

Tompkins County Planning Department 2007 ANNUAL REPORT

From the Commissioner . . .

Our efforts to implement the policies and action items in the Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan reached new levels of success in 2007. Particularly notable were actions by the Tompkins County Legislature to adopt an Affordable Housing Strategy and approve a Sustainable Management Plan for County forest lands. The County Legislature also approved the purchase of 55 Brown Road as the site of the new County Health Department building, a project that will be the first Tompkins County government project to seek LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification. In addition, the dormant Flood Hazard Mitigation Program was reinstated, based on the Legislature's inclusion of funding in the 2007 budget, with a renewed focus on watershed approaches to flood mitigation and support from a matching grant provided by the New York State DEC for a Stream Corridor Protection Program.

There were also significant efforts by community partners to implement Comprehensive Plan actions such as publishing a bicycle suitability map (Ithaca-Tompkins County Transportation Council), implementing a multi-faceted buy local campaign (Cornell Cooperative Extension) and successful implementation of the Empire Zone Program (Tompkins County Area Development). The New York State Department of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation completed the long-awaited draft Master Plan for the Black Diamond Trail, a necessary first step before actual trail development can occur, and the City of Ithaca obtained a grant from the New York State Department of State to plan the long-overdue dredging of Cayuga Inlet.

While all of the above were proceeding, the Planning Department went through an unprecedented staff transition. Heather Filiberto left at the end of 2006 to take over responsibility for implementation of the County's Empire Zone program with TCAD. Kate Hackett and Crystal Buck left mid-year to pursue opportunities in Delaware and Wisconsin. All three are outstanding professionals without whose efforts the development and implementation of the County Comprehensive Plan would not have been possible. They worked hard in their final weeks and days to complete key projects and keep the work of the Department from missing a beat. We miss them all.

Fortunately for the Department and Tompkins County, we had a remarkably successful recruitment to find successors to Heather, Kate and Crystal. We were more than pleasantly surprised that we were able to bring on board three outstanding new staff members in Jeanne Leccese, Leslie Schill and Scott Doyle. All three dove into the work of the Department enthusiastically and moved up the learning curve of working in a new environment quickly. They have all advanced their project and program responsibilities with an amazing, nearly seamless transition.

Planning is all about managing change and the Department had a first hand experience in doing just that in 2007. Special thanks to Joan Jurkowich, Katie Borgella, Sharon Heller, Dariele Drake and Kathy Wilsea for pitching in to do whatever was needed and persevering throughout this challenging year.

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

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Photos by Staff





2007 GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND MEASURES OF SUCCESS

Included in the Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan are Principles, Policies and Actions that guide much of the work of the Planning Department. The Plan establishes a process for monitoring and reporting progress on plan implementation and the Planning Department published annual *Indicators of Success* reports for 2006 and 2007. The *Indicators of Success* are intended to measure the community's progress and will depend upon many outside factors that may impact the pace of that progress. As part of this Annual Report, we also want to measure our success in achieving our specific departmental goals and objectives for the year. Our goals and objectives do not reflect every activity undertaken by the department in 2007 and many of those other activities are described later in this report. We established two broad goals for 2007:

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

Objectives and measures of success for each goal are outlined below.



Goal 1, Objective 1: Develop and gain community agreement on an affordable housing strategy.

Measure of Success: Strategy is accepted by the key communities with infrastructure capacity that will allow significant development of affordable housing.

End of Year Status: The Tompkins County Housing Strategy was endorsed by the County Legislature by resolution in June, and subsequently endorsed by the City of Ithaca Common Council, Ithaca Town Board, Lansing Town Board, Ithaca Neighborhood Housing Services, Tompkins County Area Development, Better Housing for Tompkins County, Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce, and Habitat for Humanity at Tompkins and Cortland Counties.



Goal 1, Objective 2: Complete studies addressing Route 13/366 Corridor Management, Community Walkability in the Village of Trumansburg and Town of Ithaca, Ithaca North-side Waterfront Circulation, and a County Forest Management Plan.

Measure of Success: Studies are completed.

End of Year Status: All three of the transportation studies were substantially complete at the end of 2007 and the County Forest Management Plan was completed in October 2007 and adopted by the County Legislature on November 8, 2007.



Goal 1, Objective 3: Continue to develop community partnerships to promote the protection and management of resources within the Natural Features Focus Areas in the Comprehensive Plan.

Measure of Success: Complete management plans for the fourteen Natural Features Focus Areas.

End of Year Status: The Tompkins County Conservation Plan (Phase I) addressed the fourteen Natural Features Focus Areas and was completed in the late spring of 2007. The Conservation Plan identifies priority actions to conserve and steward the natural benefits provided by these Focus Areas. The Plan also identifies specific priorities for land protection in the Focus Areas.



Goal 1, Objective 4: Continue to develop a Purchase of Development Rights Program for the protection of agricultural resources in the Agricultural Resource Focus Areas identified in the Comprehensive Plan.

Measures of Success: 1) Conduct annual monitoring for the Agricultural Conservation Easement for the Howser Farm in the Town of Lansing. 2) Work with the towns of Lansing and Dryden to implement the two Purchase of Development Rights grants awarded in 2006. 3) Work cooperatively with interested farmers, community partners and municipalities to submit one additional application for Purchase of Development Rights grants for a farm in the Agricultural Resource Focus Areas.

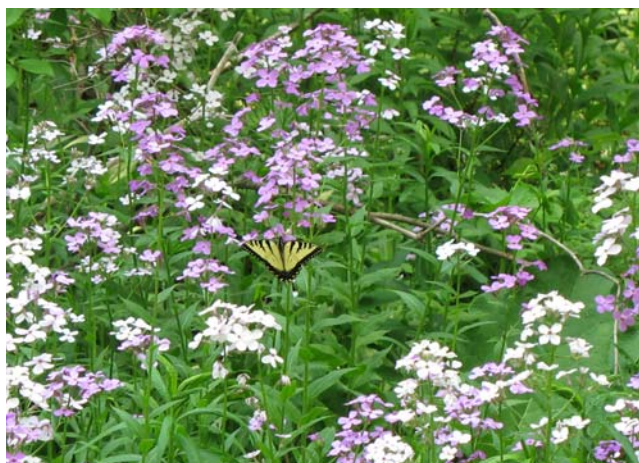
End of Year Status: The first annual monitoring report was completed for the Howser Farm in May 2007. Work progressed with the towns of Lansing and Dryden to implement grants awarded in 2006 to conserve the Bensvue and Lew-Lin farms. Working with Lansing and Dryden, applications were submitted and new grants awarded in 2007 to support further conservation of the BensVue Farm and a new project on the Jerry-Dell Farm in Dryden.



Goal 1, Objective 5: Implement project(s) funded in part by the Capital Reserve Fund for Natural, Scenic and Recreational Resource Protection.

Measure of Success: One project is successfully implemented in 2007.

End of Year Status: In 2007, a project was completed to conserve the 113-acre Babcock property. The project was led by the Finger Lakes Land Trust (FLLT) and included participation by the Town of Ithaca, Cornell University, Tompkins County and the FLLT.



*Swallowtail butterfly in VanBuskirk Gulf,
Town of Newfield.*



Goal 1, Objective 6: Re-institute the Flood Hazard Mitigation Program based on the watershed analyses conducted by our consultant Milone and MacBroom.

Measure of Success: Priority projects are identified and at least one project is initiated in 2007.

End of Year Status: The FHMP was re-instituted and several projects identified for the initial round of funding. Two projects were completed in 2007: plantings at the Barille site to restore this corridor along Sixmile Creek in Caroline, and streambank restoration along Salmon Creek in Lansing.



Goal 1, Objective 7: Work with municipalities to develop and implement stream buffer regulations.

Measure of Success: At least two local municipalities have completed draft regulations to protect stream buffers.

End of Year Status: At year's end the Town of Ulysses had incorporated buffers as part of its stormwater regulations, and the Town of Ithaca was continuing review of proposed standards to be added to the Town's zoning ordinance.



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

Measure of Success: One or more municipalities have developed draft land use regulations that support a more compact, concentrated development pattern in locally identified nodes.

End of Year Status: In 2007, several municipalities initiated planning or zoning activities that will incorporate concepts of nodal development, including the Town of Ithaca Comprehensive Plan update, the Town of Ulysses Comprehensive Plan update, and the Town of Dryden zoning update.



Goal 2, Objective 1: Evaluate housing, economic development, purchase of development rights and hazard mitigation programs to determine most effective role for County Planning Department and potentials to enhance cooperative efforts with partner agencies.

Measure of Success: Staff review of programs is completed and discussions with partner agencies initiated as appropriate.

End of Year Status: During 2007, it became apparent that the urgency to move forward with the Housing Strategy and the opportunity to provide a one-stop shop for economic development assistance could both be facilitated by shifting administrative responsibility for the Economic Development Revolving Loan Fund to Tompkins County Area Development and increasing the Planning Department's level of activity in support of implementing the Housing Strategy. A draft agreement for shifting the Revolving Loan Fund to TCAD and Legislative approval for the concept were both achieved in 2007. The Planning Department met with Cortland and Cayuga County Planning staffs to discuss, among other issues, the potential for future collaboration on purchase of development rights efforts.



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

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

End of Year Status: The Homeownership Program continued running in 2007 off program income funds, and an annual report was submitted to Housing & Urban Development (HUD) in October. Semi-annual and end-of-year reports were submitted for RPM Ecosystems' loan under the Economic Development Revolving Loan Fund. The last annual report for the County's 2003-2008 Stormwater SPDES permit was completed. A program review was conducted for Homeownership, with satisfactory results.



Goal 2, Objective 3: Maintain support for Legislature's Planning, Development and Environmental Quality Committee and advisory committees.

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

End of Year Status: In order to more effectively provide staff support, an arrangement was negotiated during 2007 to shift minute-taking responsibility for the Planning, Development and Environmental Quality Committee to the Clerk of the Legislature and maintain full staff support from the Planning Department for Environmental Management Council and Water Resources Council.



Online Resources . . .

Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan

<http://www.tompkins-co.org/planning/compplan/index.htm>

Indicators of Success

http://www.tompkins-co.org/planning/annual%20reports/Indicators_Report_Final_Draft%20b.pdf

Affordable Housing Needs Assessment and Housing Strategy

<http://www.tompkins-co.org/planning/HNA/countywidehousingneedsassessment.htm>

http://www.tompkins-co.org/planning/housing_choices/documents/TCHousingStrategy-endorsed.doc

Tompkins County Forest Management Plan

<http://www.tompkins-co.org/planning/Rural%20Resources/documents/Oct10MainPlan.pdf>

Benefits of Riparian Areas and Stream Buffers

<http://www.tompkins-co.org/planning/Water%20Resources/FINAL%20STREAM%20DOC.pdf>

Tompkins County Conservation Plan: A Strategic Approach to Natural Resource Stewardship

http://www.tompkins-co.org/NFFA/nri/documents/Tompkins_County_Conservation_Plan09-24-07.pdf

Tompkins County Walkability Assessment Methodology and Case Studies

http://www.tompkins-co.org/planning/community%20planning/documents/9-24-07TCWalkabilityFinalCompleteReportW_11x17.pdf

Tompkins County Multi-Jurisdictional All-Hazards Mitigation Plan

http://www.tompkins-co.org/planning/haz_mit.htm



THIRD ANNUAL REPORT ON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

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

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

2007 Indicators of Success Report

At the end of 2007, the County completed the second annual *Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan Indicators of Success: Achieving the Policies of the Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan*. This report is one component of the ongoing efforts of the Planning Department to report to the Tompkins County Legislature and the community regarding progress in achieving the policies of the Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan.

A few of the key findings from the 2007 Indicators of Success Report:

- Land receiving agricultural assessment has steadily decreased in the County. Since 2004, productive agricultural land decreased by 2,380 acres (3 percent).
- At the same time, Tompkins County is meeting the goal set in the County Comprehensive Plan, protecting more agricultural land each year. From 2004-2007, 8 percent more land (249 acres) in the Agricultural Resource Focus Areas gained protected status.
- The rate of land development in Tompkins County was more than double the rate of household population growth from 2005-2006.
- The County government's energy audit and implementation initiatives resulted in notable reductions in electricity and natural gas used in 2006.



HOUSING CHOICES

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

Tompkins County Housing Strategy

The Tompkins County Housing Strategy was completed in June and endorsed by the County Legislature. The document outlines four key strategies to address the growing deficit of housing of all types as documented in the Tompkins County *Affordable Housing Needs Assessment* (2006).

Strategy One: Inclusionary and Incentive Zoning

Use Inclusionary and Incentive Zoning to achieve goals that at least 20% of units in new market rate projects are affordable to those making 80% of median income and that at least 40% of units are affordable to those making

up to 120% of median income. Among the incentives that municipalities may offer are density bonuses and streamlined approval processes. This strategy also addresses the **Action: Develop or identify model provisions for land development regulations that encourage affordable housing.**

Strategy Two: Community Housing Trust

Establish a Community Housing Trust with support from major employers, financial institutions, educational institutions, government and private donors to acquire and own land on which housing for those making less than 80% of median income can be built. These housing units would be kept affordable through deed restriction on resale and/or provisions to keep rents affordable.

Strategy Three: Employer Assistance

Encourage major employers to provide assistance, such as low-interest financing, down-payment subsidies, or closing-cost assistance, to employees who purchase homes in targeted infill and nodal development projects.

Strategy Four: Community Housing Affordability Fund

Establish a Community Housing Affordability Fund, with contributions from public and private sources, to fill funding gaps needed to keep units affordable and assist not-for-profit housing developers with pre-development expenses.

Housing Trust and Housing Affordability Fund

A coalition of organizations, municipal leaders and others has established the ad hoc Tompkins County Housing Development Action (TCHDA) Group to advance implementation of the Tompkins County Housing Strategy. This group has developed proposals for two funds, identified in the Housing Strategy, to be used to meet affordable housing needs throughout the County, Tompkins County Affordability Fund and Tompkins County Housing Trust Fund. The goal of the Funds is to help communities and organizations throughout Tompkins County respond to the diverse affordable housing needs of its residents. The initial source for the Funds will come from Tompkins County, City of Ithaca and Cornell University.

Tompkins County Renter Survey

The Tompkins County Housing Needs Assessment estimates a need for 2,127 additional rental housing units over the next ten years. The Assessment recommended a renter survey to provide a greater understanding of the nature and specific sub-components of this evolving renter unit demand.

During the Fall of 2007 research and development of survey questions was completed. In partnership with Cornell University, Ithaca College and Tompkins Cortland Community College, the County has contracted the services of Survey Research Institute (SRI) to implement the Renter Survey. The survey results and analysis will be completed in Fall 2008.

Action: Build a New Community Residence—Single Room Occupancy Mental Health Facility.

Actions undertaken by other agencies/partners:

Construction of a 38-bed SRO was undertaken on Third Street in the City of Ithaca by Lakeview Mental Health Services. They expect to complete the project in 2008.

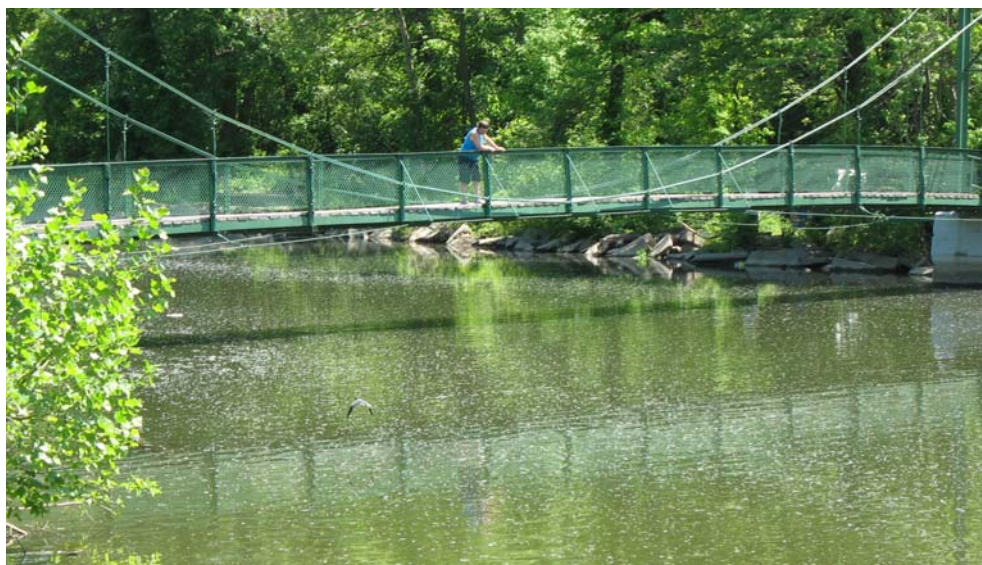
Action: Develop plans to meet the housing needs of segments of the population that require supportive services, including seniors, independent (or at-risk) youth, and the homeless.

The Tompkins County Affordable Housing Needs Assessment recommended undertaking further market surveys of the housing needs and preferences of those nearing retirement age (age 50-65) in order to assist developers in meeting key components of future demand. The Retirement Housing Preference Survey will carry through that recommendation and is being implemented by the Tompkins County Office for the Aging and the Planning Department to plan for future housing needs of those entering retirement.

In 2007, a project was initiated with the Cornell University CIPA program (Cornell Institute for Public Affairs) whereby CIPA students will develop a housing needs/preference survey and a survey methodology, and conduct the survey in 2008.

Action: Conduct a survey of in-commuters to determine the reasons they live outside of Tompkins County

Further analysis of the in-commuter survey, completed in 2005, was deferred to a future year.



*Fuertes Bird Sanctuary,
City of Ithaca*



TRANSPORTATION CHOICES

Action: Develop a bicycle suitability map for Tompkins County.

Actions undertaken by other agencies/partners:
This popular map was published in 2007 by the Ithaca-Tompkins County Transportation Council.

Action: Identify infill opportunities at nodes along transit lines.

Following completion of the Route 13/366 Corridor Management Study (see Centers of Development), staff met with the Town of Dryden Planning Board to discuss concepts from the study.



JOBS AND BUSINESS

Action: Develop a strategy to promote local use and consumption of locally produced goods

Actions undertaken by other agencies/partners:
Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County is achieving this through:

- Buy Local Month promotion - a month-long effort to promote local farms and food producers held in August
- Local Foods Directory - listing Tompkins and surrounding county producers - over 200 farms listed; 5,000 copies distributed
- Low Income Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Program - supported 36 families, 106 individuals, by providing a CSA share at half price for a period of ten weeks during the summer, which helped to make local foods affordable and accessible
- Satellite Farmers' Market Program - CCE operates four markets in rural communities so low income folks can redeem their Farmers' Market Nutrition Program Coupons; the markets are in part run by youth who learn about farming in the area, running a farm stand, cooking with local foods and eating healthy foods
- Culinary Passport - 2,500 were printed and distributed showcasing 15 area food establishments that featured local foods during the month of August 2007; passports were turned in for prizes
- Farm Trail Open House Tour, Aug. 19 - two farm trails were open for the public, a total of 65 people visited area farms and learned about how food is produced.
- Cornell Dining Local Foods Initiative - helped to link CU Dining with at least 15 local food producers
- Farm Tour for CU Dining Chefs
- Finger Lakes Culinary Bounty - regional farm and food promotion program spearheaded by CCE (provided a listing of 14 pick-your-own farms for inclusion on the Finger Lakes Tourism Alliance website)
- Tompkins County Buy Local Campaign - Buy Local steering committee and promotion program
- Annual CSA Farm Fair - CSA farmers promote their share options. Over 50 new customers signed up in 2007 as a result.

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

Actions undertaken by other agencies/partners:
2007 marked the first full year of New York State's Empire Zone Program in Tompkins County, which is administered by Tompkins County Area Development. By all measures, the Zone exceeded expectations. Thirty-four businesses were Zone Certified in 2007, projecting 762 new jobs and \$91 million in capital investments over the next five years. After receiving excellent marks on the first annual performance review, the State rewarded our Zone by doubling administrative funding support. The Tompkins County Empire Zone Development Plan was updated and approved. The plan outlines goals and strategies to promote business development in the Zone, identifies the types of businesses that are eligible to receive Empire Zone tax incentives, establishes minimum job creation and investment thresholds, and establishes performance review measures.



RURAL RESOURCES

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

Rural Small Business Loan Program — This program did not receive any new loan applications this year. Efforts are being made to publicize the program to a larger population.

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

Agricultural Protection — The County's participation in the Purchase of Development Rights program, largely funded through New York State's Farmland Protection Implementation Grants, continued to grow in 2007.



*Farm City Day — August 11, 2007
at Stuttle Farm in Dryden*

Tompkins County is now actively engaged in the crafting and monitoring of agricultural conservation easements on four farms encompassing 2,236 acres of productive farmland. After all of the easements are completed, the program will be responsible for bringing \$3.2 million of State funds to Tompkins County farmers. All of the local farms currently in the program are dairy farms, and 1,378 of those acres are now in organic production. In addition to the agricultural soils that are being protected, important stream buffers along Salmon Creek, Egypt Creek and Locke Creek are being conserved.

