

TOMPKINS COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT 2008 ANNUAL REPORT

From the Commissioner

As can be seen by reading through this report, 2008 was a year of significant progress across a wide range of issues, including: developing stream corridor protection strategies, forest stewardship, farmland protection, natural area conservation, Cayuga Lake water quality monitoring, and assisting local municipalities with planning and zoning updates.

Three efforts from 2008 stand out, however, as landmark planning processes that will have long-term impact in Tompkins County.

First, the Energy and Greenhouse Gas Emissions element was adopted by the County Legislature as an amendment to the County Comprehensive Plan. This process and the resulting element defined in local terms the issue that has attained worldwide attention as the transcendent issue of our time. The plan element is the first decisive step in developing a local road map to a sustainable energy future for the Tompkins County community. The element calls for a strategy of reducing energy demand, using energy more efficiently, transitioning to renewable energy sources and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. It sets a long-range goal of reducing emissions 80% by 2050, the minimum reduction required to stave off the most devastating effects of climate change. In order to make an immediate impact the element sets a near term goal, and directs that a five year strategy be developed, to reduce emissions 10% by 2015.

Second, 2008 brought conceptual agreement among three funding partners to establish a local Housing Fund to support a Community Housing Trust Program and Community Housing Affordability Program. Although detailed language was still being worked out, at year's end, this local initiative among Tompkins County, the City of Ithaca and Cornell University was well on its way to implementation. These programs will be funded through the Community Housing Fund, at the level of \$400,000 per year, in order to assist in the planning of affordable housing and underwrite land costs to make new construction affordable. The need to overcome these two barriers was identified in the Tompkins County Affordable Housing Needs Assessment (2006) and Housing Strategy (2007).

Third, the Route 96 Corridor study is notable as a multi-jurisdictional planning effort to evaluate nodal development as a strategy for accommodating anticipated development while mitigating the transportation and land use impacts. The towns of Ulysses and Ithaca, the City of Ithaca, Tompkins County and the Ithaca-Tompkins County Transportation Council jointly funded the study of the State highway corridor that spans the three local jurisdictions. Tompkins County Area Transit and the New York State Department of Transportation also participated in the study. The results are intended to provide input into current local comprehensive planning processes, future zoning revisions, and infrastructure development in the Route 96 corridor.

On these three major issues of proactively addressing our energy future, providing affordable housing in our community, and planning for sustainable growth, important progress was made in 2008.

Edward C. Marx, AICP

Commissioner of Planning and Public Works

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Photos in this Annual Report are some of the 593 scenic views inventoried by our consultant in the course of studying Tompkins County for the Scenic Resources Inventory. Learn about the selection process for the most picturesque views and see the final Inventory in the Natural Features section of our website: www.tompkins-co.org/planning/

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2008 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. As the Tompkins County Planning Department, we also want to measure our success in achieving our specific goals and objectives for the year. Our goals and objectives do not reflect every activity undertaken by the department in 2008. Many of those activities, as well as more details on many of the projects and programs identified below, are described later in the report. We established two broad goals for 2008:

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, measures of success, and progress made in 2008 are outlined below.

Goal 1, Objective 1: 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: During 2008, a draft Memorandum of Understanding and Notice of Funding Availability were developed to establish a Community Housing Fund that would support the Housing Trust and Affordability Fund. The project is a joint effort of Tompkins County, the City of Ithaca, and Cornell University and will provide funding for \$400,000 in grants and loans annually over six years. Cornell University also continued work on an Employer Assisted Housing Program for University Staff.

Goal 1, Objective 2: Manage County-owned forest lands in a sustainable manner by implementing the recommendations of the *Tompkins County Forest Management Plan*.

Measure of Success: County Forest receives Forest Stewardship Council certification.

End of Year Status: All of the steps necessary to receive Forest Stewardship Council certification were completed in November 2008. At year's end we were awaiting formal certification.

Goal 1, Objective 3: Initiate a new component of the County Comprehensive Plan to address energy and greenhouse gas emissions.

Measure of Success: Research, scoping, and issue identification phases of the Energy plan are completed.

End of Year Status: On December 16, 2008, the Tompkins County Legislature approved an amendment to the County Comprehensive Plan to address the issue of energy and greenhouse gas emissions. The amendment sets in motion a multi-faceted plan for the Tompkins County community to reduce energy demand, improve energy efficiency, make the transition to renewable sources of energy, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Its goal is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the county by at least 2 percent of the 2008 level for each of the next 40 years, achieving at least an 80 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by the year 2050.

