. A key opportunity is to deepen this partnership through co-created targeted marketing campaigns and comprehensive visitor experience packages.
- **The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation** manages state parks and historic sites and offers significant grant programs. It runs the Environmental Protection Fund Grant Program for Parks, Preservation, and Heritage, which awarded over \$28 million to 65 projects in 2024, and the \$10 million Municipal Parks and Recreation Grant Program. This agency is a major funder and partner in the development and preservation of parks and trails.
- **The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's** Hudson River Estuary Program protects and restores the Hudson River Estuary and its watershed through research and partnerships. Primarily funded by New York State's Environmental Protection Fund, it distributes millions in grants annually; for instance, \$2.1 million supported 19 research projects and 27 municipalities in 2023, leveraging over \$4.5 million in partner funding.
- **The New York State Department of State** administers various grant programs supporting community and economic development. Key programs include the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program, Smart Growth Community Planning grants, and the Downtown Revitalization Initiative. These initiatives directly align with the Greenway's goals for sustainable community development and waterfront access.

## Regional Organizations

- The **Erie Canalway**, a National Heritage Area managed in partnership with the National Park Service and the New York State Canal Corporation, focuses on preserving and promoting the canal's resources. Its business involves significant grantmaking, with \$255,000 to be distributed to 45 nonprofits in 2025, leveraging nearly \$1 million in additional support for tourism and preservation projects.
- **Hudson Valley Pattern for Progress** is a nonprofit policy, planning, advocacy, and research organization with operating revenues of \$867,000 in 2023. It is an independent think tank and convener, providing research and fostering cross-sector collaboration supported primarily by private and philanthropic funding.
- **The Hudson Valley Regional Council** is an organization of seven county governments that provides a regional perspective, education, and technical assistance. Funded through federal and State grant programs, it assists local governments with programs like New York State Energy Research and Development Authority's Clean Energy Communities and New York State's Climate Smart Communities Program, helping them access federal funding opportunities.
- **The New York State Conservation Partnership Program** is a significant public-private collaboration between the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and the Land Trust Alliance's New York Program. It provides matching grants to New York land trusts for conservation, economic growth, and recreation. Funded by the Environmental Protection Fund, it has awarded over \$31 million through 1,208 grants, leveraging at least \$32 million in local matching funds over two decades.
- **Parks and Trails New York** is a statewide organization with a \$3.5 million budget focused on advocacy for parks and trails. Its Park and Trail Partnership Grants program has awarded nearly \$10 million since 2015. Parks and Trails New York also runs targeted initiatives like the Trail Town grants that support local economies by bringing visitors to public lands.

## Nonprofit Land Conservation and Advocacy Leaders

- **Open Space Institute** works to protect landscapes through land acquisition, conservation easements, and its Conservation Capital Program which offers grants and loans. It relies on private philanthropy and its proactive approach as a direct purchaser and manager of open space, which distinguishes it from government-run or grantmaking entities.
- **Riverkeeper** is an environmental advocacy organization with a \$5.2 million budget. Funded by memberships and grants, its unique role is its direct advocacy

and legal enforcement, using legal tools to hold polluters accountable and push for stronger environmental protections. It is supported by a grassroots membership.

- **Scenic Hudson** is a major nonprofit with \$18.8 million in 2024 revenues, dedicated to preserving the Hudson Valley's resources through land conservation, advocacy, and park development. Funded by philanthropy and public funds, it distinguishes itself by proactively acquiring land and developing parks, as exemplified by its River Cities initiative in Kingston, Newburgh, and Poughkeepsie.

The Hudson River Valley Greenway stands apart given its organizational structure, regional emphasis, and diverse programs, often acting as a connector and facilitator across the landscape.

# Funding Analysis & Key Recommendations prepared August 27, 2025

## Introduction

This report presents a comprehensive fundraising analysis and key recommendations for the Hudson River Valley Greenway (hereafter, the Greenway), developed in August 2025 by the team at 1:1 Advisory (hereafter, 1:1).

1:1 team members examined the current federal, New York State, and regional Hudson River Valley funding landscape, including the impact of recent federal executive orders under President Trump and New York State's contrasting commitment to green initiatives under Governor Kathy Hochul. This analysis details the findings from in-depth, confidential stakeholder interviews and board surveys, assessing the opportunities and challenges for the Greenway in establishing and implementing a private fundraising program to ensure its growth and sustainability.

