

# Five Year Progress Report on Comprehensive Plan Implementation and 2009 Annual Report

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## From the Commissioner

Five years after adoption of the County Comprehensive Plan we have taken a look back to see what difference the plan has made in the community. As we reflect on the work that has been done, both within and outside of county government, and look to the road ahead, we see transformations under way that show that the vision expressed in the Foreword of the Comprehensive Plan is, in fact, achievable. (See Comprehensive Plan Foreword reprinted at the end of this report.) Perhaps as important as specific, programmatic achievements is how the plan has helped the community to create a unifying vision of what we can achieve when we work together on common goals. This has fostered collaborations among different groups of community partners to address elements of the plan, knowing that their work is part of a broader effort and is coordinated so that it interacts in a positive way with the others.

Below are some of the major programs we have undertaken to implement the Comprehensive Plan and their potential to transform the community:

**Energy and Greenhouse Gas Emissions Strategy** – County works with households, businesses and institutions to facilitate individual decision-making that allows them to save money, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and grow the local economy in a sustainable manner.

*Transformation:* Dollars now leaving the community instead become available for local investment and job creation while reducing the impacts of climate change.

**Development Focus Area Strategy** – County works with municipalities and developers to encourage development of sustainable neighborhoods and communities.

*Transformation:* Create functional, highly livable and sustainable *communities* instead of “subdivisions” or “developments.”

**Conservation Strategy** – County and partners engage with landowners to promote better management of natural resources.

*Transformation:* Mutual gains approach to resource management yields sustainable benefits to both landowner and the larger community, thus preserving the rural character, environmental benefits and economic contribution of rural landscapes.

**Housing Fund** – County and partners provide key financial support to allow private and not-for-profit housing developers to construct both rental and ownership housing that is affordable to moderate- and lower-income households.

*Transformation:* Development of a permanent housing stock that provides safe, secure, affordable housing in locations that contribute to neighborhood vitality and support sustainable living.

**Stream Buffer Restoration** – County partners with landowners and volunteers to restore land along streams to a more natural, sustainable state.

*Transformation:* Watersheds contribute filtered water to streams and Cayuga Lake; habitat is improved for aquatic species; movement corridors and habitat are provided for avian and terrestrial species.

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**From the Commissioner**

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**Capital Reserve Fund for Natural, Scenic and Recreational Resource Protection** – County facilitates cooperative open space protection projects with not-for-profit and governmental partners.

*Transformation:* Our patchwork of protected areas are connected to form a sustainable open space system that preserves and protects biodiversity, and offers a broad range of benefits from watershed protection to recreation.

**Purchase of Development Rights** – County assists farmers with long-term protection of productive farmland through conservation easements restricting non-agricultural activities.

*Transformation:* The use of key agricultural resources as functioning farms is assured, thus preserving our capacity to produce food locally.

A bright future is achievable if we continue on the course we have set. Still, there have been changes not foreseen when the plan was adopted in 2004 that challenge our ability to move forward.

The recession in the national and state economies and deteriorating fiscal situation of governments at all levels have presented new challenges to our ingenuity and creativity in the face of limited resources. While we have been buffered somewhat from the worst consequences of these changes, there is certainly more concern about jobs and local and county fiscal conditions than was the case in 2004.

The potential for large-scale changes to our landscape that could result from hydrofracking operations to extract natural gas from the Marcellus Shale could undermine several of the Plan's efforts. Impacts could be expected on housing, jobs, public facilities and services, natural feature preservation, forestry, tourism and agriculture. This community has expended much effort to try to understand the implications of and advocate for responsible public policy toward the potential development of the Marcellus Shale. We must be vigilant in our efforts to assure that this activity is not allowed to occur in a way that is destructive to our community and region.

*Edward C. Marx, AICP*  
Commissioner of Planning and Public Works

# Five Year Progress Report on Comprehensive Plan Implementation

Below is a listing, organized by comprehensive plan element, of the 61 actions identified in the 2004 Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan as well as the 17 actions added with the adoption of the Energy and Greenhouse Gas Emissions element in 2008. Following the list of actions for each element is an assessment of how the implementation of those actions has impacted the community. Finally, we have provided a list of the proposed actions for the next five years, which have been reviewed by the County Planning Advisory Board but have not yet been approved by the County Legislature. This list includes actions in the adopted plan that we will continue to implement as well as new or updated actions to supplement those that have been completed or are ongoing. These new actions have in large part been identified as a result of our experience working with the Planning Advisory Board and community partners to implement the plan over the last five years. They offer opportunities to advance the Principles and Policies of the plan. Those policies can be found in the Comprehensive Plan document. They remain pertinent and do not need to be revised or updated at this time.

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## HOUSING CHOICES

### PRINCIPLE

Housing in Tompkins County should be affordable and appealing to all residents, regardless of their income or whether they rent or own their homes.

### WHERE WE'VE BEEN

#### 2005-2009 Implementation Plan

- |           |   |
|-----------|---|
| Completed | Produce a three- to five-year affordable housing needs assessment to use as a basis to guide development of appropriate subsidized rental and ownership housing to meet local needs.  |
| Completed | Conduct a survey of in-commuters to determine the reasons they live outside of Tompkins County.   |
| Completed | Develop or identify model provisions for land development regulations that encourage affordable housing.  |
| Completed | Provide education and training programs for elected officials, board members, community leaders, developers and builders, and the general public on the need for and benefits of affordable housing development.                  |
| Completed | Identify subsidized affordable housing units and determine when subsidies expire and if the units are likely to remain affordable. Establish a program to monitor the status of those units to anticipate impending deficiencies. |
| Completed | Build a new Community Residence – Single Room Occupancy mental health facility.   |
| Underway  | Develop plans to meet the housing needs of segments of the population that require supportive services, including seniors, independent (or at-risk) youth, and the homeless.  |

### ASSESSMENT

Perhaps the best example of how clearly stated Principles and Policies can bring a community together to address a pressing need are the actions undertaken to implement the Housing element of the plan. Six of the seven actions identified in the plan have been substantially completed. A Housing Needs Assessment was undertaken to better define the problem. This led to development of a Housing Strategy that achieved broad community consensus on the actions needed to address this problem. Two of the four elements of that strategy, supporting a Housing Trust and providing pre-development assistance to affordable housing

projects, have been implemented through the creation of the Housing Fund by the County, the City of Ithaca, and Cornell University. Model zoning provisions have also been developed and are being considered in at least one community's zoning ordinance update. Better Housing for Tompkins County conducted a series of workshops and forums to educate local officials on affordable and workforce housing needs, and Tompkins County Area Development highlighted the economic significance of housing by making it one of its three top priorities in the updated County Economic Development Strategy. Through the efforts of the Department of Mental Health and community partners a long-awaited community residence for individuals needing on-site supportive services opened in the community. We continue to develop data to track progress in meeting our housing needs. Although there is still a long way to go, there is broad understanding in the community of the need to address this issue and the strategies that are being advanced to do so.

**WHERE WE'RE GOING**

**2010-2014 Implementation Plan**

- Underway      Produce a periodic housing report tracking new affordable housing, both renter- and owner-occupied.
- Proposed      Periodically review new and existing programs and incentives that encourage private development of affordable housing and share the information with others.
- Underway      Develop detailed plans to meet the housing needs of segments of the population that require supportive services, including seniors, independent (or at-risk) youth, and the homeless.

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**TRANSPORTATION CHOICES**

**PRINCIPLE**

The efficiency of the highway system should be enhanced and use of public transit, walking, and bicycling should be increased.

**WHERE WE'VE BEEN**

**2005-2009 Implementation Plan**

- Completed      Develop a bicycle suitability map for Tompkins County.
- Completed      Identify infill opportunities at nodes along transit lines.
- Underway      Develop a countywide State Route 13 Corridor Management Plan.
- Underway      Complete a traffic signal upgrade and intersection evaluation program.
- Completed      Develop a centralized, uniform accident reporting system.
- Underway      Work with municipalities to assess transportation infrastructure needs, including roadways, transit, bicycles, and pedestrians, to support local planning efforts.
- Underway      Facilitate municipal review of local development regulations to address future performance of the transportation system.
- Underway      Implement recommendations in the Freight Transportation Study to minimize negative aspects of freight transportation, while increasing safety.
- Completed      Develop a countywide comprehensive park and ride plan.

**ASSESSMENT**

Substantial activity is ongoing in the area of transportation. The Ithaca-Tompkins County Transportation Council has produced and widely distributed a bicycle suitability map that rates roads and streets in the community based on a number of factors influencing how bike-friendly they are. Many projects to provide transportation options have been advanced including car share, park and ride, van pool, Way2Go, and ride

sharing. TCAT has undertaken a comprehensive evaluation of its transit system to realign routes to provide the most comprehensive and efficient service possible and an initiative has been undertaken in association with Cortland and Tioga counties to examine regional transit opportunities. The 2009 update of the Long Range Transportation Plan by ITCTC incorporated these initiatives, many of which have been supported by Cornell University's commitment of \$10 million to its community partnership to improve transportation options and infrastructure.

