Building Vibrant Communities In Tompkins County

… a Development Focus Areas Strategy

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DRAFT

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OVERVIEW

In 2004, the Tompkins County Legislature adopted the Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan. Unlike many town, village, and city comprehensive plans, the County Comprehensive Plan did not have land use and development as a primary focus. Instead, that Plan, and a subsequent amendment, addressed ten topic areas: housing choices, transportation choices, jobs and business, rural resources, water resources, natural features, energy and greenhouse gas emissions, strong communities, centers of development, and efficient use of public funds. These all have a connection to land use and development issues, some more directly than others.

Since the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan, more detailed strategies for some of the topic areas (notably housing and energy) were prepared to identify how the community can pursue the principles and policies of the Comprehensive Plan.

Building vibrant and sustainable communities in accordance with the principles laid out in the "Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan" (2004) can be achieved by focusing most new development in compact mixed-use communities.

Background

For over half a century, new construction in Tompkins County has located in rural areas, outside of the city and villages, by a ration of 2 to 1. This pattern of development was the logical result of a number of factors, including

- After World War II and through the 1950s, national population growth and demographic shifts known as the baby boom.
- Economic growth through the 1970s, resulting in higher incomes for families allowing more families to purchase homes.
- Public policies at the national, state, and local level that fostered new development in rural areas, changing them to suburban areas. These policies built the roads, water systems, and sewer systems that made this type of growth possible.
- The low cost of buying and maintaining private automobiles as the primary means of transportation.

But conditions have changed and continue to evolve.

- Baby boomers are downsizing
- Families are smaller
- More households have two wage earners
- Growth in household incomes is flatter
- State and national funds for building infrastructure are no longer plentiful
- Energy costs, for housing and transportation, are growing faster

The suburbanization of the United States also came with costs that we did not recognize until later. We lost important high-quality farmlands and open space; we extended highways, water lines, and sewer lines beyond our capacity to maintain them in the long-term; and our reliance on the automobile resulted in increased air pollution, rising gasoline prices, and the loss of neighborhoods and community spaces to make room for highways, parking, and drive-through convenience.

Development Focus Areas

As part of the Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan, two kinds of Focus Areas were identified: Agricultural Resource Focus Areas and Natural Features Focus Areas. According to the Comprehensive Plan:

- Agricultural Resource Focus Areas are areas where agricultural activities and working farms should be sustained and enhanced.
- Natural Features Focus Areas are areas where natural features, ecosystems, and forest lands should be preserved.

The Development Focus Areas identified in this strategy are areas where development of businesses, high-density housing, and community services should be promoted and supported.

The Development Focus Areas Strategy:

- Identifies Development Focus Areas where new development should be encouraged (in short, where public water, public sewer, and transit services are already provided).
- Describes the type of development that should occur (more mixed-use development that supports transit, walking, and bicycling as viable transportation options.
- Defines, in broad terms, the steps that can be taken to support the shift away from a sprawling pattern of development to a more concentrated or nodal pattern.

While the work to prepare this strategy was undertaken by the County, its success is dependent on local governments to put into action. Without the local policies in place to make this happen, this strategy will never succeed.

The Comprehensive Plan

As mentioned earlier, while the County Comprehensive Plan did not directly address land use and development, the ten topic areas in the plan all have a connection. Let's look at how pursuing the Development Focus Areas Strategy will help to further many aspects of the Comprehensive Plan. Mixed-use compact development within the Development Focus Areas will help to:

- Meet the demand for more housing in a denser setting within walking distance of employment, services and activities;
- Provide more affordable housing options, as the cost of development is reduced as densities increase and where public water and sewer are available;
- Promote the use of bicycles and walking as viable forms of transportation;
- Reduce the pressure to develop on prime agricultural land, important natural features and forest lands;
- Reduce the need to drive everywhere, helping to decrease our energy usage and greenhouse gas emissions;
- Make possible the development of some alternative energy systems, such as combined heat and power systems;
- Facilitate the creation and maintenance of an efficient network for pedestrians;
- Improve transportation options for access to employment, schools, shopping, health facilities, and community services;
- Strengthen and enhance the City of Ithaca and the villages and hamlets as vital service and community centers; and
- Optimize the value of community investment in water and wastewater systems.

There are other benefits that can be realized as well:

- More attractive, strong walkable communities have a vibrancy that many people find desirable.
- Less traffic, as walking and biking become viable alternatives to driving, as transit connections can be strengthened, and as multiple strong business and service centers are located around the county.
- Improved health, from cleaner air because of traffic reductions and from increased activity as people walk and bike more.
- Improved water quality, due to less impervious surface.
- Improved resiliency and adaptability to changing energy markets.

Other Actions

This report identifies a strategy that can be taken locally to change future land use and development patterns. As noted above, the success of this strategy is dependent on local governments. It is important to recognize that some state and federal level policies, beyond the immediate ability of Tompkins County to change, work against achieving this vision. As opportunities arise, our community should support efforts to change those policies and programs.

While this report has not attempted to identify specific state and federal policies and programs that should be changed, a couple of examples will suffice to illustrate the problem.

- Over the past ten or twenty years, local post offices have tended to re-locate outside of community centers. This has weakened cities, villages and hamlets as centers of business as well as decreased the number of persons who can reasonably walk to the local post office.

- Building codes require that residential development, except for one- and two-family residences, have sprinkler or similar fire suppression systems. This requirement, though, can make it extremely expensive to retrofit downtown buildings to have apartments above ground-floor businesses, a strategy that would help create more vibrant and successful downtowns.

However, there has been some acknowledgement by New York State and by the Federal Government of the role they play in affecting local development patterns and some efforts to make changes.

- In 2010, New York State adopted the "Smart Growth Public Infrastructure Policy Act" for the purpose of minimizing the unnecessary costs of sprawl development. It requires state agencies to consider the extent to which projects are consistent with smart growth principles.

- In 2009, the "Partnership for Sustainable Communities" was formed by three federal entities: the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Department of Transportation, and the Environmental Protection Agency. The Partnership has established a set of livability principles to help improve access to affordable housing, more transportation options, and lower transportation costs while protecting the environement.

Conclusion

Tompkins County strives to promote sustainable practices including social, environmental, and economic stewardship to benefit this and future generations, and to inspire other municipalities, public and private entities, and residents to do the same.

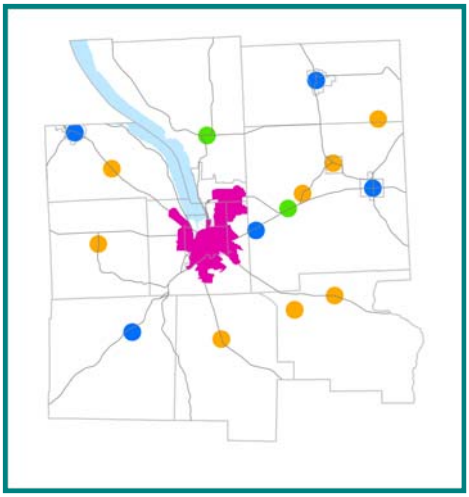
The way we develop land is fundamental to sustainability. Community sustainability requires a transition from poorly managed sprawl to land use planning practices that create and maintain efficient infrastructure, ensure close-knit neighborhoods and sense of community, and preserve natural systems.

This strategy presents a vision of sustainable development for Tompkins County that is both short-term and long-term in nature. There are actions that municipalities can take now to impact development patterns in the near future, as well as create a coordinated approach to development far into the future. Such coordination will not be easy to achieve and will require the action of 16 municipal governments to truly change development patterns in the County. However, the result of creating vibrant population centers where people are attracted to live while at the same time protecting the natural features and agricultural productivity valued by the community, may be compelling enough to spur discussion that results in tangible changes in the status quo. Absent such coordinated action, development patterns will continue to chip away at the rural character of our region, while making it more difficult for population centers to attract the types of services desired by residents.

Executive Summary

Building vibrant and sustainable communities in accordance with the principles laid out in the "Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan" (2004) can be achieved by focusing most new development in compact mixed-use communities. These Development Focus Areas will include places to live, work, learn, play, shop, and access services. These communities will act as social and economic centers for both the residents living in the focus area and for people living nearby. With careful planning, these areas can attract the type and scale of development required to create lively communities in which people will want to live. It is envisioned that at least two-thirds of all new development will occur in these Development Focus Areas for the foreseeable future.