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 initiated.

End of Year Status: In 2008, profiles were developed for each of the six Agricultural Resource Focus Areas. Each profile provides detailed information about the characteristics of the area.

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 four Purchase of Development Rights grants awarded in 2006 and 2007. 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: 1) The annual monitoring for the Howser farm was completed, including the bi-annual walk of the entire property boundary. 2) Work continued in developing the conservation easements for the Bensvue farm in Lansing and the Lew-Lin and Jerry Dell farms in Dryden. 3) An application was submitted for the Prince farm in



Bailor Road, Town of Caroline

Dryden. The Town of Dryden and Town of Ithaca also submitted applications for four additional farms. 4) Work with adjoining counties was deferred due to the heavy workload associated with current and pending applications.

Goal 1, Objective 6: Implement project(s) funded in part by the Capital Reserve Fund for Natural, Scenic and Recreational Resource Protection.

Measure of Success: At least one new project is successfully implemented in 2008.

End of Year Status: Tompkins County contributed \$10,000 to secure the Hanson property, part of the Lick Brook Corridor Initiative, in collaboration with Finger Lakes Land Trust. The seven-acre property provides buffer to both Lick Brook and the Finger Lakes Trail, enhancing the protection and scenic quality of this important resource area.

Goal 1, Objective 7: Implement the re-instituted Flood Hazard Mitigation Program and initiate the County Stream Buffer protection program.

Measure of Success: Flood mitigation projects initiated in 2007 are substantially complete and stream buffer demonstration projects are underway to implement tools that can be used to protect stream buffers in Tompkins County.

End of Year Status: Several projects initiated in 2007 were substantially completed, including streambank restoration along Sixmile Creek in Brooktondale and corridor revegetation along Virgil Creek at sites in the Town and Village of Dryden. An 8.5-acre tax foreclosure property on Breed Road along Locke Creek was sold at auction with a conservation easement to assure full protection of the stream buffer.

Goal 1, Objective 8: Facilitate and support local municipal efforts to incorporate nodal development concepts into local plans and regulations.

Measure of Success: Working with the City of Ithaca, towns of Ithaca and Ulysses and the Ithaca-Tompkins County Transportation Council,

substantially complete the Route 96 Corridor Management Study.

End of Year Status: Technical Reports 1, 2 and 3 were completed and the Technical Review Committee representing the study partners developed an outline for Technical Report 4 addressing implementation.

Goal 1, Objective 9: Research model provisions and best practices in New York State for encouraging affordable housing, agricultural and forest land preservation, stormwater management, natural feature protection, and nodal development.

Measure of Success: Project Assistants are hired and complete research targeted to the identified topics.

End of Year Status: Draft model provisions addressing incentive and inclusionary zoning and stream corridor buffers were developed in 2008.

Goal 2, Objective 1: Implement cooperative efforts with other agencies in housing, economic development, purchase of development rights and hazard mitigation programs.

Measure of Success: Discussions with partner agencies initiated in 2007 progress to concrete implementation actions in 2008.

End of Year Status: The Economic Development Revolving Loan Fund was transferred to Tompkins County Area Development. This was the culmination of a program review concluding that program customers would be best served by a one-stop-shop for economic development services and financing at TCAD.

Goal 2, Objective 2: 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: In January, 2008, the Homeownership Annual Performance Report (APR) and RPM Ecosystems Economic Development APR were submitted to New York State. Both reports were on time and no additional information was requested. Our annual Post Closeout Annual Performance Assessment Report (PAR) for HUD Program Income (Homeownership and Economic Development) was submitted to HUD in November, covering the fiscal year from October 1, 2007 to September 31, 2008. In January, 2008, we received a Letter of Satisfaction for the report submitted for the prior fiscal year. No additional information was requested.

The Tompkins County Planning Department provides support to help the County meet the requirements of its State Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (SPDES) permit for stormwater, as required by the Phase 2 stormwater regulations. The 2008 SPDES permit report was presented at a public hearing at the Water Resources Council meeting held on May 19, 2008 and was subsequently filed with the NYS Department of Conservation prior to the June 1, 2008 deadline. This report marked the completion of the County's first five-year permit period.

