

*Indicators of Success,  
Winter 2007*

Achieving the Policies of the  
Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan



## Foreword

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The Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan provides that “(t)he Planning Commissioner will report annually to the County Legislature on progress in implementing the Plan” and that “(t)he 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.” This second annual **Indicators of Success** Report describes those measurement tools that have been developed and provides a look at how to measure progress in implementing the Principles and Policies adopted by the County Legislature. It complements the Progress Report on Plan Implementation, included in the Planning Department’s Annual Report, that describes and tracks progress in implementing the Priority Actions identified in the Comprehensive Plan. The indicators are objective measures of change in the community and are designed to assess whether that change reflects progress in achieving the community vision embodied in the Comprehensive Plan.

The format of the **Indicators of Success** Report is intentionally simple. Each indicator section presents a short description, a graph depicting annual data, as well as the desired trend in the indicator. Over time, each indicator will include sufficient annual data to show trends. As this process began with the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan in 2004, there are insufficient data points to show clear trends at this time. In future reports, when more data are accumulated, we will provide comments on positive or negative trends.

The **Indicators of Success** Report is intended to help the community understand where it is headed and if we are making progress in achieving the Plan’s objectives to improve the quality of life for all community residents. It will help us evaluate which strategies are working and when we will need to consider new alternatives.

Edward C. Marx, AICP  
Commissioner of Planning and Public Works  
Winter 2007

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# Introduction

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The Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan, adopted in 2004, is organized around ten interlocking principles that set forth a vision for the County that supports regional cooperation, improved housing supply and affordability, better transportation choices, an enhanced local economy, strategic protection of the County's water and natural resources, and stronger neighborhoods and communities. This report uses 37 indicators to track the community's progress in achieving the principles of the Comprehensive Plan.

The report is divided into ten sections, one with general background data about the County and nine sections corresponding to the principles of the Comprehensive Plan. Each section reports on several indicators selected to measure progress in that area. This report is the latest in a series (that began in 2006) of annual reports on these indicators.

## Ten Principles of the Comprehensive Plan:

- Regional Cooperation
- Housing Choices
- Transportation Choices
- Jobs and Business
- Rural Resources
- Water Resources
- Natural Resources
- Strong Communities
- Centers of Development
- Efficient Use of Public Funds

## Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide fact-based information about trends over time and to gauge how well the community is doing in achieving the principles and policies defined in the Comprehensive Plan. This report aims to raise awareness about how the community is progressing and what can be improved upon. It is a reflection of our community and, as such, one illustration of how our community evolves and changes over time.

## What is an Indicator?

Indicators are quantitative measurements that can help a community track its progress in achieving goals. Taken together, they provide a snapshot of the community, and can offer us a glimpse of the "big picture." Just as car mileage indicates a car's condition to a potential buyer or a patient's blood pressure indicates his or her overall health to a doctor, indicators provide feedback on the overall health of the community. With enough data, these indicators can provide crucial information about positive and negative trends in the community. Indicators are one way of finding out whether the community is going in the right direction or whether it is going down a path that may have unintended or unexpected consequences. Annually checking in on the health of the community and the direction it is taking in key areas provides citizens, policy-makers, and experts with the information they need to address situations before they become crises.

Indicators provide a snapshot of the community that can offer us a glimpse of the "big picture."

## Criteria for Indicators

After a review of hundreds of potential indicators that could be used to measure progress toward the goals outlined in the Comprehensive Plan, 37 key indicators were selected to address the primary economic, environmental, and land use issues facing the County. The indicators were chosen using these criteria:

- *Relevance.* They tell something meaningful about what is being measured and relate to the guiding principles adopted in the Comprehensive Plan.
- *Diversity.* They cover the breadth of economic, environmental, social, and community objectives adopted in the Comprehensive Plan.
- *Data availability.* Data collected for the indicators are publicly accessible and readily available.
- *Reliability.* There is a strong likelihood that the data will be available in years to come so that indicators can be compared over time, and trends can be discerned.
- *Ease of understanding.* They are easy to understand by a broad audience.

## About the Data

### *Time Frame*

This report presents a review of data currently available for each of the indicators. In the graphs for the indicators, data are labeled by the year in which they were published or collected. Data points for 2005 and later are shown in blue since 2005 would be the first year in which the indicators might be affected by the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan, adopted in 2004. Data points for earlier years are shown in gray. Where appropriate, data points for 2000 are included for the purpose of comparison.

### *Geographic Scale*

Wherever possible, the indicators cover the geographic scale of the entire County, but a few indicators are limited to a smaller scale. For instance, water quality is tested in select sites in the County and for a variety of purposes. In this case, an indicator may represent a trend in a specific watershed rather than for the County as a whole.

### *Methodology and Sources*

This report is supported by a separately published **Technical Appendix**, which details the sources of the data and analytical methodology where appropriate. Data limitations and other considerations that may affect interpretation of these data are also identified in the **Technical Appendix**.

### *Census Data Changes*

A number of the indicators are based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau. The American Community Survey (ACS) is a new nationwide annual survey replacing major portions of the demographic data previously generated through the decennial census, which was last conducted in 2000. The main differences between the two surveys are that 1) the ACS collects and produces population and housing information every year instead of every ten years and 2) the ACS is based on a smaller sample of households. Using these data for indicators is helpful since it provides more up-to-date information throughout the decade about trends at the local community level.

### *Comparability of the Decennial Census and the American Community Survey*

Because of the different collection methods and sample sizes of the decennial Census and the ACS, some data provided by these two surveys are not comparable. As a result, some data from the 2000 Census was available for some indicators but not included in this report since 2000 Census data and data from the ACS would not be comparable. In future annual updates of this report, these indicators will include data from the ACS only.

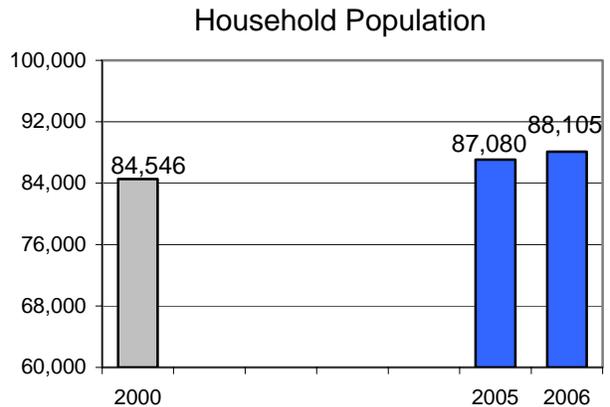
# Tompkins County Background

Background data is provided in this section so that the reader may judge how trends in the individual indicators are influenced by changes in the community as a whole, such as population change and job growth. There is no attempt to determine whether the measure is illustrating a positive or negative trend.

## 1. Household Population

Total household population.

This measure tracks the total household population in Tompkins County. According to the U.S. Census definition, a household is comprised of all persons who occupy a housing unit. The Census-defined household excludes individuals living in group quarters, such as dorms. Between 2000 and 2006 Tompkins County households grew by more than 3,500 people.

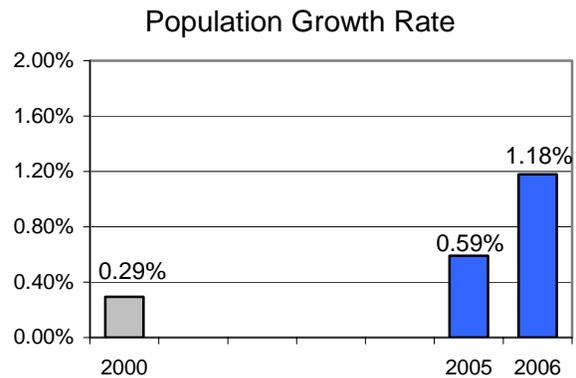


## 2. Population Growth Rate

Average household population growth rate.

The average annual population growth rate measures the rate at which the household population in Tompkins County is changing.

