



Tompkins County
**COMPREHENSIVE
PLAN**

Planning for our

FUTURE

2015

Summary

tompkins county overview

Located in the Finger Lakes Region of Upstate New York, Tompkins County contains an uncommon mixture of spectacular natural features, a vibrant urban center, internationally renowned academic institutions, and a productive and attractive working landscape. With its mixture of urban, suburban, and rural landscapes, Tompkins County offers a diverse living environment.

Geology and Natural Surroundings

Tompkins County is made up of approximately 305,000 acres of land. The southern area is dominated by rugged hills with the highest, Connecticut Hill, reaching over 2,000 feet. The northern portion has more gentle terrain and generally more fertile soils. Approximately one-quarter of the land in Tompkins County is covered by high quality agricultural soils, concentrated in Ulysses, northwestern Enfield, northern Lansing, eastern Groton, and northeastern Dryden, although smaller pockets are located throughout the county.

The most dominant natural feature in Tompkins County is Cayuga Lake. Cayuga Lake is the second-largest Finger Lake and the longest, widest, and one of the deepest of the eleven Finger Lakes. Tompkins County has approximately 26 miles of shoreline on Cayuga Lake in a glacial valley with steep slopes along the lakeshore punctuated by many picturesque gorges. Heights along gorge walls can reach 400 feet. The higher elevations of the lake's tributaries, combined with the steep gorges, produce numerous waterfalls.

State lands account for nearly ten percent of Tompkins County's land area. Chief among these are four State Parks (2,765 acres in Tompkins County), seven State Forests (19,511 acres), and one Wildlife Management Area.

Quintessential College Town

Tompkins County is home to three institutions of higher education: Cornell University, Ithaca College, and Tompkins Cortland Community College (TC3). Total enrollment at all three colleges is nearly 30,000 students. Students account for 30 percent of the county's total population and 60 percent of the City of Ithaca's population.

County Demographic Profile

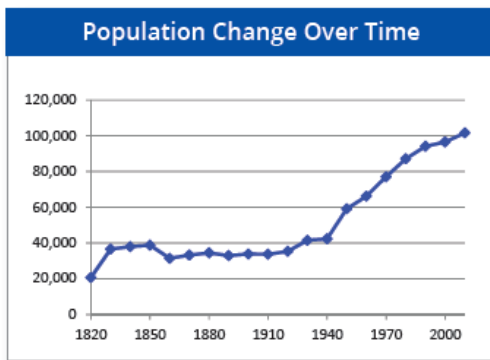
Not surprisingly for a college town, approximately one in three residents of the county is under 21 years of age. About half the adults have at least a bachelor's degree. The census also shows that residents of Tompkins County move their households frequently. In 2012, only one-third of households lived in the same residence they inhabited in 1999. This reflects, in part, the nature of a transient university community as well as national trends.

In the past few decades, the population of Tompkins County has grown at a modest rate of between five and ten percent, in contrast to most other Upstate New York counties, many of which have seen declining population.

Economic Data

Total economic activity in Tompkins County was around \$7 billion in 2009, with about half in sectors of the economy that sell goods or services to consumers outside of the county and half in sectors that serve consumers inside the county. Education is the county's largest sector, generating 27 percent of economic activity and 32 percent of employment. Manufacturing and high-tech together form the second largest sector, accounting for 18 percent of local economic activity and seven percent of employment. Government (including public schools), real estate, and health and social services each make up about eight percent of economic activity.

Unemployment rates in Tompkins County have experienced the same cyclical ups and downs as New York State and the U.S., but have consistently been lower than statewide. Tompkins County's family income levels are not as concentrated in the higher or lower ranges as are found in New York State and the US as a whole. Family income is highly concentrated in the \$50,000 to \$150,000 range and the percentage of local families earning below \$35,000 is lower than state and national averages.



| Tompkins County Population Characteristics, 2010 | |
|--|--------------|
| ALL RESIDENTS | 101,564 |
| GENDER: | |
| MALE | 50,065 (49%) |
| FEMALE | 51,533 (51%) |
| AGE: | |
| 0-19 | 25,881 (25%) |
| 20 - 64 | 64,754 (64%) |
| 65 OR OLDER | 10,929 (11%) |
| RACE: | |
| ONE RACE | |
| WHITE | 83,941 (83%) |
| ASIAN | 8,737 (9%) |
| BLACK/AFRICAN AMERICAN | 4,020 (4%) |
| OTHER | 1,680 (2%) |
| TWO OR MORE RACES | 3,286 (3%) |

overarching principles

sustainability

PRINCIPLE: 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 means equitably meeting the needs of all community members now and in the future. This includes ensuring that everyone has a wide range of choices that allow them to share in economic prosperity, live in a healthy environment, and participate in community life. It requires preserving biodiversity and natural ecosystems and conserving resources to ensure their ability to sustain future generations. It further entails advancing economic vitality, environmental stewardship, and social equity simultaneously -- by making sure a decision to advance one of these does not come at the expense of another.

regional cooperation

PRINCIPLE: Tompkins County should be a place where all levels of government work cooperatively to address regional issues.