Goal 2, Objective 3: Maintain support for Environmental Management Council, Water Resources Board and Planning Advisory Board, and work to transition Legislature's Planning, Development and Environmental Quality Committee support activities to the Clerk of the Legislature and/or County Administration.

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

End of Year Status: Agendas, minutes and reports for the EMC, WRC and PAB were provided in a timely manner. Agendas continued to be prepared for the Planning, Development and Environmental Quality Committee.

FOURTH ANNUAL REPORT ON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

The Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan was adopted by the County Legislature on December 21, 2004. The plan provides:

The Planning Commissioner will report annually to the County Legislature on progress in implementing the Plan. This will include identification of action items that have been initiated and the results of those actions. The Commissioner's report will include measures of success by which to monitor the plan's progress and any barriers to implementation that have been encountered. The appropriate measurement tools will be developed during the implementation process.

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)

Tompkins County, the City of Ithaca and Cornell University developed a draft Memorandum of Understanding with regard to the Community Housing Affordability Program and the Community Housing Trust Program. A Notice of Funding Availability has been drafted as well. Approval by the three entities to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding is anticipated to occur in early 2009. 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.

Funds will be awarded under a competitive application process in the following categories:

The **Community Housing Affordability Program** is a locally-funded and -administered program that assists with the pre-development costs associated

with residential and mixed-use real estate development projects. Eligible uses of the funding include the cost of options or purchase of land (with option for permanent ownership by the Community Housing Trust), environmental assessment, site design, building design, approvals, permits, financing and legal costs, and other necessary and reasonable pre-development expenses. Funds will be provided as a 0% interest loan that will be repaid from construction or permanent financing for the project. Eligible borrowers include both for-profit and non-profit developers. Funds may be available for preliminary feasibility and advanced feasibility. The level of information required for applications under preliminary feasibility would be expected to be less detailed than for advanced feasibility.

The **Community Housing Trust Program** is designed to ensure that newly constructed or adaptively rehabilitated housing units remain affordable to future generations of buyers. Permanent affordability is retained by separating the ownership of the land from the ownership of the housing unit, whereby only the housing unit is purchased by the homebuyer, and by restricting the amount of equity that a homeowner can take from the housing unit upon sale. Eligible uses of the funding include the cost of land, provided that the housing unit remains permanently affordable through the Community Housing Trust or another acceptable mechanism. Those applying to the Tompkins County Housing Trust Program are encouraged to partner with Ithaca Neighborhood Housing Services (INHS) as the preferred agency that serves as a housing trust. Eligible applicants include both for-profit and non-profit developers.



Cascadilla Creek Trail, City of Ithaca

Tompkins County Renter Survey

The Tompkins County Renter Survey was completed by Survey Research Institute (SRI) in spring 2008. Two renter populations were identified and surveyed: the student population and the general renter population. The student population was surveyed via a web-based questionnaire and the general renter population was surveyed via the phone. A random sample was drawn by Genesys Sampling Systems targeting the general renter population in Tompkins County. A total of 380 respondents completed the survey, a statistically significant sample size. For the student population, a sample of student email addresses was provided by each participating institution: Cornell University, Ithaca College, and Tompkins-Cortland Community College. Three hundred and fifty six (356) people completed the survey. For both surveyed populations, questions were asked regarding demographic information, factors related to their current living situation, housing unit information and criteria for potential homeownership. A complete analysis of data will be available in 2009.

Action: 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.

Retirement Housing Preference Survey

The Retirement Housing Preference Survey will highlight future housing needs of those entering

retirement. The data from the survey can be used to advocate for changes that would enhance the opportunities for the development of new housing, including, for example, zoning changes to allow more accessory housing units or mixed-use development.

The first stage of the Retirement Housing Preference Survey was completed in spring 2008 in partnership with students from Cornell University CIPA program (Cornell Institute for Public Affairs). Students researched factors influencing the housing needs and preferences of individuals entering retirement and the forms of survey methods that would best assess these needs and preferences. Using this research, it was determined that Tompkins County should undertake a telephone survey. A 27-question survey was developed, which contains four sections aimed at capturing the key features of future housing needs and preferences. The four subject areas are as follows: Background Information, Current Living Situation, Future Needs and Preferences, and Affordability. The survey is designed to best obtain information about the types of new housing that might be developed in Tompkins County that would be attractive to those entering retirement.

