

Tompkins County Department of Planning and Sustainability 2018 Work Program

This document has been created primarily to guide the work of the Tompkins County Department of Planning and Sustainability (TCDPS) staff for 2018 and communicate that work to the Legislature and community. It supports staff in maintaining focus on the priorities that we have established with input from organizational partners, legislators, and the broader community so that we can effectively consider requests for additional work that inevitably arise over the course of the year.

Mission of the Department

The mission of the Tompkins County Planning and Sustainability Department is to:

Create high-quality, useful plans on critical issues and lead implementation of actions to position all Tompkins County communities to thrive now and in the future.

This Mission Statement is intended to clarify that we do not see our role as simply sharing information in an academic sense, but that we are also looking to help communities thrive and succeed through implementing recommended actions, and that when there are not clear partners ready to carry out those actions our department is ready to lead as we are able.

Three-year Vision for the Dept

The three-year vision of the Tompkins County Planning and Sustainability Department is to:

Be widely regarded as a respected leader that provides high-quality, timely information, analysis and professional planning support, delivered in useful ways, that allow County officials, residents, communities, and local organizations to prepare for and address issues that are critical to their current and long-term success.

Draft 2018 Work Program

Planning staff have identified a baker's dozen of 13 Key Activities for 2018, representing a mix of planning initiatives, implementation actions, and strategic efforts that reflect the department's dual mission of both creating plans and implementing actions. The Key Activities include 3 planning initiatives, 7 implementing actions, and 3 strategic efforts to best position the Department for long term success in achieving its mission. Of the planning initiatives, we are eager to aim for at least one each year that would be considered innovative and help position Tompkins County as a leader in New York State. We believe that innovation is a valued characteristic in our community and that it is vital for the department to continually evolve to address the challenges of our time.

Criteria used to make these selections included (100 points total):

- Addresses an issue that has already been identified as a crisis in the community (e.g., housing, climate change) (25 points)
- Will create efficiencies in use of County government resources (20 points)
- Takes advantage of a unique opportunity (15 points)
- Leverages resources (10 points)
- Offers multiple benefits in several different subject areas that create a particularly compelling case for action (10 points)
- Enhances economic development (10 points)
- Needs County government leadership to effect change (5 points)
- Presents opportunity costs if action is delayed (5 points)

Planning Initiatives – Key Activities

1. **Create Healthy Communities Strategy.** *Especially proactive and innovative.* This is one of the last remaining major initiatives identified in the 2015 County Comprehensive Plan that has not yet begun. An opportunity has presented itself with enthusiastic partners from many County departments expressing a desire for TCDPS to assist them in stepping back and taking a big-picture look at community health and developing a cohesive action plan. This plan would look across multiple County Departments and other health, economic development, housing and transportation organizations for future activities to move the dial on issues of mutual concern. *Success: by the end of the year, staff will have met with key staff from at least three of the departments and agencies to understand planning needs and timeline, drafted a preliminary scope of areas to include in the strategy, and convened a group to review and sign-off on the preliminary scope.*
2. **Update Energy Strategy.** The ten local actions identified in first Energy Strategy, developed in 2010, were to a large extent implemented by TCDPS and community partners and had a significant impact on energy planning and reductions in greenhouse gas emitting energy consumption. There is still a significant amount of work to be done to achieve the County's goal of an 80% reduction in emissions by 2050 and it is time for a new short list of effective actions. *Success: by the end of the year, staff will have developed a scope, timeline and approach to the update; formed a steering committee; and compiled a list of up to 25 actions to consider including as priority actions.*
3. **Update Tourism Strategy.** The actions identified in the first Tourism Strategy, developed in 2007, were to a large extent implemented by TCPDS and community partners and had a significant impact on tourism planning and thoughtful allocation of room tax revenues. By evaluating results of the current strategy and engaging the CVB on the preparation of a new visitor profile study, the update will begin in firm footing. *Success: by the end of the year, staff will have held the first meeting of the steering committee, evaluated program impacts, and developed a scope for the strategy update.*

