

TOMPKINS COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT

2010 ANNUAL REPORT

FROM THE COMMISSIONER

We are in an era of fiscal constraint that is forcing us to re-think how we achieve our community's goals. Federal and State budgets are facing severe limits and this trickles down to counties and local municipalities. The Planning Department has been forced to increasingly focus on those programs and projects that are of highest priority and that will have the most impact. Housing, Conservation, and Nodal Development remained top priorities in 2010 and the implementation of the Housing Fund grant program, completion of the Agricultural Resource Focus Area Plan, progress in implementing the Stream Corridor Protection Program, and initiation of the Development Focus Area Strategy highlight the emphasis we placed on these areas of our work program.

At the same time we are faced with daunting new challenges. In 2010 and for years to come, energy issues will dominate much of what we do. Our 2020 Energy Strategy, completed and endorsed by the County Legislature in 2010, outlines a path for the first ten years of our commitment to reduce community greenhouse gas emissions 80% by 2050. It will take consistent and unrelenting pursuit of the steps outlined in this strategy if we are to succeed in that effort. In the meantime, we are faced with potentially disastrous impacts upon communities that could result from the use of high volume hydro-fracturing to recover natural gas from the Marcellus Shale formation in New York State. Determining what we can do locally to avoid or mitigate these impacts, and how we can do it, is demanding many hours from county and municipal officials and community volunteers. It is difficult, to say the least, to balance trying to understand and prepare for the imminent impacts of fossil fuel energy development while taking very difficult and complicated steps necessary to wean ourselves off such overwhelming dependence on these energy sources. The real danger is that in the rush to meet short-term energy demands we might make it impossible to achieve the critical long-term need to drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The efforts in both of these areas may provide some insight into the future of local government. We could not be effective in either effort without volunteers who devote countless hours of their time, and without effective collaborative efforts with community partners. In 2010 we worked with both the Tompkins County Climate Protection Initiative and the Tompkins County Council of Governments Gas Drilling Task Force to do our part to foster these collaborative efforts. With available staff hours shrinking we also identified the need to find new ways to reach residents as well as engage one of the greatest resources this community has to offer – the enthusiasm and energy of our young people. To that end we initiated discussion of the possibility of creating a Sustainability Center in Downtown Ithaca. Among the functions of such a center would be to connect students from Cornell, Ithaca College and Tompkins-Cortland Community College to sustainability internships with not-for-profit organizations, businesses and local governments in Tompkins County. The other key function would be as a one-stop shop where residents and visitors can be informed about how to become personally engaged in the multitude of ongoing efforts in this community, efforts that can be truly transformative when it comes to changing the ways we use energy, improving our local economy and becoming a healthier community. Young people are in many cases leading the charge on these issues as they realize that, more even than those of us in the baby boom generation, their future and their children's future are at stake.

Continued on page 2

TABLE OF CONTENTS

From the Commissioner	1	Other Department Activities	12
2010 Goals, Objectives and Measures of Success	3	Natural Gas Drilling	12
Planning Department Staff	4	Geographic Information	12
Sixth Annual Report on Comprehensive Plan Implementation	5	Ludlowville Stormwater Control	12
Housing Choices	5	Local Municipal Assistance	12
Jobs and Business	6	Snowmobile Trail Grant Program	12
Rural Resources	6	GML Development Reviews	13
Water Resources	7	Hazard Mitigation Coordination	13
Natural Features	8	Land Policy Administration	13
Energy & Greenhouse Gas Emissions	9	Homeownership Program	13
Centers of Development	11	SPDES Permit	14
		Indicators of Success	14
		Advisory Board Administration	14

Photo on page 11 by staff. Other photos in this Annual Report are some of the 593 scenic views inventoried by our consultant in the course of studying Tompkins County for the Scenic Resources Inventory, which was published in 2008. Our website includes the selection process for the most picturesque views, the final inventory, and preservation techniques for scenic resources in the Natural Features section at: www.tompkins-co.org/planning/

Continued from page 1

Collaboration among community partners, student engagement and citizen participation are some ways that we may be able to overcome the fiscal difficulties we face and address the challenges that will not and cannot wait for “better times” to come. The Planning Department recognizes this need to adjust to economic realities and work begun in 2010 will continue along this path toward a truly sustainable community.