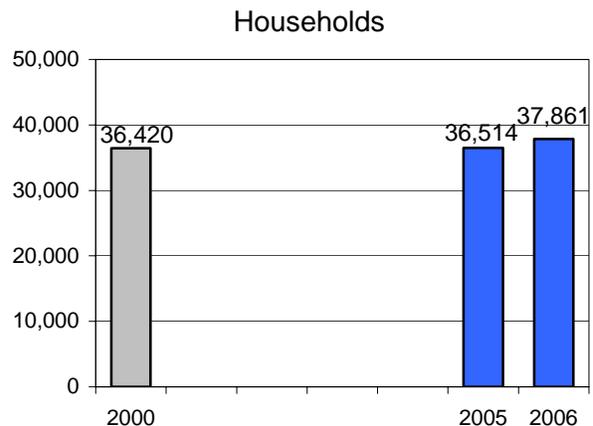
The County's household population growth rate more than doubled between 2000 and 2005 then doubled again from 2005-2006. During this same six-year period, the growth rate of upstate New York was extremely low, just a fraction of the County's.



## 3. Households

Number of households.

This measure tracks the total number of households in Tompkins County each year. From 2000-2006 Tompkins County added 1,441 new households.

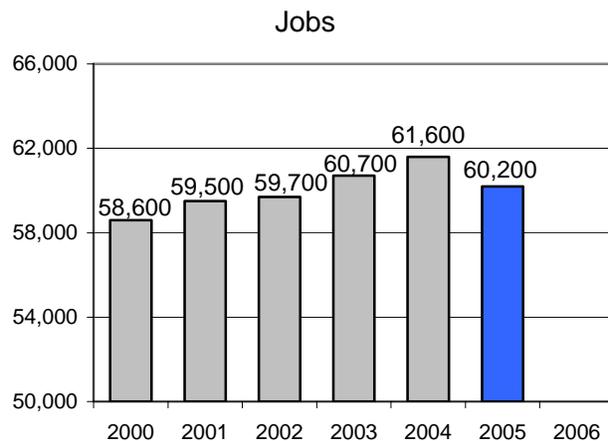


#### 4. **Jobs**

Number of non-farm jobs.

This measure provides data on the total number of non-farm jobs in Tompkins County. In 2006, the U.S. Department of Labor changed its methodology for calculating jobs as well as refined its count for the County's 2005 employment figures.

The **2006 Indicators of Success** reported Tompkins County as having 62,000 jobs in 2005. This figure has been revised by the U.S. Department of Labor to 60,200. For 2006 and future years' employment, statistics will be reported in the Indicators of Success at least two years after counts are completed by the U.S. Department of Labor so that final revisions are represented.

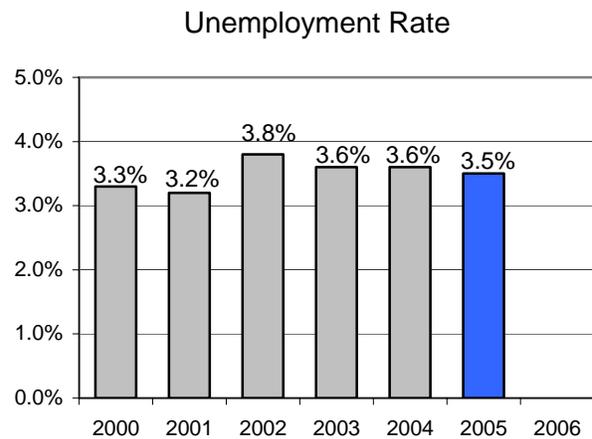


#### 5. **Unemployment Rate**

Average unemployment rate.

The unemployment rate is the percentage of the County's Labor force that does not have jobs. Tompkins County's unemployment rate has been consistently lower than that of upstate New York for the past six years. While the County experienced a 3.5% unemployment rate in 2005, upstate New York had a 5% unemployment rate as a region.

The **2006 Indicators of Success** reported Tompkins County as having a 3.2% unemployment rate in 2005. This figure has been revised by the U.S. Department of Labor to 3.5%. For 2006 and future years' employment, statistics will be reported in the Indicators of Success at least two years after counts are completed by the U.S. Department of Labor so that final revisions are represented.

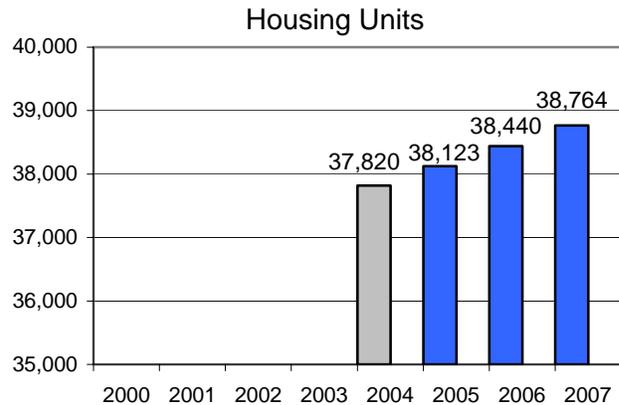


## 6. **Housing Units**

Number of total housing units.

This measure tracks the total number of housing units in the County every year. Housing units consist of single-family homes, apartments, mobile homes and single rooms that are occupied as separate living quarters. The number of housing units does not include dorms, seasonal housing, or uninhabitable dwelling units.

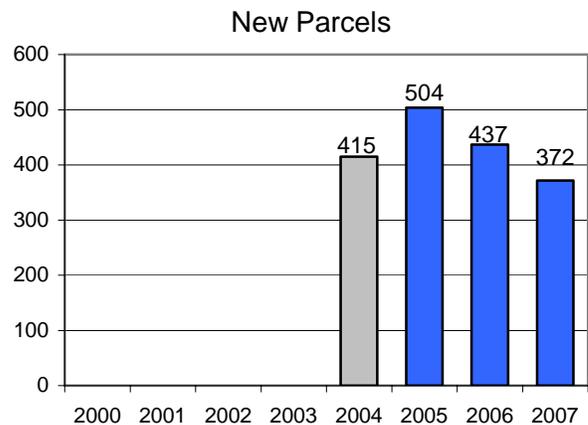
From 2004-2007, the number of housing units in the County increased by 944 units, a 3 percent increase.



## 7. **New Parcels**

Number of newly created parcels.

This measure tracks the number of parcels created by property subdivisions in the County. Subdivisions in Tompkins County spiked in 2005, then declined by 2007.



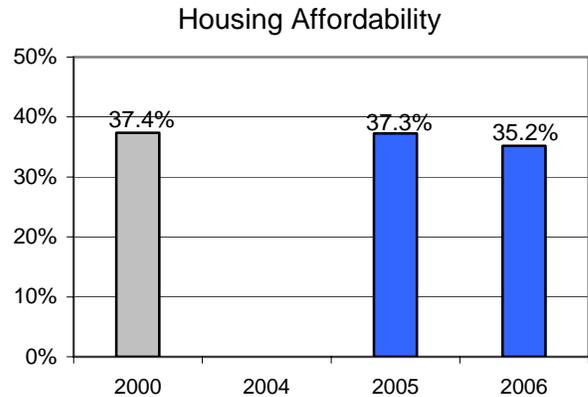
# Housing Choices

**Principle: Housing in Tompkins County should be affordable and appealing to all residents, regardless of their income or whether they rent or own their homes.**

## H1. Housing Affordability

Percent of households spending greater than 30 percent of income on housing.

Housing affordability measures the cost of monthly housing expenditures relative to household income. A household is generally defined as cost-burdened if the cost of housing exceeds thirty percent of the household's income.



➤ *Desired Trend: Decreasing percentage.*

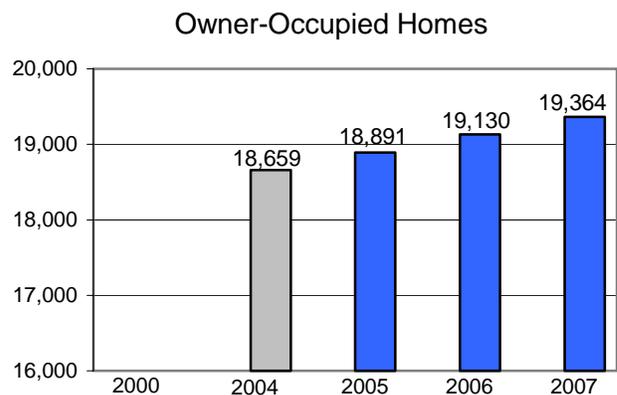
## H2. Owner-Occupied Homes

Number of owner-occupied homes.