Four types of Development Focus Areas have been identified in Tompkins County: one Urban Center, five Established Nodes, two Emerging Nodes, and eight Rural Centers. The difference among these types is largely a matter of scale and is mostly a function of the availability of public services, primarily water, sewer, and transit.



The Urban Center (shown in red) and the Established Nodes (blue) are Development Focus Areas that can support additional infill development. Emerging Nodes (green) are potential Development Focus Areas that already have some investment in public water and sewer systems, businesses and services, and employment, but generally lack the amount of residential development needed to support a complete mix of uses. Rural Centers (orange) serve as important focal points for their residents as well as residents of the surrounding rural areas. However, these areas are unlikely to see the intensity of development found in the other types of Development Focus Areas due to the absence of public water and sewer infrastructure.

Local governments play the key role in implementing the Development Focus Areas Strategy. They have the authority to establish the legal framework to implement this strategy and to make the day-to-day decisions to make this plan a reality.

Several types of actions will need to be taken to achieve the vision espoused by this Strategy:

- Density and design. Promote compact mixed-use development in the identified Development Focus Areas. The success of these communities will be dependent, in part, on the quality of the design of the areas. Infill development, particularly mixed-use higher-intensity development, should be encouraged in the existing Urban Center and in the Established Nodes.
- Development Regulations. Review local development regulations, including zoning and subdivision regulations, to ensure that they support and promote the type of development envisioned.
- Infrastructure Improvements. Make the infrastructure improvements identified in the "Countywide Inter-Municipal Water and Sewer Feasibility Study for Tompkins County" (2010) that are needed to support compact mixed-use development.
- Connections. Provide pedestrian facilities within the Development Focus Areas to make walking an attractive transportation alternative. Provide strong pedestrian and bicycle connections between Development Focus Areas and existing subdivisions near them. Provide and maintain transit connections between the Urban Center and the other Development Focus Areas.
- Controlling Sprawl. Establish a distinct edge around Development Focus Areas. Most businesses and services should locate within Development Focus Areas. Support efforts to permanently protect important farmland and natural features. Do not extend infrastructure to other unserved areas.

Introduction

In 2003 and 2004, the Tompkins County community rallied behind a vision of development that centered on creating vibrant communities while protecting natural and agricultural lands. This vision was captured in the "Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan" (adopted in 2004). Achieving that vision will involve altering the recent pattern of development experienced in the County. As the Forward to the Comprehensive Plan envisions:

> 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.

The foundation of the Development Focus Area Strategy is the "Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan" and its three principles related to neighborhoods and communities.

Strong Communities: 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.

Centers of Development: 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.

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

Focusing development around existing population centers will help the community to achieve these and many of the other principles laid out in the comprehensive plan. This Development Focus Areas Strategy identifies where it makes sense to locate these concentrations of development, how these areas can attract the type and scale of development required to create lively communities people will want to live in, and the steps necessary to achieve this vision.

Development Focus Areas

The "Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan" identified two different types of focus areas: Natural Features Focus Areas and Agricultural Resources Focus Areas. This document identifies a third type of focus area: Development Focus Areas.

While the six Agricultural Resources Focus Areas and fourteen Natural Features Focus Areas identify locations in the county where conservation efforts should be concentrated, the Development Focus Areas identify those areas where development efforts should be concentrated. A Development Focus Area is a walkable, relatively dense concentration of mixed-use development that provides:

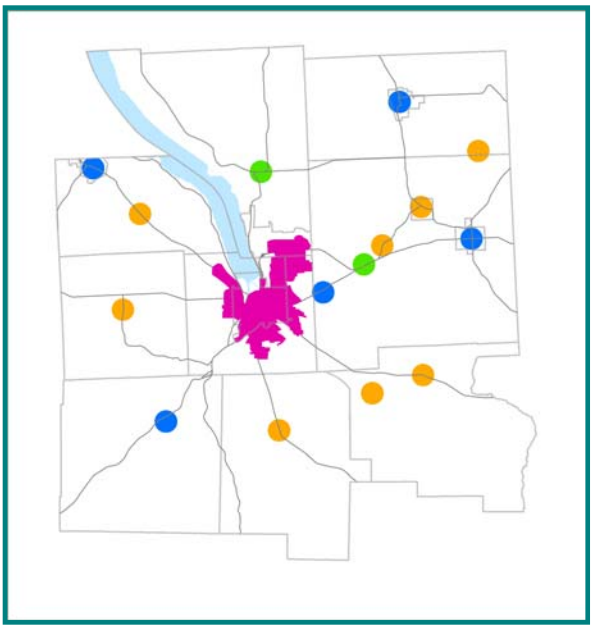
- A variety of housing types (single-family homes, condominiums, apartments, etc.)
- A mix of commercial and community services
- Employment opportunities
- Public transit access to other Development Focus Areas in the County

By concentrating most future development into compact walkable neighborhoods with a variety of services, we can create great places to live that support services and facilities that make a community vital. With lessened

development pressures in the rural areas of the County, it will be easier to protect the natural and agricultural areas held so dear in our community and not lose those areas over time to the effects of sprawl development. The alternative is to continue on the path we have followed over the last several decades. The impacts of sprawling development are seen in increasing traffic congestion and commute times; air pollution; inefficient energy consumption and greater reliance on oil; loss of open space and habitat; inequitable distribution of economic resources; and the loss of the rural character of our landscape.

The "Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan" analyzed the impacts of the pattern of future development in the community. Two different types of future development patterns were assessed. The first, the Trend Scenario, assumed that development patterns seen in the 1990s would continue over the next thirty years. The second, the Plan Scenario, assumed a nodal development pattern that would accommodate the same number of housing units and job growth. The analysis concluded that under the Plan Scenario:

- There would be fewer roads that experience a significant increase in evening commute traffic and a reduction in total miles traveled by automobile compared to the Trend Scenario.
- Both the overall cost and the per-household cost of water and sewer services would be lower.
- The total amount of land needed to accommodate new residential development would be lower and the loss of important open space would be reduced by nearly two-thirds.
- There would be a net positive impact on the fiscal health of the county and its communities.



This Development Focus Area Strategy identifies sixteen Development Focus Areas (shown on the accompanying map), divided into four types:

- Urban Center (red) – one, including portions of the City of Ithaca, the Towns of Ithaca and Lansing, and the Villages of Cayuga Heights and Lansing;
- Established Nodes (blue) – five, located in the villages of Dryden, Groton, and Trumansburg, as well as Newfield (a former village) and Varna;
- Emerging Nodes (green) – two, located in the Towns of Dryden and Lansing, where infrastructure and existing services can support new development; and
- Rural Centers (orange) – eight, located in rural areas in the Towns of Caroline, Danby, Dryden, Enfield, Groton, and Ulysses.

The Vision

These Development Focus Areas will be compact, mixed-use communities that include places to live, work, learn, play, shop and access services. These communities will act as social and economic centers for both the residents living in the focus area and for people living nearby.

These Development Focus Areas are a viable alternative to continuing the development practices of the last fifty years - a sprawling pattern that results in the loss of important open spaces, an increase in the number of miles driven, and an increase in the cost of municipal services.

This Strategy envisions that at least two-thirds of all new residential development will occur in these focus areas and no more than one-third will take place outside of these areas. This is achievable if the Development Focus Areas: (1) are held to high design standards so as to attract residents and businesses; (2) are supported and

promoted by public policies, including land use regulations; (3) receive community investment in infrastructure; and (4) are connected through significant transit, pedestrian and bicycle links.

Benefits of Focusing Development

There are many benefits to focusing most development into compact communities, benefits that accrue to residents of the focus areas, developers, local governments, and to the community as a whole.

Affordability. Developing land at higher densities lowers the cost of infrastructure and increases the efficiency of land use. By reducing the costs of development, housing costs are lower. By making walking, biking, and public transit viable options to the private automobile for many trips, and often allowing shorter auto commutes, transportation costs are lower. Also, developing more densely allows the installation of more affordable energy systems, such as district heating. All in all, these cost savings can add up to a *substantially more affordable cost of living* for residents in the Development Focus Areas.