Edward C. Marx, AICP
Commissioner of Planning and Community Sustainability

2010 GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND MEASURES OF SUCCESS

The Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan includes Principles, Policies and Actions that guide much of the work of the Planning Department. The Plan establishes a process for monitoring and reporting progress on plan implementation. However, this monitoring is intended to measure the community's progress and will depend upon many outside factors that may impact the pace of that progress. At the Tompkins County Planning Department, we also want to measure our success in achieving our specific goals and objectives for the year. Our goals and objectives do not reflect every activity undertaken by the department in 2010 but, rather, identify our priorities. Two broad goals originally established in 2007 continue to guide our work:

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 were modified to reflect priorities for 2010 and the year-end status of their measures are outlined below.

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

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

End of year status: The progress report was completed and the five-year action plan was reviewed and approved by the Planning Advisory Board.

Goal 1, Objective 2: Implement the newly established Community Housing Fund.

Measure of success: Applications have been received, reviewed, and funded.

End of year status: Two funding rounds were completed and a total of \$560,000 awarded to five projects in Tompkins County.

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

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

End of year status: The 2020 Energy Strategy was completed and endorsed by the County legislature.

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

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

End of year status: The ARFA plan was completed on schedule.

Goal 1, Objective 5: Develop a plan that defines those areas of the County where development should be encouraged and supported. This would parallel the efforts made to define the Agricultural Resource Focus Areas and the Natural Resources Focus Areas.

Measures of success: A Development Focus Areas Plan is completed.

End of year status: An internal draft of the Development Focus Areas Strategy was completed and was slated for public review in 2011.

- **Goal 1, Objective 6:** Create a proposal to combine the efforts of the Flood Hazard Mitigation Program and the County Stream Buffer Protection Program into a coordinated Stream Corridor Program.

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

End of year status: The three-year program was substantially complete and results were reported to the County Legislature. Continued funding was provided in the 2011 budget.

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

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

End of year status: All program reports were submitted in a timely manner.

- **Goal 2, Objective 2:** Maintain support for Environmental Management Council, Water Resources Council and Planning Advisory Board.

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

End of year status: Administrative support to these advisory bodies was maintained.

2010 STAFF

Katie Borgella, Principal Planner
Scott Doyle, Senior Planner
Dariele Drake, Principal Account Clerk
Sharon Heller, Geographic Information Systems Analyst
Joan Jurkowich, Deputy Commissioner
Darby Kiley, Planner
Jeanne Leccese, Senior Planner
Edward Marx, Commissioner of Planning and Community Sustainability
Leslie Schill, Senior Planner
Kathy Wilsea, Secretary

HOUSING

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

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

Two funding rounds were completed as part of the Housing Fund with a total of \$560,000 being awarded for five affordable housing projects throughout Tompkins County. One project is located in the Town of Ithaca, one in the Village of Lansing, and three projects in the City of Ithaca. Funding was awarded for both the Community Housing Affordability Program (\$220,000) and the Community Housing Trust Program (\$340,000). With the assistance of the Housing Fund, 162 new affordable housing units will be added to the current housing stock.

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

In-Commuter Survey Analysis

In 2010, the Planning Department completed analysis of the 2006 Ithaca-Tompkins County Transportation Council Tompkins County/Cornell Employee Commuter Survey. Specifically, the Planning Department evaluated several supplemental questions designed to look at attitudes of in-commuters with regard to moving to Tompkins County. In total, 6,738 workers completed the survey – 5,452 Cornell employees and 1,286 downtown employees. 5,058 employees lived in Tompkins County, 1,680 employees lived outside the County.

The bulk of the analysis focused on the 1,680 employees who lived outside of the County at the time of the survey, and specifically on the 30% (498 respondents) who stated that they would consider moving to Tompkins County if housing was more

affordable. Affordable housing at a variety of income levels continues to be a major consideration for many employees who work in Tompkins County. Nearly one third indicated an interest in living closer to their employment location but housing that is affordable to them remains a barrier. Efforts are underway to increase affordable housing in the County that would address this demand. Most in-commuters who expressed an interest in moving to Tompkins County would consider affordable housing located in urban areas or centers of development.