Implementation Actions – Key Activities

1. **Launch the Business Energy Navigator Program.** One of the primary recommendations to emerge from the 2015-2016 Energy and Economic Development Task Force was the need to help business owners and their facility managers make energy choices that reduce commercial and industrial greenhouse gas emissions. This program will connect decision makers with easy to digest energy options and funding opportunities to allow them to act with confidence. *Success: by the end of the year, staff will have executed a contract with NYSERDA, contracted with energy professionals, completed NYSERDA Design Metrics, developed initial outreach and marketing materials, and established working relationships with at least two initial pilot businesses.*
2. **Evaluate and Make Recommendations to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions from County Fleet.** Transportation accounts for 45% of all County government emissions. This tactic looks to review use patterns of the current fleet and determine the best ways to achieve ghg emissions reductions. *Success: by the end of the year, staff will have executed a contract with NYSERDA, completed NYSERDA Design Metrics, obtained fuel records from all County entities, and contracted with electric vehicle professionals.*
3. **Fund Projects Using the Natural Infrastructure Capital Program.** This program was funded by the Legislature in 2016 in recognition of the impacts of the changing climate on our community. The program is intended to expand the actions being taken to protect people and property in areas susceptible to flooding, particularly from the impact of intense precipitation events. *Success: by the end of the year, staff will have evaluated possible innovative road ditching projects and identified at least one to recommend be funded, supported at least one interested partner in applying for CFA grants if*

warranted, and shepherded at least one land protection project to the point of recommending its funding to the Legislature.

4. **Manage and Consider Expanding the Community Housing Development Fund (CHDF).** The lack of affordable housing is considered a crisis for residents in the County, as well as for businesses trying to attract and retain employees. The CHDF has been an important component of nearly all affordable housing developed in the County over the past decade and has leveraged many millions of dollars in other funding. It is a program that has been proven to achieve results, and dedicated effort should be made to continue the Fund as well as consider its expansion. *Success: by the end of the year, staff will have evaluated funding sources leveraged by past CHDF awards; provided partners with information needed to evaluate increasing funding; and, if any funding partner decides to increase their contributions, make recommendations to the Legislature and partners on amendments to the 2015 agreements and the 2019 NOFA.*
5. **Review and Seize Opportunities to Fund Affordable Housing and Infrastructure through State and Federal Grant Programs (CDBG, CFA and/or ARC).** 2018 appears to offer significant opportunities from State and Federal entities to fund housing and infrastructure projects. Tompkins County re-joined the Southern Tier 8 Regional Planning Board, opening-up Appalachian Regional Commission grant funding, and recent meetings with NYS Office of Homes and Community Renewal indicate that Tompkins County may have short-term opportunities to access State funding. *Success: by the end of the year, staff will have shared grant consultant list with municipalities, developers and agencies; evaluated and determined which (if any) grants to apply for; and submitted applications as appropriate.*
6. **Housing Opportunity/Infill Site Analysis and Pilot Assistance Program.** In order to help neighborhoods attract palatable development and help developers to achieve more success when proposing projects, this strategy would proactively identify opportunity sites and work with municipalities, neighborhoods and developers to foster interest in housing development on those sites. *Success: by the end of the year, staff will have developed, shared with the Housing Committee, and vetted with municipal planners and officials maps and spreadsheets showing residential units built since 2010, residential units currently in the planning or construction process, and existing infrastructure to support residential development. In addition, staff will have in place with our Assessment Department and others a procedure to update and share outcomes in the future.*
7. **Build Infrastructure to Open the Cayuga Lake Blueway Trail.** Opening the Trail requires efforts to improve access to beautiful Cayuga Lake and create a new tourist and resident amenity, create better maps and signage to waterfront access points, and develop targeted sites for enhanced waterfront access. *Success: by the end of the year, staff will have held the initial advisory committee meeting, executed agreements with key jurisdictions playing a role in the trail, and released the RFP for branding and signage.*