The Comprehensive Plan outlines ways the Tompkins County community can continue to address intermunicipal issues cooperatively. Planning at the county level can help municipal governments address key issues of concern that cross municipal boundaries, such as sprawl, economic development, housing affordability, and environmental protection. It can also help residents of rural and urban areas to recognize their inter-connectedness and issues of mutual interest. Tompkins County is also part of a broader geographic area and economic market that influences everything from where we choose to live and shop to what areas we visit to hike and swim. It is important that the Plan account for, connect with, and support the plans of the surrounding region and the plans of localities within the county.

fiscal responsibility

PRINCIPLE: Tompkins County should be a place where taxpayer dollars are invested in public infrastructure and facilities in the most efficient manner possible.

Tompkins County, municipal government, and school district operations are funded through four general sources of funds: local property tax, sales tax, Federal and State aid, and other sources, including fees and grants. Whatever the source, nearly all fiscal resources ultimately come from taxpayers – and Tompkins County takes seriously its role in using these taxpayer dollars judiciously. The County constantly works to maintain a financially sound

Significant interrelationships exist among the various aspects of our daily lives addressed in the Comprehensive Plan. For example, living here is affordable only when jobs are paying wages that make household costs manageable, housing is available in close proximity to jobs, services, and amenities, and public transit allows households to avoid the added cost of longer commutes.



the economy

PRINCIPLE: Tompkins County should be a place where economic prosperity is accessible to all.

Policies

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.

Snapshot of the County Today. Tompkins County is a regional employment center anchored and stabilized by Cornell University and Ithaca College which, together, form the foundation for a creative economy that has helped the county bounce back from recent recessions. Relatively strong job growth compared to population growth has contributed to an increase in the number of in-commuters.

Issues and Opportunities

Key Sectors. The industries and sectors that serve customers outside the county and that hold the strongest potential for growth and wealth-creation are education, manufacturing, high-tech, food processing and distribution, agriculture, tourism, and energy.

State Role in Economic Development. New York State, in partnership with local institutions of higher education, promotes technology transfer, commercialization, and entrepreneurship

Matching Jobs and Workforce. The size of the labor force is expected to remain fairly flat or even drop slightly while available jobs are expected to increase.

Relationship Between Quality of Life and Economic Development. The community's high quality of life plays an important role in attracting and retaining employees and businesses in knowledge industries.

Strong Working Lands. Maintaining economically productive lands is vital to the rural economy and important to limiting sprawl and maintaining the rural character of the community.

Tourism. Tourism plays a small, but important and growing role in the local economy and supports a variety of local cultural, historic, natural, and economic assets.

Localization and Wealth Retention. Locally rooted businesses promote local wealth creation and re-circulate capital in the local economy.

Prosperity for All. The County's livable wage policy is based on the concept that persons who work full time should be able to support themselves on their earnings.

Supporting Infrastructure for Economic Development. Broadband internet, air service, energy infrastructure, and commercial centers play important roles in supporting the economy.

Taking Action. The County has several plans and strategies in place that deal with different aspects of the economy: the *Economic Development Strategy*, the *Tompkins County Workforce Strategy*, the *2020 Strategic Tourism Plan*, and the *Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan*.

Within the next two years, the County will initiate the following actions:

- ⇒ Create implementation plans for agri-culinary tourism and heritage tourism, two of the focus areas in the 2020 Strategic Tourism Plan.
- ⇒ 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.
- ⇒ Seek increased funding to reimburse employers for on-the-job training that enhances employees' skills and increases their wages.

housing

PRINCIPLE: Tompkins County should be a place where housing is affordable, safe, energy efficient, and appealing.

Policies

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.

Snapshot of the County Today. The existing housing supply consists largely of older buildings, with a high proportion oriented towards renters and students. Over 40% of units are renter-occupied. According to the Tompkins County Department of Assessment, half of the residential housing stock was built before 1960 and approximately 7% of the housing stock shows definite signs of deferred maintenance.