Action: Identify subsidized affordable housing units and determine when subsidies expire and if the units are likely to remain affordable. Establish a program to monitor the status of those units to anticipate impending deficiencies.

Tracking Subsidized Housing Units for Tompkins County

The Planning Department continues to track subsidized units Countywide as part of an ongoing housing affordability review. The purpose of Tracking Subsidized Housing Units for Tompkins County, as stated in the Comprehensive Plan, is to “(I)dentify subsidized affordable housing units and determine when subsidies expire and if the units are likely to remain affordable.” The second piece of the action item is to “(E)stablish a program to monitor the status of those units to anticipate impending deficiencies.”

Subsidized housing includes: (1) Housing units that participate in the Section 8 Voucher Program whereby landlords/management accept vouchers as a form of rent or the apartment complex agrees to maintain a certain number of units, often the entire complex, for those with vouchers; (2) Organizations that distribute Section 8 vouchers; and (3) housing complexes that were funded, either through a construction loan or mortgage, by USDA Rural Development or NYS Division of Housing and Community Renewal. The Database of Subsidized Housing Units in Tompkins County is available on the Planning Department website along with an Overview of Organizations and Housing Complexes Funded through Federal/State Government.



JOBS AND BUSINESS

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

In 2010, there were no new loans made through the Rural Small Business Loan Program.

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

TCAD (Tompkins County Area Development) Countywide Loan Program

In 2008 the Tompkins County Planning Department, in consultation with Tompkins County Area Development, agreed to provide funding to establish a TCAD Countywide Loan Fund to allow TCAD to serve as a central source for economic development assistance. TCAD is the County's principle economic development agency, has experience managing a loan fund, and already works with many of the loan recipients.

In 2010, The Planning Department transferred funds to TCAD for five loans disbursed through the TCAD Countywide Loan Program for a total of \$462,000 to the following companies: Adenious, \$52,500 with another \$72,500 approved but not yet disbursed; Regional Access, \$108,000; e2e Materials, \$125,000; Sunbeam Candles, \$54,000; and Comet Sports, \$50,000.



RURAL RESOURCES

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.*

Purchase of Development Rights – Application and Promotion

The Tompkins County Planning Department continued to support the use of the state-funded Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program as noted in Part II of the Conservation Plan. However, the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets did not issue any new requests for proposal for new PDR applications.

Howser Farm

The Howser Farm, the first farm in the County to participate in the Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program, is annually monitored by the Tompkins County Planning Department. The project's monitoring plan calls for the Department to walk the entire boundary of the farm every other year. 2010 marked a year in which the full property boundary was not walked. The monitoring visit found no substantial problems in relation to the easement.

Mr. Howser submitted a request to the County regarding the subdivision of a section of the farm held under easement in 2009 for agricultural use. Planning staff and the County Attorney's office reviewed an updated proposal in 2010 and after careful review granted permission for the subdivision, which went forward. The Planning Department provided opportunities for the new property owner to gain an understanding of the terms of the easement. Future monitoring visits will require coordination with both Mr. Howser and the new property owner.

Jerry Dell Farm

The Jerry Dell Farm was notified in late 2007 that it had received funding for Purchase of Development Rights of the portion of their farm in the Town of Dryden. This project identifies Tompkins County as a co-holder of the PDR easement with the Town of Dryden. The Town has been designated as the project manager for this project, however the Tompkins County Planning Department worked very closely with the Town and farmers in 2010 to refine the easement language, and worked with the State to implement the project.



Lew-Lin Farm in Dryden Closes on Conservation Easement

In December, 2010, Tompkins County, the Town of Dryden and Dryden dairy farmers, Lewis and Linda Stuttle closed on the second agricultural conservation easement in Tompkins County expected to be funded by the state's Farmland Protection Program. This permanent easement allows for continued agricultural use of the 432 acre property, but places restrictions on the use of the property for development purposes. The goal of the program is to help farmers continue agricultural operations and maintain the agricultural soils and land base for future farming endeavors while at the same time conserving scenic roadside views, open space and unique natural habitats.