Further, 1:1 has outlined strategic initiatives to build a robust fundraising culture and external profile for future success. These initiatives are informed by the Greenway's acknowledgement that, with the work that must be undertaken to solidify and strengthen current operations (outlined in the aligned strategic plan), its focus will be on securing more resources from the public sector. Thus, it will not build a private fundraising program for at least three years. However, within this current moment, 1:1 is recommending the creation of fundraising "building blocks" that will assist the Greenway in implementing a private fundraising program, should it decide to do so at a future date.

## Landscape

This year's federal executive orders, such as "Unleashing American Energy," "Protecting the American People Against Invasion," and "Putting America First in International Environmental Agreements," have negatively affected federal funding for green projects, including a freeze on climate change and renewable energy programs. This has significant consequences, as federal grants currently cover half of the Hudson River Valley Greenway's seven employee salaries. The long-term impact of these orders is expected to reduce the availability of federal grants for environmental conservation and renewable energy initiatives across the country, potentially forcing green organizations to seek alternative funding sources or scale back their operations.

In contrast, New York State has adopted an optimistic stance towards green initiatives, with Governor Kathy Hochul announcing \$60 million in Environmental Bond Act funding

for Green Resiliency Grants on April 22, 2025. Applications for this program, which supports stormwater management and resilient infrastructure projects in flood-prone communities, opened on May 1st. This state-level commitment provides a crucial counterbalance to federal cutbacks, offering a lifeline for green projects within New York and demonstrating a continued dedication to environmental protection and climate resilience despite the shifting federal landscape.

### **Meeting this Moment**

To assess the opportunities and challenges of developing and implementing a private fundraising program for the Greenway, and thereby address current funding needs for growth and sustainability, the 1:1 team performed a comprehensive fundraising analysis. This analysis involved incorporating specific fundraising questions into 47 stakeholder interviews. These interviews were conducted with a diverse group, including select board members from both the Council and the Conservancy, all staff, peer organizations (such as Open Space Institute, Riverkeeper, and Scenic Hudson), grantees, government leaders, and representatives from regional and national private philanthropy. The interviews consistently included targeted questions about the prevailing fundraising climate and potential fundraising initiatives to thoroughly evaluate the prospects and difficulties of the Greenway establishing and executing a private fundraising program.

In sum, stakeholders understand the need for increased resources to continue and expand the Greenway's work, especially in light of continued federal and state funding concerns. Many also commented on the fact that the Greenway is often viewed solely as a government entity. Thus, if the organization entered the private fundraising space, stakeholders were concerned the Greenway might be seen as a competitor for an already small pot of private support. Some worried that this could signal a lack of consideration for the greater Hudson River Valley community.

In addition, 1:1 gained feedback regarding this topic from the Greenway's Boards of Directors via an anonymous online survey through which members could voice their most candid perspectives on the viability of a private fundraising program.

Concerns included the following:

- Currently, the Greenway is seen solely as a government agency, limiting its ability to be successful in private fundraising initiatives;
- The Greenway would be seen as competing for private dollars in an already tight market by peers throughout the Hudson River Valley;
- Board culture would be altered and fundraising would become THE top priority for Board members; and

- The Greenway lacks the resources and staff capacity to build a private fundraising program.

That said, a number of Board members also recognized the opportunities that a private fundraising program could provide if created responsibly and within a realistic timeframe:

*While fundraising is worth exploring, it would be a real challenge, given the competition and the fact that we are considered to be a government entity.*

*I think we have to ask the question “What does the Greenway do that no other governmental agency or nonprofit does?” The answer to that is where our strength lies.*

In considering Board and stakeholder feedback throughout the strategic planning process, and with significant input from the Committee, the following is a summary of key challenges to the Greenway building a fundraising program at this time:

- **Public Perception:** The organization is primarily viewed as a state agency rather than a nonprofit, even though it is both of those things and more, making it difficult to attract private donations.
- **Limited Awareness:** There is low name recognition and limited public understanding of the Greenway’s mission and impact.
- **Funding Structure:** The Greenway relies almost exclusively on public funding, lacking a diversified funding base and no staff member whose role includes overseeing or implementing fundraising initiatives and activities.
- **Competition:** The organization competes with other established nonprofits in the Hudson River Valley region for state and regional funding sources. Entering into the private fundraising arena may be viewed by peers as a competitive move and one which would add to donor bifurcation over environmental and green space programs in the region.
- **Board Engagement:** There is limited involvement from Conservancy board members and key stakeholders in resource generating activities, restricting the organization’s ability to cultivate new donors. The existing Conservancy board will need training to successfully support a private fundraising program.