The second stage will occur during fall 2009, during which the survey will be implemented and data analysis will be completed.

JOBS AND BUSINESS

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

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

The Revolving Loan Fund was successfully transferred to Tompkins County Area Development (TCAD) in May 2008. The County will grant up to \$500,000 to TCAD over the next two years for the purpose of funding economic development loans to assist businesses that will provide economic benefits to Tompkins County and its residents. The County did not receive any requests for funding this year from TCAD.

RURAL RESOURCES

Action: Determine the feasibility of a rural microenterprise program, including adding a component to the County's Economic Development Revolving Loan Fund.

Rural Small Business Loan Program

The Rural Small Business Loan Program completed one loan this year: Thomas Hoebbel Photography. Thomas Hoebbel Photography is a full service commercial photography studio located in the Town of Caroline. Established in 1990, the company has built a small but successful business and has shown the ability to survive in an industry that has seen technological changes evolving from film to digital.

The loan request was for the purchase of equipment, software, marketing and other operating capital. Based upon the projected success of this expansion, the owner will be not only able to continue to keep himself in business, but will potentially be able to expand his employment base in the future to at least one part time assistant.

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.



Irish Hill Rd., Town of Newfield

New York State's Farmland Protection Implementation Grants, continued to grow in 2008. Tompkins County is now actively engaged in the crafting and monitoring of agricultural conservation easements on four farms encompassing 2,240 acres of productive farm and forest land. The participating farms are the Howser and Benvue 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 conservation easements in perpetuity.

After all of the current farm easements are completed, 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.

Application and Promotion of PDR

The Tompkins County Planning Department continued to support the use of the state-funded Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program and as such coordinated and held a PDR information session for all farmland owners and renters countywide. The meeting was held February 26th at Cornell Cooperative Extension and included presentations from County Planning, New York Agricultural Land Trust and a local farm appraiser. A separate presentation was held at Groton Agricultural Days in March 2008. PDR was additionally promoted as a part of Farm City Day in August.

In September, the Planning Department submitted an application on behalf of Cheryl Prince for her 324-acre former dairy farm in Dryden. The Jerry Dell Farm, whose organic dairy was selected for PDR funding in 2007, and has utilized the high quality soils to grow a variety of organic grains, currently rents this farm.



Enfield Creek, Town of Enfield

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. 2008 marked a year in which the full property boundary was walked. The monitoring visit found no substantial problems.

Action: Develop or identify model performance standards to preserve agriculture and forest land.

Sustainable Forestry

After the adoption of the Tompkins County Forest Management Plan in 2007, staff and Bevan Forestry, the consulting forester, completed the steps necessary for the County-owned forest lands to receive Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) Certification in November 2008. The FSC is an international, not-for-profit organization that promotes stewardship of the world's forests by overseeing a respected system of internationally recognized standards for responsible forest management. The FSC has a logo and product label that helps consumers worldwide recognize organizations and products that support responsible forest management. Following FSC guidelines helps ensure that all aspects of sustainability and long-term income generation for the forests will be achieved. Tompkins County intends to offer its FSC Certified Management Plan as a model for other forest owners in Tompkins County who are looking to obtain long-term income generation through sustainable harvesting practices.

WATER RESOURCES

Action: Continue to conduct aquifer studies.

In 2008, the aquifer study program made great strides in studying the Upper Buttermilk Creek Aquifer located in the Town of Danby. Funded jointly by Tompkins County, the Town of Danby, and the USGS (United States Geological Survey), the study will provide information on the extent and thickness of the aquifer, water levels and direction of groundwater flow, and general water quality of the aquifer. The USGS inventoried wells and well pumping data in the aquifer and oversaw the drilling of two new wells to better understand the aquifer. A draft of the aquifer study is expected in late 2009.

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

The Flood Hazard Mitigation Program Technical Advisory Committee convened in January 2008 to visit and evaluate projects for the 2008 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 vegetation projects in both the Town and Village of Dryden were selected for implementation. These projects joined several other projects from 2007 in development. 2008 work included project activity in five different jurisdictions, resulted in the planting of over 450 trees and the stabilization of over 3,000 feet of stream bank.

Actions: Define stream corridor buffers for the major tributaries to Cayuga Lake and encourage use of appropriate measures to preserve the designated stream buffers, and

Action: Develop or identify model stream buffer ordinances.