Bensvue Farm in Lansing Wins Approval from State for Funding

In 2010, Tompkins County, the Town of Lansing and Lansing organic dairy farmers, Charles and Andra Benson achieved the final approval necessary to be awarded funds under the state's Farmland Protection Program. Once the state funding for this project is allocated, the farm will sell certain development rights to allow for permanent protection of the land and continued agricultural use of the 951 acre property.

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

County Forest Land

In December, 2010, Tompkins County released a request for bids to selectively harvest trees from its Forest Stewardship Certified lands in the Town of Newfield. Unfortunately, no bids were received and the harvest was postponed.

WATER RESOURCES

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

Flood Hazard Mitigation Program Implementation

The Flood Hazard Mitigation Program Technical Advisory Committee convened in June 2010 to visit and evaluate projects for 2010. The committee includes representation from the Tompkins County Soil & Water Conservation District, the Tompkins County Health Department, the Tompkins County Planning Department and the United States Geological Survey.

Streambank projects in the towns of Enfield, Danby and Ulysses were selected for implementation. These projects joined several other projects from 2008 in development. Since 2007, the program included project activity in seven different jurisdictions and five watersheds. Tools developed as a part of a State Water Quality Improvement Project (WQIP) have been of great assistance in implementing these projects. The Technical Advisory Committee will be reviewing the program's objectives in 2011 and will make a recommendation as to its direction for the future.

Action: Continue to conduct aquifer studies.

Tompkins County and the US Geological Survey (USGS) entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in 2003 to study the aquifers in Tompkins county over a 20 year period. In the MOU, USGS has committed to providing a 30% match for such studies. The County established a capital program to fund up to 35% of each study.

Activity in 2010 related to three aquifers:

- Pony Hollow (Town of Newfield). In 2009, Tompkins County and the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) contracted with USGS to provide a partial analysis of the Pony Hollow Valley Aquifer. USGS work on this aquifer study continued through 2010 and will be completed in 2012.
- Sixmile Creek and Willseyville Creek (Town of Caroline). In 2002, the Town of Caroline and Tompkins County contracted with USGS to study these aquifers. The final report on this aquifer study is expected in 2011.
- Upper Buttermilk Creek (Town of Danby). This aquifer study, begun in 2005 and partially funded by Tompkins County and the Town of Danby, continued with some additional well drilling and data analysis. The work is scheduled for completion in early 2011 with a final report due approximately one year later.

NATURAL FEATURES

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

and
Action: Develop or identify model stream buffer ordinances.

Stream Corridor Management Program

The Tompkins County Planning Department 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 in 2007.

This program seeks to enhance the County's water quality protection, ecosystem maintenance, educational opportunities, and flood mitigation efforts. The grant funds were used in three distinct ways:

1. Grant funds have been used to craft property owner agreements for the flood hazard mitigation program, conservation easement language that includes stream buffer protections and will be used to develop model stream buffer regulations.
2. The funds were further used in demonstration projects throughout the County in both urban and rural settings.
3. The final phase is 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 is ongoing.

This grant, completed in 2010, helped the County to, among other things, leverage funds in planting over 1,800 trees along over 11,000 linear feet involving more than 150 volunteers and several local small businesses. Additionally, two riparian conservation easements and multiple riparian protection areas were formalized with the assistance of this grant. Tools and lessons learned through the WQIP have helped to improve the function of the Flood Hazard Mitigation Program and pave the way for a broader Stream Corridor Restoration Program.

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

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

Agricultural Resource Focus Area Plan

The *Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan* identified six Agricultural Resource Focus Areas that contain concentrations of important agricultural aspects in the County. To assess the trends, opportunities and threats occurring in each area the *Tompkins County Conservation Plan – Part II* was developed. This part of the plan, which concentrates on the County's Agricultural Resource Focus Areas, was finalized in the spring of 2010.

The effort began with the development of individual profiles for each of the six Agricultural Resource Focus Areas that provide detailed information about the characteristics of the areas, including cartographic analyses. The project then expanded to farmer outreach/focus group meetings in each of these ARFAs. The findings of this plan will be used in 2011 to develop the County's Conservation Strategy.