Strategic Efforts for Long-term Success – Key Activities

1. **Hire New Staff and Build Productive Team to Address Community Planning Needs.** It is vital that TCDPS help new and seasoned staff function productively and mesh well together and with the community, including training new staff on administrative procedures they need to know for their positions and begin transition planning for key items. *Success: by the end of the year, staff will have filled five positions, implemented a peer partner program, created a helpful guidebook for employees, and evaluated efforts to build teamwork.*

2. **Improve How We Engage and Serve Under-represented Populations.** The goal of TCDPS is to serve all people in all corners of the County, however, we recognize that improvement is needed in soliciting input from various sectors of the population in county planning activities. This work includes a review of options on how to achieve this goal, including high-level evaluation of different groups of people we may wish to engage, community and partner readiness to engage, staff resources necessary to carry-out the identified best option, capacity of existing staff to take on this work, and specific impacts each option could achieve. *Success: by the end of the year, staff will have jointly defined project goals and parameters with partners, piloted at least one concrete step to engage under-represented people in the update of the tourism strategy, and identified at least one additional concrete step to incorporate into department outreach efforts in 2019.*

3. **Build Trust and Collaboration with Interested Municipalities While Effectively Managing Expectations.** Many of the recommendations in our plans and strategies are difficult to achieve without action at the local government level. Therefore, this effort looks to building relationships and identify ways that we can support municipal officials in their decision-making. *Success: by the end of the year, staff will have evaluated how we currently support and interact with municipalities; met with at least three municipal staffs to discuss relevant topics, including housing, mapping, data, 239 reviews, and grant opportunities; and developed a concrete approach for deeper municipal engagement in 2019.*

In addition to the above Key Activities, there are many activities performed by TCDPS staff that serve important functions in the community and County government. Below is the list of activities staff will work on in 2018, as well as lists of committees and boards to which staff will contribute.

Initiatives requiring MORE than 40 hours work

- 1) Contract and administer the Clean Energy Communities Grant
- 2) Administer 239 Program, including project reviews
- 3) Administer the Homeownership Program Community Development Block Grant and Program Income Contract (CDBG)
- 4) Support County Administration and Legislature with Harris B. Dates Property
- 5) Determine best use of housing-focused monies in 2018 Budget
- 6) Review and seize opportunities to fund transition of County facilities near the airport to electric renewable heat
- 7) Provide staff support to the Energy Task Force
- 8) Oversee consultant preparing Small to Medium-scale Wind Development Study
- 9) Assist NYSEG with siting pressure-boosters with maps, data and connections
- 10) Determine best use of energy fund monies in 2018 Budget
- 11) Provide staff support to the Environmental Management Council
- 12) Provide staff support to the Water Resources Council
- 13) Support Route 13 transportation study
- 14) Review opportunities to conserve additional farmland through the spring NYS Department of Ag and Markets' purchase of development rights program
- 15) Monitor lands with County-held conservation easements
- 16) Manage forester overseeing harvest of timber on County-owned forestlands in Newfield
- 17) Promote and administer the County's Conservation Reserve Fund Program