**WHERE WE'RE GOING**

**2010-2014 Implementation Plan**

- Proposed Improve transportation options for people, especially in rural areas, who need to access services, such as health care and after school activities, in and near the City of Ithaca.
- Underway Develop transportation demand management programs, (such as employee commute options, ride-matching, variable work hours, park and ride, and downtown bike-share).
- Underway Develop a countywide State Route 13 Corridor Management Plan.
- Proposed Develop intensive transit service linking Downtown Ithaca, the West End, Cornell University and Ithaca College.

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**JOBS AND BUSINESS**

**PRINCIPLE**

The local economy should be enhanced by building on important community assets, such as a highly educated workforce, an entrepreneurial spirit, dynamic academic institutions, and a high quality of life.

**WHERE WE'VE BEEN**

**2005-2009 Implementation Plan**

- Underway Complete and implement the workforce development plan, striving to meet the needs of the unemployed and underemployed through job creation activities, and the needs of employers through employment and training programs.
- Completed Enhance the ability to analyze costs and benefits of projects as well as improve post-project job data collection to determine whether the public purpose of projects is realized.
- Completed Continue to lobby for State Empire Zone status and explore regional partnerships to share underutilized economic development resources.
- Completed Continue to explore ways to improve the cost and convenience of air service for county employers, visitors, and local residents.
- Underway Utilize Cornell University's resources to greater advantage, including: work with Cornell to improve technology transfer, and study feasibility of a business attraction initiative using specific Cornell research and development programs as the key element.
- Underway Promote and assist in the development of the county's tourism attractions, including cultural, natural, and commercial attractions.
- Underway Develop a strategy to promote local use and consumption of locally produced goods.
- Underway Encourage the formation, retention, and expansion of manufacturing and high tech businesses.

**ASSESSMENT**

Major strides have been made on advancing some of the key economic development actions identified in the comprehensive plan. An Empire Zone was approved in Tompkins County and 51 businesses were certified

and became eligible for a range of Empire Zone benefits. The addition of new airlines at the Ithaca-Tompkins County Airport greatly improved travel options and resulted in more competitive fares and increased activity. The Industrial Development Agency instituted measures to enhance tracking of the performance of incentive programs. Cornell University placed a greater emphasis on technology transfer through the CCTEC program. The Workforce Development Plan was completed and is being implemented. Tourism continued its growth and is poised to make new advances as the economy recovers. Efforts to promote locally-produced food have been greatly expanded and enhanced and Tompkins County Area Development continues to help innovative tech start-ups grow and prosper. Perhaps most significantly, the 2006 update of the Tompkins County Economic Development Strategy by TCAD established an increased and more diverse housing supply, improved workforce and business skills, and revitalized unique commercial districts and town centers as the major five-year goals. These goals directly support elements of the Comprehensive Plan.

**WHERE WE'RE GOING**

**2010-2014 Implementation Plan**

- Proposed Provide technical assistance/training programs to assist villages and hamlets within the County with revitalization and commercial development.
- Underway Complete and implement the Workforce Development Plan, striving to meet the needs of the unemployed and underemployed through job creation activities, and the needs of employers through employment and training programs.
- Underway Utilize Cornell University's resources to greater advantage, including: work with Cornell to improve technology transfer, and study feasibility of a business attraction initiative using specific Cornell research and development programs as the key element.
- Underway Encourage the formation, retention, and expansion of manufacturing and high tech businesses.
- Underway Promote and assist in the development of the county's tourism attractions, including cultural, natural, and commercial attractions.



*Sixmile Valley ARFA*

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## RURAL RESOURCES

### PRINCIPLE

A diversified rural economy centered around the working rural landscapes of farms and forests, and the livelihoods of those who depend upon them, should be preserved and enhanced.

### WHERE WE'VE BEEN

#### 2005-2009 Implementation Plan

- Completed Determine the feasibility of a rural micro-enterprise program, including adding a component to the County's Economic Development Revolving Loan Fund.
- Underway Update the Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan with a particular focus on promoting the viability and profitability of agriculture within the county.
- Completed Establish a program to protect and manage land for agricultural and forestry use in the focus areas identified in the Comprehensive Plan using tools appropriate to the functions of those resources.
- Revised Develop or identify model performance standards to preserve agriculture and forest land.

### ASSESSMENT

The major accomplishment here has been the development of the Conservation Strategy, including the Agricultural Resource Focus Areas and the Natural Features Focus Areas. This effort identified ways to work with landowners to conserve important resources on their property and utilize them in ways that contribute to a sustainable rural economy. A pilot project was undertaken to establish a Rural Micro-enterprise Program. Although several loans were made to small businesses in rural areas of the county, the volume of activity has not justified continuation of that effort. A grant application was submitted in cooperation with Cooperative Extension to update the Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan, which should be completed in the coming years.

### WHERE WE'RE GOING

#### 2010-2014 Implementation Plan

- Proposed Evaluate options to reduce ownership and management costs for forest landowners who are actively managing their forests and are willing to commit to keeping their land forested, such as a forestry district program, certification program, or forestry cooperative.
- Proposed Develop a consortium of local food procurement programs (such as jails, the colleges, and schools) and locally administered programs (such as local food assistance programs) that utilize agricultural goods and encourage a portion of the goods be procured from local farms.
- Underway Update the Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan with a particular focus on creating alternative rural economic models, such as organic farming, community supported agriculture, agri-tourism, and renewable energy production.
- Proposed Implement the Agricultural Resources Focus Areas Plan.

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## WATER RESOURCES

### PRINCIPLE

Water resources provide drinking water, recreational opportunities, and environmental benefits, and should be protected and used appropriately.

### WHERE WE'VE BEEN

#### 2005-2009 Implementation Plan

Completed	Complete watershed assessments for the Fall Creek and Six Mile Creek drinking water sources.
Underway	Continue to conduct aquifer studies.
Revised	Initiate inspection and maintenance requirements for individual on-site wastewater treatment systems.
Completed	Update the county Flood Hazard Mitigation Program to incorporate watershed-based approaches to reducing the risk of flood damages.
Underway	Update floodplain maps.
Completed	Develop or identify model stream buffer ordinances.
Underway	Develop a system to provide for regular maintenance of existing drainage systems and use of appropriate road ditching techniques on County-maintained roads, and encourage the use of such techniques on other roads in the county.
Underway	Develop boat docking, boat service areas, and a waterfront commercial district on, and in the vicinity of, Inlet Island in the City of Ithaca.
Revised	Redevelop the New York State Department of Transportation Maintenance Facility site with water-dependent and/or water-enhanced projects to provide economic benefits to the City and the County and provide public access to the water's edge.
Underway	Dredge Cayuga Inlet and find an appropriate method for disposal of dredge spoil material, for example, using dredged material to create new, functioning wetlands at the south end of Cayuga Lake.
Completed	Prepare a Cayuga Lake water quality and quantity monitoring plan.

### ASSESSMENT

Among the major accomplishments under Water Resources was the effort of the Water Resources Council to cooperatively develop a Cayuga Lake monitoring plan. Coordination and enhancement of ongoing monitoring efforts will hopefully provide a more complete picture of factors influencing water quality in the lake. Watershed assessments were completed for not only Fall and Six Mile Creeks but also Salmon and Cascadilla Creeks and Cayuga Inlet. These assessments provided guidance for updating the Flood Hazard Mitigation Program to incorporate more of a watershed-wide approach, considering upstream and downstream impacts of projects to mitigate erosion and flooding and using more holistic methods such as re-establishing flood plains and restoring natural vegetation to stream corridors. Model ordinances to protect stream corridors were developed. The City of Ithaca obtained a grant to undertake the necessary studies to allow dredging of Cayuga Inlet and continues to work on plans for waterfront revitalization

### WHERE WE'RE GOING

#### 2010-2014 Implementation Plan

Underway	Create an exciting waterfront district that allows public access to the lake, including redevelopment of the NYSDOT site.
Proposed	Establish and implement a stream buffer protection program.

- Proposed Re-evaluate the aquifer study program to include a focus on showing the location of the contributing areas for public water supply systems, as well as appropriate land management strategies for protection of that resource.
- Proposed Create a program to require regular maintenance of individual on-site wastewater treatment systems, as well as regular inspection of the functional adequacy of such systems.
- Proposed Facilitate updating the floodplain maps and evaluate local floodplain management programs in conjunction with informational outreach regarding any changes to the maps.
- Underway Dredge Cayuga Inlet and find an appropriate method for disposal of dredge spoil material.
- Proposed Investigate development of a Cayuga Lake blueway trail for people-powered boats, including protection of natural shoreline and providing recreational access.
- Proposed Monitor natural gas development of the Marcellus Shale and identify measures available to local government to reduce impacts from natural gas extraction activities.

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## NATURAL FEATURES

### PRINCIPLE

Natural features that define our community, and form the foundation of our local and regional ecological systems, should be preserved and enhanced.

