

Local Government Response to Climate Change

**Tompkins County Energy and Greenhouse Gas
Emissions Initiatives**

Tompkins County History of Energy Initiatives

- **Solar panels on new County Library in 2000**
- **Member of ICLEI since 2001**
- **2001 - Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory**
- **2003 - Local Action Plan**
- **Energy Performance Contract for County Facilities with Johnson Controls completed in 2007**
- **Comprehensive Plan element addressing Energy and Greenhouse Gas Emissions in 2008**

A scenic view of a large lake, likely Cayuga Lake, surrounded by green trees and hills under a clear blue sky. The text is overlaid on the top half of the image.

Energy and Greenhouse Gas Emissions
Element
Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan

Planning for our Future

Process and Timeline - 2008

February	Steering Committee formed
April-May	Focus Groups and Interviews
June	Public Meeting
Summer	Draft Plan Element
Fall	Public Meetings
Fall	Revise Draft
December	Adoption by Legislature

New Element and the Comprehensive Plan

The Energy and Greenhouse Gas Emissions element complements and directly relates to many other policies:

- **Promoting nodal development patterns**
- **Developing alternative transportation options**
- **Investing in local jobs and business opportunities**
- **Protecting rural resources and natural features**

Community Energy Picture: Energy Use and Source

2006 Energy Use

Transportation: 42%

Residential: 25%

Commercial: 25%

Industrial: 8%

2006 Energy Source

Gasoline 34%

Natural Gas 32%

Electricity 20%

Diesel 7%

Heating Oil 3%

Propane 3%

The Principle: A Community Approach

The Tompkins County community should:

- Reduce energy demand
- Improve energy efficiency
- Transition to renewable sources of energy
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions

Policies

It is the policy of Tompkins County to:

- **Reduce GHG emissions by 80% by 2050**
- **Coordinate energy and GHG emissions planning and implementation activities**
- **Reduce energy use through countywide composting, recycling, reuse, and other waste management programs**
- **Develop financial mechanisms and incentives that foster investment in the systems and programs necessary to achieve energy and GHG emissions goals**

Policies

It is the policy of Tompkins County to:

- Encourage new development and renovations to be energy efficient and take advantage of renewable energy sources
- Encourage development of local renewable energy sources and technologies
- Construct, renovate and maintain County government facilities and buildings to optimize energy efficiency, utilize renewable energy where possible and enhance environmental sustainability
- Consider energy usage and GHG emissions in transportation and infrastructure decisions

ACTION Items

Action items are short-term activities that Tompkins County government or community partners can undertake to implement the long-term policies.

- **Work with local municipalities, school districts, businesses, institutions of higher education and not for profits to develop a 5-year strategy to reduce emissions by 10%, including a detailed plan for County government**
- **Report metrics of change in energy use and greenhouse gas emissions, energy efficiency improvements and renewable energy installations in the county**
- **Prepare an adaptation plan for impacts of global climate change and peak oil**
- **Conduct an educational campaign on energy issues and choices**
- **Promote Best Management Practices to enhance carbon sequestration**

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- **Develop a strategy to divert 75% of the community waste stream from landfills by 2015**
- **Develop a plan to address the specific energy needs of low-income people**
- **Investigate feasibility of a low-interest revolving loan fund to improve the payback period for energy efficiency investments**
- **Promote green business development and create green job training opportunities**
- **Adopt local tax incentives to encourage investment in energy efficiency and renewable energy systems**
- **Develop model building energy code**
- **Adopt a policy requiring County government buildings be certified (LEED) Silver**

ACTION Items

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- **Determine the feasibility of developing a regional consortium of sustainable biomass growers and processors to supply biomass consumers in the region**
- **Develop criteria and identify the sites most appropriate for locating community scale wind power**
- **Establish a Green fleet policy for County government**
- **Reduce Vehicle Miles Traveled through planning for park and rides, express regional commuter service, vanpool, bike/pedestrian ways and other transportation improvements**
- **Establish a board or committee to advise Legislature on proposed federal and state legislation and policy initiatives**

Progress to date – County Government

- **New Health Department facility being renovated to LEED Silver with solar hot water and planned photovoltaic installation**
- **NYSERDA application for lighting, solar hot water, and efficiency improvements at county facilities**
- **Green fleet policy has been developed and is in the Legislative review process**
- **Solid Waste Management Plan Update – Goal: 75% diversion from landfill**
- **Airport “Green” Master Plan Initiated – 1st in U.S.**

Progress to date - Community

- **Adopted sales tax exemption for solar installations**
- **Program concepts developed for rural biomass demonstration project**
- **Developing program to finance energy efficiency improvements for residents**
- **Cornell University and Ithaca College have recently released their climate action plans**
- **Collaboration between weatherization, green job training and public information efforts**
- **Long Range Transportation Plan focusing on reducing VMT**

Rural Biomass

- **16,000 households (40%) in Tompkins County utilize fuel oil, propane or electricity for heat; 11,000 are in rural areas**
- **Utilizing half of abandoned farm and forest land could produce biomass sufficient to heat 15,000 average homes**
- **Landowner biomass production cooperative and local processing facility are in development**
- **Consumer demonstration of biomass heating options is next step**

Energy Efficiency Financing

- **Berkeley/Sonoma County models seem most promising**
- **Use energy efficiency district to tie payment to property rather than owner – assures that benefit stays with payer and reduces administration costs**
- **Use bonding authority to finance**
- **2-3% interest surcharge pays program administration costs**
- **Could finance owner share of efficiency improvements for up to 20,000 units, about half of county total, over 20 years**

Community Partnerships: Tompkins County Climate Protection Initiative

- **Park Foundation**
- **Cornell University**
- **Ithaca College**
- **Tompkins-Cortland Community College**
- **Ithaca-Tompkins County Transportation Council**
- **Cooperative Extension**
- **Workforce Investment Board**
- **Tompkins Community Action**
- **Chamber of Commerce**
- **Many other institutions and businesses**

Contact Information

Tompkins County Planning Department

<http://www.tompkins-co.org/planning/compplan/index.htm>

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