



Tompkins County
**COMPREHENSIVE
PLAN**

Planning for our

FUTURE
2015

Five-Year Review

November 7, 2019

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Introduction and Summary

Overview

The current Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan was adopted by the Tompkins County Legislature on March 3, 2015. It presents a vision for the future of the community based on a set of twelve principles. The principles include three that are overarching and are reflected throughout the Comprehensive Plan:

Overarching Principles

Tompkins County should be a place where:

- the needs of current and future generations are met without compromising the ecosystems upon which they depend (Sustainability).
- all levels of government work cooperatively to address regional issues (Regional Cooperation).
- taxpayer dollars are invested in public infrastructure and facilities in the most efficient manner possible (Fiscal Responsibility).

The remaining nine principles form the basis for the individual chapters of the Comprehensive Plan. These chapters are:

- The Economy
- Housing
- Transportation
- Natural Resources
- Water Resources
- Energy and Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Climate Adaptation
- Healthy Communities
- Development Patterns

Each of these chapters:

- identifies five to eight policies of the County related to the topic area, for a total of 52 policies;
- includes a section entitled *Snapshot of the County Today*, providing information about the topic in Tompkins County;
- includes a section entitled *Issues and Opportunities*, and
- includes a section entitled *Taking Action*, identifying two to four actions, for a total of 28 actions, to be initiated by the County within two years of adoption of the plan.

Basis for and Purpose of the Five-Year Review

The regular review and, as needed, update of the Comprehensive Plan is called for in several places. The 2015 Comprehensive Plan states that “When the Plan was adopted in 2004, it was envisioned to be a dynamic document with review every five years and full updates every ten.” In addition, the review and update of plans is referenced in:

- General Municipal Law §239-d, concerning County comprehensive plans. It provides for the periodic review of such plans. Specifically, it states that the
county legislative body shall provide, as a component of such proposed county comprehensive plan, the maximum intervals at which the adopted plan shall be reviewed.
- The Tompkins County Charter (§C-10.01(a)) states:
The [Comprehensive] plan shall be monitored annually, updated as necessary, and formally reviewed every five years following adoption.

- The resolution of the Tompkins County Legislature adopting the Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan (Resolution No. 2015-34), included the following provision:

RESOLVED, further, That the Plan can be amended from time to time and that the Plan shall be reviewed, at a minimum, every five years.

The purpose of this five-year review is to determine if conditions in the community have changed to such an extent as to warrant a formal amendment to the plan. Specifically, five questions were considered:

Question 1. What Action Items have been completed and can be removed from the plan?

Answer: The 2015 Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan identified 28 Action Items that the County would initiate within two years of adoption of the plan. Eighteen of those actions have been completed, nine are partially underway, and one has not been (and does not need to be) initiated. All can, therefore, be removed from the plan. The full response to this question can be found in the section entitled **Progress on Action Items**.

Question 2. Is the plan based upon accurate data, or have data points changed significantly enough in the past five years to warrant new analysis?

Answer: The information in the text, tables, and maps throughout the plan have been reviewed and, while there have been changes in some conditions, none are significant enough to materially affect the recommendations of the plan. The full response to this question can be found in the section entitled **Information in the Plan**.

Question 3. Are the plan's principles and policies still relevant to the issues facing the community?

Answer: The Principles and Policies identified in the 2015 Comprehensive Plan still apply in Tompkins County and none should be removed. See the section entitled **Principles and Policies** and **APPENDIX B – Principles and Policies of the 2015 Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan**.

Question 4. Have any important issues arisen in the past five years that are not addressed by the current principles and policies?

Answer: No important issues have arisen in the past five years that are not addressed by the current Principles and Policies. Hence, no edits to the Comprehensive Plan are recommended other than a new list of Action Items. The full response to this question can be found in the section entitled **Issues**. Also see **APPENDIX C: Public Outreach - Comments Received and Staff Responses to Comments** for a more detailed assessment of issues that were raised.

Question 5. What Action Items should be added to the plan to help achieve the principles and policies of the plan?

Answer: A new list of Action Items to be initiated between now and the next full update of the Comprehensive Plan (anticipated by 2025) is recommended to be added to the Comprehensive Plan. The draft resolution to do so follows. The full response to this question can be found in the section entitled **New Action Items**. Also see **APPENDIX C: Public Outreach - Comments Received and Staff Responses to Comments** for a more detailed assessment of recommended action items.

Conclusions of the 2019 Review

In all, no additional budgetary or staff resources are needed in 2020 in order to update the 2015 Comprehensive Plan. However, a new list of Action Items to be initiated between now and the next full update of the Comprehensive Plan (anticipated by 2025) is recommended in the following resolution proposed for adoption by the Tompkins County Legislature.

PROPOSED RESOLUTION

AMENDMENT TO THE 2015 COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN – FIVE-YEAR REVIEW

WHEREAS, in 2015, the Tompkins County Legislature adopted the 2015 Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan to guide County program development and decision making, and

WHEREAS, the Tompkins County Charter states “The plan shall be monitored annually, updated as necessary, and formally reviewed every five years following adoption,” and

WHEREAS, the Tompkins County Department of Planning and Sustainability, with guidance and advice of the Tompkins County Planning Advisory Board, has conducted a thorough review of the Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan - including progress on the Plan’s 28 recommended Action Items, changes in data upon which the Plan was based, the Plan’s 12 Principles and 52 Policies, and issues that have arisen since the Plan was adopted in 2015, and

WHEREAS, the Department of Planning and Sustainability and the Planning Advisory Board have recommended adding 18 new Action Items to the Plan to be initiated before the next scheduled Plan update in 2025, and

WHEREAS, the Comprehensive Plan review was subject to opportunities for public review and comment, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, on recommendation of the Planning, Energy and Environmental Quality Committee, That the Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan be amended by adding the following Action Items to the Comprehensive Plan:

1. Municipal Assistance: Undertake direct outreach and engagement with municipalities several times each year to identify opportunities to assist their implementation of projects that would directly promote the policies of the Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan or projects identified in County strategies.
[Department of Planning and Sustainability]
2. Strategic Tourism Plan: Update the *Tompkins County 2020 Strategic Tourism Plan (2012)*. [Strategic Tourism Planning Board, Department of Planning and Sustainability]
3. Priority Trails: Work with community partners to further implement the Tompkins Priority Trails Strategy. [Department of Planning and Sustainability]
4. Route 13 Corridor Study: Develop the 2020 State Route 13 Corridor Study and identify opportunities to implement recommendations. [Department of Planning and Sustainability, Ithaca-Tompkins County Transportation Council]
5. Housing Funding: Identify and pursue methods to continue and expand the Community Housing Development Fund Program. [Department of Planning and Sustainability]
6. HABs Strategy: Establish a detailed countywide Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) strategy based on the Cayuga Lake and Owasco Lake HABs Action Plans and identify the actions, and the appropriate lead

agencies, to be taken in Tompkins County that would most effectively reduce HABs . [Water Resources Council]

7. Stream Corridor Protection: Provide resources to support and encourage local officials to establish mechanisms and programs for protecting stream corridors. [Department of Planning and Sustainability]
 8. Watershed Rules and Regulations: Evaluate existing watershed rules and regulations within the region to determine best practices for protecting drinking water quality and enforcement mechanisms, focusing on the potential of establishing such rules for the Cayuga Lake watershed. [Department of Planning and Sustainability, Health Department]
 9. County-Owned Forestlands: Establish clear goals for managing County-owned Forest Lands and develop a plan of action for advancing those goals. [County Legislature, Environmental Management Council, Department of Planning and Sustainability]
 10. Resiliency and Recovery Plan: Develop the Tompkins County Resiliency and Recovery Plan that both includes an update of the *Tompkins County Hazard Mitigation Plan (2013)* and develops tools to support resiliency and post-disaster economic recovery. [Department of Planning and Sustainability]
 11. Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory: Conduct greenhouse gas emissions inventories both for the community and for County government operations, to be able to compare and track progress from the *2008 GHG Emissions and Energy Use Inventories*. [Department of Planning and Sustainability]
 12. Energy Infrastructure: Work with the Public Service Commission, state agencies, and NYSEG to plan for and support reliable and adequate energy infrastructure in the County that advances the County's greenhouse gas emissions goals, while supporting the County's Economic Development Strategy and Housing Strategy. [Department of Planning and Sustainability]
 13. Business Energy Advisors: Continue to implement the Business Energy Advisors program and explore methods to improve and expand its impact on reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the commercial sector. [Department of Planning and Sustainability]
 14. Employee Commutes: Assist County employees in reducing greenhouse gas emissions from their daily commutes. [Department of Planning and Sustainability, Human Resources]
 15. Net-zero Emissions Facilities and Fleet: Undertake an inventory and analysis of County facilities and fleet to determine a financially sound path to net-zero emissions. [Facilities Department, Department of Planning and Sustainability]
 16. Water and Sewer Study: Support TCAD's update of the *Countywide Inter-Municipal Water and Sewer Feasibility Study for Tompkins County (2010)* and disseminate the results to municipalities. [Department of Planning and Sustainability]
 17. Planning and Design: Identify and share ways local municipalities can use the Planning and Design Principles from the *Development Focus Areas Strategy (2012)* in their communities. [Department of Planning and Sustainability]
 18. Cayuga Lake Blueway Trail: Complete tasks associated with the regional Cayuga Lake Blueway Trail Implementation grant from the New York State Department of State. [Department of Planning and Sustainability]
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Progress on Action Items

Question 1: What Action Items have been completed and can be removed from the plan?