The most recent Farmland Protection grants were made in December 2007, to the Jerry-Dell Farm in the Town of Dryden and the Bensvue Farm in the Town of Lansing. The 420-acre Jerry-Dell Farm is the largest certified organic dairy farm in the Northeast (many other acres are rented or are located in Cortland County). That project is in the early stages of development. The 960-acre Bensvue Farm received an additional allocation of funds from the program in order to bring the project cost in line with the appraised value of the easement.

The Bensvue Farm, along with the 419-acre Lew-Lin Farm in the Town of Dryden, received program awards in October 2006. It is expected that those projects will be completed in 2008. The Tompkins County Planning Department has been working closely with the Town of Dryden and the Town of Lansing in both grantwriting and project implementation for these projects, and the two entities will co-hold the conservation easements on the Jerry-Dell, Lew-Lin and Bensvue Farms in perpetuity.

This year marked the first annual monitoring of the 439-acre Howser Farm in the Town of Lansing. The Howser Farm has been operating with a conservation easement, which is held solely by Tompkins County, since August 2006. In conducting the monitoring work, staff of the Planning Department, Soil and Water Conservation District, and Natural Resources Conservation Service visited the farm, met with Mr. Howser, and documented the condition of the land relative to the terms of the easement. This annual spring monitoring will become a part of the Department's annual work program as part of the County's obligation to ensure that the lands encumbered with a conservation easement retain the agricultural and natural resource values that were protected by the easement.

Sustainable Forestry — In October 2007, the Tompkins County Legislature adopted the Tompkins County Forest Management Plan. The overarching purpose of the Plan is to provide for the sustainable management of Tompkins County's 550 acres of County-owned forest lands. A secondary purpose is to use the Plan to achieve Forest Certification through the Forest Stewardship Council. Another goal is to provide a model high-quality sustainable forest management plan to other forest owners in Tompkins County looking to obtain income generation over the long-term through sustainable harvesting practices. The Department intends to make this management plan available for public review, track the economics of the plan

over time, and conduct periodic outreach to forest owners about the plan's performance and content.

Bevan Forestry, a forestry consultant certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), prepared maps, conducted timber and forest inventories, growth studies and analyses, and developed a detailed forest management plan that conforms to FSC guidelines. The forester also worked closely with the County's Planning Advisory Board and Environmental Management Council to refine the Plan based on recommendations of those advisory boards. In 2008, it is anticipated that the forest lands will receive FSC Certification, and recommended harvesting activities should commence in 2009.



WATER RESOURCES

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

2007 marked the rebirth of the Tompkins County Flood Hazard Mitigation program, which was updated to incorporate watershed-based approaches to flood mitigation projects. Projects for the program are largely selected from Flood Mitigation Needs Assessments conducted by Milone & MacBroom, Inc. for the County's watersheds and evaluated by a local Technical Advisory Committee which includes representation from the Tompkins County Soil & Water Conservation District, the Tompkins County Health Department, the Tompkins County Planning Department and the United States Geological Survey.

The year's projects included eight projects in four different watersheds. Projects ranged from streambank stabilization to vegetated plantings and stream buffer protection measures. Several of the projects will continue into 2008. In fall 2007, funding for the program was extended for the next three years.

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

and

Develop or identify model stream buffer ordinances.

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

This project will help build the Tompkins County Stream Corridor Protection and Management Program which seeks to identify, implement and report on tools that help establish stream corridor protection throughout the

County. This program, coordinated by the Tompkins County Planning Department, seeks to enhance the County's water quality protection, ecosystem health, educational opportunities, and flood mitigation efforts.

The project will include three aspects:

1. Grant funds will initially be used to craft property owner agreements for the flood hazard mitigation program, conservation easement language that includes stream buffer protections, and model stream buffer regulations.
2. The most substantial portion of the project will be the implementation of demonstration projects throughout the County, including significant flood mitigation projects. Additionally, the property abutting Locke Creek, which has been held out of the foreclosure auction, may be used in implementing a demonstration project.
3. The final phase of the project will be the development of an outreach campaign to provide local elected officials and property owners with information on the resources available to support local stream buffer protection. This outreach will include a web-based video.

This project was initiated in the Fall of 2007 and will continue through 2008.

Action: Dredge Cayuga Inlet and find an appropriate method for disposal of dredge spoil material, for example, using dredged material to create new, functioning wetlands at the south end of Cayuga Lake.

Actions undertaken by other agencies/partners:

City of Ithaca staff has hosted meetings with representatives from Senator George Winner's office, State Parks, DEC, New York State Department of Transportation, and the Canal Corporation. A grant was obtained from the Environmental Protection Fund for the planning phase. EcoLogic was hired in 2007 to conduct the planning study, which will determine dredging areas, classes of soils, disposal sites, environmental impacts, revegetation and redesign plans for dewatering sites, and need for underwater restoration.



NATURAL FEATURES

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

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

The Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan identified 14 Natural Features Focus Areas containing concentrations of outstanding natural features in the County. To assess the primary benefits provided by each of the Focus Areas resources, to protect and preserve those resources, and move toward achieving the community's vision for the future, the *Tompkins County Conservation Plan – Part I: A Strategic Approach to Natural Resource Stewardship* was developed.

The Conservation Plan was completed in September 2007, with the help of local agencies, organizations and the general public. The effort began with the development of individual plans for each of the 14 Natural Features Focus Areas that provide detailed information about the unique characteristics of the area and outlines a tailored approach to protection and management strategies.

The Conservation Plan identified 35 priority action times to be initiated over the next five years and roughly 20,000 acres were identified as priority areas for protection over the next 20 years. The Tompkins County Planning Department and its Conservation Partners are actively implementing several of the action items throughout the priority protection areas.

Part II of the Conservation Plan, concentrating on the County's Agricultural Resource Focus Areas, will begin in 2008.

In 2007, the County Planning Department submitted a successful application to New York State's Quality Communities Grant Program in partnership with Finger Lakes Land Trust to complete a trail assessment of the Finger Lakes Trail, with a focus on four at-risk trail segments. The County is administering the grant while the Land Trust is managing this project. In late 2007, consultants were selected and contracted to begin work on the trail corridor assessment which will result in a Finger Lakes Trail Corridor Protection and Enhancement Plan slated for completion in March 2009.

Action: Complete the Cayuga Waterfront Trail and the Black Diamond Trail.

Cayuga Waterfront Trail

The County continues to participate in steering committee meetings to provide planning assistance, as necessary.

Actions undertaken by other agencies/partners:

Black Diamond Trail

Finger Lakes State Parks completed the draft Master Plan for BDT and held community meetings regarding the plan.



STRONG COMMUNITIES

Actions: *Conduct pedestrian level-of-service and walkability studies in neighborhoods, villages, and hamlets throughout the county.*
and

Work with municipalities to assess transportation infrastructure needs, including roadways, transit, bicycles, and pedestrians, to support local planning efforts.

The walkability of a community affects access to resources, housing, entertainment, and employment. It can also influence the health of residents, as well as community interaction, cohesion and sense of community identity. Many factors, ranging from lack of sidewalks to steep terrain, can impact the walkability of a community.

The Tompkins County Planning Department received federal Transportation, Community and Systems Preservation Program grant funding to undertake pilot programs to enhance walkability in two communities in Tompkins County: the Village of Trumansburg and Northeast Ithaca. The studies identified and quantified both overarching and location-specific issues that could be addressed to improve a community's walkability.

The final report, titled "Tompkins County Walkability Assessment Methodology and Case Studies," was published in the fall of 2007, and both of the communities subsequently used the results of the studies to prepare applications for the Safe Routes to School Program. Elected officials of the Town of Ithaca used the Report's recommendations regarding the necessity of sidewalks along Hanshaw Road to help support efforts to fund the sidewalk construction when that road is reconstructed in the near future. It appears that their efforts have been successful and sidewalks will be built along that critical pedestrian corridor in conjunction with the County reconstruction of Hanshaw Road. The Village of Trumansburg chose to incorporate the report into its Comprehensive Plan, which was adopted in early 2008.



CENTERS OF DEVELOPMENT

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

An inter-municipal planning effort to assess the Route 96 transportation corridor began at the end of 2007. The Town of Ithaca, Town of Ulysses, City of Ithaca, and Tompkins County are working cooperatively to complete a one-year study that will evaluate traffic impacts associated with development along the corridor from the Village

of Trumansburg to the junction of NYS Routes 96 and 13, as well as provide recommendations and mitigation strategies. The study will quantify existing and projected traffic and levels of service and evaluate how a nodal development pattern with mixed uses, enhanced transit service, access management, and additional transportation system improvements, including bike and pedestrian facilities, could mitigate the impacts of this traffic. The study will examine the option of promoting development nodes in the vicinities of Cayuga Medical Center and the Hamlet of Jacksonville as well as consider the impacts of anticipated development in the City of Ithaca and Village of Trumansburg, as an alternative to a sprawling suburban and rural development pattern. The final product will include defining the extent of nodal development and identifying specific access and corridor management improvements that could be made to mitigate traffic impacts. Key considerations include identifying multi-modal options in the corridor and protecting livability of impacted areas. The study will recommend specific land use regulatory changes and transportation system improvements that would have the effect of reducing the traffic impacts of future development in the corridor. The study is expected to be complete in 2008.



EFFICIENT USE OF PUBLIC FUNDS

Action: *Develop or identify model land development regulations and design standards that support denser development in areas with water and sewer services (including residential, infill, and mixed-use) and limited development in areas without such services.*

Actions undertaken by other agencies/partners:

Tompkins County Area Development completed an application for a Shared Municipal Services Initiative grant to provide 90% funding for a study of county-wide water and sewer infrastructure. This study will identify existing system capacity and improvements needed to achieve affordable housing and community revitalization goals.

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

Actions undertaken by other agencies/partners:

The County Legislature approved purchase of 55 Brown Road for the future home of the Health Department. The existing building will be renovated to meet the needs of the Health Department under parameters of certification by LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design). Move to the new location is anticipated in 2009.



OTHER PLANNING DEPARTMENT ACTIVITIES



LUDLOWVILLE STORMWATER CONTROL PROJECT

The Tompkins County Planning Department applied for and received State funds for a project to assist with stormwater concerns in Ludlowville where property damage to date is estimated at over \$300,000. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation awarded the County \$240,000 through its Water Quality Improvement Program (WQIP) for the Ludlowville Stormwater Control Project. Recognizing the importance of this project, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) requested project information for supplemental funding through its Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM) Grant Program.

The Ludlowville Stormwater Control Project helps to address concerns over repetitive flooding and property damage associated with stormwater. It is anticipated that a stormwater control facility and streambed control measures will be installed. In addition to the decreased flow rate of runoff into Salmon Creek, the project aims to reduce the sediment, phosphorous and other pollutants entering Salmon Creek and Cayuga Lake. The project is organized as three phases:

- Phase 1: Project Feasibility Study – This phase will include hiring an engineering firm to study the natural features and stormwater issues in Ludlowville. The firm will additionally develop broad design solutions to assist in mitigating stormwater problems.
- Phase 2: Design Implementation – One specific flow project will be selected for detailed design work and preparations will be made at the identified project site.
- Phase 3: Project Construction – The selected project will be constructed over the course of two construction seasons.

This project will include considerable public involvement and cross-agency coordination throughout the project. Key contributors to the project include the Town of Lansing Highway Department, the Tompkins County Highway Division and the Tompkins County Soil & Water Conservation District. To begin the project, an engineering firm is slated to be selected by early summer 2008. This project is scheduled for completion by December 2009.



SPDES PERMIT

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



SNOWMOBILE TRAIL GRANT PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

The New York State's Snowmobile Trail Grant Program is meant to encourage local snowmobile club stewardship and development of snowmobile trails in the state. Permissible uses of the funds include trail development and the maintenance of existing trails and trail facilities. The Tompkins County Planning Department has sponsored the application and administered the program on behalf of local snowmobile clubs since 1998. No new mileage was funded by the state in the 2007-2008 snowmobile season, so the program size remained the same. The program was funded on behalf of five snowmobile clubs, maintaining 91 miles of trails for snowmobile use in Tompkins County.



*Salmon Creek,
Town of Lansing*

PLANNING DEPT. WEBSITE

The Tompkins County Planning Department, with able assistance from the County's Information Technology Services, launched a revamped Department website in 2007. The new site is easy to navigate and gives a good sense of the work of the Department. Since the Planning Department is using the internet more frequently in outreach and education efforts to the public, it was important to staff that the site make it easy for people to find topics of interest. Customer feedback on the site has been very positive and staff continues to ensure the site is current and contains information of value to the citizens of the County. The site address is: www.tompkins-co.org/planning/



*Camp Comstock and Cayuga Nature Center,
Town of Ulysses*

LOCAL MUNICIPAL ASSISTANCE

Trumansburg Comprehensive Plan

At the end of 2007, the Trumansburg Comprehensive Plan was in the final stages. Vision Statements and Strategies were drafted in Summer 2007, based on the results of the 2006 Comprehensive Plan Survey, suggestions from workshop attendees, and research into comprehensive plans from other communities, similar to Trumansburg, in various parts of New York State. There were several public meetings and extensive opportunities for the community to provide input on the Comprehensive Plan and the strategies. The Village Trustees offered their preliminary support of the Comprehensive Plan. Once the Comprehensive Plan is formally adopted, it will allow the Village to more effectively take on the task of updating its zoning ordinance - something which has not been done in over thirty years.

LAND POLICY ADMINISTRATION

The Planning Department assists the County in managing its lands by maintaining a current inventory of all County landholdings and identifying surplus properties that should be sold or transferred to another entity. The Department also evaluates all properties that are subject to foreclosure each year and identifies properties that could serve a higher public good if protected in some way, or that pose liability issues to the County. By working with State agencies and other land protection organizations, the Planning Department evaluates each situation and recommends a course of action to the Legislature. Since the County land policy was first adopted in 1995, the Department has facilitated the sale and protection of 173 acres of important natural areas to groups including the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, Finger Lakes Land Trust, and Cornell Natural Areas Program.

In March 2007, Planning, Assessment and Finance Department staff visited 17 tax parcels subject to foreclosure for non-payment of taxes. Each parcel was evaluated for potential liability issues and natural or cultural resources of significance, and each occupied residence was visited to personally communicate the foreclosure situation with the people living there. One of the parcels, located on Breed Road in the Town of Lansing, was identified as having significant natural resources worthy of protection and it was withheld from the spring auction in order to evaluate protection options. During the year, the parcel was further studied and the County's partner organizations were contacted to discuss viable protection options. Since the parcel is composed of both upland woods and streamside wetlands and is bisected by Locke Creek, there seemed to be an opportunity to delineate a riparian protection area and a building area on the parcel within the framework of a conservation easement. In 2008, it is expected that such a proposal will be brought to the County Legislature within the context of the Department's stream buffer protection grant through the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's Water Quality Improvement Projects.

Another land policy administration project that is slowly moving forward is the sale of two parcels on West King Road in the Town of Danby to State Parks. In late 2005, the Legislature authorized the sale of the parcels for strategic additions to Buttermilk Falls State Park. In 2006, the parcels were illegally logged, and in 2007, State Parks attorneys discovered problems with the title on one of the two parcels. Despite these hurdles, State Parks is still willing to purchase the parcel with a clear title at the agreed-upon price from 2005, and the Planning Department is working with the County Attorney's Office to remedy the title situation on the other parcel in order for State Parks to finalize that acquisition. The transactions for these parcels are expected to be complete by the fall of 2008.

Finally, the County-Owned Land Inventory was updated in November 2007, and distributed to key County staff and Legislators. As of November 1, 2007, the County owned a total of 58 parcels comprising 1,634 acres, with a total assessed value of approximately \$60.3 million of which \$10.6 million is the value of the land. Since this Inventory was last updated in October 2004, this constitutes a net increase of 3 parcels and 7 acres.



DEVELOPMENT REVIEWS

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



HOMEOWNERSHIP PROGRAM

The Tompkins County Homeownership Program continued its thirteenth year of success with the use of Program Income funding generated from the loans repaid by previous clients. A total of \$478,036 in assistance was provided, helping seventeen families to purchase their first homes. 2007 included the first new construction project, which allowed one family the opportunity to be actively involved in the building choices of their new home.