- 18) Prepare Disaster Resiliency and Recovery Plan, either through grant program or as part of update of the Hazard Mitigation Plan
- 19) Organize for 2019 update of Hazard Mitigation Plan
- 20) Propose tourism budget that adheres to the stated policies of the 2020 Strategic Tourism Plan and all other applicable policies
- 21) Communicate with the Legislature on the tourism program
- 22) Develop annual room-tax projections
- 23) Evaluate current tourism grant programs and funding streams
- 24) Prepare and develop funding strategy for Outdoor Recreation Tourism Implementation Plan
- 25) Review and provide input on feasibility of developing a downtown conference center
- 26) Provide staff support to the Strategic Tourism Planning Board
- 27) Administer tourism grant program – track grants, advise applicants, weigh-in on projects with grant review teams, shepherd resolutions through PDEQ, and contract with the approx. 80 individual projects
- 28) Provide staff support to the Planning Advisory Board
- 29) Develop metrics to track value of TCDPS in the community, which may include measuring progress in achieving goals of the Comprehensive Plan
- 30) Prepare annual metrics tracking of housing development and land conservation
- 31) Actively participate in Southern Tier 8 and the Appalachian Regional Commission grant process
- 32) Prepare and manage 2018 and 2019 work programs
- 33) Administer and oversee Department functions
- 34) Develop and manage Department budget
- 35) Manage contracts and grants
- 36) Renovate office space to improve safety and function
- 37) Respond effectively to emerging issues and opportunities

Initiatives requiring LESS than 40 hours work

- 1) Launch new initiative to support municipalities and nonprofits with free GIS services
- 2) Conduct data analysis by Development Focus Areas to quantify important housing-related information
- 3) Summarize American Community Survey data on vacancy and rents
- 4) Establish ongoing relationships with landlords
- 5) Help the Human Services Coalition successfully establish Housing Tompkins coordinator and meetings
- 6) Apply for Climate Smart Communities bronze or silver level certification
- 7) Track energy usage at County facilities
- 8) Advise on and promote the Energize New York Property Assessed Clean Energy Program
- 9) Provide advice and support for the EV Tompkins grant
- 10) Administer Park Foundation grant for the HeatSmart Tompkins II and III program
- 11) Assist Water Resources Council in updating Water Quality Strategy
- 12) Assist Water Resources Council in drafting watershed rules and regulations
- 13) Promote and administer the Aquifer Study Program
- 14) Promote and administer the County's Stream Corridor Protection Program
- 15) Administer Community Science Institute's Stream Water Quality Monitoring Program

- 16) Support EMC's update of Unique Natural Areas (UNA) Inventory
- 17) Administer County land policy and review foreclosed properties
- 18) Complete the Habitat Connectivity Strategy
- 19) Manage agriculture district annual additions
- 20) Manage Ludlowville Flood Mitigation Phase II Project and administer related grant funds
- 21) Support efforts to establish the Tompkins Center for History and Culture
- 22) Ensure fulfillment of County, State and Federal requirements through the County compliance program
- 23) Update County's State Environmental Quality Review Act policy
- 24) Review two-year action list from the Comprehensive Plan and update with actions from newer strategies
- 25) Train new staff on administrative requirements
- 26) Begin transition planning for staff retirements
- 27) Support efforts to relocate the NYS Department of Transportation waterfront facility
- 28) Coordinate execution of the south hill trail license agreement between NYSEG and the County
- 29) Review programs for opportunities to "spin-off" portions to partners
- 30) Evaluate ways to improve work with young professionals and citizens in our community
- 31) Maintain Department website
- 32) Manage the State's Snowmobile Grant Program for local trail organizations

Serve as member of boards and committees

- 1) Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board
- 2) Air Service Board
- 3) Cayuga Lake Scenic Byways Board
- 4) Conference Center Feasibility Study Steering Committee
- 5) County Sustainability Team
- 6) Economic Development Collaborative
- 7) Finger Lakes ReUse Center Board
- 8) Homeless and Housing Task Force
- 9) Homeownership Program Oversight Committee
- 10) Housing Tompkins Steering Committee
- 11) Infrastructure Cabinet
- 12) ITCTC Planning Committee
- 13) Ithaca 2030 District Board
- 14) NYSAC Planning Directors
- 15) NYS Open Space Committee
- 16) Solar Tompkins Board
- 17) Southern Tier 8 Regional Board
- 18) Tompkins Center for History and Culture
- 19) Tompkins County Area Development Board
- 20) Tompkins County Climate Protection Initiative Steering Committee
- 21) Tompkins County Trails Network
- 22) Upstate APA Fall 2018 Conference Planning Committee