The 2015 Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan identified 28 Action Items that the County would initiate within two years of adoption of the plan. This progress report lists those action items and briefly describes progress as of March 1, 2019¹:

The Economy

1. Create implementation plans for agri-culinary tourism and heritage tourism, two of the focus areas in the *2020 Strategic Tourism Plan*.

COMPLETE. The [*2020 Tompkins County AgriCulinary Tourism Implementation Plan*](#) was adopted by the Strategic Tourism Planning Board on September 21, 2016. The [*Tompkins County Heritage Tourism Implementation Plan*](#) was adopted by the Strategic Tourism Planning Board on February 17, 2016.

2. Develop an Energy Focus Areas Strategy to provide for the energy needs of growing businesses while prioritizing renewable energy solutions and addressing energy concerns in key geographical areas of the county.

COMPLETE. The [*Tompkins County Energy Focus Area Study*](#) was completed on March 13, 2017.

3. Seek increased funding to reimburse employers for on-the-job training that enhances employees' skills and increases their wages.

INITIATED AND UNDERWAY. The Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce has partnered with the County Workforce Investment Board and the One-Stop Center to receive regular funding from the New York State Department of Labor to offer On-the-Job Training grants to businesses and organizations in our community.

Housing

4. Update the Tompkins County Affordable Housing Needs Assessment and engage the broader housing community in revising the *Tompkins County Housing Strategy*.

COMPLETE. The [*Tompkins County 2016 Housing Needs Assessment*](#) was completed in late 2016. The [*Tompkins County Housing Strategy: A Place for All of Us*](#) was endorsed by the Legislature on July 6, 2017.

5. Better define the housing needs of client populations served by County human services agencies.

COMPLETE. The Ithaca/Tompkins County Continuum of Care developed the Coordinated Assessment Team with a “no wrong door approach” where participating agencies implement a standardized assessment tool to identify vulnerabilities and assist in placing consumers in the right housing options. There is a single waiting list, reviewed regularly, to meet the needs of people remaining on the list.

¹ Hyperlinks, when available, are provided to documents prepared or funded by Tompkins County.

6. Assist municipalities in developing strategies to help homebuyers compare and evaluate the energy efficiency of existing housing.

COMPLETE. The Tompkins County Planning Department and Cornell Cooperative Extension supported a team of local governments (Towns of Danby, Caroline, Ithaca and Ulysses, and the City of Ithaca) that received grant funding from NYSERDA to prepare the *Tompkins Residential Energy Score Program and Implementation Plan*. Work on the project continues with NYSERDA's Home Energy Rating Pilot which includes the Pearl Home Certification being offered in Tompkins County.

Transportation

7. Identify the most critical elements of the County-owned highway infrastructure network for use in prioritizing investment of County funds.

INITIATED AND UNDERWAY. The County Highway Department regularly assesses highway infrastructure to prioritize spending.

8. Conduct a study to identify electric vehicle charging station development needs and opportunities.

COMPLETE. The Ithaca-Tompkins County Transportation Council received grant funding from NYSERDA and completed the [*Tompkins County Plug-in Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Plan*](#) in June 2017.

9. Investigate additional park and ride and other ways to provide better, safer access to existing transit routes in suburban and rural areas.

COMPLETE. A review was conducted by the Ithaca-Tompkins County Transportation Council. Opportunities for implementing improvements continue to be explored.

Natural Resources

10. Monitor development activity within the Natural Features Focus Areas and Agricultural Resource Focus Areas and share that information with municipalities.

INITIATED AND UNDERWAY. The Department of Planning and Sustainability in conjunction with the Department of Assessment have developed a methodology for annual tracking of development. Only one year of data (2017) has been developed; as future years are added that information will be shared with municipalities.

11. Identify Purchase of Development Rights priority projects for implementation in the Agricultural Resource Focus Areas.

COMPLETE. Using the priorities of the State's Purchase of Development Rights program, actively farmed properties with the highest quality soils and greatest development pressure were identified and were the focus of outreach and education on the State's PDR programs.

12. Develop a conservation funding strategy that accurately captures need for key conservation acquisitions.

COMPLETE. The Tompkins County Legislature established the Natural Infrastructure Capital Project in 2017. The program is administered by the Department of Planning and Sustainability. In 2019, staff completed a review of this and other similar county funding programs to assess their effectiveness in meeting the County's priorities and revised program guidelines will be developed and presented to the Legislature for consideration in 2020.

13. Build on the recommendations in the Finger Lakes Trail Corridor Protection Plan to identify specific areas and tools to improve connectivity between Natural Features Focus Areas.

COMPLETE. The [*Tompkins County Habitat Connectivity Strategy*](#) was completed in May 2018. Some of the Strategy's recommendations could provide formalized protection and improvement of the Finger Lakes Trail Corridor.

Water Resources

14. Contribute to NYSDECs work assessing and improving water quality in the southern end of Cayuga Lake.

INITIATED AND UNDERWAY. The Cayuga Lake Monitoring Partnership, a committee of the Tompkins County Water Resources Council, has been working with NYSDEC to track development of the total maximum daily load (TMDL) program for Cayuga Lake. NYSDEC has yet to release the draft TMDL.

15. Develop an integrated green infrastructure program that combines existing efforts to identify and protect the quality of stream corridors, wetlands, and aquifers.

COMPLETE. The Tompkins County Legislature established the Natural Infrastructure Capital Program in 2017. The program is administered by the Department of Planning and Sustainability.

16. Complete the NYSDOT Relocation and Site Redevelopment Feasibility Study.

COMPLETE. The [*NYSDOT Maintenance Facility Relocation & Redevelopment Feasibility Study*](#) was completed in August 2016.

17. Support the Water Resources Council in its work to update delineation of wetland resources in the County.

COMPLETE. The County provided funding and other support to the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network for the completion of the [*Wetland Mapping for Tompkins County, New York*](#) report and maps which were completed in January 2016.

Energy and Greenhouse Gas Emissions

18. By the end of 2015, finalize the Tompkins County Energy Roadmap to determine the most effective and efficient means of meeting the community's long-term energy and greenhouse gas emissions goals and begin implementation.

COMPLETE. The Legislature accepted the [*Tompkins County Energy Roadmap: Evaluating Our Energy Resources*](#) on April 19, 2016.

19. Conduct a greenhouse gas emissions inventory for both the community and County government using 2014 data.

COMPLETE. The [*2014 Tompkins County Community Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Energy Use Inventory*](#) and the [*2014 Tompkins County Government Operations Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Energy Use Inventory*](#) were both completed in September 2016.

20. Work with municipalities to develop tools to encourage widespread deployment of renewable energy systems.

COMPLETE. The Department of Planning and Sustainability completed [*Tools to Promote and Regulate the Deployment of Renewable Energy Systems: Recommendations for Municipalities in Tompkins County*](#) in June 2017.

Climate Adaptation

21. Assess the vulnerability of the County government's critical facilities to the impacts of climate change.

INITIATED AND UNDERWAY. In early 2019, the County received notice that it had been awarded grants from the NYS Department of State and the NYS Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Services to create and implement community recovery and resiliency plans to address climate change risks. This project will include a countywide risk assessment of critical infrastructure and important County buildings.

22. Prepare a community disaster recovery plan to prepare the community to take the actions; including those that build economic resilience, to bounce back from a disaster should it occur.

INITIATED AND UNDERWAY. In early 2019, the County received notice that it had been awarded grants from the NYS Department of State and the NYS Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Services to create and implement community recovery and resiliency plans to address climate change risks. This project will include a continuity of operations plan training for local businesses.

23. Conduct an inventory of pipeline stream crossings in the county and identify those of highest priority in order to advance measures to reduce risk to human health and the environment.

COMPLETE. The *Tompkins County Inventory of Erosion Hazards at Pipeline Crossings* was completed in December 2016.

Healthy Communities

24. Develop a healthy communities strategy as a collaborative effort of County departments.

INITIATED AND UNDERWAY. In discussions among County departments, it was determined the most effective approach to this project was for the Department of Planning and Sustainability to provide planning support, as needed, to other County Departments as they work on developing health-related plans.

25. Establish a formal role for the County in trail development.

COMPLETE. In 2015, the Planning, Energy and Economic Development Committee agreed that the Planning Department should support development of a countywide trail system with a particular focus on regional multi-use trails involving multiple municipalities. The Department's role includes convening partners, supporting efforts to secure trail corridors, and helping to obtain funds to design and build trails.

26. Prepare and share a sidewalk inventory with municipalities.

NOT INITIATED. Upon review, it was determined that the existing sidewalk inventory is largely already completed and available to municipalities.

Development Patterns

27. Work with municipalities to identify potential infill or redevelopment sites within Development Focus Areas.

INITIATED AND UNDERWAY. The Department of Planning and Sustainability has initiated a contract with a consultant to assist in its infill analysis and efforts to nurture compatible infill development within Tompkins County communities.

28. Provide technical assistance to municipalities to establish land use policies and regulations that support development within Development Focus Areas.

INITIATED AND UNDERWAY. The Department of Planning and Sustainability has reinvigorated its efforts to provide staff assistance to communities interested in taking actions in support of the County's planning policies.

Information in the Plan

Question 2: Is the plan based upon accurate data, or have data points changed significantly enough in the past five years to warrant new analysis?

The 2015 Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan contains information about the county in the text, in tables, and in maps throughout the plan. These have all been reviewed and, while there have been changes in conditions as noted below, none are significant enough to materially affect the recommendations of the plan.

Introduction

This chapter includes a table showing the date of local comprehensive plans. Since that list was published, several of those local plans have been updated or are currently being worked on. These include the Villages of Lansing and Trumansburg, the Towns of Caroline, Dryden, Enfield, and Lansing, and the City of Ithaca.

County demographics, as described in the text, have seen some relatively minor changes based on American Community Survey (ACS) data. The proportion of the population enrolled in college or graduate school has decreased slightly in the county as a whole as well as in the City of Ithaca. The proportion of the population that is at least 65 years old has increased somewhat to approximately one in eight residents.

The Economy

Most of the data presented in this chapter has not been updated since the Comprehensive Plan was written in 2014. There is updated data on some of the information shown in the “Selected Income and Employment Characteristics” table on page 24. Most of the local changes reflect trends seen on the national and state level.

There are a couple of exceptions. While the population in poverty and families in poverty have decreased nationwide, both saw increases in Tompkins and surrounding counties. Also, while median family income increased, the rate of increase in Tompkins County (3.2%) was lower than that of surrounding counties, New York State, and the country as a whole (each approximately 10%). ***These trends should be tracked closely.***

Housing

A review of the U.S. Census data shown on the “Housing Statistics for Tompkins County and Surrounding Counties” showed some changes in Tompkins County. While the homeownership rate has held steady, the proportion of households with monthly owner costs exceeding 30% of their household income decreased significantly, from 28.9% to 20.6%. However, there was an uptick in the proportion of renters paying more than 30% of their household income for rent, from 57% to 60%. This probably reflects the increase in median rent from \$925 to \$1,055 per month.

Transportation

A review of the commuting data presented in the Comprehensive Plan showed some changes, but all these were within the reported margin of error.

Natural Resources

In reviewing and updating the table on Dedicated Open Space in Tompkins County, we discovered that some land areas were inadvertently double-counted when the Comprehensive Plan was written in 2014. The most up-to-date information follows:

Dedicated Open Space in Tompkins County

Open Space Owner/Type	2013 Land Area (ac.) <i>As erroneously reported in 2015 Comprehensive Plan</i>	2019 Land Area (ac.)	2019 % of Land in Agricultural Resource Focus Areas (ARFAs)	2019 % of Land in Natural Features Focus Areas (NFFAs)
New York State	28,461	28,588	0.8%	97.5%
Cornell University	7,258	7,844	4.1%	92.1%
Finger Lakes Land Trust	4,770	6,847	14.1%	59.7%
City of Ithaca	1,158	1,159	0.0%	96.5%
Tompkins County	660	660	14.2%	80.4%
Private/Other	553	837	9.0%	64.6%
Other Municipal Land	752	972	1.4%	39.1%
The Nature Conservancy	394	394	77.9%	77.8%
Ithaca College	284	286	0.0%	80.1%
Agricultural Easements	2,221	2,259	89.2%	18.8%
TOTAL	46,511	49,848	8.0%	85.7%

Water Resources

There have been some relatively minor expansions of the areas in the county served by municipal water and sewer systems. The extent of these changes will be documented in the update to the *Countywide Inter-Municipal Water and Sewer Feasibility Study for Tompkins County*, scheduled to be completed by the end of 2020.

The Comprehensive Plan includes a table showing the acres of wetlands, by municipality, based on the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI). Since the adoption of the plan in 2015, the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network (CLWN), with support from Tompkins County and others, completed the *Wetland Mapping for Tompkins County, New York* report and maps in January 2016. CLWN's effort used more accurate and detailed data and imaging than was available when the NWI was completed. The results are shown below.

Wetlands, by Municipality (acres)

Municipality	National Wetlands Inventory	Cayuga Lake Watershed Network
Town of Caroline	1,021	1,367
Town of Danby	1,187	1,420
Town of Dryden	3,763	5,708
Town of Enfield	695	972
Town of Groton	1,549	2,197
Town of Ithaca	447	573
Town of Lansing	1,160	1,502
Town of Newfield	527	741
Town of Ulysses	606	812
City of Ithaca	127	106
TOTAL	11,082	15,398

Energy and Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Since adoption of the Comprehensive Plan, Tompkins County has prepared the *2014 Tompkins County Community Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions and Energy Use Inventory*. A few highlights from that inventory are summarized here:

- The community has reduced GHG emissions 21% from 2008 levels by 2014. This is six years ahead of the target goal of a 20% reduction by 2020. While positive news, 11% of this reduction was achieved through a major shift from coal to natural gas to power the grid.
- Emissions associated with fracked shale gas are calculated extremely differently depending on whether the currently accepted GHG accounting is used or if the findings of evolving climate science on methane are applied. If the new science is applied, the community has not seen a 21% reduction in emissions, but instead has seen a 67% increase in total GHG emissions.
- The commercial sector saw a significant reduction in emissions, largely due to Cornell's decision to stop using coal and begin using natural gas to produce its heat and electricity.
- There was substantial growth in the development of local renewable energy generation between 2008 and 2014 – an increase of 136% overall.

Tompkins County has also prepared the *2014 Tompkins County Government Operations Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions and Energy Use Inventory*. Highlights from that most recent inventory are:

- Tompkins County reduced GHG emissions from its government operations by 53% from 2008 levels, far surpassing the target goal of a 20 percent reduction by 2020. However, as with the community inventory, a considerable amount of this reduction has been achieved through changes to the power grid, i.e., a shift from coal to natural gas.

- If the new science (as described above) is applied, County government, instead, has seen a 10% *increase* in total GHG emissions.
- Overall energy use in County Buildings and Facilities decreased by 16%; energy costs for Buildings and Facilities decreased by 23%.
- Energy use by Vehicles and Equipment decreased by 24%; related energy costs decreased by only 2%.

Adaptation

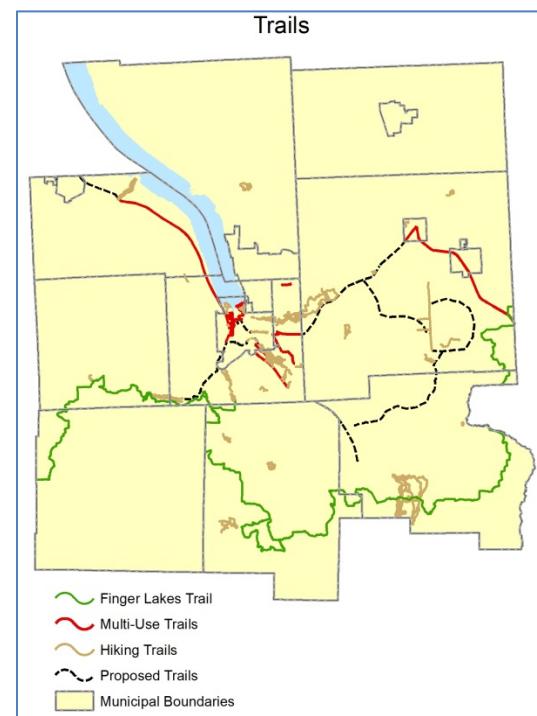
The data presented in this chapter (largely from the ClimAID Report) has not been updated since the Comprehensive Plan was written in 2014. However, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), in October 2018, released a report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. The report found that maintaining a temperature rise to below 1.5°C is possible, but only through "rapid and far-reaching transitions in energy, land, urban and infrastructure..., and industrial systems." The report concluded that in order to achieve the 1.5°C target, global net anthropogenic CO₂ emissions must reach net zero by around 2050.

Healthy Communities

There have been several major additions to the trail network depicted in the Comprehensive Plan. These include the opening of the Black Diamond Trail, the completion of the trail between the villages of Dryden and Freeville, and the addition of hiking trails in several locations throughout the county. An up to date map is seen here.

Development Patterns

None of the data or the maps presented in this chapter has been updated since the Comprehensive Plan was written in 2014. There are some indications that new residential and non-residential development is being located in the Development Focus Areas identified in the Comprehensive Plan at a greater rate than in past years. However, the available data is of limited duration and, therefore, should continue to be tracked.



SOURCE: Tompkins Co. Department of Planning and Sustainability (2019)

Principles and Policies

Question 3: Are the plan's principles and policies still relevant to the issues facing the community?

The 2015 Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan identified twelve principles and 52 policies. These are listed in Appendix B. They have all been reviewed and are determined to still be appropriate.

Issues

Question 4: Have any important issues arisen in the past five years that are not addressed by the current principles and policies?

A key part of the review of the Comprehensive Plan was determining if any important issues had arisen in the past five years that are not addressed by the principles and policies already included in the plan. A number of potential such issues were raised and considered. In Appendix C, all the issues raised during the public outreach process are listed along with a brief description and an assessment of whether the 2015 Comprehensive Plan should be amended to incorporate them.

In brief, we conclude that no edits to the Comprehensive Plan are recommended for the purpose of addressing newly arisen issues. However, some of the recommended new Action Items (discussed in the next section of this report) would address issues identified during the review of the Comprehensive Plan.

Issues Considered that Are Not Addressed by Existing Policies

The following issues are not addressed in the 2015 Comprehensive Plan.

Drought

The development of the Tompkins County Resiliency and Recovery Plan will incorporate an analysis of that drought and recommendations for community planning for a future drought, is proposed as an Action Item to address this issue.

5G Mobile Networks and Wireless Systems

The County does not have a direct role in providing or permitting this technology.

Housing Stability and Tenant Protection Act

The County's role in this process is secondary and only follows action by a local municipality.

Issues Considered that Are Addressed by Existing Policies

Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs)

This issue is addressed by policies in the Water Resources section of the Comprehensive Plan. The preparation of a detailed countywide HABs strategy based on the Cayuga Lake and Owasco Lake HABs Action Plans is proposed as an Action Item to address this issue.

Natural Gas Moratorium in Lansing

This issue is addressed by policies in the Energy and Greenhouse Gas Emissions section of the Comprehensive Plan. In order to address this and related issues, there is a proposed Action Item to work with the Public Service Commission, state agencies, and NYSEG to support energy infrastructure in the County that advances the County's greenhouse gas emissions goals, while supporting the County's Economic Development Strategy and Housing Strategy.

IPCC Special Report on Global Warming

This issue is addressed by policies in the Energy and Greenhouse Gas Emissions section of the Comprehensive Plan. In order to address this issue, there are proposed Action Items to implement the

Energy Strategy (2019), including undertaking an inventory and analysis of County facilities and fleet to determine a financially sound path to net-zero emissions.

Lead Contamination in Lansing

This issue is addressed by policies in the Water Resources section of the Comprehensive Plan. No Action Item to address this issue is proposed.

Emerging Pollutants in Cayuga Lake

This issue is addressed by policies in the Water Resources section of the Comprehensive Plan. As of this writing, the County is exploring ways to educate the community about the plastic bag ban. No additional Action Item to address this issue is proposed.

Other Issues

The following issues were raised during the review of the 2015 Comprehensive Plan. Some were considered to be issues that are not newly arisen since the Plan was adopted; some have already been addressed; others are not yet issues; and others cannot be addressed by the County.

- Local parking regulations
- Sheriff's Department and other law enforcement
- Broadband and internet access in rural areas of the County
- Connecting resiliency planning with community preparedness
- Preparedness for parasites and diseases anticipated due to climate change
- Housing supply for an aging population
- Salt contamination in Cayuga Lake
- Concentrated Animal Feedlot Operations (CAFOs)
- Anticipated population influx due to climate change
- Preparations for an aging population
- Changes in recycling markets
- Use of cooling water for potential reuse of the power plant
- Small farms with livestock may not be an appropriate use in hamlets
- Parks and recreation plan for the County
- TCAT ridership remains high and there should be planning for expansions
- There are new wetland maps for the County.

New Action Items

Question 5: What Actions Items should be added to the plan to help achieve the principles and policies of the plan?

Staff Review Process

Most of the 28 actions identified in the 2015 Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan have been initiated. In identifying potential actions to consider pursuing prior to the next full update of the Comprehensive Plan, Planning and Sustainability staff reviewed actions that were considered (but not included) while preparing the 2015 Comprehensive Plan as well as the recommendations included in other plans and strategies. Special emphasis was placed on those documents that were developed since 2015, within a professional planning context, and that incorporated public review and comment. These were:

- Tompkins County Energy and Economic Development Task Force (2016)
- Tompkins County Energy Roadmap (2016)
- Tompkins County Housing Strategy (2017)
- Tompkins County Habitat Connectivity Strategy (2018)
- Tompkins County Energy Strategy (2019)

The following documents were also reviewed:

- Tompkins County 2020 Energy Strategy (2010)
- Tompkins County Conservation Strategy (2012)
- Building Vibrant Communities in Tompkins County ... a Development Focus Areas Strategy (2012)
- Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Plan (2012)
- Tompkins County Hazard Mitigation Plan: 2013 Update
- Tompkins County Sustainability Strategy (2014)
- 2035 Long-Range Transportation Plan (2014)
- Tompkins County Economic Development Strategy 2015-2020 (2015)
- Tompkins County Water Quality Strategy: 2019-2021 (2018)
- Cleaner Greener Southern Tier Regional Sustainability Plan (2013)

Among those documents, more than 600 potential action items were identified. Two minimum screening criteria were applied to all potential action items:

- The action should clearly be tied to at least one POLICY in the Comprehensive Plan
- The action is something the County, as a government entity, can undertake.

Other considerations in the initial screening of action items were whether the action related to more than one section of the Comprehensive Plan and whether the County is the entity best-suited to take the lead.

Actions that met the screening criteria were further evaluated based on the following considerations: the relative impact the action would have on the community, the relationship between the action and other activities of the county and in the community, and the ability to undertake the action by 2024. Staff of the Department of Planning and Sustainability prepared a short list of proposed Action Items. This short list was reviewed by the Planning Advisory Board and by the Planning, Energy and Environmental Quality Committee of the Legislature prior to going out to the public with a list of 25 proposed Action Items.

Public Participation Process

In all, during May and June of 2019, staff of the Department of Planning and Sustainability reached out to the public, advisory boards, and committees. Formal meetings included:

- May 14 - Planning Advisory Board review and comments.
- May 28 - Planning, Energy, and Environmental Quality Committee - presentation and comments.
- June 3 - Public meeting at Tompkins County Public Library.
- June 13 - Environmental Management Council - comments.
- June 17 - Water Resources Council – presentation and comments.
- June 20 – Municipal Planners Meeting – comments.

At these meetings, staff raised two basic questions:

- Since nearly all of the Action Items from the 2015 Comprehensive Plan have been initiated, **What action items should be added to help achieve the principles and policies of the plan?**
- **Have any important issues arisen in the past five years that are not addressed by the current principles and policies?**

In addition to comments given in response to these questions, additional remarks on the Comprehensive Plan's Principles and Policies and other topics were also heard.

Appendix C summarizes all the comments received along with responses from staff of the Department of Planning and Sustainability.

After weighing the input received on potential Action Items, the Department of Planning and Sustainability proposes the following list of new Action Items to be initiated by 2025 to further the policies of the Comprehensive Plan.

County Actions to be Initiated by 2025²

1. Municipal Assistance: Undertake direct outreach and engagement with municipalities several times each year to identify opportunities to assist their implementation of projects that would directly promote the policies of the Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan or projects identified in County strategies. [Department of Planning and Sustainability]
2. Strategic Tourism Plan: Update the *Tompkins County 2020 Strategic Tourism Plan (2012)*. [Strategic Tourism Planning Board, Department of Planning and Sustainability]
3. Priority Trails: Work with community partners to further implement the Tompkins Priority Trails Strategy. [Department of Planning and Sustainability]
4. Route 13 Corridor Study: Develop the 2020 State Route 13 Corridor Study and identify opportunities to implement recommendations. [Department of Planning and Sustainability, Ithaca-Tompkins County Transportation Council]
5. Housing Funding: Identify and pursue methods to continue and expand the Community Housing Development Fund Program. [Department of Planning and Sustainability]
6. HABs Strategy: Establish a detailed countywide Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) strategy based on the Cayuga Lake and Owasco Lake HABs Action Plans and identify the actions, and the appropriate lead agencies, to be taken in Tompkins County that would most effectively reduce HABs . [Water Resources Council]
7. Stream Corridor Protection: Provide resources to support and encourage local officials to establish mechanisms and programs for protecting stream corridors. [Department of Planning and Sustainability]
8. Watershed Rules and Regulations: Evaluate existing watershed rules and regulations within the region to determine best practices for protecting drinking water quality and enforcement mechanisms, focusing on the potential of establishing such rules for the Cayuga Lake watershed. [Department of Planning and Sustainability, Health Department]
9. County-Owned Forestlands: Establish clear goals for managing County-owned Forest Lands and develop a plan of action for advancing those goals. [Environmental Management Council, Department of Planning and Sustainability]
10. Resiliency and Recovery Plan: Develop the Tompkins County Resiliency and Recovery Plan that both includes an update of the *Tompkins County Hazard Mitigation Plan (2013)* and develops tools to support resiliency and post-disaster economic recovery. [Department of Planning and Sustainability]
11. Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory: Conduct greenhouse gas emissions inventories both for the community and for County government operations, to be able to compare and track progress from the *2008 GHG Emissions and Energy Use Inventories*. [Department of Planning and Sustainability]
12. Energy Infrastructure: Work with the Public Service Commission, state agencies, and NYSEG to plan for and support reliable and adequate energy infrastructure in the County that advances the County's greenhouse gas emissions goals, while supporting the County's Economic Development Strategy and Housing Strategy. [Department of Planning and Sustainability]

² County Actions are not listed in priority order.

13. **Business Energy Advisors:** Continue to implement the Business Energy Advisors program and explore methods to improve and expand its impact on reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the commercial sector. [Department of Planning and Sustainability]
14. **Employee Commutes:** Assist County employees in reducing greenhouse gas emissions from their daily commutes. [Department of Planning and Sustainability, Department of Human Resources]
15. **Net-zero Emissions Facilities and Fleet:** Undertake an inventory and analysis of County facilities and fleet to determine a financially sound path to net-zero emissions. [Facilities Department, Department of Planning and Sustainability]
16. **Water and Sewer Study:** Support TCAD's update of the *Countywide Inter-Municipal Water and Sewer Feasibility Study for Tompkins County* (2010) and disseminate the results to municipalities. [Department of Planning and Sustainability]
17. **Planning and Design:** Identify and share ways local municipalities can use the Planning and Design Principles from the *Development Focus Areas Strategy* (2012) in their communities. [Department of Planning and Sustainability]
18. **Cayuga Lake Blueway Trail:** Complete tasks associated with the regional Cayuga Lake Blueway Trail Implementation grant from the New York State Department of State. [Department of Planning and Sustainability]

APPENDIX A: History of the Comprehensive Planning Process

The Tompkins County Charter calls for the Department of Planning and Sustainability to:

Prepare, in consultation with the County Planning Advisory Board, a Comprehensive Plan for the development of the County, which may include those topics authorized by New York State General Municipal Law and other topics determined to be important to the County. Such plan shall be submitted for adoption by the Tompkins County Legislature in the manner provided by the General Municipal Law. The plan shall be monitored annually, updated as necessary, and formally reviewed every five years following adoption;

1999 Work Begins

Intensive work on the comprehensive planning process for Tompkins County was initiated in 1999 at a retreat of the staffs of the Planning Department and the Ithaca-Tompkins County Transportation Council with the adoption of the following vision statement:

Our vision is to build vital communities within Tompkins County by encouraging and involving people in participatory planning to create communities where:

- natural and historic resources are preserved,
- jobs are available,
- sprawl is contained,
- neighborhoods are vibrant,
- services are accessible, and
- all citizens have opportunities to improve the quality of their lives.

The Vital Communities Initiative: Precursor to the First Comprehensive Plan

The Tompkins County Legislature first adopted a comprehensive plan in 2004. The groundwork for that first plan started in 1999 with the initial vision statement and then again in 2000 with the County Planning Department's Vital Communities Initiative, a two-year effort to fully involve the community in defining a broad vision of how, where, and what kind of development should occur in the future. The impetus for the Initiative came from concerns expressed by local organizations, national awareness of the need to combat sprawl and improve communities, and recognition of the need to improve the quality of life for the county's citizens.

The Vital Communities Initiative recognized the diversity of communities, lifestyles, and interests in our county and beyond, and provided citizens and community leaders with a planning process to articulate their vision for the future. Through participatory workshops and public presentations, a set of interim development and preservation principles was developed. These interim principles were adopted by the County Legislature in 2002.

Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan: Planning for our Future (2004)

The 2004 Comprehensive Plan contained principles, policies, and actions to guide the County and other community members as they made decisions that influence regional development, involve inter-governmental cooperation, and affect the quality of life in neighborhoods and communities. It provided a framework to address community goals in a proactive and coordinated manner. On December 16, 2008, the Tompkins County Legislature approved an amendment to the 2004 Comprehensive Plan to address the issue of energy and greenhouse gas emissions.

Topic Area Strategies

In the years following the adoption of that first Comprehensive Plan, the County developed five strategies to supplement and expand upon the work in the Plan.

Housing Strategy. The Tompkins County Legislature endorsed the *Housing Strategy for Tompkins County* in 2007. This strategy includes recommendations on how to achieve the housing growth identified in the *Affordable Housing Needs Assessment* (2006). The Needs Assessment analyzed the local housing market and population trends and found a need for 4,000 additional rental and owner-occupied units across all income levels by 2014.

Housing Strategy-2017 Update. The Tompkins County Housing Strategy (dated June 29, 2017) was endorsed by unanimous vote of the County Legislature in July 2017. Developed using information gathered through the *Housing Needs Assessment* (2016), the 2016 Housing Summit, the County's 2017 Legislature/Department Head retreat, and input from community members, this new Strategy aims to guide Tompkins County in meeting its housing needs through 2025. The Strategy proposes (1) direction and targets for housing efforts over the next ten years, (2) approaches to achieve desired housing outcomes, and (3) monitoring and support needed to track progress and identify concerns that may arise along the way.

Conservation Strategy. The Tompkins County Legislature endorsed the Tompkins County Conservation Strategy in 2012. The strategy is based on the recommendations of the Tompkins County Conservation Plan, Part I: A Strategic Approach to Natural Resource Stewardship (2007) and of the Tompkins County Conservation Plan, Part II: A Strategic Approach to Agricultural Resource Stewardship (2010).

Energy Strategy. The Tompkins County Legislature endorsed the *Tompkins County 2020 Energy Strategy* in 2010. The Strategy outlines how the community can achieve a 20 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from 2008 levels by 2020, as the first step along the path to achieving the Legislature's adopted a goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 80 percent by 2050.

Energy Strategy-2019 Update. The *Tompkins County Energy Strategy* (dated July 2019) was adopted by the County Legislature in August 2019. The Energy Strategy provides vision and leadership to move both County government operations and the overall community toward achieving net-zero emissions. The County can provide leadership by being an example in how it addresses greenhouse gas emissions in its own operations. The County can also provide leadership by supporting and facilitating community work to reduce fossil fuel dependency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Tourism Strategy. In 2012, the Tompkins County Legislature accepted the *2020 Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Plan: Inspiring Action to Support Tourism Development*, prepared by the Strategic Tourism Planning Board. This strategy advances tourism as a means of promoting economic development and enhancing quality of life.

Development Focus Areas Strategy. The Tompkins County Legislature endorsed *Building Vibrant Communities in Tompkins County ... a Development Focus Areas Strategy* in 2012. This strategy identifies an urban center, five established nodes, two emerging nodes, and eight rural centers as the Development Focus Areas. These areas are deemed to be well-suited to be the focal points of new development due to the existence of public services, transit, and existing development. The objective of the strategy is to have at least two-thirds of new development occur in the identified focus areas.

Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan: Planning for Our Future (2015)

When the first Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2004, it was envisioned to be a dynamic document to be reviewed every five years and fully updated every ten. This first full update of that Comprehensive Plan adds climate adaptation, a completely new element; restructures the strong communities section by also addressing healthy communities; adds the two overarching principles of fiscal responsibility and sustainability; and updates policy statements to make them more direct. Specific action items to be initiated by County government within two years are identified in each chapter.

Legislative History of the Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan and Related Strategies

Date	Legislative Action
June 4, 2002	Board of Representatives adopts the Interim Vital Communities Development and Preservation Principles
December 21, 2004	Legislature adopts first Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan
June 19, 2007	Legislature endorses the Housing Strategy for Tompkins County
December 16, 2008	Legislature adopts Energy and Greenhouse Gas Emissions Element as an amendment to the County Comprehensive Plan
September 7, 2010	Legislature endorses the Tompkins County 2020 Energy Strategy
September 18, 2012	Legislature accepts the 2020 Strategic Tourism Plan
October 2, 2012	Legislature endorses the Tompkins County Development Focus Areas Strategy
October 2, 2012	Legislature endorses the Tompkins County Conservation Strategy
August 5, 2014	Legislature accepts the Tompkins Priority Trails Strategy [presented by the Tompkins County Parks & Trails Network]
March 3, 2015	Legislature adopts second Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan
April 7, 2015	Legislature accepts the 2015 Economic Development Strategy for Tompkins County [presented by Tompkins County Area Development]
April 19, 2016	Legislature accepts the Tompkins County Energy Roadmap: Evaluating Our Energy Resources
July 6, 2017	Legislature endorses the Tompkins County Housing Strategy
August 6, 2019	Legislature adopts the Tompkins County Energy Strategy

APPENDIX B: Principles and Policies of the 2015 Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan

Overarching Principles

Sustainability. Tompkins County should be a place where

the needs of current and future generations are met without compromising the ecosystems upon which they depend.

Regional Cooperation. Tompkins County should be a place where

all levels of government work cooperatively to address regional issues.

Fiscal Responsibility. Tompkins County should be a place where

taxpayer dollars are invested in public infrastructure and facilities in the most efficient manner possible.

The Economy, Housing, and Transportation

The Economy. Tompkins County should be a place where

economic prosperity is accessible to all.

It is the policy of Tompkins County to:

- Support economic development that provides high-quality employment opportunities with living wages and benefits.
- Promote the growth and development of local businesses and encourage the purchase of locally produced goods and services.
- Work with economic development agencies and institutions of higher education to diversify and expand the local economy and enhance community vitality.
- Promote innovation and technology transfer and attract and support people working to start and grow competitive businesses.
- Support quality of life measures that enhance the local business climate and attract employees.
- Promote development of a strong land-based rural economy.
- Provide opportunities to all residents to develop the skills necessary to obtain high-quality employment.
- Ensure the benefits and costs of economic development incentives are distributed equitably and there is an open and transparent process for decision-making.

Housing. Tompkins County should be a place where

housing is affordable, safe, energy efficient, and appealing.

It is the policy of Tompkins County to:

- Encourage a variety of housing options in development focus areas.
- Support new development of housing whose total costs, including utility and transportation expenses, are affordable to households with a range of incomes.
- Promote energy efficient housing.
- Provide housing options for an aging population.
- Maintain an adequate supply of housing for people requiring supportive services.
- Improve the existing housing stock.

Transportation. Tompkins County should be a place where transportation choices are efficient, affordable, and healthy for people and the environment.

It is the policy of Tompkins County to:

- Maintain and improve critical elements of the existing transportation network to support the safe movement of people and goods.
 - Reduce the use of fossil fuels in transportation.
 - Shift travel away from driving-alone to biking, walking, carpooling/ridesharing, and using public transit.
 - Support a pattern of land use that allows people to move efficiently and affordably.
 - Provide for the safe and effective movement of freight to, from, and within the county.
 - Continue to provide airport services that support community and business needs.
 - Consider the needs of populations that are particularly challenged by transportation when developing systems and alternatives.
-

The Environment

Natural Resources. Tompkins County should be a place where natural features and working rural landscapes are preserved and enhanced.

It is the policy of Tompkins County to:

- Preserve natural features and ecosystems, especially within the Natural Features Focus Areas.
- Protect farmland within the Agricultural Resource Focus Areas for agricultural use.
- Reduce the adverse impacts to native species and ecosystems caused by invasive organisms and climate change.
- Promote best management practices that protect natural resources and productive working lands.
- Improve public access to outdoor recreation resources and opportunities.

Water Resources. Tompkins County should be a place where water resources are clean, safe, and protected.

It is the policy of Tompkins County to:

- Protect the ecological, economic, and recreational functions of Cayuga Lake.
 - Protect aquifers from contamination by limiting development within groundwater recharge areas.
 - Protect streams and their watersheds to maintain water quality, manage stormwater and flooding, and enhance ecological diversity.
 - Preserve existing wetlands and restore wetland functions.
 - Support water-dependent or -enhanced development of the City's urban waterfront while conserving important natural resources and providing public enjoyment of the waterfront.
-

Climate Change

Energy and Greenhouse Gas Emissions. Tompkins County should be a place where the energy system meets community needs without contributing additional greenhouse gases to the atmosphere.

It is the policy of Tompkins County to:

- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions to reach a minimum 80 percent reduction from 2008 levels by 2050 and reduce reliance on fossil fuels across all sectors.
- Improve the energy efficiency of all components of the community energy system.
- Increase the use of local and regional renewable energy sources and technologies.
- Increase carbon capture and storage in the county's forests, wetlands, and soils.
- Reduce the amount of material disposed of in landfills.

Climate Adaptation. Tompkins County should be a place where

the entire community is prepared for the economic, environmental, and social impacts of climate change.

It is the policy of Tompkins County to:

- Maintain floodways and limit development within floodplains to reduce damages from floods.
- Improve connectivity of open space to prevent fragmentation of ecosystems and isolation of plant and wildlife populations.
- Promote adaptation measures that lessen climate impacts on the local economy.
- Encourage actions that protect vulnerable populations from the impacts of climate change.
- Prepare for community recovery in the event of disaster.

Neighborhoods and Communities

Healthy Communities. Tompkins County should be a place where

the built environment promotes healthy, safe, and active lifestyles.

It is the policy of Tompkins County to:

- Promote bicycling and walking throughout the county by making these transportation modes safe, efficient, and appealing options.
- Encourage the development of lively streets with a variety of opportunities for daily activity, recreation, and social interaction.
- Foster the expansion of a countywide trail network.
- Encourage efforts to improve the accessibility of the built environment to allow everyone to participate in community life.
- Promote parks, community facilities, recreational activities, and networks that support regular social interaction and physical activity.
- Discourage land uses that threaten community health and safety.

Development Patterns. Tompkins County should be a place where

new development is focused in compact, walkable, mixed-use communities.

It is the policy of Tompkins County to:

- Strengthen downtowns as retail, service, employment, and community centers.
- Encourage municipalities to protect rural character and scenic resources by limiting sprawl.
- Promote more housing and mixed-use development in Development Focus Areas.
- Support land use policies and regulations and public infrastructure improvements to encourage private investment in the Development Focus Areas.
- Preserve and enhance the distinct identities and historic character of existing communities.

APPENDIX C: Public Outreach - Comments Received and Staff Responses

Introduction

During May and June of 2019, staff of the Department of Planning and Sustainability reached out to the public, advisory boards, and committees. Formal meetings included:

- May 14 - Planning Advisory Board review and comments.
- May 28 - Presentation to Planning, Energy, and Environmental Quality Committee.
- June 3 - Public meeting at Tompkins County Public Library.
- June 13 - Environmental Management Council. No presentation given just an opportunity for comments.
- June 17 - Water Resources Council.
- June 20 – Municipal Planners Meeting – comments.

At these meetings, staff raised two basic questions:

- Since nearly all of the Action Items from the 2015 Comprehensive Plan have been initiated, **What action items should be added to help achieve the principles and policies of the plan?**
- **Have any important issues arisen in the past five years that are not addressed by the current principles and policies?**

In addition to comments given in response to these questions, additional remarks on the Comprehensive Plan's Principles and Policies and other topics were also heard.

Following is a report on the all the comments received along with responses from staff of the Department of Planning and Sustainability.

Action Items

In order to be considered as an addition to the Comprehensive Plan, proposed action items must, at a minimum, meet two criteria:

- The action should be clearly tied to at least one POLICY in the Comprehensive Plan.
- The action is something the County, as a government entity, can undertake.

In reaching out about potential action items, staff of the Department of Planning and Sustainability prepared a draft list of 25 potential action items. Other potential action items identified during the outreach process fell under virtually all aspects of the Comprehensive Plan and are summarized below. These are organized by topic area in the 2015 Comprehensive Plan.

It should be noted that while not all the suggested actions were deemed to rise to the level of inclusion in the recommended amendments to the Comprehensive Plan, many of these actions can and will be undertaken by appropriate entities in the course of their work and this Appendix will be reviewed when the Comprehensive Plan is next updated in 2025.

HOUSING	
Suggested Action Item	Response
1. Add an action item on housing and energy.	The action item Energy Infrastructure was amended to include housing.
2. Educate municipal officials on the importance of Smart Growth and on addressing NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) concerns.	Related to action item Planning and Design .
3. Identify elderly housing sites based on location of transportation and support services, retail , etc.	Action item not included as Development Focus Areas that meet these criteria have already been identified.
4. Provide guidelines to local governments on parking requirements for housing in various areas: urban, rural, and suburban.	Related to action item Municipal Assistance .
5. Support cooperative housing.	Action item not included. Not a County Action. There are no particular concrete steps the County could take to develop cooperative housing apart from providing support for affordable cooperative units, for example, as already provided under the existing Community Housing Development Fund.
TRANSPORTATION	
Suggested Action Item	Response
1. Add an action related to implementing the Blueway Trail, particularly related to navigability and dredging for water travel.	Action item added: Cayuga Lake Blueway Trail .
2. Develop a plan to track vitality of the rail service in County and ideas for future use of the rail corridor if it stops being used solely for commercial purposes.	Action item not included. The Ithaca-Tompkins County Transportation Council has indicated that they are following this issue.
NATURAL RESOURCES	
Suggested Action Item	Response
1. Expand the Soil and Water Conservation District's Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) program.	Action item not included. Not a County Action. AEM is a New York State led locally by the Tompkins County Soil and Water Conservation District.
2. Research and address legacy toxins in our floodplains.	Action item not included. Legacy pollutants are chemicals that are no longer used but are still present in the environment. They are often difficult to detect because they tend to be present in relatively low concentrations. Recent efforts in Tompkins County to identify emerging contaminants using more sophisticated monitoring technology may offer an approach to identifying legacy pollutants as well. Opportunities to combine these efforts should be explored by entities that currently monitor water and soil contaminants.
3. Update and republish the Natural Resources Inventory document, not just the interactive maps.	Action item not included. However, the Department of Planning and Sustainability will review the Natural Resources Inventory and identify any need to update the maps and data.

WATER RESOURCES	
Suggested Action Item	Response
1. Acquire permanent conservation easements along stream corridors, especially where there are major contributors of ditch water entering streams.	Action item not included. Acquisition of conservation easements can be expensive and the ongoing costs of monitoring those easements are considerable.
2. Address water quantity and quality issues for private wells.	Action item not included. Does not address a policy in the Comprehensive Plan. The County Department of Health has established standards for the installation of new wells including separation distances from buildings, water bodies, and sewage systems.
3. Conduct regular inspections of septic systems around the lake.	Action item not included. The Tompkins County Department of Health oversees the design, inspection and permitting of all new, replacement or expanded sewage systems and septic tanks. A program to conduct regular inspections would require training for local contractors, and administration and enforcement of an extensive program.
4. Establish watershed committees across municipal boundaries to address flooding and water quality issues.	Action item not included. Not a County Action. This action would require municipalities to act to create and maintain such organizations.
5. Extend wastewater treatment lines along both sides of Cayuga Lake to protect water quality.	Action item not included. Not a County Action.
6. Include Cargill in the conversation about addressing HABs.	Related to action item HABs Strategy .
7. Prevent agricultural tiling systems from dumping into ditches and install appropriate management measures such as ditch socks.	Action item not included.
8. Provide guidance and structure to the WRC Water Withdrawals Committee.	Action item not included. Does not address a policy in the Comprehensive Plan. The Department of Planning and Sustainability provides administrative and planning staff support to the Water Resources Council, but the resources available to provide additional support are limited.
9. Provide training for municipal officials and staff on best management practices for culverts; share county ditching knowledge with municipalities.	Related to action item Municipal Assistance .
10. Update and adopt the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP).	Action item not included. Not a County Action. This action can only be undertaken by municipalities.
11. Work with State Parks staff to address stream corridors concerns.	Action item not included. The Department of Planning and Sustainability works informally with local conservation partners, meeting biannually to discuss issues of common interest. This includes stream corridor protection.

ENERGY	
Suggested Action Item	Response
1. Develop a network of public electric vehicle charging stations.	Action item not included. Not a County Action. The <i>Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Plan</i> identified the location of the ten most suitable sites for new charging station installations and many were installed as a result of that work.
2. Install LED lighting.	Action already underway for County facilities.
3. Research Community Choice Aggregation (CCA).	Action item not included. Not a County Action. In New York State, only towns, cities and villages are eligible to participate. The Administrator can be a municipality or a third party, such as a nonprofit organization, private company, or local development corporation. The Public Service Commission has established requirements for creating a CCA program.
CLIMATE ADAPTATION	
Suggested Action Item	Response
1. Address the impacts of climate change on the County's agricultural economy.	Action item not included. Soil and Water Conservation Districts can work with individual farmers through the Climate Resilient Farming Program.
2. Continue to work with SPCA to plan to deal with pets and farm animals during disasters; also address concern with potential water pollution from flooded stables.	Related to action item Resiliency and Recovery Plan .
3. County should support municipalities with their resiliency planning efforts. This could be coordinated through TCCOG.	Related to action item Municipal Assistance .
4. Identify critical facilities where you would want to install back-up generators to maintain operations during power failures.	Related to action item Resiliency and Recovery Plan .
5. Test disaster plans by conducting disaster scenarios with participants.	Action item not included. This is related to the action item Resiliency and Recovery Plan , but whether disaster scenario testing will be undertaken is unknown at this time.
HEALTHY COMMUNITIES	
Suggested Action Item	Response
1. Assess impact of toxins on environment.	Action item not included. Not a County Action. The County does not have the expertise to undertake this activity.
DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS	
Suggested Action Item	Response
2. Provide oversight of new sewer districts in Lansing.	Action item not included. Not a County Action. The Health Department plays a role in the extension and management of wastewater treatment systems in Tompkins County, but they do not have a role in where or when new sewer districts are created.
3. The Water and Sewer Study update should address energy utilities.	The Water and Sewer Study action item will not include energy utilities. The Energy Infrastructure action item will partially address this issue.

OTHER TOPICS	
Suggested Action Item	Response
1. Dryden is working on municipal internet service – the County should work with other towns to do this as well.	Action item not included. Does not address a policy in the Comprehensive Plan. In 2012, the County's Broadband Committee completed its report: <i>Broadband Internet Access for All Residents of Tompkins County</i> .
2. Increase cell phone coverage throughout the County.	Action item not included. Does not address a policy in the Comprehensive Plan. The County does not have a direct role in providing this technology.
3. Research population trends, particularly by age cohorts.	Action item not included. Does not address a policy in the Comprehensive Plan. Various County Departments explore population trends, including age projections, as part of their regular activities.

Issues

Another question raised during the outreach process was

Have any important issues arisen in the past five years that are not addressed by the current principles and policies?

A number of issues were identified. Some of these are already addressed by the current principles and policies in the 2015 Comprehensive Plan. Other issues were not new; in other words, they were extant in 2015 when the Comprehensive Plan was developed and were not included in the document.

It should be noted that while not all the suggested issues were deemed to rise to the level of inclusion in the recommended amendments to the Comprehensive Plan, many of these issues can and will be undertaken by appropriate entities in the course of their work and this Appendix will be reviewed when the Comprehensive Plan is next updated in 2025.

New Issues – Not Addressed by Existing Policies

Drought

In 2016, Tompkins County and the City of Ithaca were classified as being in a 'severe drought' by the U.S. Drought Monitor. Six Mile Creek and Fall Creek, which supply drinking water to the City of Ithaca and Cornell University, respectively, were at record lows. USGS data showed groundwater levels were lower than normal. The Tompkins County Health Department worked closely together with the City of Ithaca, Cornell University, and Bolton Point Water System to establish redundant backups for each other during these conditions.

The development of the Tompkins County Resiliency and Recovery Plan will incorporate an analysis of that drought and recommendations for community planning for a future drought, is proposed as an Action Item to address this issue.

5G Mobile Networks and Wireless Systems

5G Systems were not on the horizon when the 2015 Comprehensive Plan was developed. While the technology is relatively new, its rollout and implementation will largely be the responsibility of private providers, as were earlier networks and systems.

The County does not have a direct role in providing or permitting this technology.

Housing Stability and Tenant Protection Act

The Housing Stability and Tenant Protection Act of 2019 was signed into law on June 14, 2019. While a thorough review of the law has not been completed, a few points are worth noting. Any local (i.e., city, town or village) legislative body can declare a housing emergency for all or part of its housing if the vacancy rate is not in excess of five percent. If such an emergency is declared, a rent guidelines board for the county must be established by the State Commissioner of Housing and Community Renewal “upon a recommendation of the county legislature which recommendation shall be made within thirty days after the first local declaration of an emergency.” That board establishes annual guidelines for rent adjustments.

The County’s role in this process is secondary and only follows action by a local municipality.

New Issues – Addressed by Existing Policies

Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs)

Cyanobacterial blooms, also known as harmful algal blooms (HABs), have been detected in Cayuga Lake and in Owasco Lake in recent years and are of great concern for public health officials for potential impacts on recreational users of the water and public water supplies. In early 2018, the Governor’s Office announced the creation of committees to develop action plans to address HABs. The \$65 million initiative to combat HABs in Upstate New York includes Cayuga and Owasco Lakes. The HABs action plans for Cayuga and Owasco Lakes identify contributing factors fueling HABs and priority projects to manage water quality.

The preparation of a detailed countywide HABs strategy based on the Cayuga Lake and Owasco Lake HABs Action Plans is proposed as an Action Item to address this issue.

Natural Gas Moratorium in Lansing

In 2014, NYSEG proposed a new pipeline to bring natural gas from Freeville to the Warren Road area of Lansing; the current infrastructure had reached its capacity to safely and reliably deliver natural gas to Lansing. Instead, after community concerns were raised regarding the greenhouse gas emissions implications of this proposal, NYSEG imposed a moratorium on new gas customers in Lansing in 2015 and then proposed a plan to increase reliability to existing customers by reducing demand (or increasing supply) of natural gas through its non-pipe alternatives request for proposals that is ongoing at this time.

In order to address this and related issues, there is a proposed action item to work with the Public Service Commission, state agencies, and NYSEG to support energy infrastructure in the County that advances the County's greenhouse gas emissions goals, while supporting the County's Economic Development Strategy and Housing Strategy.

IPCC Special Report on Global Warming

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is the United Nations body for assessing the science related to climate change. In October 2018, IPCC released a report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. The report found that maintaining a temperature rise to below 1.5°C is possible, but only through "rapid and far-reaching transitions in energy, land, urban and infrastructure..., and industrial systems." The report concluded that in order to achieve the 1.5°C target, global net anthropogenic CO₂ emissions must reach net zero by around 2050.

In order to address this issue, there are proposed Action Items to implement the Energy Strategy (2019), including undertaking an inventory and analysis of County facilities and fleet to determine a financially sound path to net-zero emissions.

Lead Contamination in Lansing

In 2016, the EPA entered into a Consent Order with the Lansing Rod and Gun Club in which the EPA found that the "continued handling and disposal of lead shot at the Club may present an endangerment to health or the environment." The order gave the Club the option of permanently prohibiting shooting activities that use lead ammunition or implementing a plan to ensure that shooting will no longer be into or over Salmon Creek and adjacent wetlands. While the Club has pursued the second option, proposing to relocate shooting activities away from the creek and wetlands, there has been significant public opposition to the plan and public concern about the impact of fifty years of lead ammunition on Salmon Creek and groundwater quality.

It has been suggested that the County should assess impact of lead toxins on environment. The County does not have the expertise to undertake this activity. Other potential actions the county could take would be to hire a contractor to perform monitoring of water quality upstream and downstream of identified contamination sites as well as conducting soil tests for toxins. However, there are 27 contaminated sites identified in the State's Environmental Site Remediation Database and that list does not include the Lansing site. The cost of such an extensive monitoring program would be great, and even if pollution of the water were found, the County would not be in a position to act – that would be up to the State or Federal governments.

In addition, according to a recent news report, Bolton Point had tested its water, finding it to be safe, and soil tests conducted by the Town of Lansing near Ludlowville Falls did not find measurable lead contamination.

The County has been approached to ban the use of lead ammunition at the ten shooting ranges in the County, as part of its Health Regulations, which could move forward outside of the scope of the Comprehensive Plan.

Emerging Pollutants in Cayuga Lake

Emerging pollutants include mainly chemicals found in pharmaceuticals, personal care products, pesticides, industrial and household products, metals, surfactants, industrial additives and solvents. Many of them are used and released continuously into the environment even in very low quantities and some may cause chronic toxicity, endocrine disruption in humans and aquatic wildlife and the development of bacterial pathogen resistance. Individual commenters mentioned both microplastics and per-and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS).

A collaborative effort by individuals at the Ithaca Area Wastewater Treatment Facility, Cornell University, and Ithaca College has been monitoring emerging pollutants locally since 2014. Confirmed pollutants include, among others, pesticides, flame retardants, medications (pharmaceuticals, veterinary medicines and illicit drugs), personal care products (a source of microbeads—since banned in the U.S.), and PFOAs.

Action has been occurring at the state, national and international levels to address some of these contaminants.

- Emerging Contaminants - In 2018, New York State announced \$200 million in grant funding to help communities address emerging contaminants in their drinking water supplies by upgrading drinking water systems.
- Medications - Locally, the community has established three ways to dispose of medication –regular disposal events (usually twice per year), nine drop boxes available year-round, and several pharmacies that will take back medicines.
- Microbeads – As of 2016, the use of microbeads has been banned in the U.S.
- Microplastics - In 2019, New York State passed a ban on plastic bags that would take effect in March 2020. These bags break down into microplastics.
- PFOS and PFOA - Between 2000 and 2002, PFOS was phased out of production in the U.S. by its primary manufacturer. In 2006, eight major companies agreed to phase out their global production of PFOA and related chemicals.

As of this writing, the County is exploring ways to educate the community about the plastic bag ban. The County is also considering whether to impose a fee on paper carryout bags, the proceeds from which would be used to purchase and distribute reusable bags, with priority given to low- and fixed-income communities.

Other Issues and Concerns

Identified Issue/Concern	Response
Local parking regulations.	Not a new issue. Concern with parking regulations has been a local issue for years.
The plan should address the Sheriff's Department (and other law enforcement) since they are a large local expenditure.	Not a new issue. The Comprehensive Plan is primarily focused on the built and natural environment and does not address social service types of concerns.
Dryden is working to get its own broadband/internet access in rural areas. Can the County do the same?	Not a new issue. In 2012, the County's Broadband Committee completed its report: <i>Broadband Internet Access for All Residents of Tompkins County</i> . One of their findings is that there will be no sole source of funding available that will be sufficient for a project of this scope.
Connect resiliency with community preparedness.	Not a new issue. Already partially addressed in the County's <i>Hazard Mitigation Plan</i> and will be expanded in the Tompkins County Resiliency and Recovery Plan.
Public health preparedness for parasites and diseases to be expected due to climate change.	Not a new issue. County Planning and Sustainability works closely with Department of Health on resiliency and recovery planning.
Housing supply should address aging population needs.	Not a new issue. The <i>2016 Housing Needs Assessment</i> identified the need to address (a) the existing deficit of 100-200 subsidized senior apartments; (b) the need for at least one Medicaid Assisted Living Program facility; and (c) market-rate senior housing units with services and congregate care facilities.
Salt contamination in Cayuga Lake is over 20 mg/L – considered unsafe for people with hypertension and for infants – need to address this contamination.	Not a new issue. There is no drinking water standard for sodium. The Water Resources Council researched this issue and identified some groundwater sources with slightly greater than 20 mg/L of sodium, which should not be used for drinking by people on severely restricted sodium diets, but not near the 270 mg/L threshold, which should not be consumed by people on moderately restricted sodium diets.

Identified Issue/Concern, cont.	Response
Concentrated Animal Feedlot Operations (CAFOs) need to balance land use with environmental impacts.	Not a new issue. New York State regulates CAFOs. DEC has been involved with the permitting of CAFOs since 1999. The DEC established a new General Permit for CAFOs effective July 9, 2019.
The County needs to prepare for a population influx from climate change.	Not a new issue. While it is an international issue, it is one we can prepare for by tracking population trend data to determine early if we start to see signs of this happening and continuing to focus on directing development primarily to nodes where housing is located near jobs and activities to help prepare for any influx of people to the area.
Prepare for an aging population. Services for elderly, such as transportation, activities and programs; senior housing, healthcare services (doctors and clinics); Ithaca CarShare at remote elderly housing sites; Nursing homes have a shortage of personnel; management of nursing homes is a concern; shortage of home health aides.	Not a new issue. The Comprehensive Plan is primarily focused on the built and natural environment and does not address social service types of concerns.
Recycling reductions.	There have been significant changes in recycling markets that impact Tompkins County. The County Department of Recycling and Materials Management is fully aware of these changes and has responded with new guidelines for recycling in Tompkins County.
Use of lake water for cooling if the power plant is converted to a data center.	Not an issue at this time. There is an existing SPDES permit that allows the use of lake water for cooling the power plant. This allows a flow of 245 million gallons per day for condenser cooling water.
Small farms in the hamlet of Newfield may not be appropriate due to impacts of livestock.	Restricting agricultural operations in villages and hamlets is a town/village function.
The County should prepare a parks and recreation plan for the entire county.	The County does not own any parks, trails, or other recreation facilities – although there are numerous state and local resources that serve the County and the County Tourism program funds many parks and trail improvement projects.
TCAT has again served over four million riders and planning for expanding services is overdue.	Tompkins County is a member of the TCAT Board of Directors and is one of the three major local funders of this service. The recently completed <i>TCAT Strategic Plan: 2018-2030</i> identifies a multitude of short-term and long-term actions for TCAT to undertake. As a collaborating partner, the County will be asked to play a role under TCAT's leadership.
There are new wetland maps for the county.	This is acknowledged in the review of information contained in the 2015 Comprehensive Plan.

Miscellaneous Comments

Participants in various meetings provided other comments. These are presented below with occasional responses from staff.

Comment	Response
The Actions Items should be listed in priority order.	The timeliness of actions sometimes depends on outside actions or sources of funding which can be unpredictable. It is the County's intention to pursue all the actions on the list of Action Items.
The "Resiliency and Recovery Plan" Action Item is the most important.	No response. We decided not to list action items in priority order [see above].
Change the term "Cross-Cutting Action" to "Collaborative Action."	The term was dropped altogether.
Show how Action Items address multiple Principles.	We tried several ways to do this, but all were bulky and/or confusing. The Plan states clearly that the principles and policies in the plan are interrelated.
Why is the "Watershed Rules and Regulations" Action Item focused on working with other counties and not on working with municipalities in Tompkins County?	Watershed rules and regulations are adopted by water purveyor(s) and are enforced by County Health Departments. In the case of Cayuga Lake, there are seven County Health Departments that would be charged with enforcement of any rules developed.
The Water Resources policy "Protect streams and their watersheds to maintain water quality, manage stormwater and flooding, and enhance ecological diversity" should be amended to add water quantity.	We will consider this when the Plan is updated in 2025.
The Comprehensive Plan should have an index.	We will consider this when the Plan is updated in 2025.
There is a Boston-based firm that looks at methane emissions in greenhouse gas emissions inventories.	We will look into this when undertaking the "GHG Emissions Inventory" Action Item.
Has the County achieved its targets established in previous plans, particularly green fleet targets?	The County has established a target to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 80% by 2050. As part of that effort, the County has made strides towards converting its fleet to hybrid and plug-in electric vehicles (PEV). At present, the County is analyzing its fleet to tailor a long-term schedule for conversion and rightsizing its fleet and has committed to purchasing PEVs to replace existing gasoline powered vehicles.
Schuyler County Cooperative Extension is looking for state grant funding to help manage their green fleet.	The County has received a NYSERDA Clean Energy Community grant to, in part, to implement the program described above.
Is the County aware of the Energy Smart Community behind the meter project?	Yes.

The following comments were made, many of these are either strictly factual or are an expression of opinion, that we did not feel needed a formal response.

Comment
Hydrangea is the most invasive to waterway in light of dredging. Some land shed is being developed reconfigured with buildings/projects-behind and along Meadow.
I support lake shore water source/ heating and cooling-it works as a solution so ok for new developments including Cayuga Power.
I'm against any power productions with methane-sourced greenhouse gases.
As of this moment, the U.S. is still under the Paris Climate Accord and will remain so until 2020.
I support the idea of providing bicycling connections.
The community needs to balance floodplain uses and resiliency.
The Ithaca City School District has prepared future projections for student population – showing it remaining flat or slightly declining over the next 10 years
Huge to have someone keep supporting local actions and keep them moving forward
Support County assistance to municipalities would be a big help. It is important to have someone advocate local actions.