



**Tompkins County**  
**DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING**

121 East Court Street  
Ithaca, New York 14850

Edward C. Marx, AICP  
Commissioner of Planning  
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**AGENDA**  
**PLANNING ADVISORY BOARD**

Wednesday, February 27, 2013  
9:00 AM

**COOPERATIVE EXTENSION, ROOM C**

Call to Order & Changes to the Agenda	Martha Armstrong
Comprehensive Plan Update -- Discussion	Joan Jurkowich
Commissioner's Report	Ed Marx
Approval of Minutes from November 28, 2012 and January 23, 2013	Martha Armstrong
Announcements	Members
Adjournment	Martha Armstrong

*Please allow 1 ½ hours for this meeting.*

*If you will be absent, please notify  
Kathy Wilsea at 274-5560 or  
[kwilsea@tompkins-co.org](mailto:kwilsea@tompkins-co.org)*

*Upcoming meeting dates: March 27, April 24*



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Telephone (607) 274-5560  
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TO: Planning Advisory Board  
FROM: Joan Jurkowich, Deputy Commissioner of Planning  
DATE: February 20, 2013  
RE: Comprehensive Plan Update – Initial Discussion at PAB Meeting

The Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2004 and the Planning Department is tasked with updating the plan with a goal of having it ready for adoption by the Legislature in 2014. As with the original plan preparation, the PAB will serve as the Steering Committee for the 2014 Update.

The February meeting of the PAB will largely be devoted to an initial discussion of the scope of the plan update. The Planning Department would like to focus the discussion on some specific questions, listed below. Following each question are some thoughts the Planning Department staff have about the update. These are provided to spur PAB discussion, not as final answers to all the questions.

**Should there be any change to the overall tenor of the plan?**

The 2004 Comprehensive Plan was the first Comprehensive Plan prepared for legislative approval. It was rather careful in its approach. While this was appropriate at the time, the 2014 Plan Update should be bolder – trying to create a more transformative vision for the County. In order to support this approach, the timeframe of the plan needs to be longer. The 2004 Plan looked 20 years forward, the 2014 Update could look 50 or 100 years into the future – or maybe to 2050 to align with the county’s energy strategy.

**Should new topics be included?**

The 2014 Update should include all the existing elements, although the Centers of Development and Strong Communities sections might be better if they were combined or otherwise handled differently.

There are other topics that should not be treated as new chapters but instead should be themes that are woven through the plan (rather like regional cooperation is handled now): sustainability, healthy communities, social equity, and climate change adaptation.

In terms of new topic areas, there were topics that were identified as potential elements of the 2004 plan, but were not included. These are grouped under five headings:

Community Resources/Character

Culture/Arts  
Historic Districts; Historic Structures  
Lighting; Night Sky  
Motorized Recreation  
Noise  
Rural Landscapes  
Scenic Resources

## Natural Resources and Environmental Quality

- Air Quality
- Chemical Exposure
- Greenhouse Gases
- Energy Conservation
- Renewable Energy Resources

## Economy

- Brownfields
- Forestry

## Social Infrastructure

- Disaster Mitigation; Disaster Planning
- Human Services

## Physical Infrastructure

- Public Safety
- Public Schools/Public Education
- Outdoor Recreation
- Wireless Communications

Some of these have already been addressed. For example, the Energy and Greenhouse Gas Emissions element (2008) addressed the topic areas of greenhouse gases, energy conservation, and renewable energy resources. Also, the Department conducted a scenic resources inventory and is just completing work on a hazard mitigation plan update. Relevant information from such efforts can be incorporated in the plan update.

Two ideas for additional elements (somewhat reflected above) are communication and information technology (in terms of community infrastructure) and placemaking (including concepts of rural character, urban design, and protection of scenic resources).

### **How should we update the Action Items?**

Including the Action Items in the 2004 Plan was partially successful. Almost all of the actions that were identified as the responsibility of the Planning Department, either alone or in collaboration with other organizations, were successfully implemented. However, where action items were identified as being the responsibility of other organizations, there was a significantly lower rate of completion. In retrospect, that's not so surprising, those organizations were not as vested in the plan as the Department. So, we may want to change how the plan deals with action items.