Stream Corridor Management Program

The Tompkins County Planning Department received New York State Department of Environ-

mental 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, which is being matched over three years by funding from the County's Flood Hazard Mitigation Program.

This project seeks to develop, implement and evaluate tools that help establish stream corridor protections throughout the County. The objective is to develop an ongoing program that will enhance the County's water quality protection, ecosystem maintenance, educational opportunities, 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, conservation easement language that includes stream buffer protections and model stream buffer regulations.
- The next, most substantial portion of the project will be 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 2008 included:

- Research and drafting of a model stream buffer ordinance.
- Analysis of options for protecting environmentally sensitive lands at the headwaters of Locke Creek on an 8.5-acre Breed Road foreclosure property. Ultimately arrived at plan to survey a development area on the parcel (approximately 1.5 acres) and develop conservation easement language that would pertain to the remainder of the land (approximately 7 acres). This property was sold at auction to Habitat for Humanity. Tompkins County will hold the conservation easement to this property.
- The development of a Riparian Protection Agreement for use in the County's Flood Hazard Mitigation Program. This agreement requires that private property owners protect



Jennings Pond Portion of Buttermilk Falls State Park , Town of Danby

streamside property improvements that the County has invested in.

A number of projects were implemented to advance the development of stream buffers, including the vegetation of banks, the reduction of erosion, and the advancement of flood protections.

Action: Prepare a Cayuga Lake water quality and quantity monitoring plan.

Cayuga Lake Monitoring Plan

The Water Resources Council prepared a Monitoring Plan for the Southern Basin of Cayuga Lake. The Plan was developed in partnership with Cornell University and relies on existing monitoring efforts by the Ithaca Area Wastewater Treatment Plant, Community Science Institute, Cornell University, and the City of Ithaca.

The Monitoring Plan also identified several areas for additional efforts:

- increased understanding of lake circulation patterns to build knowledge of how the lake functions and the transport and fate of point source and non-point sources outfalls;
- better understanding of the biological health of the lake by looking at the lake's food web; and
- improved monitoring of streams that feed into the southern basin of Cayuga Lake (Cayuga Inlet, Sixmile Creek, Cascadilla Creek, and Fall Creek), as they are the avenue of the majority of inputs to the lake.

The preparation of the Monitoring Plan was paralleled by public outreach efforts about the Plan and about the results of existing monitoring efforts.

NATURAL FEATURES

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.

NYS Region 7 Open Space Committee

The New York State Open Space Conservation Plan, first adopted in 1992, is updated every three years with the assistance and recommendations from nine Regional Advisory Committees. Tompkins County Planning staff serves on the Region 7 Advisory Committee and actively participates in formulating policy recommendations and identifying open space resources that are exceptionally important in our area. In the spring of 2008, the Committee convened several times to work on the draft 2009 Plan. The Plan helps to coordinate and focus efforts to protect the key ecological, wildlife, recreational, scenic, and historical resources in the State.

New Region 7 recommendations in the draft 2009 Plan include urging the state to develop mechanisms to allow all of the land protection partners opportunities to access fast, accountable, and certain funds for land acquisition identified as priori-



Sixmile Creek, Town of Ithaca

ties in the Plan; encouraging state agencies to clarify priorities and creatively identify models and mechanisms to facilitate critical shoreline protection; and requesting environmental and tourism agencies to work together to define and create a network of “water trails” consisting of strategically spaced publicly accessible shoreline parcels to allow public access to the waterfront and its amenities.

Actions: Develop and disseminate educational information tailored to each Natural Features Focus Area and each Agricultural Resources Focus Area, and 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 lands 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.

The Plan is scheduled for outreach, further development and completion in 2009.

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 convened on May 1st and November 19th of 2008.

Finger Lakes Trail Corridor Protection and Enhancement Plan

In 2008, the initial Finger Lakes Trail inventory was completed and documented in the Trail Assessment Report by the Finger Lakes Land Trust and hired consultants. The Trail Assessment Report characterizes the 78 miles of trail in the study area along with associated natural resources; presents relevant data from local municipalities, non-profit partners, and public conservation agencies; and discusses initial outreach to stakeholders – municipal officials and boards as well as landowners in identified “at risk” areas.