*Highlight:*

- The number of owner-occupied homes in the County has increased by 3.8 percent since 2004.

Owning a home is widely recognized as an effective way to build and sustain wealth. Higher homeownership rates are also correlated to other social and community benefits such as higher rates of community participation including voting and volunteerism, better educational outcomes for children, lower crime rates, and other measures of social stability.



➤ *Desired Trend: Increasing number.*

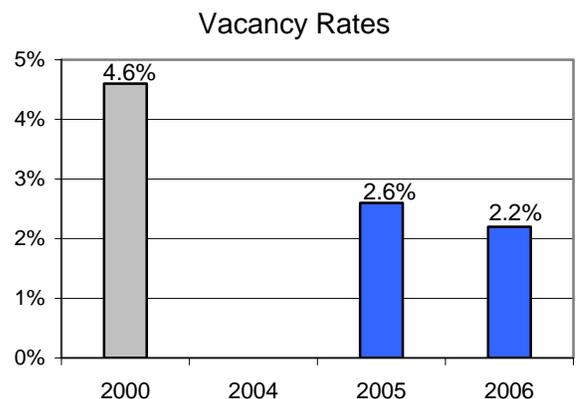
## H3. Vacancy Rate

Vacancy rate for rental units.

*Highlight:*

- The vacancy rate for rental units in 2006 in the County was less than half the rate in 2000.

A very low vacancy rate (below 3%) for rental units is a sign that they are in high demand, which can lead to an increase in rental costs and a decrease in housing availability. A high vacancy rate (over 5%) for rental units is a sign that such units are over-supplied in the market. NOTE: The margin of error for this data is very high.



➤ *Desired Trend: Vacancy rate between 3 and 5 percent.*

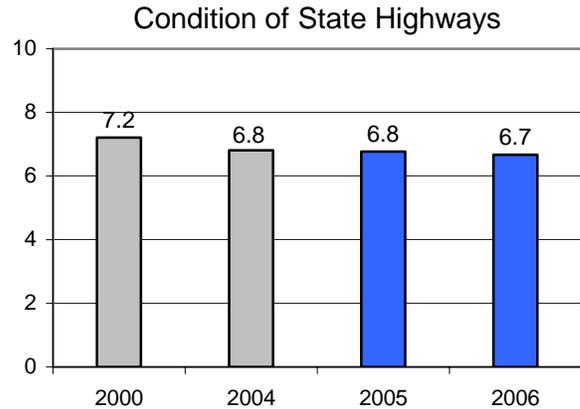
# Transportation Choices

**Principle: The efficiency of the highway system should be enhanced and use of public transit, walking, and bicycling should be increased.**

## T4. Condition of State Highways

Average condition of state highways.

State highway corridors are critical to the economy of Tompkins County because they are the primary ground transportation routes used to carry goods and services to and from the community. One measure of their condition is the average pavement condition score, which rates the average pavement condition of state highways in the County on a scale from 1 to 10. A score of 10 means "excellent;" a 6 rating is "fair;" and any score below 6 is "poor."

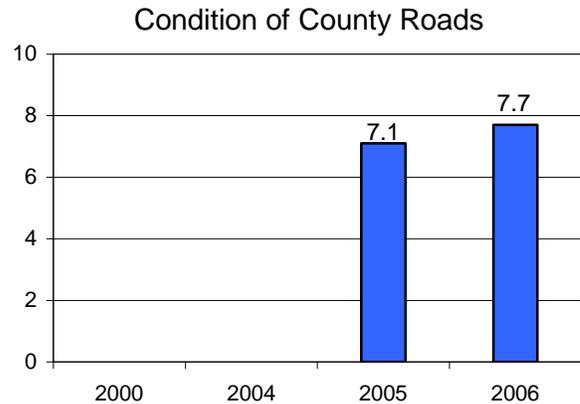


➤ *Desired Trend: Increasing score.*

## T5. Condition of County Roads

Average condition of County roads.

Approximately 300 miles of roadway throughout Tompkins County are owned and managed by the County. This measure tracks the average pavement condition of County roads. A score of 10 means "excellent;" a 6 rating is "fair;" and any score below 6 is "poor."



➤ *Desired Trend: Increasing score.*

## T6. Bus Ridership

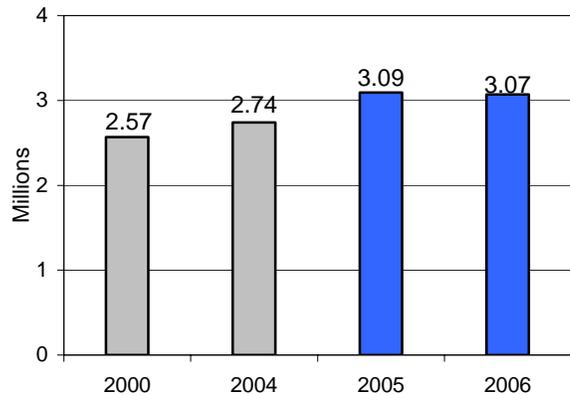
Annual ridership on public transit.

### Highlight:

- A decline in TCAT ridership from 2005-2006 was attributed to the reconstruction of the Thurston Avenue bridge which altered bus routes in the vicinity, causing Cornell bus ridership to drop.

A heavily used public transit system is a sign that members of the community have good incentives to ride public transit, including convenient bus routes, well-maintained buses, and any financial or other incentives that may be provided by work or school. Growing ridership is indicative of public transit's important role in providing a multi-modal transportation system in Tompkins County and supports the potential for transit as a viable alternative to the single-occupancy vehicle.

Bus Ridership



➤ *Desired Trend: Increasing number.*

## T7. Multiuse Trails

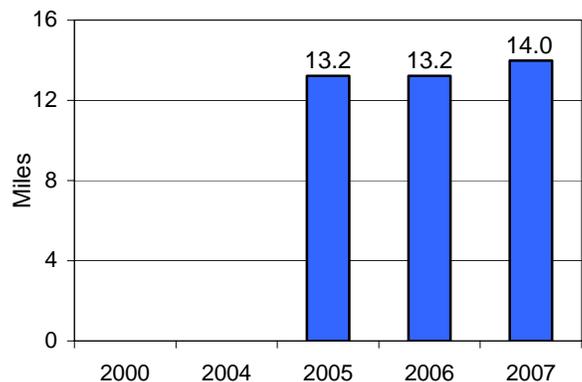
Miles of multiuse trails.

### Highlight:

- The addition of the Pew Trail in the Town of Ithaca extended the multiuse trail system by 3/4 mile in 2007.

The presence of an extensive multiuse trail network can help to connect communities, provide residents with alternative routes for commuting, and create opportunities for exercise, recreation, and relaxation. Multiuse trails can also strategically preserve corridors of open space in the region. This indicator is a measure of the investment in and expansion of multiuse trails in Tompkins County.

Multiuse Trails



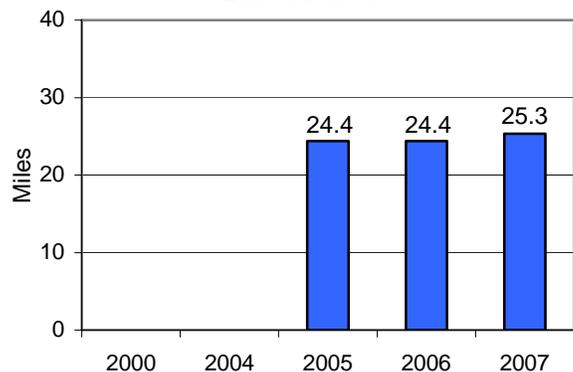
➤ *Desired Trend: Increasing number.*

## T8. Bike Routes

Miles of marked bike routes.

The number of designated bike routes provides a good measure of the public support for the bicycle network in Tompkins County. Increasing the number of bike routes and ensuring a well-funded bike route system help to provide a solid foundation for bicycle recreation and commuting in the County.