Vibrancy. People want to live in strong communities: where there are friendly relationships among neighbors, where the quality of the built environment is high, and where residents feel they can live a safe and healthy life. By building on the distinct identities of existing neighborhoods and creating new ones that possess their own special sense of place, the Development Focus Areas can be exceptional places to live. Attractive design of public spaces, attention to details, and proximity of housing to employment, schools, parks and other services help create walkable neighborhoods that have a certain vibrancy many people find desirable.

Reduced Pressure on Farmland and Natural Areas. While not all new development will be located in Development Focus Areas, by providing places where people want to live and where the community welcomes development, there is reduced pressure to develop in areas already valued by the community for their important agricultural, recreational and natural resources.

*Efficiency***.** According to the Urban Land Institute, developing on the outskirts of existing communities eventually costs a community from 40 to 400 percent more than infill development, when the costs of building and maintaining new roads, sewers, fire stations, schools and other public facilities are taken into account. Short-term private profits may result from developing outside of population centers, but the long-term costs are passed on to the public in the form of higher taxes, deteriorating infrastructure, and distress of existing businesses. As noted earlier, developing at higher densities reduces the total cost of development. It also reduces the community's ongoing cost to maintain infrastructure. Developing in existing population and employment centers takes advantage of the public and private investments already made in those areas.

Reduced Overall Traffic. With stores, services, housing and employment in close proximity to one another, not all trips will require driving – walking and biking will be more realistic options for a broader range of residents. With transit connections between all the Development Focus Areas and the Urban Center, most commuters will have a viable alternative to driving to work. In addition, with strong businesses and services located throughout the county, rural residents and businesses will have nearby alternatives when they need to run most regular errands. In all, this will reduce the amount of traffic on the entire road network.

*Other Benefits***.**

- Improved health. Cleaner air from traffic reductions and increased activity by people walking and biking more results in overall public health improvements.
- Improved water quality. Building compactly results in less impervious surface, such as parking lots, resulting in improvements to local and regional water quality.
- Improved resiliency and adaptability. By making alternatives to driving viable and attractive, and creating close-knit communities that could potentially share energy infrastructure, resiliency to changes in energy markets is greatly enhanced.

Purpose of the Development Focus Areas Strategy

The purpose of this strategy is to develop an action plan to achieve the vision of appealing population centers surrounded by productive agricultural lands, recreational opportunities, and healthy natural areas.

This Development Focus Area Strategy does not envision that all new development will occur in the focus areas. Rather, the strategy envisions that development will return to earlier patterns now that the rapid growth of households with children is slowing. In Tompkins County, prior to the 1960s, nearly two-thirds of housing units were located in the city and villages. Today, after 60 years of the post-baby boom development patterns that encouraged single-family suburban development, only half of housing units are in the city and villages. The objective of this strategy is to have at least two-thirds of all future housing located in the Development Focus Areas along with many businesses, employers, and community services.

Changing Households

Nationally, for more than sixty years, married couples with children dominated our housing markets and caused the suburbs to grow explosively. But today those families make up less than 25 percent of American households. In their place are young professionals, childless couples, empty nesters, and single parents. Study after study show that many of these households prefer condominiums, apartments, townhouses, and small-lot single-family homes. These demographic groups are looking for dynamic, attractive living environments and are creating a demand for a greater mix of housing types.

These changes to the housing market are long-term in nature. The demand for higher-density homes -- by renters and by owners -- is expected to increase significantly in the future due to changing demographics. Nationally, the demand for higher-density homes will hit new highs by 2015 due to an influx of:

- 78 million downsizing Baby Boomers,
- 78 million persons graduating from college, and
- 9 million new immigrants

The demand for more housing choices is not just a national phenomenon. There is plenty of evidence to suggest that these trends apply locally.

- Local realtors are telling the same story of people approaching them looking for housing types that are not easily found in Tompkins County.
- An in-commuter survey conducted in 2006 found that 30% of those who work in Tompkins County, but live elsewhere, would be willing to move into Tompkins County if housing were more affordable. And, of those, 80% would be interested in living in 'villages, city neighborhoods, or rural hamlets.'
- Tompkins County residents have also expressed concern about how to attract and retain young people, particularly those raised here. The most often identified barriers are the lack of jobs and the lack of housing choices.

Economic development also relies on a successful housing market. Many businesses locate where potential workers already live, or where employees can be attracted to live. If we want to retain our existing businesses and recruit new ones, we have to be able to attract the workers they need. This premise is a cornerstone of the "Economic Development Strategy" adopted by Tompkins County Area Development in 2006.

The Sixteen Focus Areas

Overview of Development Focus Areas

Four types of Development Focus Areas have been identified: one Urban Center, five Established Nodes, two Emerging Nodes, and eight Rural Centers. The difference among these types is largely a matter of scale and is mostly a function of the availability of public services, primarily water and sewer, and transit.

The *Urban Center* is the largest of the Development Focus Area types for a number of reasons. Urban centers are the historic employment, retail, service, and government centers for the surrounding region. These areas tend to have a dense internal transit system, providing frequent opportunities to travel between destinations within the Center. An Urban Center also has water and sewer infrastructure and the greatest diversity of housing, businesses, and employment. In Tompkins County, the Urban Center includes portions of the City of Ithaca, the Towns of Ithaca and Lansing, and the Villages of Cayuga Heights and Lansing.

Nodes, whether established or emerging, are walkable in size. A general rule of thumb is that people are willing to walk up to ten minutes to run an errand or walk to school, but for any greater distance, the inclination shifts to driving. A ten-minute walk translates roughly into a half-mile in distance. Nodes, like Urban Centers, have public water and sewer systems capable of supporting dense and diverse development.

> *Established Nodes*, as the name implies, already exist and have a mix of housing types, diverse businesses and services, and employment opportunities. In Tompkins County, these are located in the villages of Dryden, Groton, and Trumansburg, as well as in Newfield and Varna.
>
> *Emerging Nodes* already partially meet the definition of Nodes, however they lack the mix of land uses that would make them Established Nodes. They do, however, have some water and sewer infrastructure (or plans for those services) with the capacity to support mixed-use development. Two Emerging Nodes have been identified: South Lansing and the NYSEG area.

Rural Centers, like Nodes, are walkable in size. They usually have a mix of residential development, employment, businesses, and services. The critical difference between Nodes and Rural Centers is the lack of water and sewer infrastructure in the Rural Centers. Without this infrastructure, they cannot support the intensity of development envisioned in Nodes. However, they do serve an important function as commercial and service centers for the surrounding rural populations. In Tompkins County, eight Rural Centers have been identified, located in the rural areas of the Towns of Caroline, Danby, Dryden, Enfield, Groton and Ulysses.

Detailed Definition of Development Focus Areas

In order for Development Focus Areas to become the dynamic living spaces envisioned in the Comprehensive Plan, they need to provide a certain mix of uses, located within small geographic areas.

Land Area. In order to keep a focus area walkable it should be encompass an area within a ½-mile radius from the center of the commercial core to the edge – a total land area of approximately 500 acres. The majority of destinations (businesses and services) should be located in the core of the focus area, defined as the roughly ¼-mile radius in the center.

An Urban Center, with its abundant supply of regular internal transit services, can be larger than this pedestrian-oriented definition. It is an area that has a variety of internal, overlapping Nodes: a central business district with retail, entertainment, offices, and a mix of higher density housing; neighborhood centers that serve as destinations for the more residential areas within the Urban Center; and regional retail centers and regional employment centers that serve as destinations for a significant number of persons from throughout the county and from surrounding counties.

Table 1
Existing Characteristics of the
Sixteen Development Focus Areas

Development Focus Area	Estimated Housing Units	Estimated Employment	Service Variety (out of 14)	Public Water and Sewer
Urban Center				
Ithaca Area	15,500	27,000	14	Both
Nodes				
- Established				
Dryden	725	800	10	Both
Groton	775	475	10	Both
Newfield	250	250	9	Both
Trumansburg	875	400	10	Both
Varna	425	75	7	Both
- Emerging				
NYSEG	25	325	5	Both
South Lansing	175	175	7	Water only
Rural Centers				
Brooktondale	150	25	4	Neither
Danby	100	50	7	Neither
Enfield	50	75	6	Neither
Etna	250	50	6	Neither
Freeville	225	150	8	Sewer only
Jacksonville	125	50	5	Water only
McLean	225	100	6	Neither
Slaterville Springs	125	25	5	Neither

The Urban Center and the Established Nodes are existing communities that, for the most part, meet the definition of a Development Focus Area. As the table above illustrates, Emerging Nodes are areas that have already seen a significant amount of investment in public water and sewer systems, businesses and services, and employment, but generally lack the amount of residential development to support a variety of services. Rural Centers are unlikely to see the level of development found in the other Development Focus Areas due to the absence of public water and sewer infrastructure. The estimates presented on this table represent existing development within the urban center boundary and within the ½-mile radius circles drawn for the other focus areas.

Population and Housing Development. Studies have indicated that a population of at least 2,500 is required to support most basic neighborhood-scale commercial services, which is an integral ingredient to a vibrant residential setting. If the average household size were 2.5 persons, a fully functional focus area would need a total of 1,000 housing units. A larger population base would support more diverse and stronger businesses, adding to the vitality of the Nodes. Accordingly, a typical Node should support between 1,000 and 1,500 housing units.

Of course, not all the land in a focus area would be uniformly developed for residential purposes. If half of the 500 acres in a Node were devoted to residential development, and accounting for the need to provide public facilities (like streets and stormwater management facilities) and to protect important natural features, housing would need to be developed at a **net** density of six to eight units per acre. However, a vibrant community needs a mix of housing densities to provide a variety of living experiences. Thus, housing densities should range from at least four units up to fifteen units per developed acre, with higher densities generally located in the core.

An Urban Center, of course, will have a much larger population than any Node. With its larger land area and higher-capacity infrastructure and services, a typical Urban Center could support 30,000 or more housing units at higher densities than in Nodes, particularly in the core of the Urban Center.

Rural Centers, as noted earlier, rely, in part, on private wells and individual septic systems for water supply and wastewater treatment. This limits their ability to support many types of housing. As a result, Rural Centers are likely to contain between 100 and 300 housing units with density limited by public health standards.

Jobs/Housing Balance. Vibrant communities are places that are active throughout the day. Bedroom communities, where the vast majority of residents are away at school or at work all day, usually have difficulty supporting a large variety of businesses and services. Development Focus Areas in Tompkins County should establish a balance between residential development and employment opportunities in order to support a broader mix of businesses and services.

If an average household included 1.5 adults in the labor force, this would mean an employment base of 1,500 to 2,250 persons in Nodes. Of course, not all residents would work within the Node in which they live, and others will come from outside to work. As a result, employment in the most Nodes should range between 500 and 3,000. An Urban Center typically includes numerous regional employment centers, attracting many workers during the day from throughout the county, and beyond. Therefore, the employment opportunities in the Urban Center could include 35,000 or more jobs. Rural Centers, being less populated, should aim for an employment base of 100 or so.

Variety of Services. Development Focus Areas need a mix of neighborhood-scale services in order to promote community livability, transportation efficiency, and walkability. The LEED-ND (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design for Neighborhood Developments) identified fourteen categories of non-residential uses appropriate for neighborhoods (see Appendix 1), seven of which should be within walking distance in order to promote community vibrancy. The fourteen uses include various retail uses, entertainment and recreational facilities, educational facilities, religious facilities, government services, medical offices, and light industrial uses. These facilities would not only meet the regular needs of residents, they would provide employment opportunities, as well.

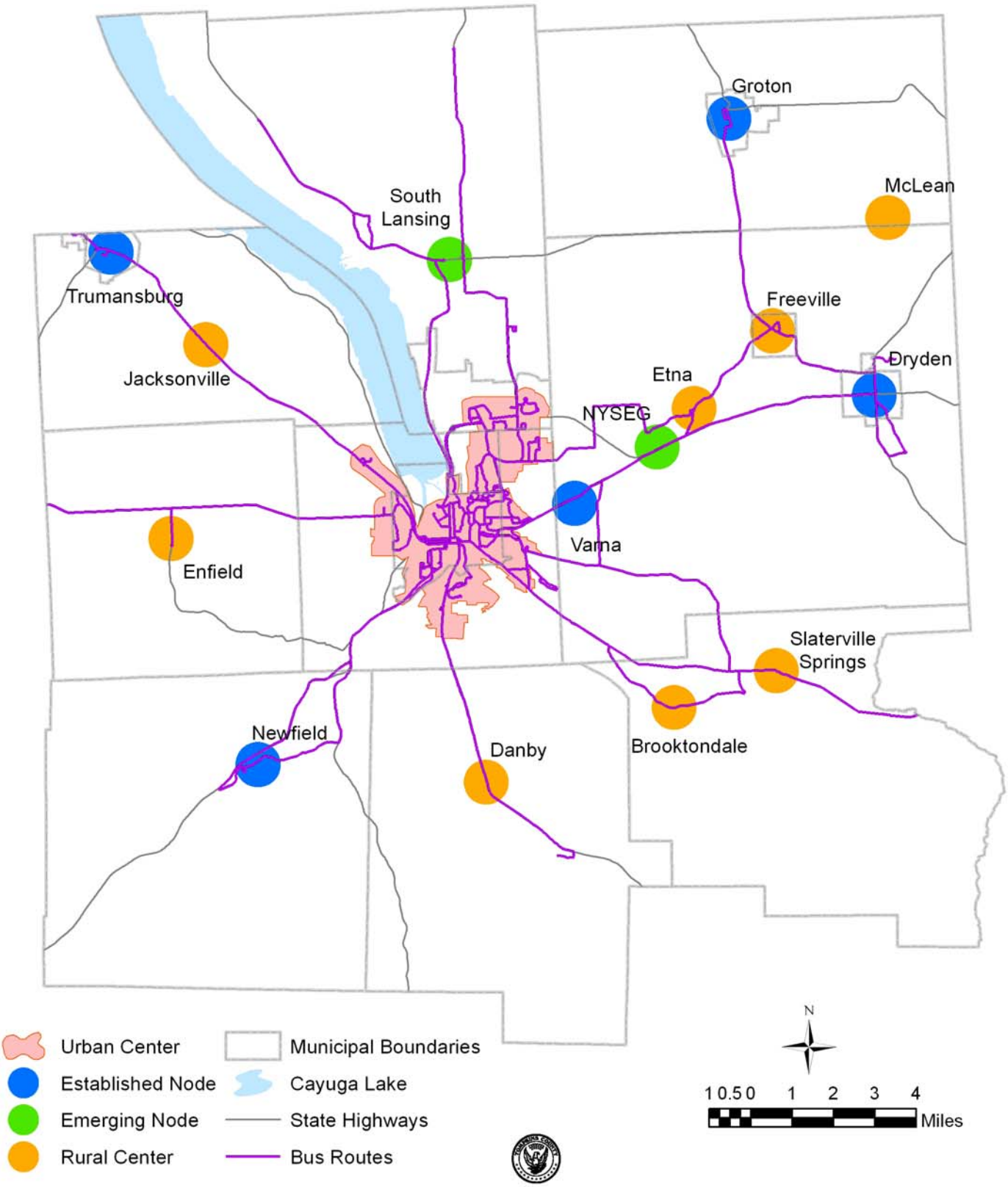
The commercial development in the Nodes, be it coffee shops or daycare providers, would primarily serve the daily and weekly needs of the residents and employees of that Node, as well as the residents of the surrounding rural areas. The Urban Center also serves a larger regional function by providing commercial services unique in the area.

Urban Center

The single Urban Center in Tompkins County is located in the middle of the county and includes portions of the City of Ithaca, the Towns of Ithaca and Lansing, and the Villages of Cayuga Heights and Lansing. The Ithaca Area Urban Center already supports well over 15,000 housing units, roughly 27,000 jobs, and a fully diverse mix of non-residential uses. While The Commons functions as the central business district for the County, the Urban Center also includes neighborhood centers, with commercial and service centers surrounded by largely residential neighborhoods, including Collegetown, Northside, Community Corners, and South Hill, and regional shopping facilities along Route 13 in the southwest portion of the City and on North Triphammer Road in the Village of Lansing.

The Urban Center has the service and infrastructure base to support infill development, both residential and non-residential. As of this writing, the City of Ithaca is beginning an update to its Comprehensive Plan and the Town of Ithaca is finalizing its Comprehensive Plan update. To support the Urban Center concept as outlined in this Strategy, the City's and the Town's plans will, ideally, identify the primary and secondary service and commercial centers, describe opportunities for infill development, and support The Commons as the County's primary central business district.

Development Focus Areas



Tompkins County Planning Department
June 8, 2012

Established Nodes

There are five Established Nodes in Tompkins County. These are the Villages of Dryden, Groton, and Trumansburg and the hamlets of Newfield and Varna. Within the Villages, the number of housing units ranges from 700 to 900, existing employment ranges between 400 and 800, and the mix of services is 9 or 10 types out of the 14 defined by LEED-ND.

Newfield and Varna are smaller Established Nodes. Housing and employment are significantly lower in these areas. However, they have a healthy mix of non-residential uses and they have the infrastructure capacity to support additional development. They are, however, limited in their ability to become as large as the other Established Nodes due to the limitations of geography (steep slopes in Newfield, and steep slopes and wetlands in Varna).

All these Established Nodes can support infill development, both residential and non-residential. Each of the villages and the hamlet of Newfield have well-defined commercial centers that should be strengthened. Additional residential development in these commercial centers would help maintain and enhance their vitality.

Emerging Nodes

There are two Emerging Nodes in Tompkins County. These areas have some infrastructure in place with the opportunity for expansion in the future, and limited residential and non-residential development. These two Emerging Nodes are quite different.

- The NYSEG Emerging Node is located in the Town of Dryden around the (now largely vacant) NYSEG office building. It has an industrial park that provides jobs and the NYSEG complex offers a unique opportunity for redevelopment. If some residential development were sited here, this area could serve as a full Node. However, like the Established Node of Varna, there are geographic limitations to development due to steep slopes, wetlands, and Fall Creek.
- The South Lansing Emerging Node is located in the Town of Lansing. Unlike other Development Focus Areas, this Emerging Node seems to have two 'centers,' one around the Rogue's Harbor/Town Hall Area and one around the Route 34/Triphammer Road intersection. In order to take advantage of this configuration, development efforts should concentrate on locating compact residential development between the two 'centers' and commercial and service activities should locate in the two distinct commercial areas on the edge of the Emerging Node. In addition, the infrastructure to support additional development in this area is planned, but not existing. Development of this Emerging Node is dependent on the provision of complete water and sewer infrastructure.

Rural Centers

There are eight Rural Centers identified in Tompkins County: Brooktondale, Danby, Enfield, Etna, the Village of Freeville, Jacksonville, McLean, and Slaterville Springs. These are located in the rural areas of the county and are the historic hamlets in the community. They generally include 100-300 housing units, 50 to 150 jobs, and 5 or 6 of the 14 non-residential types of facilities and services. These areas do not have the infrastructure capacity to support the higher-intensity development envisioned for the other Development Focus Areas. However, they do serve as important focal points for the residents of the Rural Center as well as for the surrounding rural areas. Future development in these areas should be encouraged. In particular, businesses and services should be located in the core of these Rural Centers to provide a single destination where residents of the Rural Center and the surrounding areas can go and meet their needs.

Achieving the Vision

Overview

Local governments in Tompkins County play the key role in achieving the vision of the Development Focus Areas Strategy. The County can help the community pull together this vision and can provide support for municipal planning actions, but only local governments have the authority to establish the legal framework to implement this strategy and make the day-to-day decisions over the coming years to make this strategy a reality.

Several types of actions will need to be taken to achieve the vision espoused by this Strategy. These fall into five broad categories:

The Urban Center and the Nodes provide Tompkins County with the greatest opportunity for changing the pattern of future development.

- ***Density and Design.*** Promote compact mixed-use development in the Development Focus Areas. The success of these communities will be dependent, in part, on the quality of design.
- ***Development Regulations***. Review local laws, including zoning and subdivision regulations, to ensure that they promote the type of development envisioned in this Strategy.
- ***Infrastructure Improvements.*** Implement improvements to existing public water and sewer systems to support compact mixed-use development.
- ***Connections.*** Provide pedestrian facilities within each Development Focus Area to make walking an attractive transportation alternative. Provide and maintain transit connections between the Urban Center and the other Development Focus Areas. Also, provide strong pedestrian and bicycle connections between the Development Focus Areas and nearby existing developed areas.
- ***Controlling Sprawl.*** Most of the benefits of concentrating growth in the Development Focus Areas will not be achieved if a sprawling pattern of development continues outside of these areas. Development outside the Development Focus Areas should not require the expansion of water, sewer, and transit services and should fit the character of the surrounding rural landscape.

The Urban Center and the Nodes provide Tompkins County with the greatest opportunity for changing the pattern of future development. These areas already have in place the foundation for the envisioned nodal development pattern – they have (or have plans for) infrastructure, they have already established some of the land use mix needed to support vibrant communities, and they have been identified as important centers by the local community. The key to making this Development Focus Area Strategy a success is to direct much of the County's new development to these areas.

Density and Design

As noted in the earlier sections of this Strategy, the success of Development Focus Areas depends, in large part, on their ability to create a vibrant community, one to which residents and businesses will be attracted; where people will walk to work, school, and shopping; and where important natural features and systems will be protected and enhanced. Although there is no single design template that can be applied to all of the Development Focus Areas, there are planning and design principles that can help a community achieve the benefits of focusing development.

Planning and Design Principles

- *Compact and multiuse:* Development Focus Areas are designed to include a range of mutually supportive uses, including neighborhood-scale retail and services, offices, and residential uses combined and integrated in a compact form. As Nodes are developed around pedestrian accessibility, core services, employment, transit and shopping should be no more than a ten-minute walk from residences.

- *Pedestrian friendly:* Street life is an integral component of Development Focus Areas. To encourage and facilitate walking, successful Nodes feature a comfortable, safe and efficient pedestrian network with wide sidewalks, seating, and other pedestrian comfort features.

- *Residentially diverse:* Development Focus Areas are dynamic communities able to accommodate a diversity of residents at varying stages of life. From senior housing to family-oriented developments, the Development Focus Areas contain a mix of housing types that appeal to a variety of demographic groups. Housing types include detached single-family homes, apartments, condominiums and town homes. This residential diversity helps accommodate a broad range of incomes and needs, while also helping support area services and businesses. With the higher densities, residential privacy and safety can be addressed through careful design, building-orientation and site layout.

- *Businesses and Services:* To best support its residents, the overwhelming majority of businesses and services are located in the core of the Development Focus Area, the ¼-mile radius circle at the center. This concentration of services makes it easy for residents to run multiple errands on a single trip.

- *Multi-modal:* Development Focus Areas accommodate a variety of users on their street networks in a safe and efficient manner. Streets are not designed solely for access by the automobile. In fact, large surface parking lots are minimized and replaced with smaller lots to the side and at the rear of buildings and with on-street parking. Transit stops are conveniently placed and pedestrians are provided with wide sidewalks and safe crosswalks. Bicycle facilities are provided to improve cyclist safety and further reduce and calm car traffic.

- *Transit Oriented Development (TOD)*: Transit oriented development is designed to encourage transit ridership. Design features of TODs include mixed-use development that will support transit usage throughout the day as well as excellent pedestrian facilities, such as high quality pedestrian crossings, narrow streets, and reduced densities more distant from the transit stop.

- *Well designed:* Good building design through the use of design guidelines helps achieve higher residential densities while maintaining livability and is a prerequisite for attracting both residents and businesses. Design guidelines should be specific to each Development Focus Area and created in consultation with property owners, businesses, and citizens. Guidelines can stipulate simple design features like having storefronts and entryways face streets or parks.

- *Public Realm:* An active, engaging and safe public realm is central to a successful Development Focus Area. Comfortable sidewalks, public sitting and gathering places, street trees and other plantings, public art, and ground level, street front retail are all components of a public realm where people want to spend their time. Investing in and upgrading these spaces can help attract more pedestrians and street traffic

and promote local businesses. Many Nodes also include some kind of larger public gathering or event space as a focal point around which other uses can be clustered. These high-quality public spaces help foster community interaction and community pride and can be used for a variety of events, such as farmers markets and local festivals and celebrations.

- *Green Infrastructure:* Development Focus Areas integrate, protect, and enhance natural features and open space. Existing vegetation, such as trees and notable landforms, should be maintained as focal points or incorporated in the overall design. Naturalized stormwater management is also encouraged to reduce infrastructure service costs and create additional multi-purpose green and open space. In general, a minimum of 20 percent of a Development Focus Area's gross area should be maintained as park or open space.

- *Vehicle Movement:* As is the case in the City of Ithaca and villages in Tompkins County, State Highways transect most of the Development Focus Areas, creating special design challenges. The primary challenge will entail creating a street where the movement of vehicles *through* the area does not impede local pedestrian and bicycle activity *within* the area and, in fact, supports access to local businesses and services. In 2011, New York State adopted Complete Streets legislation to consider the needs of all users "including pedestrians, bicyclists, public transportation riders, motorists and citizens of all ages and abilities, including children, the elderly and the disabled." In local villages, this has been successfully achieved, such as in the Village of Trumansburg, using creative and thoughtful streetscape design.

Although these Planning and Design Principles were adapted from "Nodal Development: Creating Compact, Complete, Mixed-Use Communities," prepared by the Regional District of Nanaimo in British Columbia, they are not foreign to Tompkins County. Most of our existing communities already meet some or all of these principles. Cases in point are the Established Nodes in the County. Some have a 'Main Street' central business district with surrounding residential neighborhoods, as seen in Dryden, Groton, and Trumansburg. Even the smaller Established Nodes – Newfield and Varna – meet most of these principles. All of these Established Nodes have a variety of businesses and services, a mix of housing densities, and (all but the smallest) a fairly complete sidewalk network. Similarly, on a larger scale, we can look to the City of Ithaca, where the mix of businesses, services, and housing types is denser and even more diverse.

Density and Design Recommendations

- Urban Center and All Established Nodes – Encourage infill development, particularly mixed-use higher-intensity development, in the Urban Center and in Established Nodes. Each community should identify specific locations suitable for infill development and actively promote these within the development community. Barriers to developing these sites should be identified and addressed.

- Urban Center and All Emerging Nodes – Require new development to be in accord with the planning and design principles listed above. Communities can accomplish this by using the planning and design principles as part of local development plan reviews. Communities could also take a further, more pro-active step by conducting detailed design studies for each of the Emerging Nodes and for neighborhoods in the Urban Center. These studies should involve local residents, property owners, businesses, developers, and local government planners and elected officials.

- All Rural Centers – To the degree possible, encourage new development in the Rural Centers to be in accord with the planning and design principles listed above.

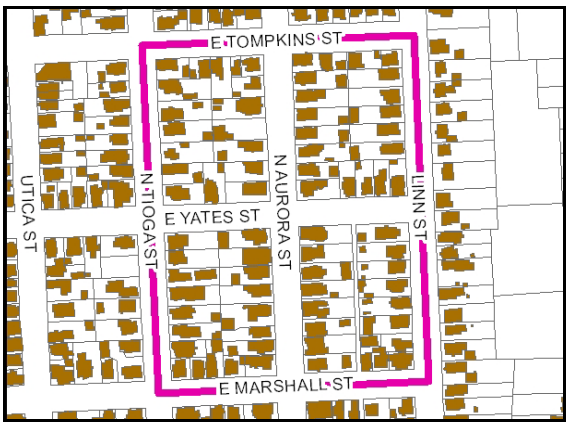
- Newfield and Varna Established Nodes – These smaller Established Nodes have geographic limitations on their size due to the presence of streams, wetlands and steep slopes. The boundaries of these areas should be carefully delineated to protect vulnerable natural features and better define where development should be encouraged within the Nodes.

What Density Looks Like Around Tompkins County

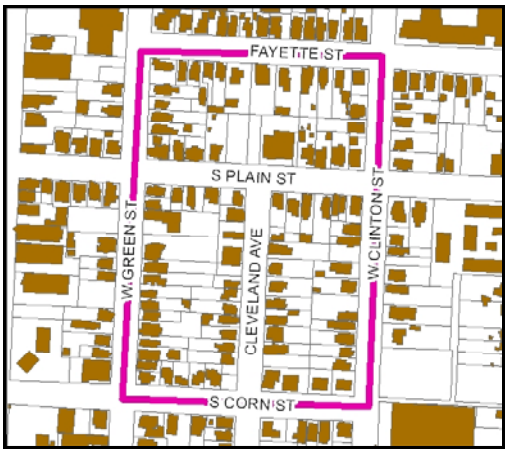
The following photos and maps illustrate existing development patterns at varying densities within Tompkins County.

Location: Collegetown Neighborhood, in the City of Ithaca
Net Density: 53.0 units per acre
Typical Lot Sizes: 2,900 – 12,400 square feet

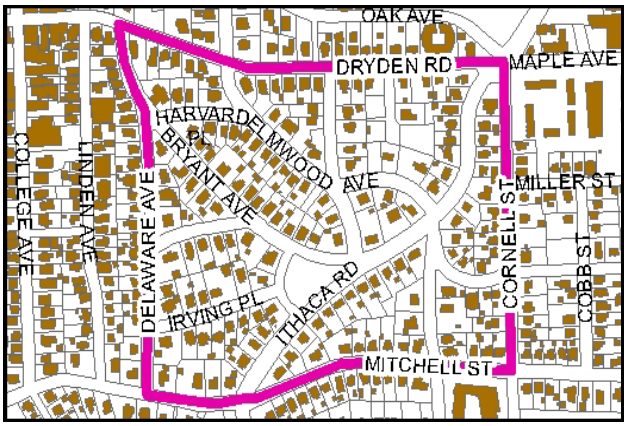
Location: Gaslight/Uptown Villages, in the Village of Lansing
Net Density: 16.5 units per acre
Lot Size: 300,000 square feet



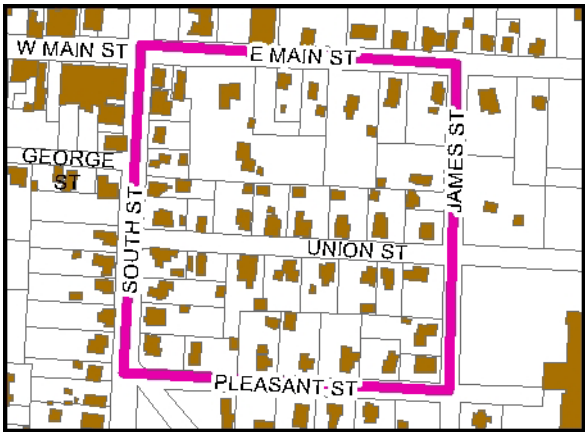
Location: Fall Creek Neighborhood, in the City of Ithaca
Net Density: 15.3 units per acre
Typical Lot Sizes: 2,600 – 6,100 square feet



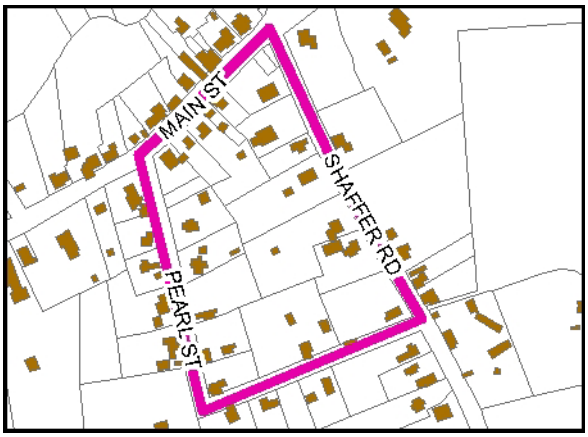
Location: Southside Neighborhood, in the City of Ithaca
Net Density: 13.4 units per acre
Typical Lot Sizes: 2,200 – 7,600 square feet



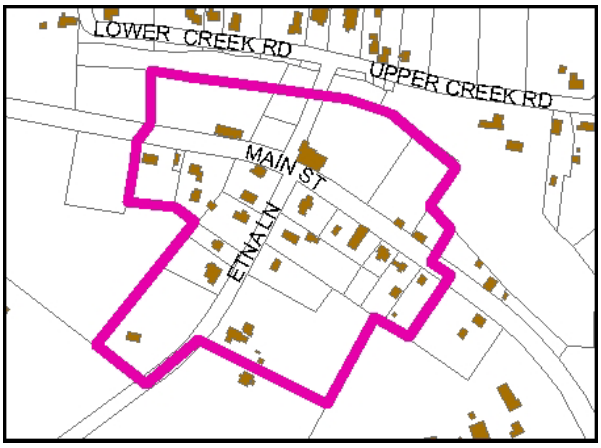
Location: Belle Sherman Neighborhood, in the City of Ithaca
Net Density: 8.2 units per acre
Typical Lot Sizes: 3,500 – 19,200 square feet



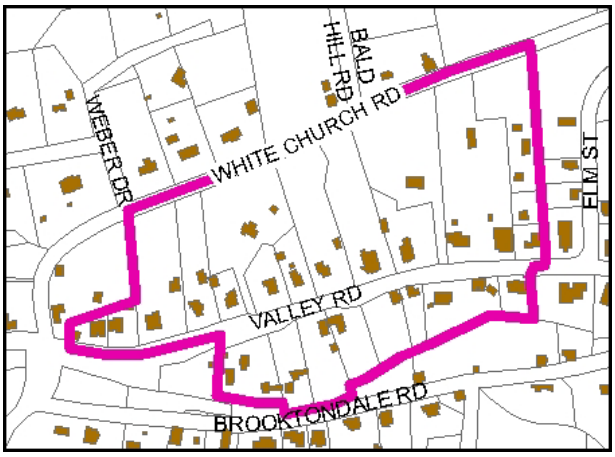
Location: Village of Dryden
Net Density: 5.6 units per acre
Typical Lot Sizes: 7,500 – 18,000 square feet



Location: Newfield Hamlet
Net Density: 2.4 units per acre
Typical Lot Sizes: 5,100 – 44,000 square feet



Location: Etna Hamlet, in the Town of Dryden
Net Density: 2.1 units per acre
Typical Lot Sizes: 8,500 – 68,000 square feet



Location:	Brooktondale Hamlet, in the Town of Caroline
Net Density:	1.3 units per acre
Typical Lot Sizes:	12,000 – 68,000 square feet

Development Regulations

Most communities in Tompkins County have adopted Comprehensive Plans, enacted Zoning Ordinances and Subdivision Regulations, and have other land development regulations in place. In many cases, these existing regulations make it difficult to achieve the patterns of development envisioned in this Strategy. The density of residential development permitted is often well below that required to support the compact development patterns envisioned herein and commercial development is permitted in areas remote from residential neighborhoods.

A complete review of these regulations is needed to identify which regulations would need to be amended in order to implement this Strategy.

Development Regulations Recommendations

- All Development Focus Areas – To the extent possible, incorporate the Planning and Design Principles into local zoning ordinances, subdivision regulations, and other development laws.

- Urban Center – Within the Urban Center, require residential development to be at net densities of at least five units per acre, with higher net densities (at least 20 units per acre) in and around the downtown and Collegetown areas, moderate net densities (ten to twenty units per acre) near other commercial centers, and lower net densities (five to ten units per acre) elsewhere. Establish *minimum* density standards for all new residential development.

- All Established and Emerging Nodes – Within the Established and Emerging Nodes, require residential development to be at net densities between four and fifteen units per acre, with higher densities in the core of the Node. This recommendation is based on the supposition that half of the land within the Node would be developed for residential uses. If a community prepares a plan for the Node that envisions more or less land for residential uses, residential development should be at net densities that would result in 1,000 to 1,500 units within the node. In any event, *minimum* density standards should be established for all new residential development.

- All Established and Emerging Nodes and Rural Centers – Within the Established Nodes, Emerging Nodes, and Rural Centers, require new businesses and services that attract customers to locate in the core of the Development Focus Areas.

At these recommended densities and taking into account the capacity of infrastructure, without any additional detailed analysis, the Development Focus Areas could support a significant number of new housing units. The "Countywide Inter-Municipal Water and Sewer Feasibility Study for Tompkins County," sponsored by the Tompkins County Council of Governments in 2010, concluded that there is existing capacity to immediately serve the equivalent of 10,600 new housing units and an additional 2,850 to 7,300 units with identified improvements to existing systems.

The historic average annual growth rate in population in Tompkins County is 1%. At this rate, housing units would increase by 8,600 in the next twenty years. Two-thirds, or roughly 5,750 housing units, could easily be accommodated in the proposed Development Focus Areas. With modest infrastructure improvements and good planning all growth for the foreseeable future could be accommodated by this strategy

Development Focus Area Type	Housing Unit Growth Potential
Urban Center	5,000 – 10,150
Established Nodes	725 – 1,900
Emerging Nodes	1,050 – 1,550
Rural Centers	50 – 1,075
Total	6,975 – 14,675

Commercial Development in the Focus Areas

The type, scale, and design of commercial development should vary among the Development Focus Areas. The Urban Center provides regional shopping destinations in Tompkins County and should continue to do so.

Commercial development in the other Development Focus Areas should provide goods and services primarily to the residents of the Development Focus Areas and the surrounding rural areas. In general, permitted businesses should not generate large volumes of traffic, should minimize adverse impacts on nearby residential properties, and should fit the visual character and architectural scale of the specific Development Focus Area. Strip-type shopping centers, highway-oriented commercial uses, and drive-through facilities should be minimized.

The following is an illustrative (not exhaustive) list of the types of businesses and services that could be expected to locate in the Nodes and Rural Centers. These should be limited in size, based on the population to be served and the need to fit into the character of the Development Focus Area.

Commercial Uses

- Artist studios
- Banks, excluding drive-through facilities
- Bed and breakfasts, inns
- Business and professional offices
- Convenience stores
- Farmers markets
- Medical and dental offices
- Music, dance, art studios and schools
- Personal services, including pharmacies, launderettes, barber/beauty shops, tailors and shoe repair
- Restaurants, coffee shops, bakeries, and bars, excluding drive-through facilities
- Retail, including clothing, hardware, furniture, and antiques

Public/Semi-Public Uses

- Churches and other places of worship
- Community centers, clubs, and lodges
- Day care centers
- Libraries and museums
- Municipal or government buildings, including fire and police stations
- Post offices
- Primary and secondary schools

Conditional Uses

- Light manufacturing, including agricultural processing
- Animal shelters and kennels
- Communications facilities
- Indoor entertainment facilities
- Indoor recreation facilities

Infrastructure Improvements

This document has noted several times the importance of the availability of water and sewer infrastructure to support the change in development patterns. In March 2010, the Tompkins County Council of Governments published a review of the status of water and sewer infrastructure entitled, "Countywide Inter-Municipal Water and Sewer Feasibility Study for Tompkins County." That study included an inventory of municipal water and wastewater facilities and evaluated their capacity to support growth in a nodal development pattern. The study identified the limitations (if any) to system expansion.

The study also included an analysis of the readiness of each of the proposed Development Focus Areas to support the development described herein and (for those not ready) how long before those systems could reasonably be ready. The readiness of the Urban Center, Established Nodes, and the Emerging Nodes are:

Immediate to 5 Years
Urban Center
Established Nodes: Dryden, Groton, and Varna
5 to 10 Years
Established Nodes: Newfield and Trumansburg
Emerging Nodes: NYSEG and South Lansing

The Rural Centers, for the most part, do not have existing infrastructure, so it is unlikely that they will be ready for the more intense development needed to develop as Nodes.

Infrastructure Improvements Recommendations

- Newfield Established Node– Improve the wastewater treatment facility in the Newfield Development Focus Area. Flows to the wastewater treatment facility have been exceeding permit limits pointing to the need to expand the number of absorption fields. This expansion may be required whether additional development occurs or not.

- Trumansburg Established Node– Provide a redundant source of groundwater supply for the water system serving the Trumansburg Development Focus Area.

- NYSEG Emerging Node – Municipal water and sewer infrastructure exists in portions of the NYSEG Development Focus Area but does not extend north across NYS Route 13 to Hall Road or Pinckney Road. The service area would need to be expanded to support a mixed-use, compact Node.

- South Lansing Emerging Node – A new sewer district would be needed to serve the existing and new mix of land uses in the South Lansing Development Focus Area.

Connections

The proposed Development Focus Areas will be successful only if pedestrian travel is a viable transportation option within the Focus Area and if bicycle and transit travel are viable transportation alternatives to destinations outside the Focus Areas.

In 2007, pilot walkability studies were conducted in two communities: (1) the Village of Trumansburg and (2) the Northeast area of the Town of Ithaca and the Village of Cayuga Heights. These walkability studies provided specific recommendations to improve and enhance pedestrian access to important destinations, such as schools, shopping, employment, and health centers. Assessing walkability requires a very detailed knowledge of existing facilities and experience with identifying specific barriers to walking in a community. It is important for any walkability study to employ a process that involves a broad cross-section of the community in order to provide a good picture of the community's walking concerns and needs.

As noted earlier in this report, development in Tompkins County over the past fifty-plus years has not followed a nodal development pattern. As a result, there are several areas in the County with a significant amount of development near, but not within, the proposed Development Focus Areas. It is important to build connections between these developments and the Development Focus Areas. With strong pedestrian, bicycle, and/or transit connections to the Development Focus Areas these more scattered developments can enjoy some of the benefits of the Focus Areas without necessarily having to drive.

Connections Recommendations

- Urban Center and All Established Nodes – Conduct walkability studies and implement the recommendations.

- Urban Center and All Established Nodes – Complete sidewalk systems and develop and implement long-term maintenance plans.

- All Development Focus Areas – Establish strong pedestrian and bicycle connections between the various Development Focus Areas and nearby development. Some areas require particular attention, as highlighted below. Develop connections between:
    - Urban Center and residential areas near Deer Run, along Snyder Hill Road, in western Cayuga Heights, in western Village of Lansing, and in northern Village of Lansing.
    - Freeville Emerging Node and the William George Agency (George Junior Republic) facility.
    - NYSEG Emerging Node and the Etna Rural Center.

- Provide transit service that meets the needs of commuters in the Development Focus Areas. In particular, provide regular commuter service between the Nodes (both Established and Emerging) and the Urban Center. Continue to provide regular transit service throughout the Urban Center.

Controlling Sprawl

Most of the benefits of concentrating growth in the Development Focus Areas will not be achieved if a sprawling pattern of development continues outside of these areas. Developing outside of the focus areas will require significant investment in water, sewer, and roads; create a demand for services in new areas even as services in existing areas are stagnating or in decline; require more trips by automobile as scattered development cannot be served efficiently with trails and transit; and continue development pressure on farmland and important natural areas. Limiting development outside the Development Focus Areas will also help preserve rural character, an oft-stated goal of local plans.

While the Development Focus Areas Strategy recognizes that there will continue to be a need and demand for development outside the identified focus areas, there are several strategies that can help to control it.

- A distinct edge should be established and maintained between the Development Focus Areas and the surrounding countryside.

- For those businesses and services that are important to creating a successful Development Focus Area, local development regulations should discourage their location outside of the identified focus areas.

- Water and sewer infrastructure should not be extended to serve new areas outside of the Development Focus Areas. Decisions on public investment in roads, buildings, facilities, and services should consider whether those expenditures support nodal development patterns or sprawl.

- Economic development activities for rural areas that are not dependent on subdividing and developing land should be identified and promoted. This would include exploration of new agricultural and forestry products and markets and the development of renewable energy resources.

- Efforts to permanently protect important farmland and critical natural resources should be supported.

- Transfer of Development Rights programs should be explored for individual towns, for portions of towns, or even for multi-town regions to help promote and direct growth to the Development Focus Areas.

Looking to the Future

The benefits of the nodal development pattern envisioned by this Development Focus Areas Strategy may not be fully realized in the next five to ten years, but development today will likely be here in 50 to 100 years and beyond. As we strive to develop a sustainable community we can expect higher costs for fossil fuels, more reliance on transportation alternatives, a need for increased efficiency in public services, and an increased emphasis on daily activity that leads to better health. All of these trends are better accommodated in a nodal pattern of development and are much more difficult to achieve if we continue to promote a sprawling pattern of development.

APPENDIX 1

Diversity of Uses

The Preliminary Draft of the LEED for Neighborhood Developments Rating System (2005) identified fourteen categories of non-residential development that were used to evaluate the diversity of uses within walking distance of a proposed project. Proposed developments received maximum points for having at least seven of the fourteen types located within walking distance. The fourteen types of uses identified were:

- everyday retail (convenience, general, grocery, drug, hardware, gas, laundry),
- discretionary retail (restaurants, bookstores, departments stores, specialty shops),
- entertainment (movies, theaters, concert halls, music and performance venues),
- educational facilities (daycare, schools, college, university),
- public/private clubs (not open to public) and associated recreational facilities,
- religious (including cemeteries),
- government services (city hall, court, jail, police station, fires station, post office, motor vehicle admin),
- other civic buildings (library, museum, community center, transportation depots/stations/terminal),
- offices (not counting home-based, small, personal offices),
- lodging,
- medical (hospital, clinic, private offices),
- public recreational facilities: playing courts, sports fields, extensive trail networks,
- light industrial (including auto repair) warehouses,
- nurseries, market gardens, public community gardens.

Note that the final LEED for Neighborhood Developments Rating System used an entirely different approach to evaluate the diversity of uses, however, the Development Focus Areas Strategy analysis is based on the 2005 draft system.

More About LEED-ND

The U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC), the Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU), and the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC)—three organizations that represent some of the nation's leaders among progressive design professionals, builders, developers, and the environmental community—have come together to develop a national set of standards for neighborhood location and design based on the combined principles of smart growth, urbanism, and green building. The goal of this partnership is to establish these standards for assessing and rewarding environmentally superior development practices within the rating framework of the LEED® (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Green Building Rating System.

Unlike other LEED products that focus primarily on green building practices, with relatively few credits regarding site selection, LEED for Neighborhood Development (LEED-ND) places the emphasis on the elements that bring the buildings together into a neighborhood, and relate the neighborhood to its larger region and landscape. This work was guided by sources such as the Smart Growth Network's ten principles of smart growth, the Charter of the New Urbanism, other LEED rating systems, and other pertinent criteria. In short, LEED-ND will create a label, as well as guidelines for design and decision-making, to serve as an incentive for better location, design, and construction of new residential, commercial, and mixed developments.

APPENDIX 2

Planning Process

The Tompkins County Planning Advisory Board (PAB) oversaw the preparation of this strategy. The PAB is a citizen advisory board appointed to provide the Tompkins County Legislature and the Commissioner of Planning with advice and counsel on comprehensive planning matters. The staff of the Tompkins County Planning Department was responsible for the day-to-day drafting of this document and for reaching out to municipalities and members of the public on its contents.

The foundation for the Development Focus Areas Strategy was established in the "Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan," adopted by the Tompkins County Legislature in 2004. This Strategy also relies on several other local efforts to help identify the need for this Strategy. Particularly key were the "Affordable Housing Needs Assessment," sponsored by Tompkins County in 2006, the "Countywide Inter-Municipal Water and Sewer Feasibility Study for Tompkins County," sponsored by the Tompkins County Council of Governments in 2010, and the "Economic Development Strategy," prepared by Tompkins County Area Development in 2006.

Work on the Development Focus Areas Strategy began in March 2010 at a PAB meeting at which the proposed approach to the preparation of the Strategy was discussed. Preliminary information on defining the Development Focus Areas was presented at a public meeting held in June 2010. Forty attendees, representing eight municipalities and a variety of community organizations heard a presentation on the benefits of nodal development and the potential locations of Development Focus Areas. Between September 2010 and February 2011, the PAB frequently discussed progress on the Strategy.

Early in 2012, a draft of the Development Focus Areas Strategy was shared with local elected officials, planning boards, and zoning boards along with an offer to meet with them to review the draft. Planning Department staff met with officials from the City of Ithaca, six towns, and two villages as well as staff from the City of Ithaca and Town of Ithaca. Several substantive changes to the draft were made as a result of these discussions. The June 8, 2012 version of this report includes those changes.