Tompkins County Conservation Partners

One of the action items established in the *2007 Tompkins County Conservation Plan – Part I: A Strategic Approach to Natural Resource Stewardship* was to "convene a group of partners (Tompkins County Conservation Partners) involved in local conservation efforts twice a year. Meetings will facilitate regular information sharing as well as coordinated efforts such as periodic field trips for municipal officials to key sites in the Focus Areas." This



group met twice in 2010, and has had tangible results in advancing local conservation measures.

Capital Reserve Fund Program Management

In 2010, the Tompkins County Legislature allocated \$25,000 from the Capital Reserve Fund for Natural, Scenic, and Recreational Resource Protection to the Finger Lakes Land Trust for the purchase of the Berntsson/Millier property. This property, located in the Town of Dryden, is a distinct 170-acre parcel of woodlands, fields and wetlands. It is located within The Forestlands Natural Features Focus Area as well as the Emerald Necklace Greenbelt, a priority project within the New York State Open Space Plan. It includes more than 6,000 feet of frontage on Six Mile Creek, 20 acres of wetlands, and a linkage to thousands of acres of protected open space including Hammond Hill and Yellow Barn State Forests.

Action: Conduct a Scenic Resources Inventory and prepare a Scenic Resources Preservation Plan.

Tompkins County: Protecting Our Scenic Resources was prepared by the Tompkins County Planning Department as a companion document to the *Tompkins County Scenic Resources Inventory*, completed in 2007. Its primary purpose is to provide information to municipal officials and boards as they work to protect and preserve important scenic resources.

Part 1 of the report reviews how development can be designed to be sensitive to scenic resources. Design and siting factors can be used to improve the visual compatibility of developments with their setting. Considerations such as the placement of buildings on a parcel; the size of the development, including height and bulk of buildings; landscaping of the property; and the choice of colors and building materials are all integral to providing important protections for scenic resources.

Part 2 of the report describes tools that municipalities can use to institutionalize local government influence on the design and siting of new development. These include community planning programs (such as comprehensive plans), municipal review boards (such as architectural review boards), and local regulations (such as zoning). This part of the report also talks about state programs that can be utilized by municipalities to control the visual impact of new development. The report also talks about the use of scenic easements to protect scenic resources.

And, Part 3 of the report recaps some of the findings of the 2007 *Tompkins County Scenic Resources Inventory*.



ENERGY AND GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

Energy and Greenhouse Gas 10-Year Emissions Inventory and Report

In 2010, the County completed and published two 10-year reports assessing emissions resulting from the County government and the Tompkins County community. The County government report evaluated progress made toward a 20 percent reduction goal in government emissions that was set for 2008. Though the County government did not achieve its goal of overall emissions reductions, findings showed that facility efficiency improvements directly resulted in building emissions reductions. The government emissions report clarified the need for focused attention on the County's vehicle fleet for emissions reductions and also brought to light the importance (and improvement over time) of accurate and thorough emissions tracking throughout the government.

The Tompkins County community saw an increase in emissions over the ten-year period, as expected. Data from the community emissions inventory report will serve as a community emissions baseline for the 2020 Energy Strategy that was also published in 2010.

Motivating Residents to Reduce Energy Use and Save Money

In partnership with local energy partners, Tompkins County planning staff actively worked on creating motivating strategies and messaging around the topic of energy efficiency in the community. The first goal of this long-term community wide energy campaign is to reach every resident in Tompkins County with the campaign message and motivate them to try at least one new energy-saving strategy.



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

and

Action: *Prepare an adaptation plan to help prepare the community for impacts of global climate change and peak oil.*

Legislature endorses the Tompkins County 2020 Energy Strategy

As part of an amendment to its Comprehensive Plan, in 2008, the Tompkins County Legislature adopted a goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the community by at least 80% from 2008 levels by 2050. In September 2010, the Legislature endorsed a strategy outlining measures to achieve the first interim step along the path of achieving the 80% reduction: a 20% reduction in emissions by 2020. Quantified in the Strategy are both new initiatives for the community to take, as well as a range of key programs already underway that will help the community achieve its greenhouse gas emissions goals. These measures range from federal lighting and appliance standards, to New York State's Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, to climate commitments made by the three local institutions of higher education and efforts underway by local municipalities and public schools. Additionally, ten new local measures are identified and quantified – new programs to move the community forward in achieving its goals.