Bike Routes

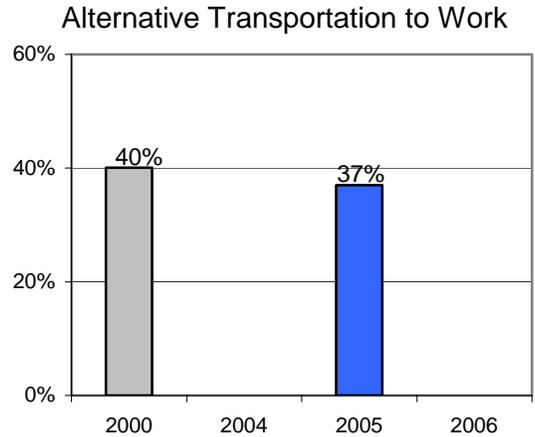


➤ *Desired Trend: Increasing number.*

**T9. Alternative Transportation to Work**

Percent of workers taking alternative modes of transportation to work.

This indicator tracks the proportion of commuters who walk, bike, carpool, telecommute, and take the bus to work instead of driving alone. An increasing percentage of workers taking alternative transportation to work helps lessen traffic congestion during peak commuting hours and reduces air pollution.



➤ *Desired Trend: Increasing percentage.*

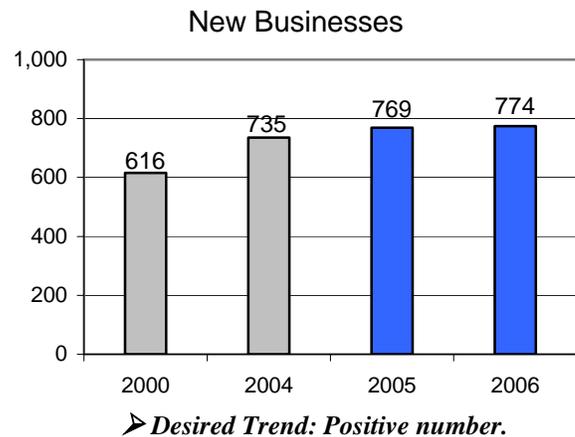
# Jobs and Business

**Principle: The local economy should be enhanced by building on important community assets, such as a highly educated workforce, an entrepreneurial spirit, dynamic academic institutions, and a high quality of life.**

## J10. New Businesses

Net number of businesses created annually.

Entrepreneurship and a steady growth in new businesses can point to a healthy and vigorous business environment. One way to measure business growth in the County is by counting the net number of new businesses created annually.



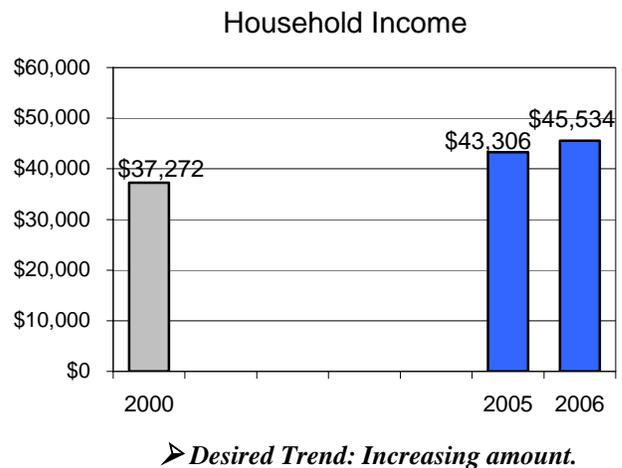
## J11. Household Income

Median household income.

*Highlight:*

- Median household income in the County increased by 10 percent between 2000 and 2006, after factoring inflation.

The median household income is a broad measure of economic health of the County. A household includes all persons who occupy a housing unit. A rising median household income is one indication that households in the County are doing well financially.



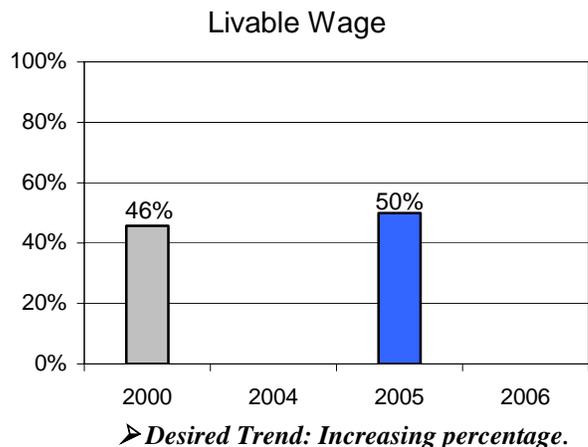
## J12. Livable Wage

Percent of individuals earning a livable wage.

*Highlight:*

- In 2005, half of all County residents earned a livable wage of at least \$19,102.

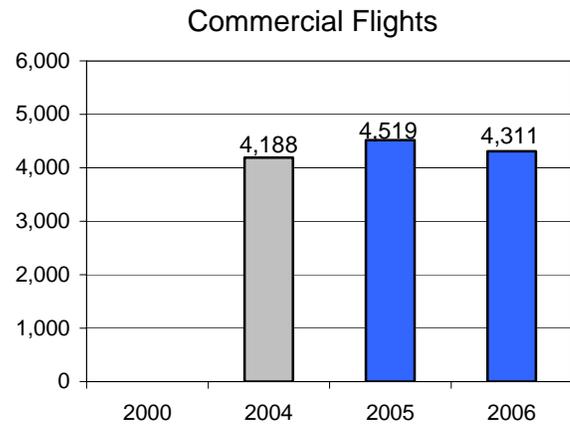
An important indication of the quality of employment opportunities and standard of living in a region is whether or not individuals' wages are keeping up with the cost of living in that region. The Livable Wage Study by Alternatives Federal Credit Union provides a benchmark for the minimum wage needed to reasonably support a person living in Tompkins County.



### J13. Commercial Flights

Number of regularly scheduled commercial flights using the Ithaca-Tompkins Airport.

The Ithaca-Tompkins Regional Airport is a critical element of the community's transportation infrastructure that supports the local economy. Increasing the number of commercial flights available enhances travel options for travelers, thus improving the region's perceived suitability as a place to do business, go to school, and visit.



➤ *Desired Trend: Increasing number.*

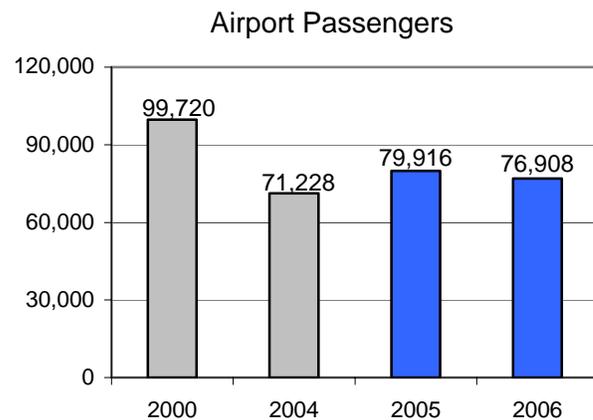
### J14. Airport Passengers

Number of airport passengers using the Ithaca-Tompkins Airport.

*Highlight:*

- The number of airport passengers increased by 12 percent from 2004-2005 then fell off again in 2006. The 2006 decrease is largely attributable to a spike in fuel cost that impacted ticket prices.

The number of airport passengers using Ithaca-Tompkins Regional Airport indicates the degree to which the airport is serving the community's air travel needs. The number of passengers sharply declined after the events of September 11, 2001, and still falls short of the numbers before that date. This is consistent with national trends.



➤ *Desired Trend: Increasing number.*

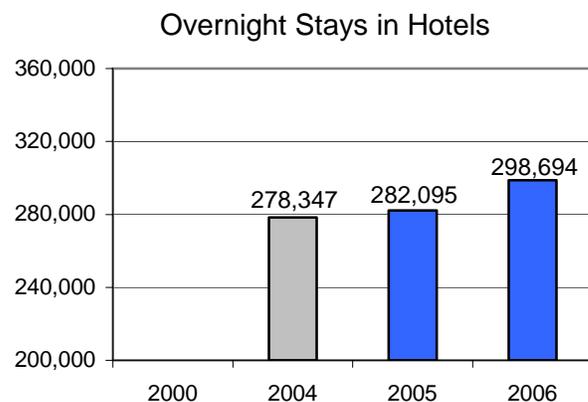
### J15. Overnight Stays in Hotels

Number of overnight stays in hotels and motels.