### WHERE WE'VE BEEN

#### 2005-2009 Implementation Plan

- Completed Establish an open-space program to protect or preserve natural resources and recreational amenities in the focus areas identified in the Comprehensive Plan using tools appropriate to the functions of those resources.
- Completed Define stream corridor buffers for the major tributaries to Cayuga Lake and encourage use of appropriate measures to preserve the designated stream corridors.
- Revised Develop and disseminate educational information tailored to each Natural Features Focus Area and each Agricultural Resources Focus Area.
- Completed Conduct a Scenic Resources Inventory and prepare a Scenic Resources Preservation Plan.
- Revised Develop or identify model performance standards to preserve natural resources.
- Completed Develop or obtain a system to track land use changes and preservation efforts.
- Underway Complete the Cayuga Waterfront Trail and the Black Diamond Trail.

### ASSESSMENT

Several strides have been made in accomplishing those actions identified to protect and enhance our natural areas and resources. The Natural Features Focus Area component of the Conservation Plan has identified priority areas for protection and the Capital Reserve Fund for Natural, Scenic, and Recreational Resource Protection has been utilized to support key open space acquisitions in three of these areas: Cayuga Inlet and Lick Brook in the Gorges Natural Features Focus Area and the Berntsson property in the Forestlands Natural Features Focus Area. Continued recapitalization of the Capital Reserve Fund will be critical to implementation of the open space component of the Conservation Strategy. An analysis of stream buffer requirements has been prepared and a grant received from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation has allowed us to develop and implement tools for stream corridor protection. Several projects have been completed and others are ongoing. A Scenic Resources Inventory has been completed and tools and strategies to protect those resources have been identified in a companion document. Phase III of the Cayuga Waterfront Trail is nearing completion, thanks to the efforts of the City of Ithaca and Chamber of Commerce, with Phase II expected to go to construction in 2011, and a community-based strategy to spur development of the Black Diamond Trail is underway. The actions for the next five years

represent a continuation of these efforts. Added items include updating the Unique Natural Areas inventory to keep this important resource current, and an effort to promote use of native vegetation in landscaping and landscape restoration projects.

**WHERE WE'RE GOING**

**2010-2014 Implementation Plan**

- Underway      Develop a plan to effectively and efficiently monitor and steward County-held conservation easements and agreements.
- Underway      Complete the Cayuga Waterfront Trail and the Black Diamond Trail.
- Proposed      Update the Unique Natural Areas Inventory of Tompkins County.
- Underway      Use the Conservation Reserve Fund to secure key parcels and trail corridors in the Natural Features Focus Areas.
- Proposed      Develop a procedure to incorporate the use of non-invasive and, where possible, native plants for all county landscape maintenance activities and County-initiated landscape restoration efforts.



Benjamin Hill ARFA

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**ENERGY AND GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS**

**PRINCIPLE**

The Tompkins County community should reduce energy demand, improve energy efficiency, transition to renewable sources of energy, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

**ASSESSMENT**

As this element was just added to the plan in 2008, no changes to the implementation actions are proposed. However, significant progress has been made in assessing wind energy potential, incorporating energy reduction strategies in the Long Range Transportation Plan, and developing the 2020 Energy Strategy.

## WHERE WE'RE GOING

### 2009-2014 Implementation Plan

Underway	Work with local municipalities, school districts, businesses, institutions of higher education, and non-profits to develop a 5-year strategy to reduce community greenhouse gas emissions by at least 10% of 2008 emissions levels, including a detailed plan for County government to achieve that same target.
Proposed	Incorporate into the Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan Indicators of Success Report metrics of change in energy use and greenhouse gas emissions, energy efficiency improvements, and renewable energy systems installations in the community.
Proposed	Prepare an adaptation plan to help prepare the community for impacts of global climate change.
Proposed	Prepare an adaptation plan to help prepare the community for impacts of peak oil.
Underway	Conduct an educational campaign on energy issues and energy choices that address topics such as home heating options, energy efficiency measures, transportation options, food production, and renewable energy systems.
Proposed	Identify and promote utilization of Best Management Practices in agricultural, forestland, and water management to enhance carbon sequestration.
Underway	Develop a strategy to divert 75% of the community waste stream from landfills by 2015.
Underway	Develop a plan to address the specific energy needs of low-income people, including recommendations for improvements to existing energy-related programs and identification of potential pilot projects to address energy needs.
Underway	Investigate the feasibility of developing a low-interest revolving loan fund to improve the payback period for energy efficiency investments made by homeowners, landlords, and businesses.
Underway	Promote green business development and create green job training opportunities for workers, high-school students, and college students.
Proposed	Adopt and expand local tax incentives, such as sales and property tax abatements, to encourage homeowners and businesses to invest in energy efficiency and renewable energy systems.
Proposed	Develop or identify a model building energy code that can be phased in, as well as incentives to assist with code compliance.
Proposed	Adopt a County administrative policy that requires major new County government buildings or renovations of County buildings to be certified Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Silver or higher.
Underway	Determine the feasibility of developing a regional consortium of sustainable biomass growers and processors to supply biomass consumers in the region.
Completed	Develop criteria and identify the sites most appropriate for locating community-scale wind power in Tompkins County.
Underway	Establish a green fleet policy for County government, including participating in car share and bike share programs for County government employees, and determining needs for amenities to facilitate alternative transportation use.
Completed	In the 2009 update of the Long Range Transportation Plan include provisions to reduce vehicle miles traveled and enhance transportation efficiency through physical and programmatic improvements, such as park and rides, express regional commuter service, vanpool, and interconnected bike/pedestrian ways.
Proposed	Identify and, if necessary, create a board or committee to advise the Tompkins County Legislature on proposed federal and state legislation and policy initiatives regarding energy and greenhouse gas emissions.

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## STRONG COMMUNITIES

### PRINCIPLE

Tompkins County residents should be safe, healthy, and comfortable with the aesthetics of their communities, and have daily opportunities to interact with neighbors and community members to build strong, cohesive communities.

### WHERE WE'VE BEEN

#### 2005-2009 Implementation Plan

- Underway Advance implementation of a countywide multiuse trail network.
- Underway Conduct pedestrian level-of-service and walkability studies in neighborhoods, villages, and hamlets throughout the county.
- Underway Provide pedestrian connections between the waterfront and downtown through urban creek corridors.

### ASSESSMENT

Significant progress has been made in advancing walkability, and bicycle and pedestrian connections in the community. The Town of Dryden has substantially completed the extension of the Jim Schug Trail from the Village of Dryden to the Village of Freeville and is working collaboratively with the Town of Ithaca, Tompkins County, and Cornell University to begin an extension of the East Hill Recreationway from the Ithaca/Dryden town line to Varna and, eventually, to Etna and a connection to the Jim Schug Trail in Freeville. The Town and City of Ithaca have jointly begun an extension of the South Hill Recreationway that will connect the existing trail all the way to Buttermilk Falls State Park and a junction with a future leg of the Black Diamond Trail. The municipalities of Ulysses, Town of Ithaca, City of Ithaca and Tompkins County are jointly working with the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation to develop a strategy to complete the first phase of the Black Diamond Trail from Taughannock Falls State Park to Cass Park, linking the Village of Trumansburg to the City of Ithaca. In addition, walkability studies were completed in the Village of Trumansburg and the Town of Ithaca. The study in the northeast sector of Ithaca led to a successful "Safe Routes to School" application by the Town to improve pedestrian connections in the Warren Road area. In Trumansburg the study has led to renewed interest in extending their village sidewalk system and making the connection to the Black Diamond Trail. The City of Ithaca received grant funding to improve the pedestrian crossings of Route 13 at Dey Street and at Third Street to provide safe access from City neighborhoods to the Waterfront Trail. The need to complete a network of trails linking population centers in the county was reinforced as a key component of the Transportation Demand Management component of the 2020 Energy Strategy.

### WHERE WE'RE GOING

#### 2010-2014 Implementation Plan

- Proposed Conduct pedestrian level-of-service and walkability studies in villages and in proximity to primary and middle schools.
- Proposed Develop bicycle lanes, off-road bike trails, and pedestrian trails that can serve as commuter routes for bicyclists and pedestrians and link centers of development.

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## CENTERS OF DEVELOPMENT

### PRINCIPLE

The development patterns reflected in the existing villages, hamlets, and the City of Ithaca's downtown area and neighborhoods should be promoted as key components of the built environment that greatly contribute to the vitality of the local economy and community life.

### WHERE WE'VE BEEN

#### 2005-2009 Implementation Plan

- Underway Work with municipalities to identify and map areas appropriate for infill development.
- Revised Develop or identify model development design standards that address how to maintain a distinct edge between the urban/village areas and the rural countryside.
- Completed Evaluate and modify the following programs for consistency with and furtherance of the nodal development patterns: review of development proposals under General Municipal Law 239, Economic Development Revolving Loan Fund, Agricultural Districts, and advisory boards' work programs.
- Underway Work with municipalities to develop land use scenarios consistent with the Plan and with local land use plans and policies.

### ASSESSMENT

Efforts to identify the most appropriate role for County government to support Centers of Development have progressed over the five years since the plan was adopted. The most effective means seems to be to work with interested communities as they update their comprehensive plans and land use regulations. The Route 13 and Route 96 Corridor Management Plans have provided valuable information that has been or is being considered in comprehensive plan and zoning updates in the towns of Dryden, Ulysses and Ithaca. We have also determined that it is important to gain some level of intermunicipal agreement on where development should be focused. The county-wide sewer and water infrastructure study sponsored by the Tompkins County Council of Governments and coordinated by Tompkins County Area Development provided important information that has now allowed us to embark on a Development Focus Area Strategy. Municipal planners in attendance at the first public meeting on this strategy in June 2010 were enthusiastic and their requests for assistance have, in part, led to the future action item to provide focused assistance to municipalities with updates to their laws and regulations, which essentially revises and combines several of the action items identified in the original Comprehensive Plan. Finishing the Development Focus Area Strategy and assisting municipalities with those provisions that will help to implement the strategy, as well as the Housing, Conservation, and Energy and Greenhouse Gas Emissions Strategies, and Long Range Transportation Plan, will be the primary focus of efforts to support Centers of Development in the coming years.

### WHERE WE'RE GOING

#### 2010-2014 Implementation Plan

- Proposed Offer to provide municipalities with assistance in reviewing and changing local land use regulations and policies in order to further the goals of the County Comprehensive Plan:
- ▶ promote mixed-use development, as well as development of a variety of housing types and levels of affordability;
  - ▶ promote infill development at development densities sufficient to support housing affordability, efficient use of infrastructure, pedestrian mobility and transit use;
  - ▶ control the number of curb cuts on major road corridors;
  - ▶ maximize the retention of farmland; and
  - ▶ protect wetlands and stream corridors not regulated by the State or Federal Government.
- Underway Prepare a Development Focus Area strategy.

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## EFFICIENT USE OF PUBLIC FUNDS

### PRINCIPLE

The effectiveness of taxpayer dollars should be maximized by investing government funds in public infrastructure and facilities in the most efficient manner possible.

### WHERE WE'VE BEEN

#### 2005-2009 Implementation Plan

Revised	Develop or identify model land development regulations and design standards that support denser development in areas with water and sewer services (including residential, infill and mixed-use) and limited development in areas without such services.
Completed	Review responsibility for highway management and maintenance based on the function of the highways.
Completed	Evaluate a downtown office plan for future County facility needs.
Completed	Determine the location of future Health Department facility and the future use of the Biggs B Building.
Completed	Implement the countywide Public Safety Communications System project.
Underway	Evaluate the need to renovate or expand the County Public Safety Building to meet projected needs.
Completed	Conduct regular meetings with officials from adjacent counties to focus on ways to reduce overall costs to taxpayers.
Completed	Explore the feasibility of developing an Official County Map.

### ASSESSMENT

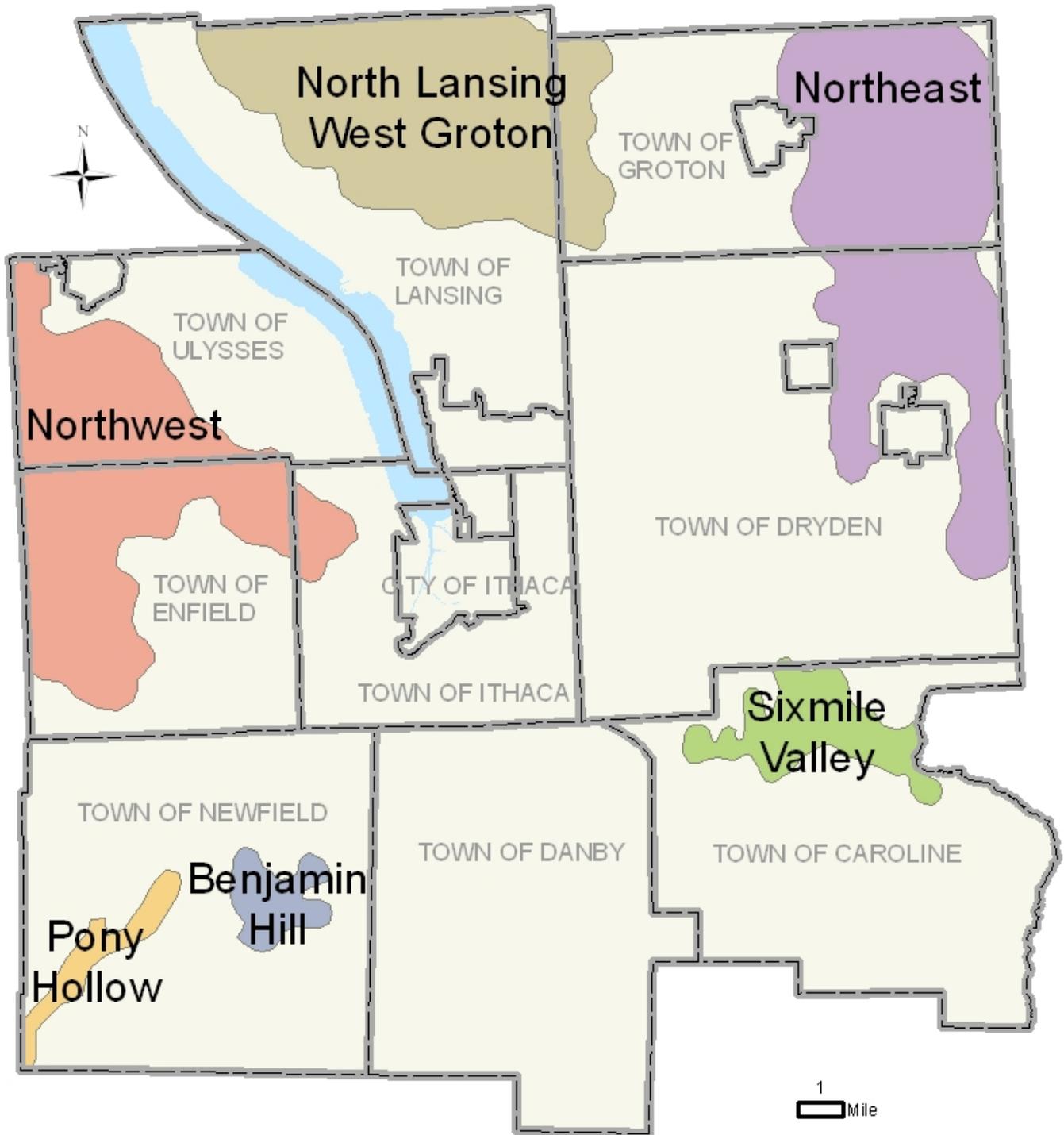
An impressive list of major projects identified in the Comprehensive Plan has been accomplished over the last five years. The Health Department has moved to a new facility at 55 Brown Road, which is expected to achieve LEED Silver certification, and the Biggs Building has been sold to Cayuga Medical Center. The Public Safety Communication Project is substantially complete with final enhancements being added at the current time. A joint review of highway function has led to highway jurisdictional swaps with the towns of Ulysses, Ithaca, Dryden, Groton and Lansing, creating a more manageable system for each of these municipalities as well as the County. A plan was developed to address downtown office needs of County government and is being evaluated by a special committee of the Legislature to identify next steps. The action to develop or identify model land development regulations and design standards that support denser development in areas with water and sewer services has been rolled into the Development Focus Area Strategy. In part as a result of local residents' concerns regarding highway improvement projects, the concept of developing an Official County Map, which could make County intentions for future infrastructure improvements more widely understood, is being carried forward for closer examination.

### WHERE WE'RE GOING

#### 2010-2014 Implementation Plan

Underway	Maintain an inventory of the location and capacity of existing water and sewer facilities and utilize the information to maximize the benefit of public investments and efficiency of facility operations.
Proposed	Explore the feasibility of developing a new Tompkins County Administration building, possibly as a joint facility with the City of Ithaca, to be located in downtown Ithaca.
Underway	Evaluate highway management and maintenance responsibilities based on the function of the highways to improve efficiency of effort.

# Agricultural Resource Focus Areas



*Photos in this report were taken by staff during the development of Tompkins County Conservation Plan Part II: The Agricultural Resource Focus Areas.*

# 2009 GOALS, OBJECTIVES and MEASURES OF SUCCESS

The Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan includes Principles, Policies and Actions that guide much of the work of the Planning Department. The Plan establishes a process for monitoring and reporting progress on plan implementation. However, this monitoring is intended to measure the community's progress and will depend upon many outside factors that may impact the pace of that progress. At the Tompkins County Planning Department, we also measure our success in achieving our specific goals and objectives for the year. Our goals and objectives did not reflect every activity undertaken by the department in 2009 but, rather, identified our priorities. To that end we continued the two broad goals established in 2007 and 2008 into 2009:

1. *Continue to make substantive progress in implementing the actions identified in the Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan.*
2. *Effectively and efficiently administer the program responsibilities assigned to the Planning Department.*

Objectives and measures of success reflect priorities for 2009 and are outlined below.