Maybe the plan should have two types of action items – a list of action items for the County to undertake (similar to the existing list of action items) and a list of actions that others in the community could and should undertake but (for whatever reason) do not fall under the purview of county government. These latter actions would probably be less prescriptive and may be called something else.

The Department has had success in implementing the specific strategies that evolved from the Comprehensive Plan (i.e., the housing, energy, conservation, and development focus areas strategies). The plan update could recommend the preparation of more short term strategies to implement the plan – these are five-year strategies and the frequent updates can take advantage of known changes in local capabilities and new and changing funding resources.

### **How should the plan address natural gas drilling?**

Should natural gas drilling be addressed in an introductory chapter that deals with new issues since the 2004 plan? Should it be addressed in the alternate scenarios – maybe identifying the impacts of different rates of development of gas drilling? Should the plan make a strong statement that it is official county policy not to allow gas drilling using current HVHF technology and that in order to make any headway on addressing climate change we cannot continue to extract and use fossil fuels? Should the plan address the potential that, no matter what is done in the

short term, state government may in the future open the door to natural gas drilling despite any local policies and concerns?

**What should be the role of the PAB?**

The Department has already identified a couple of ways in which the PAB could play a valuable role in the plan update. One is in thinking through how to weave social equity issues in the plan. The 2004 plan does this a very little bit, the 2008 energy element does a better job.

The second is in thinking through how we can best involve other organizations in the planning process. It seems that people in the school systems could be a great resource for the plan, and the plan has the potential to be a great resource for them. But how best and when to involve them is something that needs to be thought through. Similarly for other organizations that have a county-wide view, including county advisory boards (like the EMC and Water Resources Council), organizations that have been formed since 2004 (e.g., Tompkins County Climate Protection Initiative, Sustainable Tompkins, Local First Ithaca), and some organizations that see Tompkins County in a bigger context – regional organizations like Finger Lakes Land Trust and, perhaps, the Regional Economic Development Council.

We look forward to hearing what the members of the PAB think about these questions, and more, when you meet next week. And, rest assured, this will not be the last time the PAB will be discussing these topics.

Reference Material

- A copy of the Comprehensive Plan is available on the Planning Department’s website (<http://www.tompkins-co.org/planning/compplan/index.htm> ) along with the 2008 amendment to the plan, the Energy and Greenhouse Gas Emissions Element.

1 *Draft 1/23/2013 dk*

2 **PLANNING ADVISORY BOARD**  
3 **Wednesday, November 28, 2012**  
4 **SCOTT HEYMAN CONFERENCE ROOM**  
5 **125 East Court Street**

6  
7 **draft MINUTES**  
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9 **Members Present** –Martha Armstrong, Will Burbank, Dick Coogan, Sue Cosentini, Fernando de Aragon,  
10 John Gutenberger, Dave Herrick, David Kay, Dooley Kiefer (Associate), Monika Roth, Kathy Schlather,  
11 John Spence, Rob Steuteville, Scott Whitham

12 **Members Excused** -- Mina Amundsen, Michelle Berry, Todd Bittner, Gay Nicholson, Andy Zepp

13 **Member Absent** – Rick Couture

14 **Others Present** – Joan Jurkowich (TCPD), Ed Marx (Commissioner of Planning & Community  
15 Sustainability), Kathy Wilsea (TCPD)

16  
17 **Call to Order** – The meeting was called to order at 9:03 AM by the Vice Chair, Martha Armstrong. Agenda  
18 items will be taken out of order.

19  
20 **Commissioner's Report** – Ed Marx reported the County Legislature approved a budget for 2013. It did not  
21 include a joint City/County sustainability planner. Otherwise it is pretty much status quo for the department.  
22 • Leslie Schill is leaving the Planning Department, and her last day will be December 14. Of Leslie's job  
23 tasks, the Housing Fund Round 6 is near completion, and will go to Joan. The Cleaner Greener Southerntier  
24 Regional Sustainability Plan is also near completion.

25  
26 **Election of Chair and Vice Chair for 2013** – Monika Roth reported for the Nominating Committee that  
27 Martha Armstrong has agreed to serve as Chair and Andy Zepp has agreed to serve as Vice Chair. This slate  
28 was accepted by consensus.