*Highlight:*

The number of overnight stays in the County soared by 6 percent from 2005-2006. One key factor was the completion of a new downtown hotel in 2005.

This indicator provides a measure of the economic vitality of both tourism and business sectors in Tompkins County. As more visitors are drawn to the County's many attractions, such as its state parks and waterfalls, Farmer's Market, and arts and entertainment venues, the number of room rentals increases. Likewise, the activity at our institutions of higher education and a growing business sector boost room rentals as the number of travelers grows.



➤ *Desired Trend: Increasing number.*

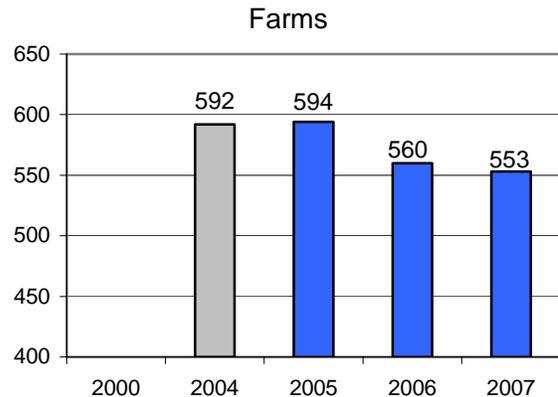
## Rural Resources

**Principle: A diversified rural economy centered around the working rural landscapes of farms and forests, and the livelihoods of those who depend upon them, should be preserved and enhanced.**

### R16. Farms

Number of farms.

A measure of the state of agriculture in the County is the number of farms. A thriving agricultural sector benefits from having a diversity of farm types and sizes.



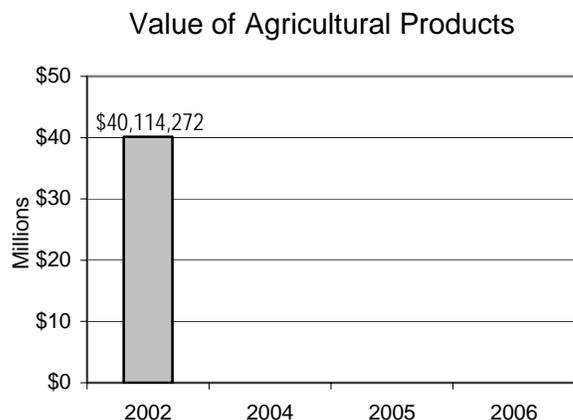
➤ *Desired Trend: Stable or increasing number.*

### R17. Value of Agricultural Products

Market value of agricultural products.

The total market value of agricultural products produced provides a financial snapshot of how well the agricultural economy is doing in the County. An increasing or stable market value indicates that the economic health of farming within the region is solid. The most recent data for this indicator is from the 2002 Agricultural Census, which is calculated every five years.

NOTE: The data for 2007 will be available in 2009.



➤ *Desired Trend: Increasing value.*

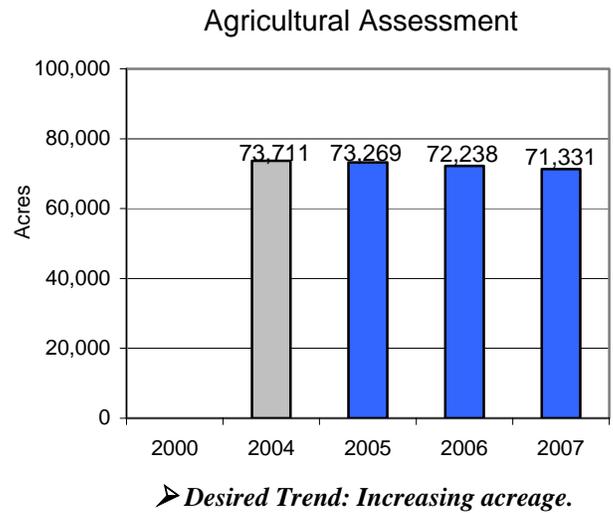
## R18. Agricultural Assessment

Acres receiving agricultural assessment.

### Highlight:

- Land receiving agricultural assessment has steadily decreased in the County. Since 2004, productive agricultural land fell by 2,380 acres (3 percent).

Tracking the number of acres that are receiving agricultural assessment is one way of evaluating the state of agriculture within Tompkins County. In order to qualify for agricultural assessment, land must be used for the commercial production of crops, livestock, or livestock products. Farmland that receives agricultural assessment is taxed for its value as agricultural land, not its development value. An increasing portion of land receiving agricultural assessment is one indication that the agricultural base in the County is strong and growing.



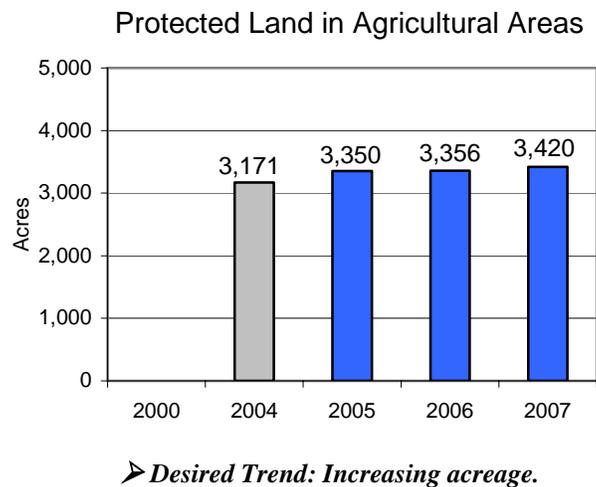
## R19. Protected Land in Agricultural Areas

Acres protected from development in the Agricultural Resources Focus Areas.

### Highlight:

- 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 Agricultural Resource Focus Areas that were identified in the Comprehensive Plan have the best soils in the County as well as high concentrations of contiguous, actively farmed parcels of land. This indicator tracks the acres of land in the Agriculture Resource Focus Areas that are protected from non-agricultural development, using tools such as farmland protection easements. Protecting land in Agricultural Resource Focus Areas helps to preserve prime agricultural soils and buffer farmland from encroaching residential development.



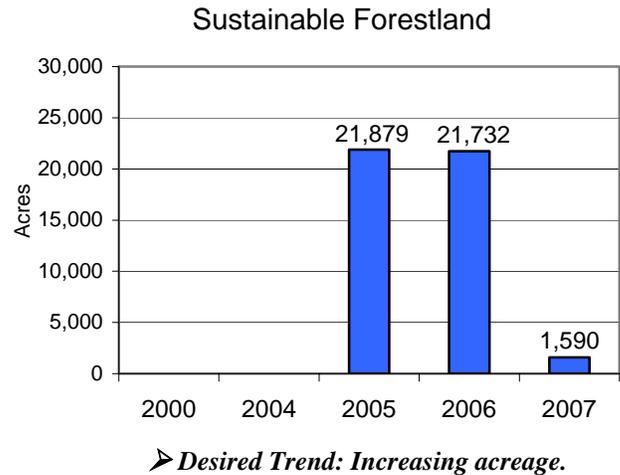
## R20. Sustainable Forestland

Acres of sustainably managed forestland.

### Highlight:

- The reduced number of reported sustainable forestland in 2007 is due to fact that the State Department of Environmental Conservation has not yet renewed its annual Forest Stewardship Council certification.

Sustainable forestry integrates the reforestation, management, growth, and harvest of trees for useful products with the conservation of soil, air and water quality, wildlife and fish habitat. Sustainable forestry is one of the many ways that residents use the available natural resources to support themselves financially and manage local forests wisely. This indicator tracks the number of acres of forestland in Tompkins County that is certified by the Forest Stewardship Council or the American Tree Farm System.



## R21. Rural Self-Employment

Amount of self-employment income from businesses located in rural areas.

People that are self-employed in the rural areas of the County represent a vast array of services and occupations including bed and breakfasts owners, restaurateurs, veterinarians, website designers, accountants, seamstresses, and dairy farmers among many others. Self-employment and small business entrepreneurship in rural areas contribute to a diversified rural economy and provide for, or add to, the livelihood of many of the County's rural residents.