### **Goal 1, Objective 1: Complete five-year review of progress in implementing the Comprehensive Plan.**

Measure of Success: Report on progress in implementing Comprehensive Plan Action Items, including recommendations for new five-year action plan, is completed.

End of Year Status: Progress assessment was initiated with work to be completed in 2010.

### **Goal 1, Objective 2: Implement the adopted Housing Strategy for Tompkins County.**

Measure of Success: A Community Housing Trust, Housing Affordability Fund and Employer Assisted Housing program have been established.

End of Year Status: The Housing Trust and Housing Affordability Fund were established through an agreement between Tompkins County, the City of Ithaca, and Cornell University. The first Notice of Funding Availability was released in November.

### **Goal 1, Objective 3: Begin implementation of the new component of the County Comprehensive Plan to address Energy and Greenhouse Gas Emissions.**

Measure of Success: First draft of five-year action plan to reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions by 10% over five years is completed.

End of Year Status: A draft 10-year strategy was in development at year's end. Several Federal and State grant applications were submitted.

### **Goal 1, Objective 4: Complete the County Conservation Plan.**

Measure of Success: Part II of the Conservation Plan to address the Agricultural Resource Focus Areas is completed.

End of Year Status: The ARFA strategy draft was completed and under review.

### **Goal 1, Objective 5: Continue to develop a Purchase of Development Rights Program for the protection of agricultural resources in the Agricultural Resource Focus Areas identified in the Comprehensive Plan.**

Measures of Success: 1) Conduct annual monitoring for the Agricultural Conservation Easement for the Howser Farm in the Town of Lansing. 2) Work with the towns of Lansing and Dryden to implement the three Purchase of Development Rights grants awarded in 2006 and 2007, and the one grant hopefully to be awarded

in 2009. 3) Work cooperatively with interested farmers, community partners and municipalities to submit one additional application for Purchase of Development Rights grants for a farm in the Agricultural Resource focus Areas. 4) Work with adjoining counties to develop a long-term framework for farmland protection in the region.

End of Year Status: Annual monitoring was completed. Work continued with the towns of Dryden and Lansing to obtain final approval from the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets for easement documents.

**Goal 1, Objective 6: Implement the re-instituted Flood Hazard Mitigation Program and the County Stream Buffer Protection Program.**

Measure of Success: Three-year program funding cycle is substantially complete and report is made to Legislature on progress in meeting program objectives with recommendation on continued funding.

End of Year Status: A fourth year of funding was included in the 2010 budget. The program report to the Legislature will be made in 2010.

**Goal 1, Objective 7: Facilitate and support local municipal efforts to incorporate nodal development concepts into local plans and regulations.**

Measure of Success: The City of Ithaca, Town of Ithaca and Town of Ulysses agree in principle on nodal plan for development in the Route 96 Corridor.

End of Year Status: At year's end each of the municipalities was considering a resolution of support for the study's recommendations.

**Goal 2, Objective 1: Maintain reporting and administrative requirements for all programs administered by the Planning Department.**

Measure of Success: 1) All required reports for the Homeownership program, Economic Development Revolving Loan Funds, and the Phase II Stormwater SPDES permit are submitted on time and in accordance with program requirements. 2) All program audits or reviews are satisfactory or better with no major violations of

program rules. Any deficiencies are quickly corrected and resolved.

End of Year Status: All program reports were submitted.

**Goal 2, Objective 2: Maintain support for Environmental Management Council, Water Resources Council and Planning Advisory Board, and work to transition Legislature's Planning, Development and Environmental Quality Committee support activities to the Clerk of the Legislature.**

Measure of Success: Agendas, minutes and reports are prepared and distributed in a timely manner.

End of Year Status: Agenda, minutes and reports were prepared and distributed in a timely manner. Full administrative support was maintained for all advisory board activities, as was partial support for the Planning, Development and Environmental Quality Committee of the County Legislature.



*Pony Hollow ARFA*

# FIFTH ANNUAL REPORT ON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN IMPLEMENTATION



## Housing Choices

**Action: Produce a three- to five-year affordable housing needs assessment to use as a basis to guide development of appropriate subsidized rental and ownership housing to meet local needs.**

*Community Housing Affordability Program and Community Housing Trust Program (known collectively as the Housing Fund)*

In April 2009, Tompkins County, the City of Ithaca and Cornell University entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with regard to the Community Housing Affordability Program and the Community Housing Trust Program in April 2009. A Notice of Funding Availability was released in November 2009 with an application due date of December 31, 2009. Six applications were received for the first funding round. The goal of the Housing Fund is to help communities and organizations throughout Tompkins County respond to the diverse affordable housing needs of its residents. These programs are focused on encouraging the development of the 50% of those new housing units needed by households with incomes at or below 80% of the area median.

*Tompkins County Renter Survey*

The Tompkins County Renter Survey was completed by Survey Research Institute (SRI) in spring 2008. The Executive Summary for the Renter Survey, which provides an analysis of the data, was completed in September 2009. The Executive Summary, along with the three survey reports, can be found on the Tompkins County Planning Department website.



## Jobs and Business

**Action: Encourage the formation, retention, and expansion of manufacturing and high tech businesses.**

*Transfer of Economic Revolving Loan Fund to Tompkins County Area Development*

The Revolving Loan Fund was successfully transferred to Tompkins County Area Development (TCAD) in May 2008. TCAD requested and was disbursed loan funds for one project in 2009: Novomer, a hi-tech R&D facility, in the amount of \$75,000.



## Rural Resources

**Action: Determine the feasibility of a rural micro-enterprise program, including adding a component to the county's Economic Development Revolving Loan Fund.**

*Rural Small Business Loan Program*

There were no new loans in the Rural Small Business Loan Program.

**Action: Establish a program to protect and manage land for agricultural and forestry use in the focus areas identified in the Comprehensive Plan using tools appropriate to the functions of those resources.**

*Agricultural District – 8-Year and Annual Updates*

There were no additions or removals of lands for either Agricultural District in 2009. Planning staff did work closely with the Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board in developing a criteria for use in evaluating requests for additions to the agricultural district. Criteria will be used as a

guideline in helping the board arrive at a recommendation for the specific proposal. The criteria will be initially utilized for any proposed annual agricultural district updates in 2010.

*Purchase of Development Rights – Application and Promotion*

Tompkins County continues to be actively engaged in implementing and monitoring agricultural conservation easements purchased largely through New York State's Farmland Protection Implementation Grants program. Four farms are currently included in the program, encompassing 2,240 acres of productive farm and forest land. The participating farms are the Howser and Bensvue Farms in Lansing and the Lew-Lin and Jerry Dell Farms in Dryden. The Tompkins County Planning Department has been working closely with the towns of Lansing and Dryden in both grantwriting and project implementation for these projects, and the County and towns will co-hold the majority of the conservation easements in perpetuity.

Once all of the current easements are in place, the program will be responsible for bringing \$3.2 million of State funds and \$107,000 in Federal funds to Tompkins County farmers. All of the local farms currently in the program are dairy farms, and 1,383 of those acres are now in organic production. In addition to the agricultural soils that are being protected, important stream buffers along Salmon Creek, Egypt Creek and Locke Creek are also being conserved.

- **Howser Farm**

The Howser Farm, the first farm in the County to participate in the Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program, is annually monitored by the Tompkins County Planning Department. The project's monitoring plan calls for the Department to walk the entire boundary of the farm every other year. 2009 marked a year in which the full property boundary was not walked, but rather prioritized monitoring points were visited. The monitoring visit found no substantial problems in relation to the easement.

- **Jerry Dell Farm**

The Jerry Dell Farm was notified in late 2007 that it had received Purchase of Development Rights funding. This project identifies Tompkins County as a co-holder of the PDR easement with the Town of Dryden. The Town has been designated as the manager for this project, however the Tompkins County Planning Department has worked very closely with the Town and farmers in 2009 refining the easements, and is working with the State in implementation of the project.

- **Bensvue and Lew-Lin Farms**

These grants were awarded in 2006 and 2007. In 2009, easement documents were prepared and under review by the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets.

*North Lansing/  
West Groton  
ARFA*





## Water Resources

**Action: Update the county flood hazard mitigation program to incorporate watershed-based approaches to reducing the risk of flood damages.**

### *Flood Hazard Mitigation Program Implementation*

The Flood Hazard Mitigation Program Technical Advisory Committee convened in April 2009 to visit and evaluate projects for the 2009 program. The committee includes representation from the Tompkins County Soil & Water Conservation District, the Tompkins County Health Department, the Tompkins County Planning Department and the United States Geological Survey.

Streambank projects in the towns of Dryden, Ulysses as well as the City of Ithaca were selected for implementation. These projects joined several other projects from 2007 and 2008 in development. Since 2007, the program included project activity in five different jurisdictions, resulted in the planting of over 600 trees and the stabilization of nearly 4,000 feet of stream bank. Tools developed as a part of the development of the Stream Corridor Protection & Management Program have been of great assistance in implementing these projects.