Additionally, a landowner survey was developed and distributed to 68 private landowners along the trail to determine their satisfaction and/or concerns with hosting the Finger Lakes Trail, future plans for participating as trail host and interest in potential long-term options.

A Draft Trail Corridor Analysis Report was also completed in 2008. This report outlines the risks facing the trail corridor and opportunities for resource protection. Four “at risk” areas of the trail are studied in detail in this report as well as options for retaining important recreational and natural resources and relocating the trail in difficult or disappearing segments. Public outreach to local municipalities, landowners, and stakeholders through direct contact and four public workshops was critical to this report.

The Finger Lakes Trail Corridor Protection and Enhancement Plan is slated for completion in Spring 2009.



Cornell Plantations, Town of Ithaca

ENERGY AND GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

On December 16, 2008, the Tompkins County Legislature approved an amendment to the County Comprehensive Plan to address the issue of energy and greenhouse gas emissions. The amendment sets in motion a multi-faceted plan for the Tompkins County community to reduce energy demand, improve energy efficiency, make the transition to renewable sources of energy and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Its goal is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the county by at least 2 percent of the 2008 level for each of the next 40 years, achieving at least an 80 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by the year 2050.

The Energy and Greenhouse Gas Emissions Element planning process was initiated in February 2008 and included the input of a Steering Committee appointed by the Planning Advisory Board; technical expertise provided through a series of six focus groups held in Spring 2008; multiple meetings with the Planning Advisory Board, Environmental Management Council, and the Planning, Development and Environmental Quality Committee of the County Legislature; as well as broad public outreach during the summer and fall of 2008 that directly engaged approximately 400 people.

A few of the highlights of the Plan’s action strategy that will be engaging County staff and community members in the coming years are to: work with local municipalities, school districts, businesses and others in the community to develop a five-year strategy to reduce community greenhouse gas emissions by at least 10% of 2008 emissions levels; 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; and promote green business development and create green job training opportunities for workers, high-school students, and college students. To see the element and all 17 action items, please visit www.tompkins-co.org/planning/



Main Street, Trumansburg

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)) signed a contract with Bergmann Associates and SRF Associates at the end of 2007 to complete a one-year study of the Route 96 corridor. The purpose of the study is 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 2008, Technical Reports #1-3 were developed and shared with the community. Report #1 presents the existing conditions on the Route 96 Corridor, including traffic conditions, physical characteristics of the road and surrounding land, and zoning and land uses. Technical Report #2 provides the transportation analysis portion of the study as three components: traffic projections, traffic impact analysis, and opportunities and constraints analysis. Technical Report #3 offers a

series of recommendations for transportation infrastructure, land use, and quality of life changes/improvements that are based both on study analysis and resident and stakeholder input.

At year's end, draft Technical Report #4 was under development by the intermunicipal team. It will include regulatory options and improvement projects to implement the study recommendations. Ultimately, the intermunicipal implementation strategy will serve as a planning tool for municipal comprehensive planning efforts and agency long-range planning.

The final Technical Report #4 is anticipated to be complete in Spring 2009, when it will be circulated to municipal and agency officials for resolutions of support for the goals, recommendations, and implementation actions identified.

EFFICIENT USE OF PUBLIC FUNDS

Action: *Determine the location of future County Health Department facility and the future use of the Biggs B Building.*

The County Legislature authorized acquisition and approved funding for the renovation of 55 Brown Road as the new County Health Department facility. Design development and construction design were completed, deconstruction was bid and awarded with work commencing in the fall, and the construction bid was released.

The County Planning Advisory Board provided recommendations to the Legislature regarding a process for disposing of the Biggs B building and associated property.

Action: *Implement the Countywide Public Safety Communications System project.*

The Countywide Public Safety Communication System was officially completed in October with a formal ribbon cutting at the Ithaca College Tower site.

OTHER PLANNING DEPARTMENT ACTIVITIES

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 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 fieldwork and analysis, held a public meeting, and completed Phase 1 of the project (Project Feasibility Study). This established the basis for a designed mitigation project in 2009.

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.

Key contributors continue to be the Town of Lansing Highway Department, the Tompkins County Highway Division and the Tompkins County Soil & Water Conservation District. This project is scheduled for completion by December 2010.

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.

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. No new mileage was funded by the state in the 2008-2009 snowmobile season, so the program size remained the same. The program was funded on behalf of five snowmobile clubs, maintaining 91 miles of trails for snowmobile use in Tompkins County.