**New Census data is expected in 2010.**

➤ *Desired Trend: Increasing amount.*

## Water Resources

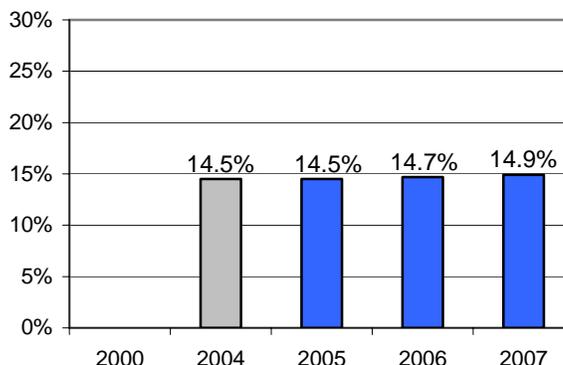
**Principle: Water resources provide drinking water, recreational opportunities, and environmental benefits, and should be protected and used appropriately.**

### W22. Protected Stream Buffers

Percent of perennial streams with protected buffers.

Vegetated corridors of land along streams, called stream buffers, help protect water quality by filtering pollutants, sediment, and nutrients from runoff associated with land development. Other benefits of stream buffers include flood control, erosion mitigation, and habitat improvement. Conservation and enhancement of contiguous stream buffers will help to improve water quality in the County's streams and in Cayuga Lake. Protected stream buffers include land protected by ownership such as Finger Lakes Land Trust preserves and conservation easements.

Protected Stream Buffers



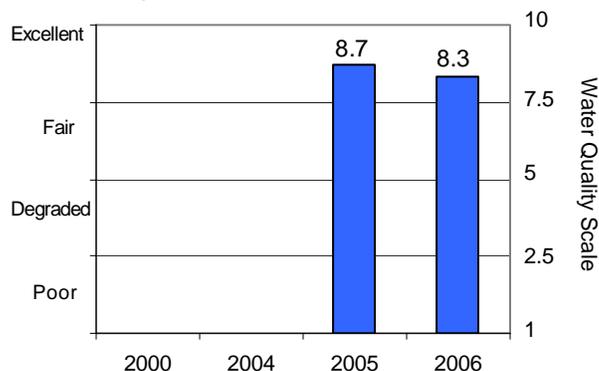
➤ *Desired Trend: Increasing percentage.*

### W23. Aquatic Health in Six Mile Creek

Analysis of benthic macroinvertebrates in Six Mile Creek.

Because of their sensitivity to environmental impacts in the aquatic environment, the number and diversity of macroinvertebrates (including insects, mollusks, and worms) found in streams can be used to assess water quality. This indicator provides an assessment of water quality in Six Mile Creek based on macroinvertebrate data. The indicator relies on a methodology recommended by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, which uses a scale of 1 to 10 with a score of 10 indicating that the creek's water quality is excellent.

Aquatic Health: Six Mile Creek



➤ *Desired Trend: Increasing score.*

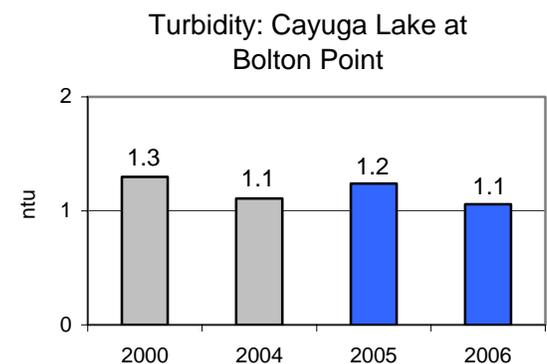
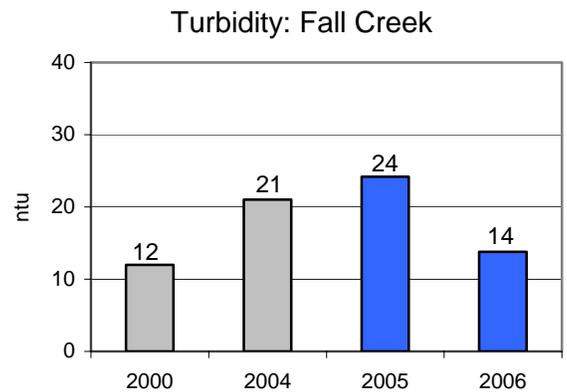
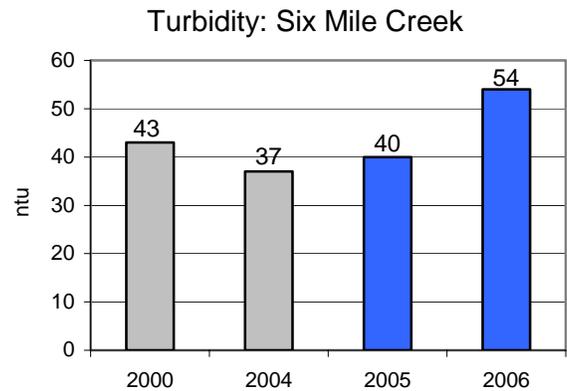
## W24. Turbidity

Average annual turbidity of water entering the County's three drinking water treatment facilities.

### Highlight:

- Two of the three local drinking water treatment facilities tracked a decrease in water turbidity from 2005-2006. The City of Ithaca Water Treatment Plant experienced one significant storm event during the year that greatly impacted their average turbidity level.

Turbidity measures the clarity of water and is used as an indirect indicator of the concentration of suspended matter, such as sediment, in water. A decreasing level of turbidity indicates greater water clarity. Turbidity can be caused by, among other factors, excessive erosion and sedimentation, which can degrade aquatic habitat and water quality, and diminish the aesthetic and recreational capacity of surface waters. This indicator tracks the average turbidity of water in Six Mile Creek, Fall Creek, and Cayuga Lake, which are the water sources for the City of Ithaca Water Treatment Plant, the Cornell Drinking Water Filtration Plant, and the Bolton Point Water System, respectively.

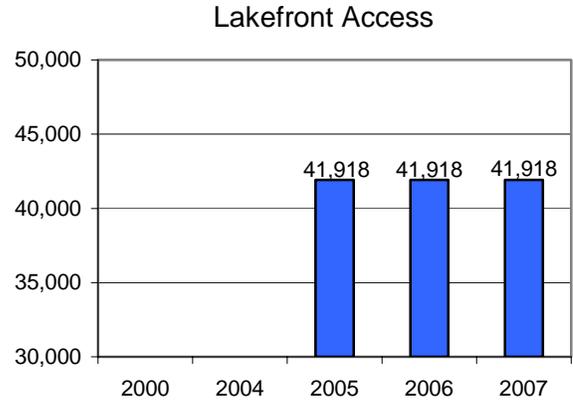


➤ *Desired Trend: Decreasing levels for all water sources.*

### W25. Lakefront Access

Feet of Cayuga Lake shoreline with public access.

Cayuga Lake is one of the most significant recreational and aesthetic attractions in Tompkins County. This indicator gauges the level of public access to the lake by measuring the total number of feet of shoreline that are accessible to the public.



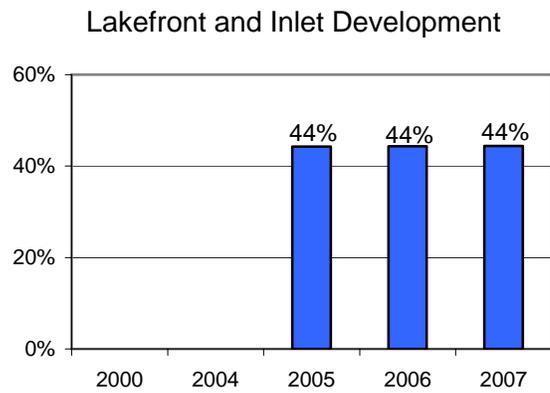
➤ *Desired Trend: Increasing number.*

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### W26. Lakefront and Inlet Development

Percent of Cayuga lakefront and inlet area that is developed in water-dependent or water-related uses.

Marinas, boat rentals, and some public utilities must be located directly on the lakefront. Other lakefront development, such as some restaurants and public parks, provide a community benefit as a result of their location on the lakefront. As lakefront land is a limited commodity, it should be reserved for water-dependent and water-related uses. This indicator tracks the percentage of developed lakefront and inlet area to Buffalo Street in the City of Ithaca (not including vacant parcels) in water-dependent or water-related uses.