**Action: Develop or identify model stream buffer ordinances.**  
and

**Action: Define stream corridor buffers for the major tributaries to Cayuga Lake and encourage use of appropriate measures to preserve the designated stream corridors.**

### *Stream Corridor Management Program*

The Tompkins County Planning Department applied for New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Water Quality Improvement Project (WQIP) funds for a project to protect stream corridors in Tompkins County. The State awarded the County \$70,000 for this project. It is the intent of the Planning Department to use a significant portion of the State funds to supplement the County's Flood Hazard Mitigation Program.

This project helps to establish a Tompkins County Stream Corridor Protection and Management Program, which seeks to develop, implement and report on tools that help protect stream corridors throughout the County. This program, coordinated by the Tompkins County Planning Department, seeks to enhance the County's water quality protection, habitat protection and enhancement, and flood mitigation efforts. The project includes three aspects:

- Grant funds have been used to craft property owner agreements for the flood hazard mitigation program and conservation easement language that includes stream buffer protections, and to develop model stream buffer regulations.
- The next, most substantial portion of the project is the implementation of demonstration projects throughout the County, including significant flood mitigation projects.
- The final phase of the project will be the development of an outreach campaign to provide local elected officials and property owners with information on the resources available to support local stream buffer protection.

Program activity for the Stream Buffer Program in 2009 included:

- Finalizing a model stream buffer ordinance which was distributed to Tompkins County jurisdictions.
- Developing a stream buffer planting guide with the assistance of a local graphic designer. The guide will be finalized, printed and distributed in 2010.
- Closing a stream buffer easement on environmentally sensitive land in the Town of Lansing at the headwaters of Locke Creek on Breed Road. The easement is applied to 7 acres of the 8.5-acre parcel owned by Habitat for Humanity. Habitat is currently developing a residence outside of the easement area. Tompkins County holds and annually monitors this easement.
- Working with the model stream buffer easement to implement a formal, appropriate method of protection on a residential parcel abutting Sixmile Creek. The 3.8-acre section of a parcel on Sixmile Creek in Brooktondale was surveyed, baseline documentation was

gathered, and paperwork was prepared in order to finalize and file the easement. This easement demonstrates the recommended 330 foot buffer, from the edge of the Creek, that provides benefits to both wildlife habitat and water quality. The easement should be formally filed in early 2010.

- Implementing projects to advance the development of stream buffers including the vegetation of banks, the reduction of erosion, and the advancement of flood protections. This included the planting of 100 trees and shrubs along the banks of Fall Creek on the Cornell Vegetable Research Farm. This brings the total number of trees and shrubs planted as a part of this program to well over 600 throughout the County.



## Natural Features

**Action: Develop and disseminate educational information tailored to each Natural Features Focus Area and each Agricultural Resources Focus Area.**

and

**Action: Establish an open-space program to protect or preserve natural resources and recreational amenities in the focus areas identified in the Comprehensive Plan using tools appropriate to the functions of those resources.**

### *Agricultural Resource Focus Area Plan*

The *Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan* identified six Agricultural Resource Focus Areas containing concentrations of important agricultural aspects in the County. To assess the trends, opportunities and threats occurring in each area the *Tompkins County Conservation Plan – Part II*, which concentrates on the Agricultural Resource Focus Areas, was initiated.

The effort began with the development of individual profiles for each of the six Agricultural Resource Focus Areas that provide detailed information about the characteristics of the areas, including cartographic analyses. Farmer outreach/focus group meetings occurred in each of these ARFAs in early 2009. Research and

analysis continued through the year resulting in a draft plan at year-end. The Plan is scheduled for added outreach, further development and completion in early 2010.

### *Tompkins County Conservation Partners*

One of the action items established in the *2007 Tompkins County Conservation Plan – Part I: A Strategic Approach to Natural Resource Stewardship* was to “convene a group of partners (Tompkins County Conservation Partners) involved in local conservation efforts twice a year. Meetings will facilitate regular information sharing as well as coordinated efforts such as periodic field trips for municipal officials to key sites in the Focus Areas.” This group corresponded on a few occasions in 2009 though did not formally meet.

### *Finger Lakes Trail Corridor Protection and Enhancement Plan*

In 2009, final public municipal meetings were held to present the draft Finger Lakes Trail Corridor Protection and Enhancement Plan findings and recommendations. The draft was then finalized and the completed plan – *The Finger Lakes Trail in the Emerald Necklace: A Plan for Corridor Protection and Enhancement* – was distributed to the public, project partners, and via the Finger Lakes Land Trust website in September 2009.

The final plan presents an introduction to the Finger Lakes Trail and Emerald Necklace; existing conditions from the Trail Assessment Report; findings from the Trail Corridor Analysis Report, including a review of the focus “at risk” portions of the trail; key recommendations for corridor protection and enhancement; and strategies for implementing recommendations. The five key recommendations proposed in the plan for corridor protection and enhancement are to secure the trail right-of-way, enhance trail access and infrastructure, protect significant open spaces in the Emerald Necklace, strengthen municipal planning tools for trail and corridor protection, and expand institutional capacity of stakeholder organizations.

The final plan may be viewed at: <http://www.fllt.org/linkfiles/EmeraldNecklaceReport.pdf>.



Benjamin Hill  
ARFA



## Energy and Greenhouse Gas Emissions

**Action: Work with local municipalities, school districts, businesses, institutions of higher education, and non-profits to develop a 5-year strategy to reduce community greenhouse gas emissions by at least 10% of 2008 emissions levels, including a detailed plan for County government to achieve that same target.**

EGGE actions included beginning work on a strategy to achieve an interim goal of emissions reductions by 2020, investigating the feasibility of developing a low-interest loan fund to finance energy efficiency improvements in residential and commercial structures, greening the County government fleet, tracking federal and state building codes, and identifying the sites most appropriate for locating community-scale wind power.

The bulk of the work done on initiating the 2020 Energy Strategy in 2009 was to clearly define new measures that could help the community make significant strides in energy reduction by 2020. Much of that work was done in conjunction with considering grant opportunities offered through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 and other funding sources.

Another effort of County Planning staff was to actively participate in and support the work of the Tompkins County Climate Protection Initiative, a cross-sector collaboration of local governments, businesses, non-profits, and institutions seeking to mobilize a countywide energy efficiency effort focused primarily on the retrofitting of buildings.

**Action: Develop a strategy to divert 75% of the community waste stream from landfills by 2015.**

and

**Action: Determine the feasibility of developing a regional consortium of sustainable biomass growers and processors to supply biomass consumers in the region.**

In the summer, the Department worked with community partners to prepare proposals for two EPA Showcase Communities Grants totaling \$500,000 that would expand the Solid Waste Division's ReBusiness Partners Program and jump-start utilizing local biomass to meet rural energy needs. Although not funded in 2009, these proposals provide work plans for advancing these initiatives.

**Action: Investigate the feasibility of developing a low-interest revolving loan fund to improve the payback period for energy efficiency investments made by homeowners, landlords, and businesses.**

In the fall, the Department prepared a proposal for \$2.2 million in funding through the U.S. Department of Energy's Energy Efficiency Conservation Block Grant competitive program to launch a Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) program to finance energy efficiency improvements in buildings. In addition to these efforts, throughout the course of the year staff reviewed many other grant opportunities and assisted other entities in the community in preparing proposals for funding energy efficiency improvements and programs.

**Action: Establish a green fleet policy for County government, including participating in car share and bike share programs for County government employees, and determining needs for amenities to facilitate alternative transportation use.**

In the spring, staff prepared a successful application for funds through the Department of Energy Alternative Fuel and Advanced Technology Vehicles Pilot Program administered through NYSERDA, in concert with Clean Communities of Central New York, to purchase three hybrid vehicles to help green the County's fleet. In October, the County Legislature formally adopted a Green Fleet Policy, mandating an annual 2% reduction in fleet emissions.



### Centers of Development

**Action: Work with municipalities to develop land use scenarios consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and with local land use plans and policies.**

*Route 96 Corridor Management Study*  
The Route 96 Corridor intermunicipal team (Town of Ulysses, Town of Ithaca, City of Ithaca, Tompkins County, Ithaca-Tompkins County Transportation Council (ITCTC), and Tompkins Consolidated Area Transit (TCAT)) executed a contract with Bergmann Associates and SRF Associates in the last days of 2007 to complete a one year study of the Route 96 corridor to mitigate the impacts of traffic associated with anticipated growth along the Route 96 corridor and to define a preferred development pattern for the

corridor that is consistent with the goals and vision for each of the involved communities and entities. In 2009, the participating partner municipalities and agencies considered resolutions regarding the Route 96 Corridor Management study goals, recommendations, and implementation actions. As of year's end, resolutions had been adopted by the towns of Ulysses and Ithaca, and the ITCTC, and were pending in the city of Ithaca and Tompkins County. The Route 96 Corridor Management Study Report 4: Intermunicipal Implementation Strategy was finalized, after resolutions were passed, marking the completion of this project. Intermunicipal partners will continue to meet at intervals to plan for the future of the corridor.

**Action: Work with municipalities to identify and map areas appropriate for infill development.**

Earlier work to identify vacant land with infrastructure along with corridor studies, completed for the Route 13 and Route 96 corridors, was utilized to initiate analysis of potential Development Focus Areas. The Planning Advisory Board recommended that a Development Focus Areas Strategy be developed working with local municipalities.



Northwest ARFA

## OTHER PLANNING DEPARTMENT ACTIVITIES



### Commenting on Marcellus Shale Drilling

In September, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) released the long-awaited draft Supplemental Generic Environmental Impact Statement (dSGEIS) on horizontal drilling and high-volume hydraulic fracturing. This is the technique that would be used to extract natural gas from the Marcellus Shale.

The Planning Department provided extensive comments on the dSGEIS and drew several major conclusions.

- The dSGEIS does not comply with the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA). It does not evaluate all the impacts of the proposed drilling nor does it meaningfully address the cumulative impacts of gas drilling operations.
- The dSGEIS is incomplete. It identifies potential environmental impacts but, in some cases, fails to recommend any mitigation measures to address those impacts and, in other cases, fails to require the identified mitigation measures.
- Mitigation measures should be required by regulation in order to maintain consistency in the application of mitigation measures.
- The dSGEIS is inadequate in addressing the impacts on water resources.
- The dSGEIS should establish thresholds for development of the Marcellus shale.
- The permitting process should more actively involve local governments.
- NYSDEC should have the resources required to enforce the required mitigation measures.
- The dSGEIS should have a sunset date. The technology surrounding natural gas drilling can change, providing the opportunity to require technology that has fewer impacts on the environment.

The Planning Department also provided staff support to the Legislature in the preparation of its comments on the dSGEIS.

As part of its review of the dSGEIS, the Planning Department attempted to quantify some of the potential impacts in Tompkins County and found

- A total of 512 well sites could be developed.
- Over 2,500 acres of land could be directly developed as well pads. This would double the total industrial land use in Tompkins County.
- Nearly 60 miles of access roads to the well pads could be built.
- Over 1,000 acres of forestland would be developed and the forested landscape would be further fragmented (over 150 miles of 'edge' would be created).
- Over 20 billion gallons of water would be used for hydraulic fracturing. Over a 30-year build-out scenario, this would be equivalent to 25% of all the water supplied by the County's three major public water supply systems.
- Nearly 5 million heavy truck trips would be generated. Over a 30-year build-out scenario, this would be the equivalent of a 27% increase in heavy truck trips on State highways in Tompkins County.
- Approximately 655 million tons of greenhouse gas emissions. This is the equivalent of 516 years of emissions at current levels from all other locally generated sources in Tompkins County.



*Sixmile Valley ARFA*



## Ludlowville Stormwater Control Project

In early 2008, the Tompkins County Planning Department developed a Request For Qualifications to select consultants to assist in developing the Ludlowville Stormwater Control Project to help to address concerns over repetitive flooding and property damage associated with stormwater in the Hamlet of Ludlowville. Barton & Loguidice, P.C. was the selected firm who conducted field work and analysis, held a public meeting, and completed Phase 1 (Project Feasibility Study) of the project, which established the basis for designed mitigation projects. Implementation of the preferred design was delayed through 2009 due to delayed reimbursement from New York State.

The project's remaining phases include:

- Phase 2: Design Implementation – During this phase, one specific project will be selected for detailed design work and preparations will be made at the identified project site.
- Phase 3: Project Construction – The selected project will be constructed in this phase over the course of two construction seasons.

In 2009, the Federal Emergency Management Agency identified their interest in supporting up to \$200,000 more of any mitigation measures that are not implemented as a part of the currently funded project.

Key contributors to the project continue to be the Town of Lansing Highway Department, the Tompkins County Highway Division and the Tompkins County Soil & Water Conservation District. The project was scheduled for completion by December 2010. An extension will most likely be requested in order to implement all proposed mitigation measures.



## Local Municipal Assistance

### *Trumansburg Comprehensive Plan*

The Trumansburg Comprehensive Plan was adopted on February 11, 2008 by the Village Trustees. As part of the resolution for adoption,

it was requested that an appendix to the Comprehensive Plan be completed to address the Auble Annexed Lands that were made part of the Village by resolution on February 1, 2008. The purpose of the appendix is to address the goals for the annexed land and develop a future land use map. The Appendix was adopted by the Village Trustees in July 2009.

### *Trumansburg Zoning Update*

The Planning Department has been assisting the Village of Trumansburg with revising its Zoning Ordinance to reflect the Village's updated Comprehensive Plan and to address newly-annexed property in the Village.

The draft ordinance includes many changes, large and small. The most significant of these are: distinguishing among various commercial areas in the Village, promoting affordable housing through an inclusionary zoning provision coupled with incentive zoning, and integrating the newly-annexed area of the Village into the zoning proposal.

Working with a Committee established by the Village throughout 2009, the Department drafted a new ordinance and a new Zoning Map that were presented at two public meetings in late 2009.



## Snowmobile Trail Grant Program Administration

New York State's Snowmobile Trail Grant Program is meant to encourage local snowmobile club stewardship and development of snowmobile trails in the state. Permissible uses of the funds include trail development and the maintenance of existing trails and trail facilities. The Tompkins County Planning Department has sponsored the application and administered the program on behalf of local snowmobile clubs since 1998. Fifteen new miles of trail were approved by the state in the towns of Groton and Dryden, as well as Village of Groton, for the 2009-2010 snowmobile season. The program was funded on behalf of five snowmobile clubs, maintaining 113 miles of trails for snowmobile use in Tompkins County.



## SPDES Permit

The Tompkins County Planning Department provides support to help the County meet the requirements of its State Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit for stormwater (as required by the Phase 2 stormwater regulations). In addition, Tompkins County helps coordinate stormwater management activities among the municipalities affected by the Phase 2 stormwater regulations to ensure a cohesive and balanced approach to stormwater management that spans municipal boundaries.

The 2009 Annual State Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (SPDES) permit was presented at a public meeting of the Water Resources Council in May 2009 and was subsequently filed with the NYS Department of Conservation in June 2009, in accordance with state requirements. This 2009 permit report follows the County's completion of its first five-year permit, which ended in 2008. The new 2009 permit emphasized municipal implementation and maintenance activities relating to stormwater discharge control.



## Homeownership Program

The Tompkins County Homeownership Program continued its 15th year of success and closed out the most recently awarded Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds.

A total of 22 families became new homeowners in 2009 with the assistance of the Tompkins County Homeownership Program. A total of

\$641,530.00 in down payment/closing cost assistance was provided.

The Homeownership Program will continue through 2010 using Program Income funds generated from previous Homeownership loans currently in repayment. All clients will continue to receive an energy audit as part of the closing process. Tompkins Community Action administers the energy audits, giving the homeowners a full report on feasible ways they can make improvements to their home to save on energy costs. Some clients will qualify for low interest loans and rebates if the recommended upgrades and repairs are undertaken.



## Hazard Mitigation Coordination

In order to adhere to the plan maintenance requirements of the *Tompkins County Multi-Jurisdictional All-Hazards Mitigation Plan* (approved by the Federal Emergency Management Agency in 2006) and to assist in implementing mitigation measures, the Hazard Mitigation Plan Implementation Committee was formed and initially met January 2008 to review and update the plan's action items. The committee is made up of representatives from every municipality involved in the plan. In 2009, the committee met in February to update action items and identify items to focus on in the plan's update.

Tompkins County's Hazard Mitigation Coordinator continues to be based out of the Tompkins County Planning Department. In addition to coordinating some of the aforementioned mitigation plan activities, the Coordinator also serves as the local conduit for Federal and State mitigation funding opportunities.



*North Lansing/  
West Groton ARFA*



## 239 Development Reviews

One hundred and sixty-two projects were reviewed under New York State General Municipal Law section 239 -l, -m, and -n. Referrals were received from all but one of the municipalities in the county. Projects included amendments to zoning ordinances, adoption of comprehensive plans, approval of site plans and subdivisions, issuances of special permits, and requests for use and area variances. Of these projects, nineteen were found to have potentially significant negative intercommunity or countywide impacts, and recommendations were made to modify the projects to mitigate those impacts.



Northeast ARFA



## Geographic Information

The Geographic Information Systems Analyst provides data analysis and maps for many of our department projects. In 2009, those projects included the Agricultural Resource Focus Areas, Finger Lakes Trail, Route 96 Corridor Study, stream buffer protection, Indicators of Success, development nodes, local municipal assistance, and maps related to the gas drilling issue that aided staff in preparing comments to NYS Department of Environmental Conservation on the draft Supplemental Generic Environmental Impact Statement on hydrofracturing.