Action: *Develop a plan to address the specific energy needs of low-income people including recommendations for improvements to existing energy-related programs and identification of potential pilot projects to address energy needs.*

Analysis of Energy-Related Programs Serving Low-Income People of Tompkins County

In partnership with local low-income energy services providers, Tompkins County produced a report detailing recommendations for improving energy-related programs serving low-income people in Tompkins County. It is anticipated that several of the key recommendations will be implemented in 2011.

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

PACE and Residential Financing

Working with local, state and national energy financing experts, Tompkins County advocated for state and national legislation to allow municipalities to develop programs to create financing incentives for property owners wishing to make energy upgrades to their buildings. Unfortunately, Federal regulatory bodies stepped in and halted PACE (Property Assessed Clean Energy) programs nationally in the second half of 2010. County Planning staff continues to identify and promote residential and commercial financing alternatives to help support energy retrofits in existing buildings.

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

Route 96 Corridor Management Study

The Tompkins County Legislature adopted a resolution of endorsement for the Route 96 Corridor Management Study and its principles in early 2010, joining all of the project partners in passing resolutions regarding the study.

In Fall 2010, the first action of the study's implementation plan was completed when NYSDOT, in coordination with the Towns of Ithaca and Ulysses, repaved and restriped the length of Route 96 within the Hamlet of Jacksonville node, effectively calming traffic and improving pedestrian circulation and safety. This achieved a critical, early goal of the plan.



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.
and

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

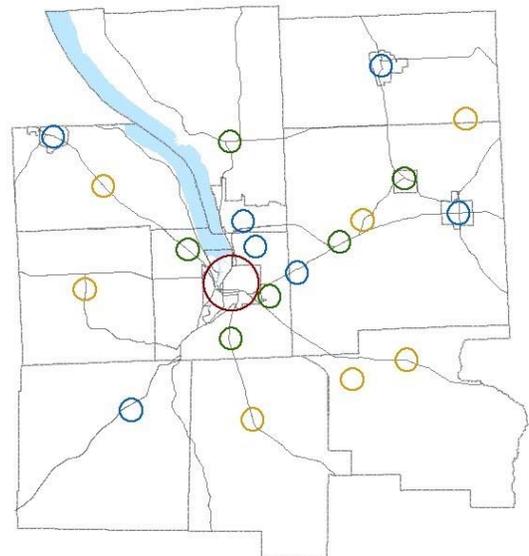
The preparation of a Development Focus Areas Strategy was initiated in 2010. Overseen by the Tompkins County Planning Advisory Board and building on the principles and policies of the Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan, the Strategy is intended to identify areas in the county where development will be encouraged.

The development focus area concept is derived from the pattern of development in the traditional villages we find in the community. They are mixed-use pedestrian-oriented areas that include places to live, places to work, and places to shop and get other services. They are relatively small areas (about 500 acres) and have available public water, public sewer, and transit service.

There are several benefits offered by developing in this pattern. The use of cars is decreased as people can more easily walk, bike, or take a bus to work or to go shopping. When car trips are required they are generally shorter and, thus, less energy consuming and polluting. By concentrating residential development into small areas, the vitality of small neighborhood businesses is increased. Denser development patterns reduce the cost of infrastructure such as streets, water and sewer lines and telecommunications and also increase the opportunities for more interaction among neighbors. And less development in the rural areas protects the environment, preserves open spaces, avoids land use conflicts with agriculture and maintains the rural character of our towns.

The Department held a public kick-off meeting on the Development Focus Areas Strategy in June at the Tompkins County Public Library. 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.

The Development Focus Areas Strategy is slated for completion by the end of 2011.