➤ *Desired Trend: Increasing percentage.*

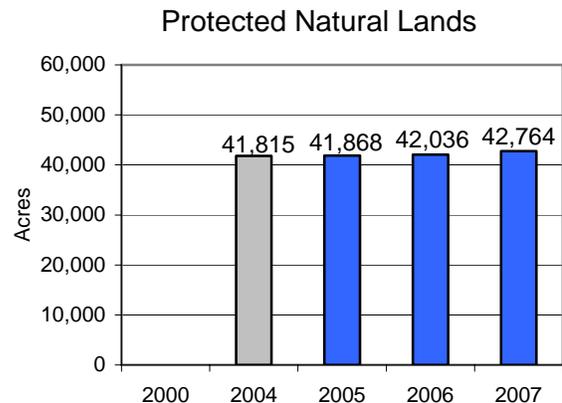
# Natural Features

*Principle: Natural features that define our community, and form the foundation of our local and regional ecological systems, should be preserved and enhanced.*

## N27. Protected Land in Natural Areas

Acres of land protected from development in the Natural Features Focus Areas.

One of the most-appreciated facets of Tompkins County is its diversity of natural features, which range from spectacular waterfalls and gorges to the many streams, wetlands, grasslands, and forests. The fourteen Natural Features Focus Areas identified in the Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan reflect the diverse natural, recreational, and working landscapes of the County. This indicator tracks the amount of land in the Natural Features Focus Areas that is protected by ownership. Included in this indicator are state parks, state forests, state wildlife management areas, Finger Lakes Land Trust preserves, conservation easements, and municipal parks.



➤ *Desired Trend: Increasing acreage.*

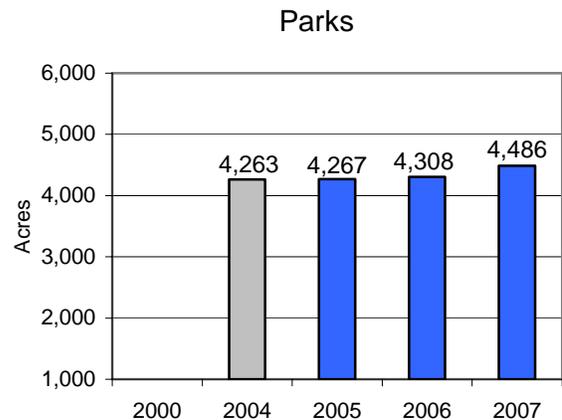
## N28. Parks

Acres of publicly accessible outdoor park and recreation facilities.

### Highlight:

- A new park of almost 100 acres was added to the Town of Danby's inventory in 2007.

The presence of public parks and recreational areas enriches the quality of life in Tompkins County. Parks contribute to a healthy lifestyle by providing opportunities for exercise, play, and social interaction for all ages. This indicator measures the acreage of parkland including municipal and state parks, as well as other publicly accessible outdoor recreational facilities, such as municipal golf courses and public school grounds.

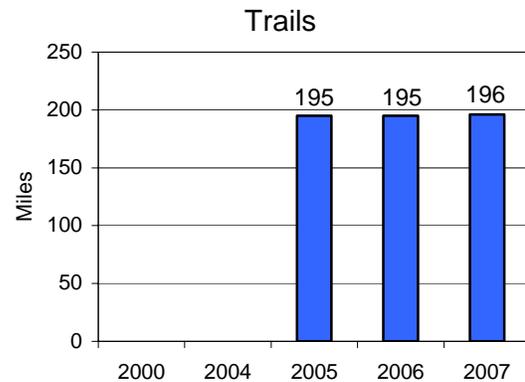


➤ *Desired Trend: Increasing acreage.*

## N29. Trails

Miles of publicly accessible hiking trails.

The hiking trails in State Forests, Cornell natural areas, and nature preserves are an important element of the outdoor recreational experience in the County. A well-maintained and expanding network of hiking trails provide good opportunities for exercise, recreation, and outdoor education for residents and tourists.



➤ *Desired Trend: Increasing number.*

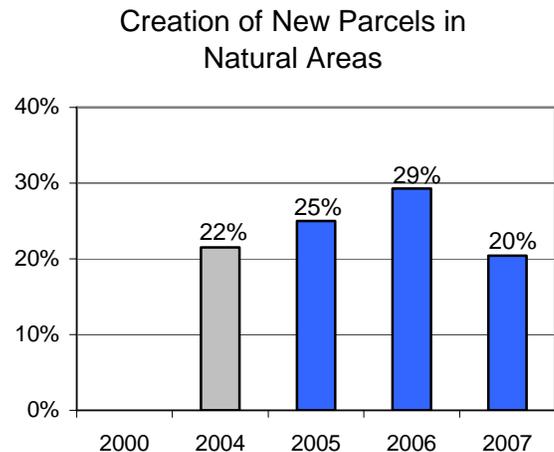
## N30. Creation of New Parcels in Natural Areas

Percent of newly created parcels that are located in Natural Features Focus Areas.

### *Highlight:*

- Between 2006 and 2007, the percentage of new parcels created in Natural Features Focus Areas dropped, as the number of newly created parcels decreased countywide.

The percentage of newly created lots within Natural Features Focus Areas gives us an understanding of how much prospective residential development is likely to occur within these areas. Increasing residential activity could threaten the natural functions and benefits of the Natural Features Focus Areas in the long term.



➤ *Desired Trend: Decreasing percentage.*

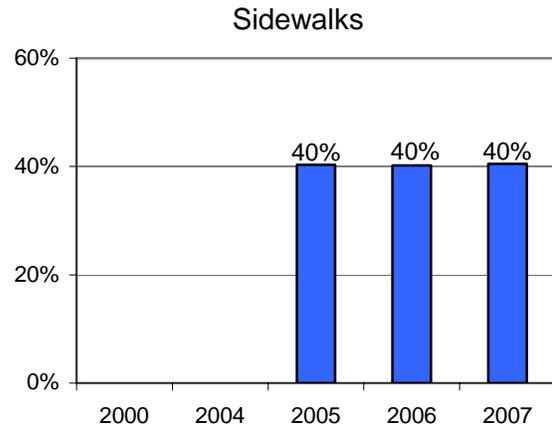
# Strong Communities

**Principle: Tompkins County residents should be safe, healthy, and comfortable with the aesthetics of their communities, and have daily opportunities to interact with neighbors and community members to build strong, cohesive communities.**

## S31. Sidewalks

Percent of streets that have sidewalks within City and village boundaries.

A connected and extensive network of sidewalks encourages people to walk for exercise, leisure, and transportation and can foster a sense of community when one meets neighbors and friends while out for a stroll. Building sidewalks in population centers increases the safety and ease of walking and demonstrates public support for walkable neighborhoods within a community.

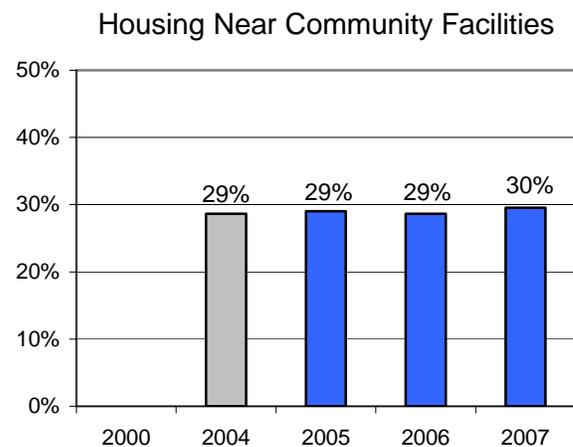


➤ *Desired Trend: Increasing percentage.*

## S32. Housing Near Community Facilities

Percent of housing units within a half-mile of at least seven community facilities.

A mix of land uses and a variety of social and recreational opportunities within walking distance of residences promote walking, social networking, and community livability. This indicator measures the percentage of housing in Tompkins County that is within a half-mile of at least seven different community facilities. These were selected from among fourteen different types of community facilities, including post offices, community centers, schools, retail stores, and offices. This indicator is adapted from the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) for Neighborhood Development Rating System, which assigns LEED certification credits to a residential project if it is located within a half-mile of at least seven non-residential use categories.