The large percentage of renters and students, combined with relatively strong employment and higher wages, differentiates the county's housing market from that of its neighbors. The results are lower vacancy rates and higher costs for housing than are typically found in the region.

Issues and Opportunities

Housing Supply. The limited supply of housing relative to demand has resulted in extremely low vacancy rates for renter-occupied units, at 2.3% countywide and around 1% in the City of Ithaca. There is a shortage of housing for seniors, households with moderate or lower incomes, and people needing supportive services.

Housing Quality. Poor quality is a widespread issue affecting the supply, affordability, and safety of housing. Older housing, high housing costs, and the growing number of single-person and older adult households all contribute to the issue.

Housing Affordability. In total, more than one in three households pays more than 30% of their income on housing.

Energy-Efficient Housing. Residential energy efficiency, both in terms of buildings and their locations within development focus areas, is critical to the affordability of housing and efforts to reduce fossil fuel consumption and greenhouse gas emissions.

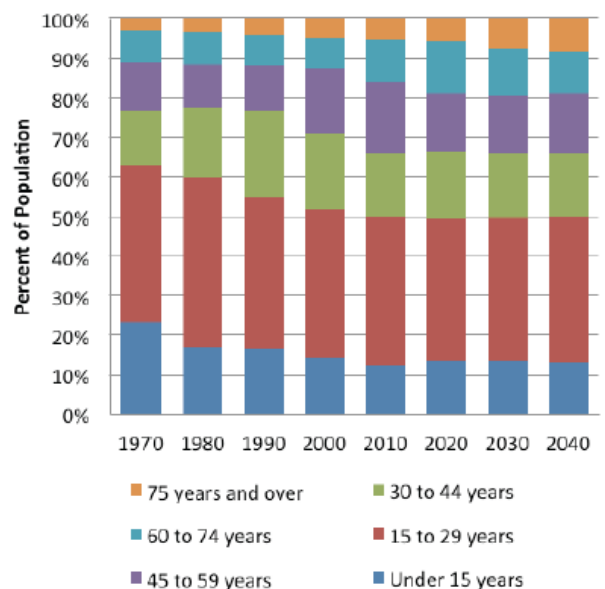
Changing Demographics. Decreases in household size and growth in both the senior population and the number of individuals in need of supportive services require changes in the local housing supply to meet community needs.

Taking Action. The County has established the *Housing Strategy for Tompkins County*.

Within the next two years, the County will initiate the following actions:

- ⇒ Update the Tompkins County Affordable Housing Needs Assessment and engage the broader housing community in revising the Tompkins County Housing Strategy.
- ⇒ Better define the housing needs of client populations served by County human services agencies.
- ⇒ Assist municipalities in developing strategies to help homebuyers compare and evaluate the energy efficiency of existing housing.

**Age Distribution of Population:
1970-2040**



transportation

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

Policies

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.

Snapshot of the County Today. Tompkins County has a high percentage of residents bicycling, carpooling, walking, and working at home with only 60 percent of commuters driving to work alone. Not surprisingly, these figures are impacted strongly by community density, individual wealth, and age. Non-automobile use was higher in the City of Ithaca and other areas where development is compact and, not coincidentally, most of the student population is concentrated.

Issues and Opportunities

The High Costs of the Current System. The State, County, and local municipalities spend about \$65 million annually in the county on transportation and still struggle to maintain the existing network of roads, bridges, and public transit.

Shifting People from Driving Alone. Changing demographics provide opportunities for transportation options that reduce individual car use. A three-pronged focus on development patterns, alternatives to drive-alone, and increased working from home can make this shift a reality.

Complete Streets. A complete street is designed and operated to enable safe access for pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and bus users of all ages and abilities.

Transportation-Insecure. People who do not drive can include youths, older persons, persons with disabilities, and low-income citizens who cannot afford a vehicle.

Rural Transit. Recent drastic decreases in revenue for rural transit systems have impacted surrounding counties affecting commuters who come to Tompkins County for employment.

Sustaining High-Quality Air Service. The past few years have seen declining numbers of passengers flying out of the Ithaca Tompkins Regional Airport.

Transportation's Role in Greenhouse Gas Emissions. Surface transportation is the largest single sector energy user in the community, accounting for 42 percent of energy used and a third of all community greenhouse gas emissions.

Taking Action. The County has several plans and strategies in place that deal with different aspects of transportation: the *2035 Long Range Transportation Plan*, the *Tompkins Priority Trails Strategy*, the *Tompkins County 2020 Energy Strategy*, and the *Cleaner Greener Southern Tier Regional Sustainability Plan*.