Addressing these challenges will require strategic investment in fundraising capacity, enhanced communication of the Greenway’s unique value to the region, and increased leadership and staff engagement in development efforts, including fundraising training and the addition of a staff member with fundraising responsibilities. The Greenway’s Board and team understand the capacity required for fundraising success, especially in

this moment, as the organization prepares to implement organization-wide recommendations from its newly adopted strategic plan.

In addition, the Greenway leadership is deeply aware of the potential impact a private fundraising program might have on its local and regional relationships, including with nonprofit peers who do not receive a similar level of public support to the Greenway.

Therefore, the Strategic Planning Committee has concluded that, although a private fundraising program may eventually be necessary, through 2028, it will focus revenue generation on securing increased state and federal funding, where, despite the challenging environment, it still has an opportunity for growth. The Greenway may opportunistically seek private funds for one-time capacity building efforts that can lay the groundwork for a private fundraising program, but it will not begin to implement a traditional **private** fundraising program until after the strategic planning period concludes.

### **Building for the Future: Fundraising Opportunities & Recommendations**

The Greenway Committee acknowledges that, once it decides to pursue private funding as a viable revenue base, it will take a minimum of 18-24 months from implementation to realize substantive results, both with individual and institutional funders. That said, 1:1 recommends the following strategic initiatives for the Greenway to begin building an internal culture and external profile that, together, will be crucial in the development of a successful fundraising program over the long term.

#### ***Top Fundraising Opportunities and Recommendations:***

- **Strengthening Organizational Identity:** By clearly communicating its mission, purpose, and unique regional impact, the Greenway can better position itself to attract new supporters and donors.
- **Demonstrating Economic Value:** Documenting and sharing the Greenway's contributions to regional economic development can serve as a compelling indicator of impact for potential funders.
- **Increasing Visibility:** Improved communication strategies—including enhanced signage, social media outreach, and promotion of accomplishments and tangible impact—can raise public awareness and engagement.
- **Building Fundraising Capacity and Culture:** Investing in staff, whose duties will include resource generation, and infrastructure over the next three years, will enable the organization to pursue new funding streams and cultivate donor relationships. Examples of potential activities to build fundraising capacity in this moment include:
  - Requesting increased and multi-year support from New York State;

- Capitalizing on national events i.e., the national 250th Anniversary with associated funding opportunities;
  - Focusing on marketing and outreach to increase the Greenway's public identity and impact;
  - Identifying and cultivating individuals of influence and affluence who can play a role as future board members and philanthropic supporters;
  - Potentially identifying and pursuing private foundation support, as appropriate and as capacity allows, from key national targets e.g., National Park Foundation;
  - Hiring a deputy director who can take on fundraising and other responsibilities, as appropriate, and
  - Engaging in Board and staff fundraising training to begin building an internal fundraising culture.
- **Leveraging Board and Community Engagement:** Engaging board members and key stakeholders as ambassadors and connectors can expand the organization's network across the region.

## **Conclusion**

This fundraising analysis and the aligned strategic plan, both completed by 1:1 for the Hudson River Valley Greenway, underscore the complex environment in which the Greenway operates. Along with so many of its peers, the organization is navigating potential federal funding cutbacks while also looking to capitalize on a diversified portfolio of robust New York State support and key funding from philanthropic entities such as the National Park Foundation. While recognizing the long-term potential of private fundraising for growth and sustainability, the Greenway has strategically decided to focus on strengthening its operational foundation, pursuing increased public funding (and select private institutional opportunities, as appropriate) through 2028.

1:1 recommends that the Hudson River Valley Greenway implement a set of core fundraising "building blocks" at this time—including enhanced organizational identity, increased visibility via marketing and communications, and initial fundraising capacity development—crucial steps that will prepare the Greenway for a future private fundraising program, should the organization decide to pursue this direction. This will help to ensure the Greenway's vital role in the quality of life for residents and visitors throughout the Hudson River Valley and in the development of the economic and social vitality of this historic region.

**Thank you.**

**1:1 Advisory LLC**

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