The County applied for and was awarded \$600,000 in its eighth Community Development Block Grant for the Homeownership Program. This new funding will allow for up to an additional nineteen families to become first time homeowners in 2008.



HAZARD MITIGATION COORDINATION

In order to adhere to the plan maintenance requirements of the *Tompkins County Multi-Jurisdictional All-Hazards Mitigation Plan* (approved by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in 2006) and to assist in implementing mitigation measures, the Hazard Mitigation Plan Implementation Committee was formed. The Committee has representation from each of the plan's involved jurisdictions as well as the Tompkins County Planning Department and Tompkins County Emergency Response.

A presentation noting recent hazard mitigation activities was made to the Tompkins County Council of Governments (TCCOG) in July 2007 and a formal report of the activities implemented was drafted in December 2007. Tompkins County's Hazard Mitigation Coordination continues to be based out of the Tompkins County Planning Department. In addition to coordinating some of the aforementioned mitigation plan activities, the Coordinator also serves as the local conduit for Federal and State mitigation funding opportunities.



ADVISORY BOARD ADMINISTRATION

Planning Advisory Board

The Planning Advisory Board provided review and comment for the following projects in 2007:

- Planning Department's Work Program,
- Proposed additions to County agricultural districts,
- Proposal for expenditure from the Capital Reserve Fund for Natural, Scenic and Recreational Resource Protection,
- Draft phases of the Affordable Housing Strategy,
- Forest Management Plan, and
- Natural Features Focus Areas project's *Tompkins County Conservation Plan – a Strategic Plan for Protection of Natural Resources*.

Environmental Management Council Highlights

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

Energy Committee initiatives for 2007 included a resolution in support of the Enfield Energy wind project that was adopted by the full council. The committee met with the developer to discuss concerns about the project. The committee helped to sponsor two educational events, setting up displays for Earth Day in April and the Ithaca Festival in June. The Energy Committee continues to monitor the Local Action Plan adopted in 2002, which calls for a 20% reduction in emissions by 2008. We assisted the County intern in preparing a report on county electricity use to determine the status of the Local Action Plan.

The Environmental Review Committee (ERC) considered many projects in 2007. They raised concerns over the hydrological and biological aspects of a planned development in Unique Natural Area-106 (Sapsucker Woods), wrote to the Town of Ithaca Planning Department and crafted a resolution that was adopted by the EMC. The committee responded to the City of Ithaca after their creation of a temporary off-leash dog park with our concerns about the dogs not staying within the bounds of the park and disturbing animals in the Hog Hole UNA as well



Michigan Hollow Swamp in the Danby State Forest

as in the grasslands and shoreline of the Allan H. Treman State Marina. Members participated in a panel discussion, and wrote a letter to the Mayor and Common Council members requesting the City study the use of the park and install a fence to minimize unwanted interaction with dogs.

The Unique Natural Areas Committee (UNA) has been engaged in the process of updating the full inventory of UNA's to incorporate any changes to the boundaries and incorporate additional biological information, especially with regard to sensitive species of plants and animals. The committee drafted a protocol for the process of adding or revising UNA's, which was formally adopted by the EMC.

Water Resources Council Highlights

The WRC Education Committee collaborated with the Tompkins County Health Department to organize our local celebration of National Drinking Water Week in early May. This involved hands-on activities for students at Environmental Appreciation Days held at 4-H Acres, followed by a day at the Ithaca Farmers Market with exhibits, discussion of watershed issues, and vote for participants' favorite municipal drinking water in the Tompkins County Drinking Water Taste Test. The Education Committee also participated in the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network's Lake Fest held at Cass Park in August.

The Monitoring Plan Committee coordinated a series of meetings in the Spring of 2007 to solicit input on a draft strategic monitoring plan for the south basin of Cayuga Lake. Participants represented four stakeholder groups: scientists, resource managers, policy makers, and the public. A special meeting was held at the DEC offices in Albany to discuss monitoring needs. The Committee also

participated in a forum facilitated by Cayuga Lake Watershed Intermunicipal Organization about multiple monitoring efforts occurring in the southern portion of the Cayuga Lake watershed.

In the fall of 2007, the Monitoring Committee launched a series of articles in the Ithaca Journal starting with our committee efforts and expanding to a broad set of water-related topics. These articles will be ongoing through 2008. The committee finished the year working on changes to the draft strategic plan and a joint statement of commitment for presentation to the full WRC and Cornell officials in 2008. The Committee and Cornell partners will participate in discussions with DEC in 2008 regarding meeting monitoring needs in the south basin of Cayuga Lake.

The Wetland Committee investigated how recent changes in federal wetland regulations might reduce the protections afforded wetland resources in the County, and what local governments can do to address identified limitations to wetland protection. A wetland survey conducted in the summer of 2007 through the towns of Dryden and Lansing indicated that a significant amount of wetland area surveyed (up to 16%) lacked regulation under federal or state laws. These wetlands are vulnerable to development and land disturbance due to a "gap" in federal and state wetland laws. An investigation of local laws found that no municipalities in the County have any wetland law or regulation that will fill this "gap", although at least one is considering riparian corridor protection. The committee identified both regulatory and non-regulatory tools that local governments can use to fill the regulatory gap for vulnerable wetlands as well as enhance protections for all wetlands generally. Finally, a review of wetland science and regulation literature indicated a need for comprehensive, watershed-scale planning to best protect wetlands and other water resources.