29  
30 **Report on Development Focus Areas Fund** – Joan Jurkowich reported two applications were received. A  
31 joint application from the City and Town of Ithaca asks for \$8,000 to hire a consultant to examine form-  
32 based codes. The Town of Dryden asked for \$2,500 to work on two projects: preparation of a gap analysis  
33 of water/sewer service near NYSEG and expansion of Bolton Point water to the edge of the Village of  
34 Dryden. The expansion of water service is considered by staff to not fit the parameters of this funding. Joan  
35 has notified the Town recently but has no response yet. She thanked the review committee for their work.  
36 These projects do not require involvement of County staff, as they want the projects to be seen as local  
37 government taking action. The City/Town of Ithaca study area explores rural, residential, waterfront and the  
38 area along Route 13 by Ithaca Beer.

39  
40 **Updates on Projects and Programs** – Ed Marx said the Regional Sustainability Plan is in the home stretch,  
41 and staff hopes to have a full draft by the end of next week. NYSERDA has continuously changed  
42 parameters. We may need to request an extension from NYSERDA. • The Housing Fund Program  
43 Oversight Committee met 11/15 and approved six projects, which are now in the stage of getting partner  
44 approval for funding. This round provides 165 units. All were housing trust applications. • Climate  
45 Showcase Communities – Staff met with the proposers of the Biggs project and discussed changes that  
46 would meet the Town of Ithaca objectives. The project will probably go to the County Legislature in  
47 January. Of the two other grant phases that are under construction, EcoVillage is facing delays with permits.  
48 • The Sustainability Center will be housed in the north side of the Human Services Annex, and renovations  
49 should be done in mid-December, then displays will be set up. The center has a part-time coordinator funded  
50 by the Park Foundation. Other workers will be volunteers, and their availability will dictate when the Center  
51 is open to the public. • The Strategic Tourism Plan was endorsed by the County Legislature and now has an  
52 implementation grant round open. • The inventory work for the Blue Way Trail is mostly done. Other  
53 phases will happen in the spring. • An update for the County Capital Plan is ready for review by the  
54 Legislature. • Solar panel installation by Solar Liberty is almost complete on six County buildings. Cornell

55 and Ithaca College are now talking with Solar Liberty about installing panels on the campuses. This would  
56 have a larger impact than the panels on County buildings. ▪ The group that worked on the Housing Strategy  
57 will reconvene next month. They will discuss analysis performed by Chuck Thomas and what we are aware  
58 of in the pipeline. One factor is employment growth is less than projected. ▪ Sometimes staff becomes  
59 aware of projects that just make them scratch their heads. A current one is conversion of buildings on Cayuga  
60 Street between Green & State to allow the alley side of the building to be converted to housing, while  
61 retaining some square footage for storefronts.

62  
63 **Approval of Minutes from October 24** – Draft minutes were moved by John Gutenberger, seconded by  
64 Dick Coogan and passed by unanimous voice vote. Final minutes are available on the Planning Department  
65 website: [www.tompkins-co.org/planning/](http://www.tompkins-co.org/planning/) under Advisory Boards.

66  
67 **Discussion: Topics of Interest** – Rob Steuteville suggested he could show how to use the online program re  
68 greenhouse gasses and affordability that is available on the Housing/Transportation Affordability Index.  
69 Equipment and internet access will be arranged for a future PAB meeting. ▪ In the news today, Montour  
70 Falls is enjoying a rejuvenation of their downtown areas. Rob said it combines the two aspects of connection  
71 to the environment with historic buildings downtown to showcase their identity, and these are concepts our  
72 villages could use. ▪ Rob attended the recent presentation by a Buffalo consultant on Form Based Codes.  
73 This is the idea of writing codes to achieve a vision of what public space should look like, with less focus on  
74 use and density. This concept generated a lot of discussion, and will be a topic for a future meeting.