➤ *Desired Trend: Increasing percentage.*

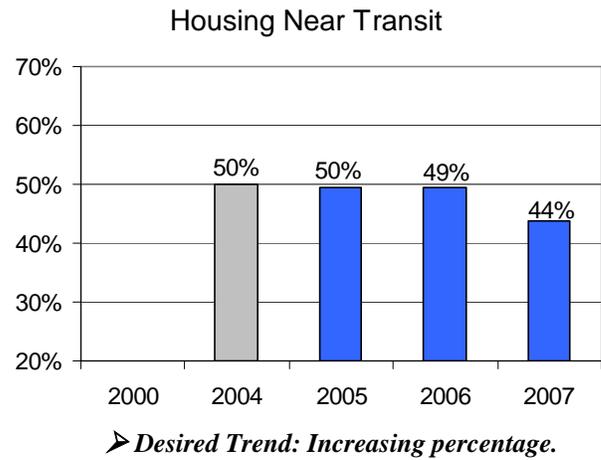
### S33. **Housing Near Transit**

Percent of housing units within a quarter mile of a transit stop

*Highlight:*

- TCAT's 2007 update to its bus stop data reveals some bus stops have been removed from transit routes since 2003. This reduction in transit stops caused the percent of housing units near transit to decline.

Locating housing close to transit stops provides residents with more convenient choices for transportation. People are more likely to use public transit to commute when a transit stop is located close to where they live. A good rule of thumb is that if a destination is within a five-minute walk (a quarter mile distance), people are more inclined to use transit.



# Centers of Development

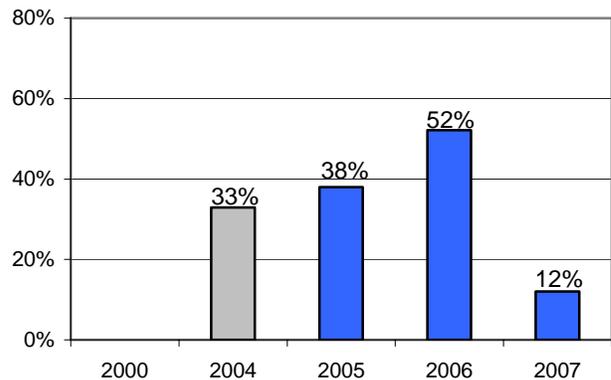
**Principle: The development patterns reflected in the existing villages, hamlets, and the City of Ithaca’s downtown area and neighborhoods should be promoted as key components of the built environment that greatly contribute to the vitality of the local economy and community life.**

**C34. Construction in Centers of Development**

Percent of new construction or renovation investment that is located in the City, villages, and hamlets.

Investment in new construction and renovation in the City, villages, and hamlets helps revitalize the community’s existing centers of development. This indicator tracks the percentage of new construction or renovation for both residential and commercial projects located in the City, villages, and hamlets. An increasing percentage indicates that new construction is being directed to established centers and away from existing open space in the County.

Construction in Centers of Development



➤ *Desired Trend: Increasing percentage.*

**C35. Land Development and Household Population Growth**

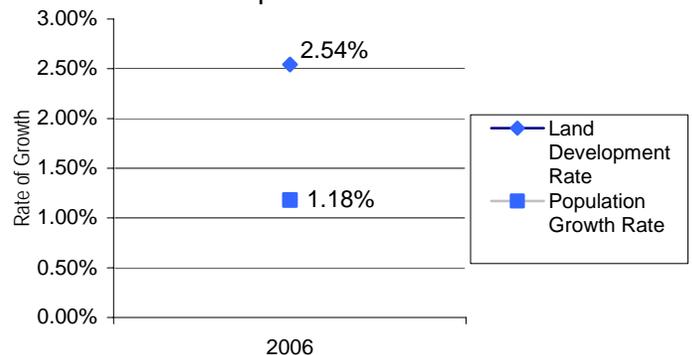
Rate of land development compared to rate of household population growth.

Highlight:

- The rate of land development in Tompkins County was more than double the rate of household population growth from 2005-2006.

This measure compares the rate of household population growth to the rate of new land development. It indicates whether undeveloped land in the County is being developed at a rate that is less than, or greater than, the rate of population growth.

Land Development and Household Population Growth



➤ *Desired Trend: Rate of land development equal to or lower than the rate of population growth.*

## Efficient Use of Public Funds

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

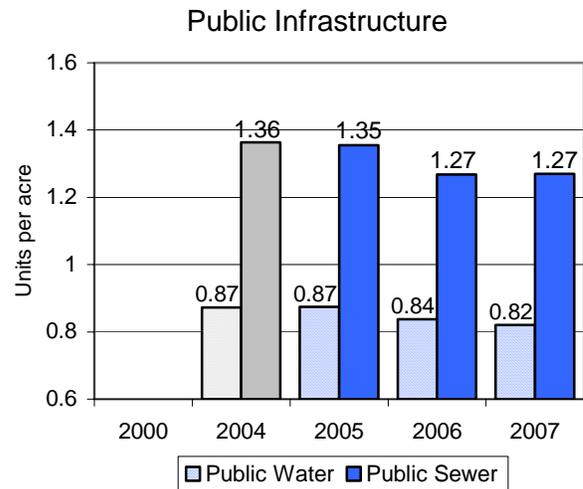
### E36. Public Infrastructure

Density of residential development within public water and sewer service areas.

*Highlight:*

- The residential housing density within public water service areas has steadily decreased from 2004-2007, though housing density in sewer service areas remained stable during the past year.

Encouraging residential development in areas where there is water and/or sewer service provides benefits to communities and homeowners. Homeowners can be assured of safe and reliable water and sewer service and communities avoid the financial strain of installing and maintaining new lines to low density, scattered residential development. This indicator measures the density of housing units per acre within the public water or sewer service areas in the County. An increasing density means that development is concentrating in areas that have access to public water or public sewer. A decreasing density means that sewer and water lines are being extended to serve lower-density development.



➤ **Desired Trend: Increasing density.**

### E37. **Non-Renewable Energy**

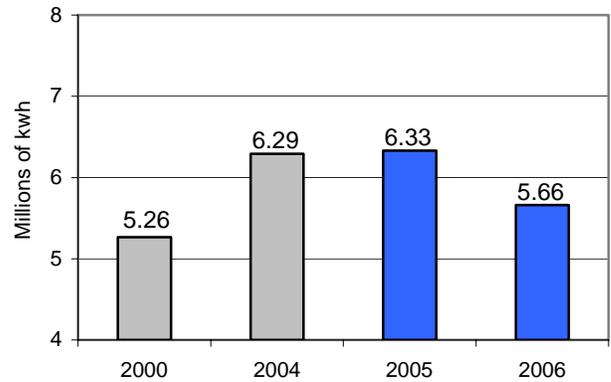
Amount of annual non-renewable energy used in County-owned facilities.

*Highlight:*

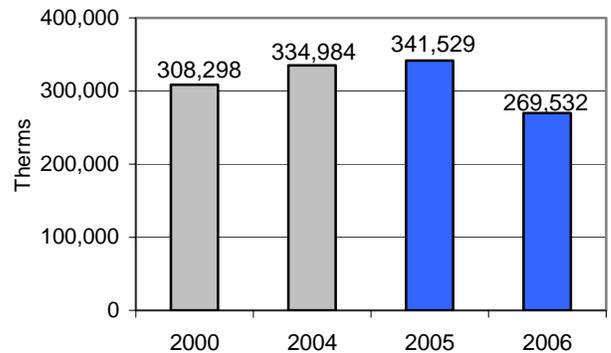
- The County government's energy audit and implementation initiatives resulted in notable reductions in electricity and heat used in 2006.

One way of reducing costs and promoting the efficient use of public funds at the County level is by reducing the amount of non-renewable energy used in County-owned facilities. Lowering the amount of non-renewable energy used also lowers the amount of greenhouse gas emissions generated by the County and consequently its contribution to global climate change. The increases in non-renewable energy usage from 2000 to 2005 reflect a net addition of 90,000 square feet, or 27 percent, to the County building inventory.

**Non-Renewable Energy: Electricity**



**Non-Renewable Energy: Heat**



➤ *Desired Trend: Decreasing amount of energy usage.*