OTHER PLANNING DEPARTMENT ACTIVITIES

NATURAL GAS DRILLING

With the assistance of the Park Foundation, a one-year planner position was added in October 2010 to assist the Tompkins County Council of Governments (TCCOG) and individual municipalities address potential impacts from natural gas drilling. Technical support was provided to the TCCOG Task Force on Gas Drilling and associated work groups. A draft list of best practices was developed with the longer-term goal of developing a toolbox for municipalities to consider as they evaluate planning strategies associated with shale gas extraction.

Road protection is a key concern for municipal officials, and the State specifies that local governments have jurisdiction over local roads. Staff assisted the towns of Caroline, Enfield, and Ulysses to prepare and distribute a request for proposals for traffic and roadway engineering services for a roadway assessment study covering industrial impacts. The goal of the study is to provide the towns with an assessment of the existing road conditions, an understanding of the road life spans, and a method for assessing potential damage due to increased heavy vehicle traffic.

GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

The Planning Department GIS Analyst provided GIS support for a variety of projects including the Indicators of Success Report, Trumansburg zoning ordinance map, nodal development planning, flood hazard mitigation, stream buffers, open space protection, potential gas drilling impacts, home ownership and snowmobile trail mapping. She provided supporting data and maps for a number of grant applications and also provided data and maps to municipalities for natural resource protection.

The Planning Department's GIS Analyst worked with the County GIS Division on an online mapping service. Tompkins County Natural Resource Data layers are available on a new online mapping service that can be viewed at <http://giseams.tompkins-co.org/SilverlightViewer/Viewer.html?Viewer=NaturalResources>

LUDLOWVILLE STORMWATER CONTROL PROJECT

The Ludlowville Stormwater Control Project is a project coordinated by the Tompkins County Planning Department to help address concerns over repetitive flooding and property damage associated with stormwater in the Hamlet of Ludlowville. The selected consultant completed a project feasibility study and alternatives analysis in 2010 which established the basis for designed mitigation projects. Ultimately two mitigation projects were identified: the building of an upstream detention pond (construction anticipated in 2012) and streambank stabilization (construction anticipated in 2011).

Key contributors to the project continue to be the Town of Lansing Highway Department, the Tompkins County Highway Division and the Tompkins County Soil & Water Conservation District. The complete project is scheduled for completion by December 2012.

LOCAL MUNICIPAL ASSISTANCE

Trumansburg Zoning Ordinance

The Planning Department continued to provide support to the Village of Trumansburg as they update their zoning ordinance. Building on its work with the Village on the update of their Comprehensive Plan, the Planning Department worked closely with the Zoning Ordinance Update Committee in 2009 on crafting an ordinance that furthers the goals of that Comprehensive Plan. The majority of the Planning Department's work in 2010 was working with the committee to amend the draft ordinance in response to public comments received at public meetings held in January and in response to design proposals submitted by a Cornell class.

SNOWMOBILE TRAIL GRANT PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

The NYS Snowmobile Program is administered by the Planning Department as a flow through grant. A total of \$35,335 was awarded for the 2010-2011 Season. Funding is provided on behalf of five snowmobile clubs for maintenance of 113 miles of trails for snowmobile use in Tompkins County.

GENERAL MUNICIPAL LAW DEVELOPMENT REVIEWS

One 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 but one of the municipalities in the county. Projects included amendments to zoning ordinances, approval of site plans and subdivisions, issuances of special permits, and requests for variances. Of these projects, 24 were found to have potentially significant negative intercommunity or countywide impacts, and recommendations were made to modify the projects to mitigate those impacts.

HAZARD MITIGATION COORDINATION

In order to adhere to the maintenance requirements of the *Tompkins County Multi-Jurisdictional All-Hazards Mitigation Plan* (approved by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in 2006) and FEMA requirements to update the plan every five years, the Planning Department took steps to coordinate the update including the successful acquisition of a \$35,000 FEMA grant to conduct the update.

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

LAND POLICY ADMINISTRATION

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

groups including the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, Finger Lakes Land Trust, and Cornell Natural Areas Program.