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76 Will Burbank said he heard on the news there is a school in Rochester that will advocate energy self-  
77 sufficiency. Students will make decisions about projects from a variety of energy sources. He will try to get  
78 more information. Monika Roth said she expects to be working on an update to the County Agriculture Plan,  
79 and the process will have sector-specific focus groups in order to learn their needs. John Gutenberger asked  
80 how our community's multitude of studies are utilized – if a group wants data, are they aware of what is  
81 already available? Ed said this points out a problem that has been discussed by staff. How do we make the  
82 public and municipalities aware of our resources? We post items on the web, but are examining what else  
83 we can do in terms of list serves and other possibilities. A staff member is looking into this. David Kay said  
84 Cornell has committed to LEED certification for a project on campus, but some faculty members object. The  
85 Atkinson Center will lead discussion and examination of LEED use. Ed said the County has a draft Green  
86 Building Policy that is linked to LEED, although he agrees LEED is too formulaic. As the discussion on  
87 campus proceeds, we will discuss this further at PAB. Fernando de Aragon suggested PAB stay abreast of  
88 phases of the Commons redesign. The City has applied for more funding from NYS. David Kay would also  
89 like to have the City and Town of Ithaca visit PAB together to report on their coordinated efforts to update  
90 their comprehensive plans.

91  
92 Discussion returned to the concepts involved in form based codes. Concerning future agenda time for topics,  
93 Ed suggested members could provide some background, perhaps a half page, to go out with the agenda. This  
94 could become a regular part of the agenda.

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96 **Adjournment** – The meeting was adjourned at 10:19 AM.

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98 Respectfully submitted,

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100 Kathy Wilsea, Secretary  
101 Tompkins County Planning Department

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103 Minutes adopted by PAB on \_\_, 2013.

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2 **PLANNING ADVISORY BOARD**  
3 **Wednesday, January 23, 2013**  
4 **SCOTT HEYMAN CONFERENCE ROOM**  
5 **125 East Court Street**

6 **draft MINUTES**

7  
8 **Members Attending:**

Name		Representation
Mina Amundsen	P	At-Large
Martha Armstrong	E	Economic Development
Michelle Berry	E	At-Large
Todd Bittner	E	Natural Environment
Will Burbank		Planning Committee
Dick Coogan	E	Local Planning (non-urban)
Sue Cosentini	P	Business
Rick Couture		Education
Fernando deAragon	P	Transportation
John Gutenberger	E	Education

Name		Representation
Dave Herrick	P	Facilities/Infrastructure
David Kay		Local Planning (urban)
Gay Nicholson		At-Large
Monika Roth		Agriculture
Kathy Schlather	P	Human Services
John Spence	P	Housing
Rob Steuteville	P	Built Environment Design
Scott Whitham	E	Cultural & Historic Pres.
Andy Zepp	P	Land Pres/Public Land Mgmt
Dooley Kiefer	P	Associate Member

10  
11 **Others Present** – Joan Jurkowich (TCPD), Ed Marx (Commissioner of Planning & Community Sustainability), Kathy  
12 Wilsea (TCPD)

13  
14 **Call to Order** – The meeting was called to order at 9:07 AM by the Vice Chair, Andy Zepp. There were no changes to  
15 the agenda.

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17 **Accessing the Housing/Transportation Affordability Index** (<http://htaindex.org>) – PAB member Rob Steuteville  
18 said he feels this is one of the most useful planning tools created. It covers 80 to 90% of the USA and drills down to  
19 Census blocks in different areas. When the index was created, affordability was considered by location, with no  
20 consideration for transportation costs. Transportation became a factor in the last ten years as gas prices increased. The  
21 index now factors more information into transportation costs. John Spence asked if it provides information that could  
22 direct future development, and Rob said yes, because so many factors are included. He showed how to use the maps,  
23 which appear as side-by-side graphics, one for housing data and one for transportation data. He summarized by saying  
24 it is a dramatic tool which shows correlation with density.

25  
26 **TCPD Work Program** – Joan Jurkowich and Ed Marx provided information for the draft document that was  
27 distributed with the agenda. Ed commented that more and more aspects of the Work Program are being guided by the  
28 strategies that have been developed from the Comprehensive Plan. In the update of the CompPlan, the plan will be  
29 reviewed and action items will be updated. Joan pointed out that we now have several years of data in the Indicators of  
30 Success documents, and it will all be analysed. Maybe at the next PAB meeting there will be discussion on what  
31 membes feel should be included in the CompPlan update. Ed said the Climate Showcase Communities project will  
32 have an outreach component this year.