Within the next two years, the County will initiate the following actions:

- ⇒ Identify the most critical elements of the County-owned highway infrastructure network for use in prioritizing investment of County funds.
- ⇒ Conduct a study to identify electric vehicle charging station development needs and opportunities.
- ⇒ Investigate additional park and ride and other ways to provide better, safer access to existing transit routes in suburban and rural areas.

natural resources

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

Policies

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.

Snapshot of the County Today. Tompkins County is known for its many natural features including Cayuga Lake, many small and large streams, gorges, waterfalls, rolling wooded hills, and flat and fertile agricultural lands. There are 26,000 acres of State Forests and Wildlife Management Areas and nearly 3,000 acres of State Parks. Over 41,000 acres have been designated as Unique Natural Areas. Approximately 30% of all land is agricultural, with about 80,000 acres of that actively farmed. The County has identified and mapped its key regional natural resources in the 14 Natural Features Focus Areas (NFFAs) and 6 Agricultural Resource Focus Areas.

Issues and Opportunities

Fragmentation. Increasing rates of land development along rural road frontage fragment the agricultural land base, rural landscapes, and the habitats and wildlife corridors many species rely upon.

Access. Improving access to natural areas will allow more individuals to enjoy the recreational opportunities these resources provide.

Improving access points is particularly beneficial when tied to greenways and blueways.

Loss of Agricultural Land. Development trends threaten the economic viability of farming by fragmenting the land base and intensifying conflicts between farmers and non-farm neighbors over such issues as noise, dust, odors, and trespassing.

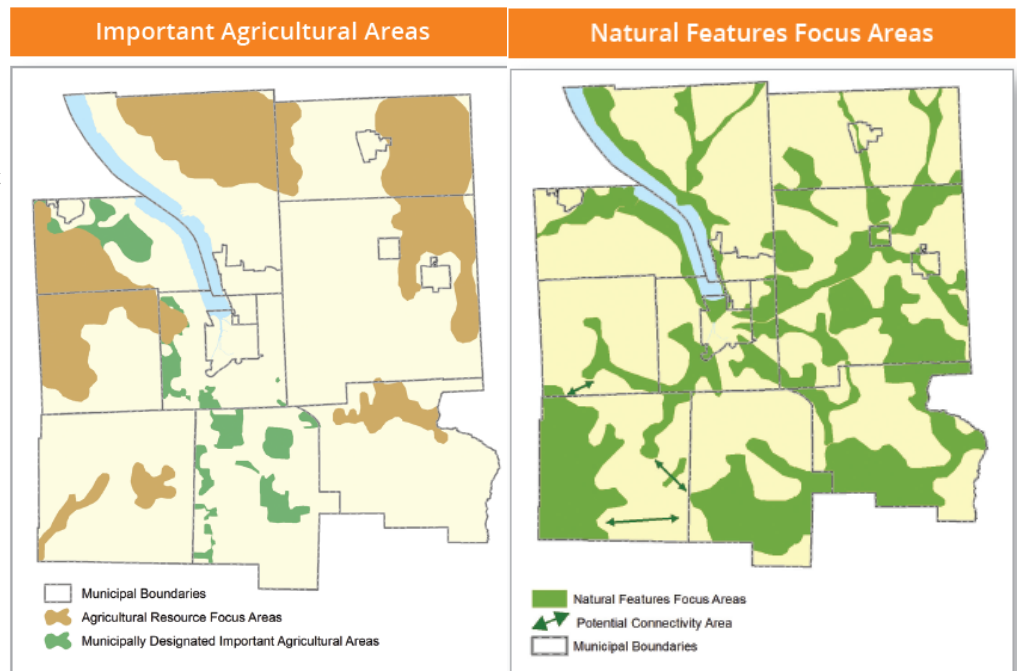
Unwelcome Visitors. Invasive species cause damage to the environment, economy, and community health. Invasive plants and insects have already had significant ecological and economic impacts in Tompkins County.

The Cost of Conservation. The protection of conservation areas in Tompkins County has largely been limited to purchasing land outright or entering into voluntary easements. Adequate funding is needed for the continued acquisition, protection, and management of those lands of highest conservation value.

Taking Action. The County has several plans and strategies in place that deal with different aspects of natural resources: the *Tompkins County Conservation Strategy*, the *Tompkins County Hazard Mitigation Plan*, the *Cayuga Lake Blueway Trail Plan*, the *Tompkins Priority Trails Strategy*, and the *Tompkins County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan*.