LOCAL MUNICIPAL ASSISTANCE

Village of Trumansburg
The Trumansburg Comprehensive Plan was adopted on February 11, 2008 by the Village Trustees. The Comprehensive Plan, developed pursuant to a technical assistance contract with the Planning Department, addresses the Trumansburg Twenty Year Vision and the six Village Elements: Community, Housing, Economic Development, Environment, Recreation, and Land Use. The Comprehensive Plan lays the groundwork for updating the Village Zoning Ordinance. The Planning Department entered into a technical assistance agreement with the Village and began work on the zoning update during the summer.

Town of Caroline
Staff assisted the Town of Caroline Planning Board in grappling with how to achieve the vision laid out in the Town Comprehensive Plan while respecting Town residents' concerns about personal freedom and property rights. Staff prepared handouts for the public describing the regulatory and non-regulatory options allowable under New York State law to meet those goals, and detailing existing common regulations that affect land de-

velopment in the Town, including those of the Town, County, State, and Federal governments. Ultimately, the Town decided to table the matter for future discussion; however, several well-attended meetings in the spring of 2008 generated good public dialogue on the topic.

LAND POLICY ADMINISTRATION

The Planning Department assists the County in managing its lands by maintaining a current inventory of all County landholdings and identifying surplus properties that should be sold or transferred to another entity. The Department also evaluates all properties that are subject to foreclosure each year and identifies properties that could serve a higher public good if protected in some way, or that pose liability issues to the County. By working with State agencies and other land protection organizations, the Planning Department evaluates each situation and recommends a course of action to the Legislature. Since the County land policy was first adopted in 1995, the Department has facilitated the sale and protection of 177 acres of important natural areas to groups including the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, Finger Lakes Land Trust, and Cornell Natural Areas Program.

In March 2008 Planning, Assessment and Finance Department staff visited 13 tax parcels subject to foreclosure for non-payment of taxes. Each parcel was evaluated for potential liability issues and natural or cultural resources of significance, and each occupied residence was visited to personally communicate the foreclosure situation to the people living there.

In May 2008 the County Legislature authorized holding a stream buffer easement on the Breed Road Parcel for purposes of stream buffer protection and water quality enhancement. The parcel was sold to Habitat for Humanity of Tompkins and Cortland Counties at the 2008 County Foreclosure Auction for the amount of \$8,000. Also in 2008, the County Legislature's Government Operations Committee decided to withdraw from auction a parcel on Fall Creek Road to evaluate protection options. The parcel contains many significant features, including Unique Natural Area "North Malloville", Fall Creek, a NYS Freshwater Wetland,

location within The Fens Natural Features Focus Area and an Agricultural Resource Focus Area, and an abandoned railroad bed (the proposed Lime Hollow trail) runs adjacent to the west of the parcel. After various negotiations, The Nature Conservancy has determined that it is interested in acquiring the Fall Creek Road parcel as an addition to its adjacent O.D. von Engeln Preserve at Malloryville. The transaction for the parcel is expected to be completed by summer 2009.

On September 6, 2005 the Legislature authorized the County Administrator to execute the deed and closing paperwork to sell three parcels of land to State Parks for strategic additions to Buttermilk Falls State Park in the Town of Danby. In 2006, the parcels were illegally logged, and in 2007, State Parks attorneys discovered problems with the title on one of the two parcels on West King Road. The Planning Department worked with the County Attorney's Office to remedy the situation during 2008. The transaction for the sale of both parcels was completed in September 2008.

HOMEOWNERSHIP PROGRAM

The Tompkins County Homeownership Program continued its fourteenth year of success with the use of its recently awarded Community Development Block Grant (CDBG).

The most recent CDBG grant benefited the lowest income clients with a diminishing lien rather than a loan, along with all clients benefiting from a home energy audit. With the diminishing lien, several clients were able to purchase higher quality, more energy-efficient homes that otherwise would not have been within their price range.

A total of 21 families became new homeowners in 2008 with the assistance of the Tompkins County Homeownership Program. A total of \$614,303 in assistance was provided.

All clients 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.

DEVELOPMENT REVIEWS

One hundred and fifty-six 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, 21 were found to have potentially significant negative intercommunity or county-wide impacts, and recommendations were made to modify the projects to mitigate those impacts.