33  
34 **Updates on Projects and Programs** – Cleaner Greener Southern Tier Regional Plan: The plan has been submitted to  
35 NYSERDA for two levels of review – details and big picture. Ed is not sure what to expect, as this is the first draft plan  
36 in NYS. He now believes the grant program will be part of the regional funding opportunities and part of the mid-year  
37 application for funding. Although parameters are not established yet, we do know a grant application can't be for extra  
38 funding for existing programs and must have positive greenhouse gas implications. Joan pointed out our "region" has  
39 no clear leadership to apply for funding and shepherd concepts to completion. We may continue to work with the  
40 consortium that was created for the purpose of developing this plan. Fernando De Aragon said he is encountering the  
41 same problem with regional transportation efforts. Ed expects Cleaner Greener to begin with a group of demonstration  
42 and pilot projects for others to follow.

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Comments on Proposed City of Ithaca Zoning Changes: Height Limits in Downtown and MLK/State Street Corridor: TCPD staff has made preliminary comments. This proposal from the City doesn't match the Downtown Ithaca Alliance strategy, and the City's CompPlan is not complete. Several County properties would be affected by the zoning and three of them have solar panels. Ed feels the City needs a policy on solar access because, without that, property owners will be reluctant to use solar panels that may ultimately end up in the shade. The City needs analysis of how square foot volume corresponds to demand, and how it affects other parts of the City, and this analysis is not appropriate before completion of the CompPlan. They also need visual and transportation impacts analysis. Under the proposed zoning, Restaurant Row (Aurora Street) would neighbor areas with 100 foot height limit allowed, which might encourage tear down and rebuild of Restaurant Row, and leave the sidewalk dining in the shade. The City's Planning and Development Committee sent the draft zoning back to staff for changes. TCPD will have an opportunity for formal review. Fernando estimated the City's CompPlan process will take another year. Dooley Kiefer encouraged TCPD contact with the City Planning Department for regular dialog.

**Commissioner's Report** – Ed reported that staff assembled a 2012 accomplishments list:

- Cleaner Greener Southern Tier Regional Plan: completion of draft document
- Conservation and Development Focus Areas Strategies completed and endorsed by County Legislature
- 20-Year Capital Plan Update adopted by County Legislature
- Climate Showcase Communities: Issues RFP for Biggs project, and two partners broke ground
- Housing Fund had two successful rounds for 165 affordable housing units
- 2020 Strategic Tourism Plan completed and adopted by County Legislature
- Provided staff support for \$213,000 in Tourism Grants
- Conservation Reserve Fund implemented for Shindagin Hollow project with Finger Lakes Land Trust
- Interns completed analysis for Solar, Wind and Biomass capacity
- NYS Purchase of Development Rights Bensvue project in Lansing closed
- Staff comments were sent to DEC on the sGEIS for gas drilling
- County green energy projects advanced

Staff submitted extensive comments to DEC on high volume hydrofracturing. The Sustainability Center is expected to open by the end of February. The Department is recruiting to fill the vacancy caused by Leslie Schill's resignation.

**Announcements** – Sue Cosentini provided an update on Aurora Pocket Neighborhood, said they are currently drywalling all three units. A blower door test and thermal imaging were conducted for one unit, with better than expected results. They are using air source heat pumps, which are inexpensive and the pump can reverse for air conditioning. The building envelopes are a bigger investment than the heat pumps. Solar panels will provide electricity to operate the heat pumps. EcoVillage at Ithaca is using similar insulation, and electricity at EVI will come from giant photovoltaic arrays. All of the Aurora Pocket Neighborhood units are sold. Sue's next project is being designed with more solar power, as it becomes increasingly affordable. Dooley asked if neighbors' trees might shade the solar panels, and did Sue secure assurances from her neighbors? Sue said she did not, but she doesn't expect tall development in Fall Creek. Ed pointed out we need to begin considering vegetation in planning, and what energy sources work in different locations. The orientation of Biggs and EVI will take advantage of solar access.

Kathy Schlather announced the annual Homeless Count will take place for 1/25/13, 7 AM Friday to 7 AM Saturday. Surveys can be conducted in the two weeks around the date to ask where target citizens were on the Count date.

John Spence announced Better Housing for Tompkins County recently received three NYS Homes and Community Renewal grants: \$150,000 Access to Home for ramps, etc., \$300,000 HOME rehabilitation, and \$187,000 NYS Affordable Housing Corporation for large rehabilitation projects.

**Adjournment** – The meeting was adjourned at 10:30 AM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Kathy Wilsea, Secretary  
Tompkins County Planning Department

Minutes adopted by PAB on \_\_, 2013.