

Tourism News

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Hudson River Valley Wine & Culinary Center Study Funded by State

DUTCHESS COUNTY, NEW YORK -- The New York Wine and Grape Foundation (NYWGF) is the recipient of an Empire State Development grant of \$44,500 to conduct a professional planning study to explore the creation of the Hudson River Valley Wine & Culinary Center (HRVWCC). It would serve to advance education, training, economic development, and agri-tourism related to the unique foods, wines, and agricultural potential of the Hudson Valley. A similar center opened in mid-June in Canandaigua in the Finger Lakes region.

The number of visitors to the New York Wine & Culinary Center (NYWCC) in Canandaigua was projected at 76,000 for the first year, but more than 21,000 visited in the first month alone. A partnership between several private sector partners and the public sector, it represents a \$7.5 million investment, including more than \$1.5 in state funding.

A steering committee has been created for the Hudson Valley Center and includes representatives from the public and private sectors for both the planning study and on-going activities. The committee will consider potential sites suitable for an HRVWCC. It will also identify potential partners and sponsors willing to invest in the project.

The NYWCC's success has convinced state officials that it is unnecessary to conduct a feasibility study. The grant's planning study will focus on providing valuable information to

potential stakeholders, including the State of New York, as to the requirements, likely benefits, and timetables for developing such a Center in the Hudson River Valley

The NYWGF, in conjunction with a project advisory committee, will issue and review the Requests for Proposal (RFP), interview candidate firms, and select a consultant to conduct the strategic planning study on the establishment of the HRVWCC.

Jim Trezise, president of the NYWGF, said “We are pleased to be administrators of this grant from New York State, and are confident this exciting project will get to the next level. We think the Hudson River Valley is the right place to establish another successful Wine & Culinary Center. I am also delighted to announce that Phyllis Feder will chair the steering committee. Acting as vice-chair is Mary Kay Vrba, director of Dutchess County Tourism.”

Phyllis Feder, who, with husband Ben Feder, is co-proprietor of Clinton Vineyards in Dutchess County, is immediate past Chair of the Board of the NYWGF. The steering committee will provide input and oversight for the planning study. They will produce a planning report within 90 days.

Mrs. Feder stated, “This is a very exciting opportunity and has many positive ramifications for this area. This grant underscores the high regard which this region has historically enjoyed as an agricultural area and is presently seen as having enormous potential for growth. Our proximity to the major New York City market makes this location a natural choice. I’m honored to chair the committee and look forward to working with these talented community representatives”.

Other members of the steering committee are: Pat Adams, Adams Fairacre Farms; Roger Akeley, Dutchess County Department of Planning and Development; Anne Conroy, Dutchess County Dutchess County Economic Development Corporation; Bruce Hillenbrand, The Culinary Institute of America; Allison Lee Hinchey, community at large; James O’Shea, O’Shea Electrical Contractors; David Tetor, Town of Stanford supervisor; and Susan Wine, Rivendell Winery. Ex-officio members include the Honorable Kevin A. Cahill, New York

State Assembly; Jim Jacob, Empire State Development Corporation; the Honorable William Larkin, Jr., New York State Senate; Honorable Stephen Saland, New York State Senate; Jim Tresize, New York Wine and Grape Foundation, and Mary Ellen Walsh, Empire State Development Corporation.

Similar to the Finger Lakes region, the Hudson Valley has several characteristics that make it ideal for a Culinary Center. The region's proximity to New York City is beneficial, with many metro-area chefs utilizing ingredients from Hudson Valley farms. While the Finger Lakes accounts for a large segment of New York's wine industry as well as agriculture, the Hudson Valley is comprised primarily of small boutique wineries and family-owned artisanal food producers, a perfect combination for stimulating agri-tourism. The HRVWCC would also serve as an educational facility to ensure the future of farming in the region as it transitions from a major apple producer into a diversity of specialty crops.

Jim Jacob, director of industry development for Empire State Development, said, "I look forward to working with the Hudson Valley steering committee on this exciting project."

The NYWGF, created in 1985 by State legislation, is the only private sector organization statutorily recognized to receive and disburse State funds for projects like this. It works very closely with the wine and food industries statewide, and is one of the Founding Partners of the NYWCC (www.NYWine.com). More information about the Center is at www.nywcc.com.

Dutchess County Tourism was established in 1984. A destination marketing organization, it brings tourism dollars to area businesses by marketing and promoting the assets of Dutchess County to the nation and the world. Dutchess County Tourism (www.dutchesstourism.com) is a division of the Dutchess County Economic Development Corporation and is funded by the County of Dutchess.