In March 2010, staff members from Planning, Assessment and Finance departments visited 22 tax parcels subject to foreclosure for non-payment of taxes. Each parcel was evaluated for potential liability issues and natural or cultural resources of significance, and each occupied residence was visited to personally communicate the foreclosure situation to the people living there. In May 2010 the County Legislature's Government Operations Committee authorized withholding a parcel on Taughannock Boulevard, which lies adjacent to the Black Diamond Trail, from auction in order to investigate options for additional buffer opportunities to the Black Diamond Trail. The County then worked on the details necessary to sell this parcel to New York State Parks. Also in 2010, the County Legislature's Government Operations Committee decided to continue to withhold a parcel on West King Road, which is located within Unique Natural Area-149, Lick Brook and Inlet Valley Slopes, to finalize purchase details with State Parks. The committee also recommended that the parcel on Fall Creek Road, which had previously been withheld, now proceed to auction as The Nature Conservancy has determined it no longer has interest in purchasing the parcel due to liability issues associated with the property's abandoned railroad bed.



HOMEOWNERSHIP PROGRAM

In 2010, Tompkins County was awarded \$750,000 in CDBG (Community Development Block Grant) funds to continue the Tompkins County Homeownership Program. Since the program's inception in 1993, 315 low and moderate income households have purchased homes through the program. The recent CDBG grant award will assist twenty-one families in Tompkins County to become homeowners.

The program will continue to be delivered by Better Housing for Tompkins County (BHTC) and the Tompkins County Planning Department. BHTC will also provide housing counseling services as part of the program delivery.

SPDES PERMIT

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

The 2010 Annual State Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (SPDES) permit was presented at a public meeting of the Water Resources Council in May 2010 and was subsequently filed with the NYS Department of Conservation in June 2010, in accordance with state requirements.

2009 INDICATORS OF SUCCESS REPORT

In 2010, the County worked on both the 2009 and 2010 annual Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan Indicators of Success Report: Achieving the Policies of the Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan – the fourth and fifth annual reports in this series. 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.

ADVISORY BOARD ADMINISTRATION

Environmental Management Council

The Tompkins County EMC is one of the oldest EMCs in the state, having been created in 1971. EMC acts as an advisory body to the County Legislature on matters affecting the preservation, development and use of the natural features of the County.

In 2010, EMC passed one resolution, Recommending that Tompkins County and Municipalities sign a letter of intent to purchase wind power from the Enfield Energy Wind Project. In response to a request for EMC concurrence in the selection of Southwest Park for environmental review as a dewatering site for the sediments to be dredged from the Cayuga Inlet boat channel, the flood control channel, and

the creek outlets, EMC sent a letter drafted by the Environmental Review Committee to the City of Ithaca stating they should not proceed with a segmented consideration of the project.

Scott Doyle and Kathy Wilsea continue to provide staff support responsibilities for the EMC. Work with the EMC included continuing to advance the efficient use of meeting and EMC member's time while also advancing the group's priority actions. The EMC worked to advance work on a number of projects including the update of the Unique Natural Areas (UNA) database. Meeting agendas, minutes, annual reports and much more information are all posted on the EMC website: <http://www.tompkins-co.org/emc/>

Water Resources Council

The Tompkins County Water Resources Council (WRC) advises the Tompkins County legislature on matters related to water resources management and planning, and is charged with identifying problems, proposing priorities, and promoting the coordination of activities in the management and protection of the County's water resources. In 2010, WRC expanded their website to include links to entities with stewardship of water resources, the series of articles published in the Ithaca Journal as Cayuga 2.0, and information on committees and major projects. All are available at <http://www.tompkins-co.org/planning/committees/WRC>

During 2010, WRC continued their interest in hydraulic fracturing for natural gas by hosting Mike Lovegreen, Manager of Bradford County, Pennsylvania Soil & Water Conservation District in April, and provided comments to US Environmental Protection Agency on the Hydraulic Fracturing Research Study in August. Other visitors were invited in 2011 so members can continue to learn about hydraulic fracturing issues.

Planning Advisory Board

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

- Planning Department's Work Program
- Agricultural Resource Focus Areas
- Development Focus Areas
- Proposed Addition to Agricultural District 2
- 2020 Energy Strategy
- Capital Reserve Fund for Natural Scenic and Recreational Resource Protection (one expenditure and finalizing guidelines)
- Update of Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan