



STRATEGIC PLAN | 2024-2029



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Role of County Government

Local government must be responsive to changing community needs, and the Strategic Operations Plan aligns resources with priorities for its service to the community. Tompkins County manages services in the areas of public safety, infrastructure, housing and economic development, the environment, health and human services, and elections, with over 800 employees across 30 departments. The plan will impact the County organization by giving strategic direction on how departments and staff can best serve the public and outlining what the County needs to achieve its goals within the economic and financial limits of County government.

Message from the County Chair

To the Tompkins County Community,

Tompkins County's first ever Strategic Operations Plan is a detailed roadmap for prioritizing local government operations and investments to meet the diverse needs of our community. This plan incorporates input and expertise from community members, Tompkins County staff, and elected Legislators, resulting in five key priority areas of focus: Health and Safety, Economic Opportunity and Quality of Life, Equitable Service Delivery, Climate Change Mitigation and Resiliency, and Organizational Excellence. Embedded in each of these priority areas is a focus on equity to ensure that our work is centered on achieving the best outcomes for the whole community.

This plan addresses key themes of need identified through significant community and staff input. The plan addresses access to County services, the importance of affordable and attainable housing, the need to fund and enhance critical life safety initiatives across the county, and the critical importance of local mental and behavioral health services among many other strategic objectives. Over the next five years Tompkins County will put this plan into action to address organizational and community needs. This plan serves as the foundation of many positive developments to come.

Throughout implementation of this plan the Legislature and County staff will regularly update the community on progress and outcomes. Expect elements of the plan requiring the investment of public funds to be examined during annual budget deliberations, and operational activities to be carried out through our departments under the supervision of the Tompkins County Administrator and the Legislature. Putting this plan into action is an opportunity for Tompkins County to further invest in our staff and community while making progress to address the needs and opportunities facing our community.

Sincerely,

Dan Klein
Chair, Tompkins County Legislature





Who We Are

Our Mission

Tompkins County safeguards and enhances lives by providing services driven by the needs of its community.

Our Vision

All Tompkins County residents thrive in a supportive, healthy, safe, and inclusive environment.

Core Values

Respect

We embrace a safe and inclusive culture and treat each other with dignity, understanding, and compassion.

Accountability

We embrace our vital role as public servants by pursuing excellence while holding ourselves, each other, and the organization responsible for decisions that impact the community.

Integrity

We commit to making conscious choices to act ethically in all endeavors, including following through on our commitments, admitting and learning from our mistakes, and being honest with the community and one another.

Equity

We sustain a workplace community that ensures fairness through diversity and inclusion by embracing learning and best practices, eliminating structurally oppressive systems, and building trust, appreciation, a sense of belonging, and opportunities for all.

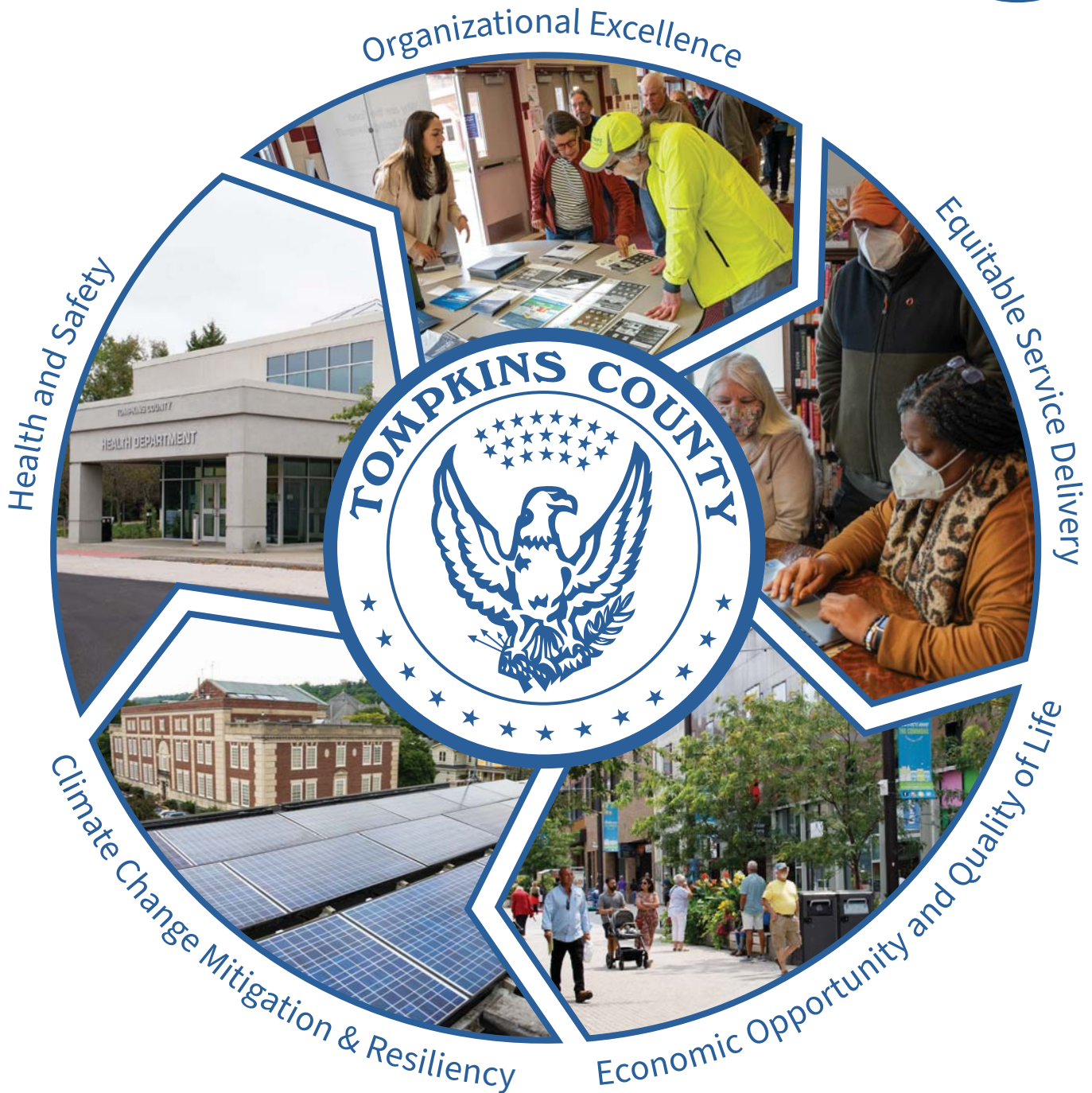
Stewardship

We value our human, financial, and environmental resources, and provide services in a manner that responsibly manage and preserve those resources into the future.

Diversity Statement

Tompkins County Government centers diversity, equity, and inclusion. We are committed to the empowerment of employees and residents to dismantle systemic barriers that inhibit inclusive governance and the provision of government services to all.

Plan At A Glance



Organizational Excellence



Our Goal

To foster a collaborative, flexible, organized, and effective government operation, Tompkins County will invest in its employees, promote a culture of belonging, and ensure a highly skilled and accountable workforce.

Objectives

1. Create a county-wide equity action plan that will provide a shared framework and allow for the review of all policies, practices, and programs to advance equity within organizational operations.
2. Develop and implement an organizational development and learning strategy that will build core skills, enact practices to enhance cultural competencies, enhance leadership proficiency, promote career pathways, and create a change-readiness culture within the County organization.
3. Identify and implement initiatives to enhance emotional/mental health support for County employees.
4. Increase staff competencies around data collection and analysis, standardize data collection and reporting processes, and increase preparedness for leadership to make decisions founded in data to improve the ability of the County to ensure equitable outcomes in the community.
5. Build a robust employee engagement program to break down silos, help provide a voice to all employees, and connect employees within their work-teams, departments and across the County organization.
6. Enhance the ability to recruit and retain qualified employees for all County departments by developing a competitive salary and benefit strategy.
7. Develop and apply organizational processes that align County staff and fiscal resources with identified priority areas to make progress on Strategic Plan priorities.
8. Develop a technology master plan to provide a road map for necessary IT investments in tools, technology, staff training, and cybersecurity.
9. Review and develop standard operating procedures that support cross-department activities such as shared services, budget development, public information, funding for training and development, and employee recognition.
10. Evaluate security and safety in County facilities and make necessary improvements.
11. Engage County staff in preparation for the move to Center of Government Building to ensure highest and best use of new facilities while also achieving a seamless service delivery during the transition.



Organizational Excellence



Performance Measures

- A. Number of qualified applicants for County career opportunities
- B. Percentage of employees who report adequate access to training and development opportunities
- C. Percentage staff vacancy rate
- D. Number of programs defined in annual equity action plan and initiated through annual workplans
- E. Percentage of County departments utilizing standard client demographic data collection policy and procedures
- F. Number of technology resources enhanced by Information Technology Services master planning effort
- G. Percentage of employees who report feeling safe at work





Equitable Service Delivery

Objectives

1. Considering current staff capacity and resources, improve service offerings and engagement to all parts of Tompkins County by bringing services and outreach to communities outside of downtown Ithaca.
2. Develop a community engagement and public information strategy to enhance the public's understanding of available County and County-funded resources provided in the community.
3. Prioritize hiring individuals with lived experience in underserved communities such as community health workers and peer support specialists to enhance trust and effectiveness in service delivery.
4. Ensure all staff are trained in understanding and addressing the diverse needs of clients.
5. Build upon efforts underway as part of the Tompkins County Whole Health Strategic Plan to develop an internal coordinating capability that provides a cross-departmental inclusive and efficient intake process that assesses the whole person.
6. Develop and implement a detailed Mobility Management Strategy to improve transportation access to employment, education, medical appointments, and other necessary services for low-income and underserved communities in the County.

Our Goal

To ensure that all residents have full and convenient access to person-centered County services, Tompkins County will develop and implement strategies to provide effective services in the most equitable and accessible manner for community members.

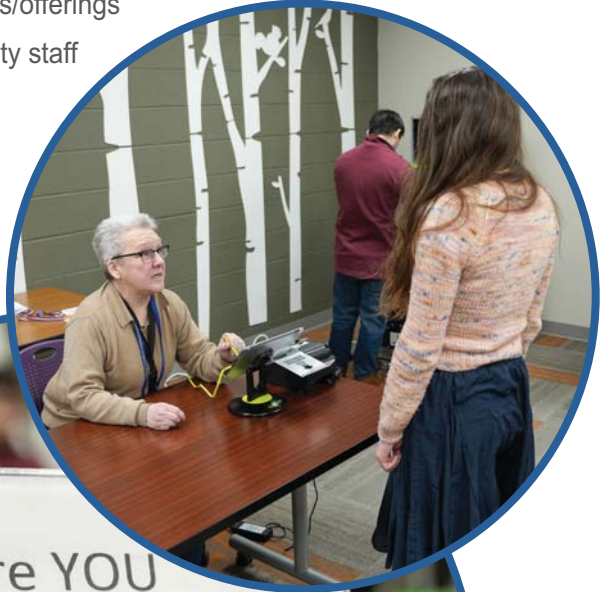


Equitable Service Delivery



Performance Measures

- A. Percent of public and clients who indicate knowledge of County programs/offerings
- B. Number of clients/public having received outreach by a member of County staff
- C. Percentage of community members receiving services by municipality
- D. Demographic profile of clients served by County programs as compared to demographic profile of entire community
- E. Percentage of staff who receive equity training annually



Economic Opportunity and Quality of Life

Objectives

1. Implement programs and solutions to encourage a housing system that meets the needs of the community by expanding housing opportunities for individuals and families ranging from a low-barrier shelter for the unhoused to permanent housing opportunities at various price points.
2. Work with developers, funding partners, and State agencies to continue leveraging awards made through the local Community Housing Development Fund and bringing in grant funding to increase the construction and rehabilitation of affordable housing.
3. Develop and enhance local programs for Minority-owned, Women-owned and Small Business Enterprise (MWSBE) Certifications and Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) Certifications with participation goals for programs provided by or funded by the County to increase County spending with MWSBE/DBE service providers.
4. Develop and implement programs to train the local workforce to better match worker skills with the needs of living wage employers.
5. Ensure the airport meets the global needs of community members, businesses, and educational institutions in a safe, convenient, and fiscally sound manner by supporting current initiatives as well as those in the upcoming airport strategic plan.
6. Encourage economic development, workforce development and workforce housing development through support of Ithaca Area Economic Development's programs and services and the Industrial Development Agency's tools and incentives.
7. Explore funding opportunities to formulate and implement solution(s) to expand high-speed broadband access to all addresses in Tompkins County in partnership with established internet service providers.
8. Provide operational oversight to ensure that the public bus service and paratransit service are operating efficiently, effectively and in accordance with federal and State guidelines, so they can continue to serve the public.
9. Evaluate the process, requirements, and methodology for County funding of outside partner agencies for non-mandated services to ensure the funds are serving the highest priority needs in the community in an equitable manner and ensure adherence to all applicable County policies, regulations, and laws.
10. Maintain a system of County bridges and roadways that are in a state of good repair and meet the needs of residents and visitors.
11. Collaborate with, and provide appropriate financial support to, partner institutions such as cooperative extension, the public library, the community college, and higher educational institutions that support economic well-being in the community.

Our Goal

To increase residents' quality of life and support a thriving, inclusive and sustainable local economy, Tompkins County will use its resources and partnerships to advance access to living wage jobs; appealing, affordable, and attainable housing; and safe and affordable transportation options for people traveling to jobs and services.



Economic Opportunity and Quality of Life



Performance Measures

- A. Analysis of outside agency funding for non-mandated services by 2026
- B. Percentage of individuals discharged from emergency shelter to permanent housing
- C. Number of individuals counted in the annual Point in Time Count
- D. Number of adults/dislocated workers employed after training
- E. Percentage of cost burdened households
- F. Percentage of vendors that are MWBE certified contracted to provide services to County
- G. Number of new affordable housing units built or rehabilitated with assistance from the Community Housing Development Fund
- H. Percentage of people who work in Tompkins County by mode of transportation to work
- I. Percentage of Tompkins County residents earning a living wage



Climate Change Mitigation & Resiliency



Our Goal

To mitigate the negative impacts of climate change and enhance community resiliency, Tompkins County will reduce greenhouse gas emissions from its operations and develop and implement programs to help the community transition from fossil fuels, sustainably manage materials and waste, reduce severity of climate impacts such as flooding and drought, and prepare for disasters of all kinds.

Objectives

1. Implement actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in County operations as outlined in the Tompkins County Energy Strategy, Green Fleet and Green Buildings Capital Program, and other County Policies that will lead to net-zero greenhouse gas emissions for County operations.
2. Develop and implement programs that promote reduction in community greenhouse gas emissions and target specific hard-to-decarbonize sectors, or populations, that need additional support, which will lead to net-zero emissions for the entire community.
3. Identify and assist residents, especially seniors and those with low incomes, who would benefit from energy efficiency in their homes.
4. Implement actions to reduce flooding and improve habitat corridors by protecting critical natural lands, maintaining well-designed roads and bridges, and increase awareness of these issues within the community.
5. Implement practices to improve water quality and reduce sediment and phosphorus in ditches, streams, and lakes to improve water quality and reduce negative outcomes, such as harmful algal blooms.
6. Implement actions to combat the impacts of drought and improve water supply resiliency in the changing climate.
7. Expand programs to enhance emergency preparedness both within the community and for County operations, including formalizing continuity of operations plans, implementing the comprehensive emergency management plan, hazard mitigation plan, and resiliency and recovery plan, and providing timely updates to the community and municipal partners on critical emergency preparedness issues.
8. Implement near-term strategies found in ReThinking Waste in Tompkins County: Fostering a Local Circular Economy to promote the 4Rs: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, and Rethink.



Climate Change Mitigation & Resiliency



Performance Measures

- A. Percentage of municipal solid waste diverted from landfill
- B. Number of tons food scrap diverted
- C. Number of acres protected through the County's natural infrastructure capital program
- D. Percentage of County vehicle fleet that are battery-electric or plug-in hybrid electric vehicles.
- E. Number of participants in Citizen Preparedness Corps
- F. Number of Tompkins County Hazard Mitigation Plan actions initiated by County and community partners
- G. Designation as a NYS Climate Smart Community
- H. Number of metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent greenhouse gas emissions from County Operations, reported every five years
- I. Number of metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent greenhouse gas emissions from the Community, reported every five years



IT'S ELECTRIC!
Your County is going green, and you can too.



Health and Safety

Our Goal

To promote the health and safety of all community members, Tompkins County will provide person-centered services informed by best practices to address existing and emerging concerns.



TOMPKINS COUNTY
Whole Health

Objectives

1. Assess pilot Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Rapid Response Program and similar initiatives and develop a long-term emergency services program strategy to ensure timely access to basic life support services across the community.
2. Continue to address the needs of older adults in the areas of community, land use, and services through cross-agency collaboration as detailed in the Age Friendly Framework under the Office for the Aging's action plan.
3. Improve the well-being of the youth in the community by implementing the Achieving Youth Results framework.
4. Expand education and outreach efforts under the Tompkins County Office of Human Rights to address discrimination in housing, employment, public accommodation, and education.
5. Conduct a needs assessment of the local veteran community to inform needs-based programming and to determine how the Tompkins County Veterans Service Department can best expand its outreach.
6. Support interventions and activities as outlined in the Community Health Improvement Plan under the priority areas of preventing chronic disease and promoting healthy women, infants, and children.
7. Prioritize programs to promote well-being, support those mental and substance use disorders, and enhance prevention efforts and education.
8. Assess the progress of the County, through the work of the Community Justice Center, Tompkins County Sheriff's Office, and other key stakeholders in achieving the plans of Reimagining Public Safety and determine which initiatives will continue in 2025 and beyond.
9. Reaffirm County's commitment to Alternatives to Incarceration (ATIs) by assessing the overall impact of current ATIs, identifying gaps in services, and supporting efforts to fill gaps through the work of the Criminal Justice/Alternatives to Incarceration Advisory Board.
10. Further the capital plan for a new Public Safety Building by obtaining updated cost estimates and schematic designs for improvements.



Health and Safety

Performance Measures

- A. Percentage of clients of Office of Aging who report being able to remain at home
- B. Percentage of Whole Health clients who received timely access to mental health services
- C. Average EMS response time by municipality
- D. Percentage of Achieving Youth Results touchstone objectives completed
- E. Number of participants at Office of Human Rights events
- F. Number of veterans and families served



TOMPKINS COUNTY MENTAL HEALTH

Why a Strategic Plan



The inaugural Strategic Operations Plan pairs a high-level roadmap to addressing community needs with an implementation strategy for staff and organizational leadership to implement change. As is the case with local governments across the U.S., Tompkins County is faced with increasingly complex organizational and community needs – this Plan looks at those needs through the lens of opportunity, showcasing what is possible and how best to achieve meaningful results. Tompkins County will use this plan to effectively prioritize its efforts over the next five years, resulting in Tompkins County taking a confident, data-driven leadership role in the community.

The Plan presents a unique opportunity to embed equity across strategic priorities and objectives. With a commitment to “the empowerment of employees and residents to dismantle systemic barriers that inhibit inclusive governance and the provision of government services to all,” Tompkins County will ensure that the organization and the people within it have the knowledge and tools to best deliver services and resources across the diverse needs of the community.

Thank you to the Appalachian Regional Commission

This planning process is supported by a grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC). Funds were granted to support the ARC Investment Goal of “Building Community Leaders and Capacity,” and the New York State Implementation Strategy Goal of “Support visioning, strategic planning and implementation, and resident engagement approaches to foster increased community resilience and generate positive economic impacts.”

Tompkins County also thanks its partners at Southern Tier 8 for their support in the ARC grant process.



How Did We Build This Plan?



Milestones



How Did We Build This Plan?



Engagement Stats



Survey responses

- Social pinpoint community data gathering – **182**
- Employees data gathering – **375** responses
- Social pinpoint community draft plan review – **306**
- Employee draft plan review – **172**



Unique participants on Social Pinpoint
643

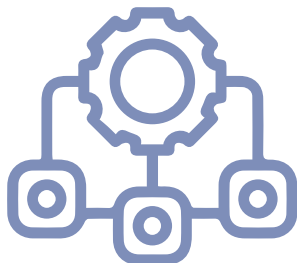
Visits to the Social Pinpoint site
13,463



Client and Community Focus Groups
4



Legislature workshops and presentations
3



Government Operations Committee Presentations
4



County leadership meetings/planning sessions
2



Community Member Interviews
104



Acknowledgements

This strategic plan is the result of the combined efforts of our County's residents, elected officials, employees, and community stakeholders. Tompkins County would like to thank everyone who provided their knowledge and insights throughout the process and who dedicated their time to making this Strategic Plan come to life.

County Legislature

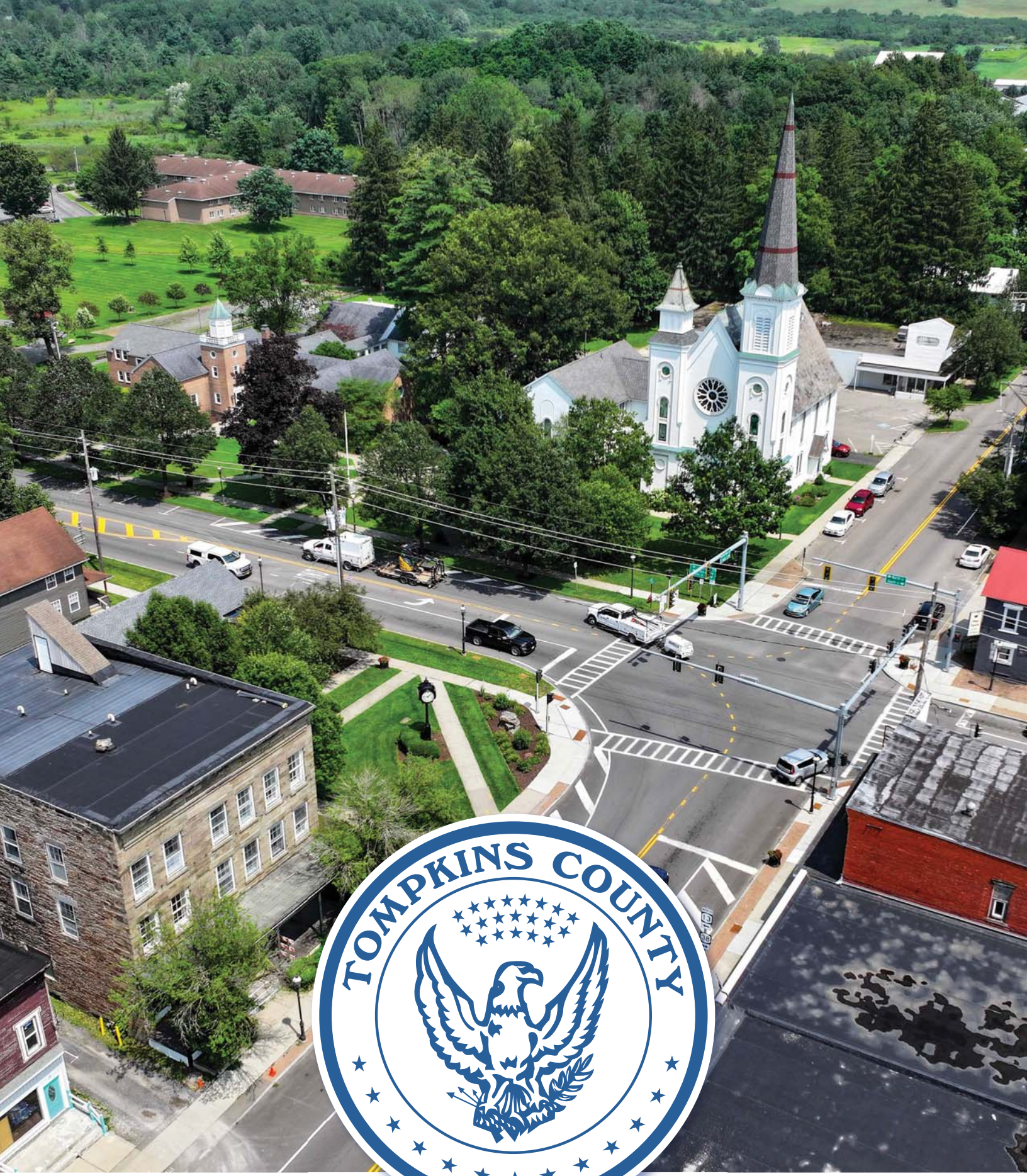
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