Within the next two years, the County will initiate the following actions:

- ⇒ Monitor development activity within the Natural Features Focus Areas and Agricultural Resource Focus Areas and share that information with municipalities.
- ⇒ Identify Purchase of Development Rights priority projects for implementation in the Agricultural Resource Focus Areas.
- ⇒ Develop a conservation funding strategy that accurately captures need for key conservation acquisitions.
- ⇒ 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.



water resources

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

Policies

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.

Snapshot of the County Today. Cayuga Lake is the most prominent water feature in Tompkins County. 80% of the county's water drains into Cayuga Lake and, eventually, north into Lake Ontario. The remainder drains south to the Susquehanna River and eventually into the Chesapeake Bay. There are over 300 miles of perennial streams, surficial aquifers cover a total area of 70 square miles, and wetlands cover more than 10,000 acres of the landscape.

Issues and Opportunities

Drinking Water Supplies. Drinking water for approximately 55% of residents comes from surface waters and the rest from groundwater.

Wastewater Disposal. While many residences and businesses are connected to sewer systems and large centralized wastewater treatment plants, a significant number are served by onsite wastewater treatment systems.

State Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (SPDES). A total of 21 SPDES permits have been issued in the county: eleven to local public facilities, two to Cornell University, three to mobile home parks, and five to industrial facilities.

Water Quality in Cayuga Lake. The most recent (2012) list of impaired water bodies identified the southern end of Cayuga Lake as impaired by three pollutants: phosphorus, silt/sediment, and pathogens.

Erosion and Sedimentation. The basic geography of the county plus past land development practices have led to increased erosion and sedimentation, impacting aquatic habitats and water treatment costs.

Stormwater Runoff and Flooding. Increased stormwater runoff has a significant impact on flooding. Climate change is expected to increase the number and intensity of heavy rainfalls, increasing the frequency and intensity of floods.

Roadside Ditches. Roadside ditches collect and convey stormwater away from roadways. Ditches are a source and conduit of sediment and associated contaminants to streams.

Wetland Protection. Wetlands filter harmful toxins, nutrients, and sediment from surface water and stormwater runoff; store floodwaters; provide valuable habitat for an array of flora and fauna; and maintain surface water flow during dry periods.

Riparian Corridors. Maintaining lands adjacent to streams in their undeveloped state helps protect water quality, stabilize stream banks and prevent erosion, trap sediment and nutrients, improve floodwater retention and groundwater recharge, and shade stream channels in summer.

Dredging. A hydraulic analysis of Cayuga Inlet found that sediment deposition has severely reduced the capacity of the Inlet to convey floodwaters. In addition, dredging is critical to maintain the navigable channel of the Inlet.

Waterfront Development. The City of Ithaca's waterfront, along Cayuga Inlet, offers a tremendous opportunity to develop an urban waterfront experience for residents and tourists alike.

Taking Action. The County has several plans and strategies in place that deal with different aspects of water resources: the *Tompkins County Conservation Strategy*, the *Cayuga Lake Waterfront Plan*, and the *Cayuga Lake Blueway Trail Plan*.

Within the next two years, the County will initiate the following actions:

- ⇒ Contribute to NYS DEC's work assessing and improving water quality in the southern end of Cayuga Lake.
- ⇒ Develop an integrated green infrastructure program that combines existing efforts to identify and protect the quality of stream corridors, wetlands, and aquifers.
- ⇒ Complete the NYSDOT Relocation and Site Redevelopment Feasibility Study.
- ⇒ Support the Water Resources Council in its work to update delineation of wetland resources in the County.

energy and greenhouse gas emissions

PRINCIPLE: Tompkins County should be a place where the energy system meets community needs without contributing additional greenhouse gases to the atmosphere.

Policies

It is the policy of Tompkins County to

- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and 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.

Snapshot of the County Today. In 2008, the Tompkins County community used over 13 million MMBtus[†] of energy, and emitted nearly 1.2 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (MTCO₂e). Energy usage in the form of electricity (780 million kWh), thermal energy (5 million MMBtus), and transportation (6 million MMBtus) accounted for the vast majority of energy use.

Issues and Opportunities

Consider Energy and the Economy Together. While the overall goals for strengthening the local economy and reaching the energy and greenhouse gas emissions targets are compatible and can be mutually reinforcing, it is also important to recognize that there may be specific instances where they come into conflict.

Explore Energy Infrastructure in Energy Focus Areas. There are areas that currently host substantial development, are expected to support new development, and are ripe for potential adoption of innovative energy solutions.

Reduce Energy Demand. New and existing homes, businesses, vehicles, and appliances could be improved to greatly reduce total community energy use and associated emissions.