Turkey Hill Road, Town of Dryden



Restaurant Row, Aurora Street, City of Ithaca



Main Street, Newfield

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 (FEMA) in 2006) and to assist in implementing mitigation measures, the Hazard Mitigation Plan Implementation Committee was formed and met January 30, 2008 to review and update the plan's action items. The committee is made up of representatives from every municipality involved in the plan.

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.

GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Many Planning Department projects require data analysis and maps from the Geographic Information Systems Analyst, including the rerouting of the Finger Lakes Trail, updating zoning maps, analysis and protection of fertile farmlands as well as assessing the progress the County is making in its planning goals (Indicators of Success). Agricultural District 2 was updated and the maps for each of the townships that include this district were created and submitted to New York State Department of Ag and Markets. Many maps were prepared for use at public meetings, such as the Route 96 Corridor Management Plan.

Revisions to the Land Use and Land Cover Map, based on 2007 data, were nearly completed. A project assistant was hired to do the quality control and assist in the process of making the final updates. Estimated date of completion is April 2009.

ADVISORY BOARD ADMINISTRATION

Planning Advisory Board

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

- Planning Department's Work Program,
- Proposed additions to County agricultural districts,
- Proposal for expenditure from the Capital Reserve Fund for Natural, Scenic and Recreational Resource Protection, and
- Draft phases of the Community Housing Fund.

Three committees were formed in 2008:

- Five members provided evaluation of the Biggs B property for reuse or sale,
- An oversight committee formed of PAB members reviewed project applications for the Rural Small Business Loan Program, and
- Five members served on the steering committee for the Energy and Greenhouse Gas Emissions element of the Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan, which was adopted by the County Legislature in December.

Environmental Management Council

In 2008, the EMC supported participation of Tompkins County in Earth Hour. Michael Koplinka-Loehr, Chair of the Tompkins County Legislature, issued a proclamation that 8:00 to 9:00 PM on March 29 was Earth Hour in Tompkins County. Citizens were encouraged to participate by turning off lights during that hour.

When County Legislators asked for recommendations on support for a federal carbon tax, the Energy Committee provided education to Council members on the cap-and-trade system and the alternative carbon tax. The Energy Committee also worked with Planning Department staff on the Energy and Greenhouse Gas Emissions addition to the Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan.

The Invasive Species Committee decided to concentrate on one pest, the Emerald Ash Borer. Members attended a March preparedness workshop, provided information to local media, and worked on a day-long workshop in October.

The *EMC News*, meeting dates, agendas and minutes are all posted on the EMC website: <http://www.co.tompkins.ny.us/emc/>

Water Resources Council

The WRC Education Committee sponsored a public meeting in February highlighting four distinct monitoring efforts in the south end of Cayuga Lake and its tributaries. The main focus was on their findings related to phosphorus. The monitoring conclusions were all similar: the source of phosphorus is from the tributaries not in-lake discharges, any attempts at reducing phosphorus should focus on the tributaries, the current state of the lake is generally good. The Education Committee also organized the WRC display at Water Week promoting the Council and the draft Strategic Monitoring Plan for the Southern Basin of Cayuga Lake. The display was also shown at the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network's Lakefest event, held in August at Goosewatch Winery.

The WRC/Cornell Monitoring Plan Committee made presentations on the draft Strategic Monitoring Plan (SMP) for the Southern Basin of Cayuga Lake and gathered formal support for the plan. Some of the specifics of the monitoring plan will be carried out through volunteer monitoring groups, local agencies that are willing to dedicate funds toward monitoring, deployment and gradual rehabilitation of the Remote Underwater Sampling Station and, hopefully, through grant-funded projects. Cornell University and the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network are coordinating the posting of watershed data and reports to e-commons, an on-line source for scientific information. The SMP will be finalized in 2009 and an annual report for 2008 will be prepared. External funding sources will continue to be sought to implement pieces of the plan. Outreach via presentations and articles will be ongoing.

The Wetlands Committee completed a report detailing how recent changes in federal wetland regulations impact protections for local wetland resources and recommending regulatory and non-regulatory actions to improve conservation of those resources. Based on interest voiced during the public presentations, the committee began work on developing a model wetland ordinance, with a goal of completing a final draft in 2009.

Agendas, minutes and annual reports for the Water Resources Council are posted on the Planning Department's webpage: <http://www.tompkins-co.org/planning/>