## Advisory Board Administration

### ◆ *Planning Advisory Board*

The Planning Advisory Board provided review and comment for the following projects:

- Planning Department's Work Program,
- Prioritized projects for the Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan Five Year Review,
- Provided input on the early phases of Future Development Patterns: Nodal Development,
- Reviewed the results of the Tompkins County Renter Survey and discussed the combined analysis of student renters and the general population,
- Previewed maps and discussed the best ways to display the Development Focus Areas for municipal officials and the public,
- Learned about how an Energy Efficiency District could work in Tompkins County,
- As a follow-up to the Scenic Resources Inventory, which was completed in 2006, discussed concepts for protecting our scenic resources, and
- Previewed a model wind resources assessment analysis for use by municipalities where commercial scale operations are under consideration.

Two committees were formed in 2009:

- PAB retained an oversight committee to review project applications for the Rural Small Business Loan Program, but no applications were received in 2009, and
- Several members worked with Planning Department staff to develop a ten-year strategy for implementation of the Energy and Greenhouse Gas Emissions element of the Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan.

### ◆ *Environmental Management Council*

The Tompkins County EMC was created in 1971 by a resolution of the County Board of Representatives, and is one of the oldest EMCs in the state. The EMC acts as an advisory body to the County Legislature on matters affecting the preservation, development and use of the natural features of the County. The *EMC News*, meeting dates, agendas, minutes and annual reports are all posted on the EMC website:

<http://www.co.tompkins.ny.us/emc/>

In 2009, the EMC passed a resolution supporting efforts to reduce Bisphenol A in our environment. BPA is a chemical that acts like a hormone in our bodies, but is also used to make plastic bottles and line food cans, and a variety of other products. Many Tompkins County retailers have already voluntarily switched to products for children, including baby bottles and sippy cups, that do not contain BPA.

An ad hoc Gas Drilling committee was formed, and the members drafted a letter to New York State Department of Environmental Conservation on the draft Supplemental Generic Environmental Impact Statement on gas drilling (hydrofracturing). Committee members interacted with other community groups and shared concerns. Each group prioritized their concerns and provided separate comments to DEC. The letter is posted on the EMC website.

The Transportation Committee was formed to address new concerns plus issues of the former Air Quality Committee that remained following the adoption of the countywide ban on open burning of household waste. The Transportation Committee created the Transportation Initiative of the Year Award, which was given to Ithaca Car Share.

In mid-2009 Scott Doyle assumed the responsibilities of Coordinator for the EMC. Work with the EMC included working closely with the group to help support the efficient use of meeting and EMC member's time while also advancing the group's priority actions. October, November and December EMC meetings were devoted to analysis and discussion of goals of EMC through team building exercises; shaping agendas, committees and leadership structure to meet our goals; and establishing goals and committees for 2010.

#### ◆ *Water Resources Council*

The Tompkins County Water Resources Council (WRC) advises the Tompkins County Legislature on matters related to water resources management and planning, and is charged with identifying problems, proposing priorities, and promoting the coordination of activities in the management and protection of the County's water resources.

The WRC formed a Gas Drilling ad hoc Committee to review the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's draft Supplemental Generic Environmental Impact Statement on gas drilling (hydrofracturing). The committee prepared a letter requesting that the 30-day comment period be extended, submitted extensive comments on the dSGEIS, and provided testimony at the public hearing held at the State Theatre. The comment letter to DEC is available on the Planning Department website under Advisory Boards.

The WRC/Cornell Monitoring Plan Committee consisted of 13 WRC members and more than a score of other partners. In August, the committee kicked off a series of articles in the Ithaca Journal about water topics, and that series will carry over into 2010. The committee continues to hear presentations from researchers to broaden their perspective. Many researchers and experts have brought discussion to the committee on phosphorus levels, refinement of statistical approaches, lake circulation, and other aspects of the health of Cayuga Lake. The group has asked the US Environmental Protection Agency for some preliminary guidance based on the Lake Source Cooling and Ithaca Area Wastewater Treatment Facility monitoring and analysis approaches, as well as how the local partnership can begin to define acceptable data within the framework of the Monitoring Plan.

A committee worked on updates of the Water Quality Strategy. The WQS describes the importance of water resources in Tompkins County, identifies the key partners working on water resources in the County, and includes a work program. The WQS can be used by local, State, and Federal government agencies to help understand and determine water resources management priorities. Revisions to the WQS were drafted by the committee, discussed in full council meetings, and subjected to a public comment period. The updated WQS was adopted by unanimous vote of the WRC at the April meeting.

## **EGGE Wins APA Award**

After the Tompkins County Legislature amended the County Comprehensive Plan in late 2008 to address the issue of energy and greenhouse gas emissions, the Energy and Greenhouse Gas Emissions element was selected by the New York Upstate Chapter of the American Planning Association to receive its 2009 Planning Excellence Award for Innovation in Sustainability. It was selected for its effectiveness in clearly articulating the goals of reducing energy demand, increasing efficiency, transitioning to renewables, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions within the context of a comprehensive plan.

### **Staff—2009**

Katie Borgella, AICP, Principal Planner

Scott Doyle, AICP, Senior Planner

Dariele Drake, Principal Account Clerk/Typist

Sharon Heller, Geographic information System Analyst

Joan Jurkowich, AICP, Deputy Commissioner

Jeanne Leccese, Planner

Edward C. Marx, AICP, Commissioner of Planning and Public Works

Leslie Schill, Senior Planner

Kathy Wilsea, Secretary

# Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan

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## Foreword

The Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan contains Principles, Policies and Actions that can help lead our community to a bright future. The Plan is based on the overarching principle that we must work together, between different levels of government and among public and private sectors, if we are to be successful as a community. Working together within the framework of this plan, we can envision the Tompkins County of twenty years from now as a place where:

- An improved housing supply serves a modest increase in population. A greater diversity and variety of housing options helps meet the needs of a changing population and the increase in supply, along with efforts to serve the needs of special target populations, helps support greater affordability.
- Traffic congestion is mitigated by locating new housing closer to jobs and services. An enhanced public transit system, as well as pedestrian paths and bikeways, link population nodes and employment centers, making at least one viable alternative to the private automobile convenient to a majority of commuters. Transportation infrastructure and service improvements to our arterial road network and air service strengthen Tompkins County's economic links to the region, the nation, and the world.
- The local economy remains strong with increased opportunity for all. Community economic development partners provide support for entrepreneurs, particularly in emerging sectors of the economy, and provide education and training to allow all residents to find meaningful employment at a fair wage. Our institutions of higher education remain preeminent and underpin our economic and community vitality. Tompkins County continues to emerge as a regional cultural center, and tourism flourishes as Ithaca and Tompkins County become recognized as the most exciting gateway to the Finger Lakes region.
- Rural communities are thriving, in large part due to sustainable use of agricultural and forest resources. There is increased diversity in the agriculture sector, often serving local and regional markets, and an emerging clean energy component based on renewable resources. Forest lands are conserved and managed to provide multiple benefits to water resources, sustainable yields of forest products, wildlife habitat, and reduction of greenhouse gases.
- A clean Cayuga Lake is the centerpiece of the community, and is fed by clear-flowing, green-belted streams. Public access to the lake is enhanced with new and improved parks, and a vibrant urban waterfront has developed in the City of Ithaca. Plentiful clean surface and ground water provides for domestic, commercial, industrial, and recreational uses. Water is recognized as an important community asset in a world where an abundant supply of clean water is an increasingly scarce commodity.

- The landscape of the county looks much the same as it is today but public access to our natural wonders has been improved. Protected forests and natural areas increase from 13 percent to about 20 percent of the land, and about one-third of the county is active farmland. Within this landscape, outstanding natural features, including gorges, stream corridors, lakeshores, forested hillsides, wetlands, and wildlife habitats are protected, defining the natural character of the community, maintaining its scenic beauty, and sustaining its biological diversity.
- Livable neighborhoods, vibrant commercial districts, and thriving employment centers have become more integrated and are increasingly linked by pedestrian paths and bikeways, supporting a more convenient, healthy, and less stressful way of life. A trail system links all four of the county's state parks. A more physically active and socially healthy community has developed. Efforts to accommodate growth in existing communities have allowed historic elements of the built environment to be used in ways that maintain their integrity and functionality.
- Growth in population is concentrated around existing population centers in accordance with local comprehensive plans. Most new development is built at increased density and designed to include attractive buildings, landscaping, and streetscapes that promote neighborly interaction and greatly enhance the quality of life. In accordance with local community plans, "new villages" are developing in places like South Lansing, Danby, and Jacksonville to complement modest growth in and around existing villages, hamlets, and the City of Ithaca.
- Finally, improved regional planning and increased intermunicipal cooperation results in greater fiscal efficiency. Combined with a strong local economy, this reduces and stabilizes the impact of the cost of public services on local homeowners, small businesses and major employers. Local residents view county, town, city, and village governments as a system that provides services in the most efficient manner possible while enhancing participatory democracy at the local government and neighborhood level.

It is within our reach to become this place, a place that reflects our community's values, builds on our many assets, and improves the quality of life for all our people. The Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan can serve as a guiding document to help define the steps we need to take to reach this future, monitor progress as we go, and provide a framework within which to adjust strategies along the way.

Edward C. Marx, AICP  
 Commissioner of Planning  
 December 2004