Transition to Renewable Energy Sources. Developing a diverse energy portfolio that includes renewable energy sources (solar, wind, biomass, water, geothermal, and methane from animal waste) will allow the community to meet its future energy needs in a sustainable manner.

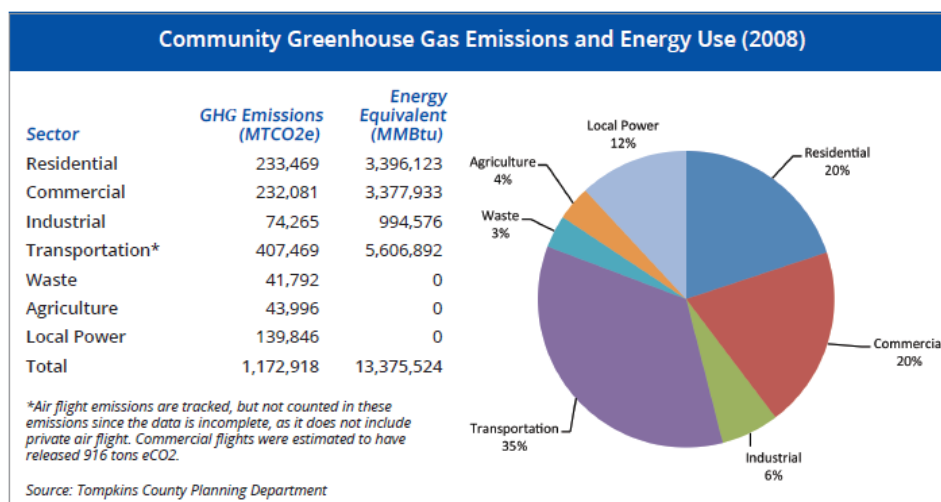
Emissions and Sequestration. Emissions can be reduced by protecting and enhancing resources that naturally remove carbon from the atmosphere and store atmospheric carbon in local land, forests, and wetlands.

Reduce Waste. The manufacture, distribution, and use of the goods and food—as well as management of the resulting waste—all require energy.

Taking Action. The County has two strategies in place that address energy and greenhouse gas emissions: the *Tompkins County 2020 Energy Strategy* and the *Cleaner Greener Southern Tier Regional Sustainability Plan*.

Within the next two years, the County will initiate the following actions:

- ⇒ 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.
- ⇒ Conduct a greenhouse gas emissions inventory for both the community and County government using 2014 data.
- ⇒ Work with municipalities to develop tools to encourage widespread deployment of renewable energy systems.



[†] MMBtu stands for one million British thermal units.

climate adaptation

PRINCIPLE: Tompkins County should be a place where the entire community is prepared for the economic, environmental, and social impacts of climate change.

Policies

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.

Snapshot of the County Today. Tompkins County faces the following specific vulnerabilities from climate change:

- Heavy downpours will put residents living in or near floodplains, as well as businesses, roads, and other infrastructure, at higher risk from flooding.
- Heat waves and summer drought increases could impact the dairy industry and impact vulnerable populations.
- Ecosystem changes will affect natural features as invasive insects, weeds, and other pests move north.

Issues and Opportunities

Climate Impacts on Economy. While it may be difficult to determine precise impacts to Tompkins County it seems quite likely that impacts will be felt in particular in the agriculture, tourism, and small business sectors.

Building Community Resilience. As the effects of climate change will be experienced locally, it is important to identify cost-effective actions that offer multiple benefits to the community.

Vulnerable Populations. Specific groups particularly vulnerable to climate hazards are older citizens, people with disabilities, health-compromised individuals, low-income people, farm workers, and people who depend on public transportation.

Climate Science and Local Municipalities. There is increasing interest on the part of local governments in staying up-to-date on climate science.

Protecting Natural and Physical Infrastructure. The potential for more flooding calls for an increased vigilance as to how and where development occurs. Expensive investments in physical infrastructure, such as water and sewer mains, treatment plants, roads, roadside ditches, bridges, and government offices should all include climate change projections in the design process.

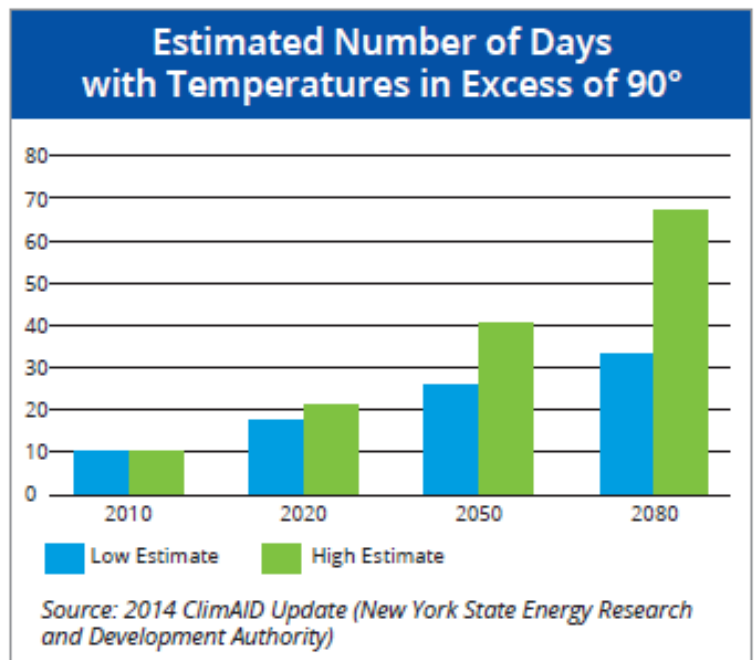
Climate Displacement. Tompkins County may become highly attractive to people currently living in areas more at risk from the effects of climate change.

Communicating Adaptation. Strengthening engagement in all sectors of the community around issues of climate change will increase awareness, decrease risk, and improve resilience.

Taking Action. The County has established the *Tompkins County Hazard Mitigation Plan* which, in part, examines hazard impacts in relation to the latest climate science and recommends steps for adaptation and mitigation.

Within the next two years, the County will initiate the following actions:

- ⇒ Assess the vulnerability of the county government's critical facilities to the impacts of climate change.
- ⇒ 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.
- ⇒ 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.



healthy communities

PRINCIPLE: Tompkins County should be a place where the built environment promotes healthy, safe, and active lifestyles.

Policies

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.

Snapshot of the County Today. Although ranked as the second healthiest county in New York, Tompkins County's latest Community Health Assessment found that nearly one out of every three middle- and high-school students is overweight or obese. The county is home to four State Parks and a number of community trails, and municipalities maintain nearly 500 acres of parkland. Community members of all ages rely heavily on school-based recreational opportunities and facilities and enjoy a variety of opportunities to access healthy food.

Issues and Opportunities

Land Uses. A mix of land uses supports a more varied population and a wider commercial base to support public transit.

Streets and Roads. Only 47% of the streets in the City and villages have sidewalks. With vehicles involved in accidents resulting in 49 injuries to bicyclists or pedestrians in 2013 alone, many streets need improvements to safely accommodate all users.

Parks, Trails and Recreational Facilities. It is important to locate recreational amenities in areas that can be reached by walking, cycling, and transit so users of all ages and abilities can easily access them.

Neighborhood Design. Development that incorporates landscapes, streets, and sidewalks that connect to the broader community help reinforce a sense of place, while improving social interactions, increasing safety, and reducing reliance on private vehicles.

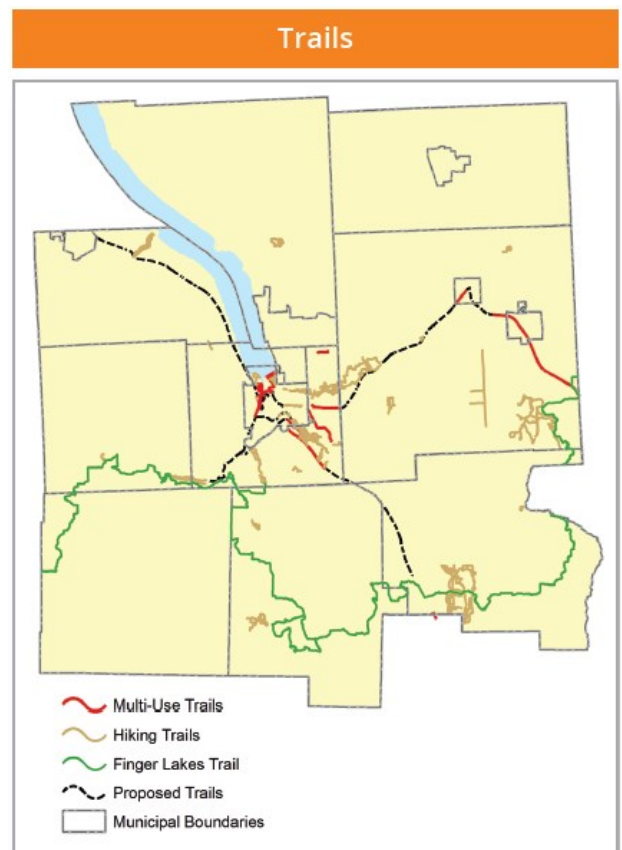
Housing Design. Residential development can be situated and designed in a way that enables people of all physical ability levels to live as independently as possible.

Healthy Food. Diverse commercial agricultural activities provide a variety of healthy food options; however, affordability remains a challenge, with 13% of the county considered food insecure.

Taking Action. The County has several plans and strategies in place that deal with different aspects of healthy communities: the *2035 Long Range Transportation Plan*, the *Tompkins Priority Trails Strategy*, and the *Community Health Improvement Plan 2013-2017*.

Within the next two years, the County will initiate the following actions:

- ⇒ Develop a healthy communities strategy as a collaborative effort of County departments.
- ⇒ Establish a formal role for the County in trail development.
- ⇒ Prepare and share a sidewalk inventory with municipalities.



development patterns

PRINCIPLE: Tompkins County should be a place where new development is focused in compact, walkable, mixed-use communities.

Policies

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.

Snapshot of the County Today. Historic patterns of traditional development are still very visible and prominent in much of Tompkins County. The pattern of a main street neatly lined with historic buildings sitting amid a grid of neighborhood streets can be seen in the City of Ithaca and its neighborhoods, and in most villages and historic hamlets. Suburban development patterns, the dominant development trend of the second half of the twentieth century, can also be found throughout the county.

Issues and Opportunities

Sprawl and Traditional Neighborhoods. Evolving demographic, economic, environmental, and fiscal changes have increased interest in returning to a pattern of development that resembles more closely the traditional neighborhood and village than the typical late twentieth century suburb.

The Cost of Sprawl. Sprawl has contributed to an increasing cost of providing government services. Highways, water lines, and sewer lines have been extended beyond our capacity to maintain them in the long-term.

Nodal Development. Development that is clustered in an existing or planned population center (nodal development) is a way to direct growth towards existing communities already served by viable infrastructure.

Infill Development. Many existing neighborhoods can accommodate much of the growth that communities require through infill development, which requires special design considerations to assure projects fit the surrounding neighborhood.

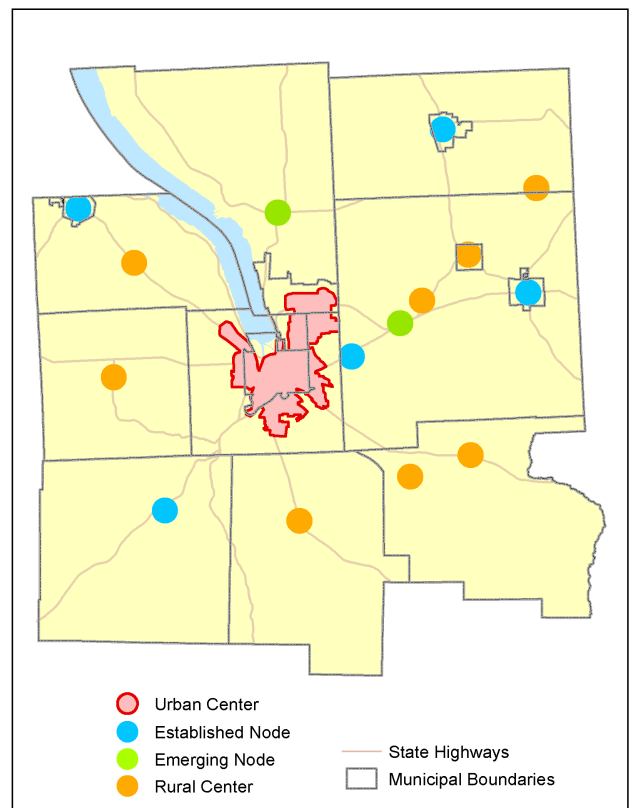
Livability Through Good Design. Good planning and design principles can help the community maintain its historic character while supporting development that provides a high quality of life.

Taking Action. The County has two strategies in place that address development patterns: *Building Vibrant Communities in Tompkins County ... a Development Focus Areas Strategy* and the *Cleaner Greener Southern Tier Regional Sustainability Plan*.

Within the next two years, the County will initiate the following actions:

- ⇒ Work with municipalities to identify potential infill or redevelopment sites within Development Focus Areas.
- ⇒ Provide technical assistance to municipalities to establish land use policies and regulations that support development within Development Focus Areas.

Development Focus Areas



**TOMPKINS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
PLANNING FOR OUR FUTURE**

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For more information visit the website: <http://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/compplan>

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