



Tools

Planners are builders. And a comprehensive plan is often seen as a ‘blueprint’ for the community. If this document is a blueprint, and we want to build toward a shared vision, we need to understand what tools we have in our toolbox. The focus of this section will be on resources that we control locally as opposed to grants that need to be sought.

Comprehensive Plans, Zoning and 239 Reviews

The most widely used tools that municipal planners rely on are the comprehensive plan and zoning regulations. These two techniques are deeply interrelated. The comprehensive plan is written first, and it establishes the vision for the community. Later a zoning ordinance is drafted to conform to the vision in the plan. The zoning ordinance can be used to restrict or encourage development to assist in implementing the comprehensive plan.

Over the past decade, Broome County Planning has worked with the towns of Lisle, Triangle, Fenton, Dickinson and Binghamton and the Village of Whitney Point to prepare their comprehensive plans. The City of Binghamton, and the Towns of Union, Chenango, Conklin and Kirkwood prepared comprehensive plans independently of the County. In reviewing these plans, several common goals emerge:

- Preserve and Maintain the Rural Character and Protect and Promote Agriculture
Fenton, Lisle, Triangle, Union, and Town of Binghamton
- Protect and Manage Natural/Environmental Resources
Fenton, Lisle, Triangle, Town of Binghamton, Union and Maine
- Improve the Appearance of the Town/Improve Code Enforcement
Fenton, Lisle, Town of Binghamton, City of Binghamton, Dickinson, and Maine
- Protect, Preserve and Enhance Local Housing Stock
Fenton, Lisle, Triangle, Union and Maine
- Guide and Manage Economic Development
Lisle, Fenton, Town of Binghamton, Union and City of Binghamton



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- Provide or Encourage Senior Housing
Triangle, Town of Binghamton, and City of Binghamton
- Preserve and Enhance the Character of Neighborhoods and Village Centers
City of Binghamton, Union, Maine, Whitney Point
- Emphasize and Enhance Gateways, Corridors and Connections
City of Binghamton, Whitney Point

In New York, zoning is handled at the municipal level, so each town and village has the opportunity to have its own zoning ordinance, zoning board of appeals, and planning board. The Countywide Zoning Map in the Land Use Chapter shows the general zoning districts for towns and villages across the county. Although these ordinances are drafted, adopted, and administered at the local level County Planning can indirectly influence how these zoning ordinances are revised.

A tool related to zoning is the 'Section 239' review performed by County Planning on certain projects. Section 239 of general town law, gives counties the authority to comment on projects within 500 feet of 1) A municipal boundary; 2) An existing or proposed county or state park or recreation area; An existing or proposed county or state road; 3) Any existing or proposed stream or drainage channel; 4) Any existing or proposed county or state land, building or institution; or 5) A farm in an agricultural district. In a typical year, 200 to 300 cases come to the County for Section 239 review.

If the County Planning Department recommends denial, the zoning or planning board needs a 'super majority' vote to override. This is a majority plus one, and it can influence approvals that would be narrowly decided. Through the 239 process, County Planning also provides technical comments from a variety of agencies that help the towns and villages make a more informed zoning decision. If this countywide comprehensive plan includes recommendations, the Planning Department can cite it in future 239 review letters. This can influence how land use decisions are made for many years.

In addition to the traditional comprehensive plan and zoning tools, there are several other relevant countywide plans in place in Broome County. These include:



Agricultural Economic Development Plan

Agriculture is a significant portion of the Broome County economy, and a substantial portion of our local land use. According to the 2007 Census of Agriculture, there are 580 farms which occupy 86,613 acres in the county. The market value of all agricultural products sold by Broome County farms was nearly \$30 million and there was nearly \$160 million in market value in land and buildings on farms in the County.

Recognizing the importance of farming, the County legislature adopted an Agricultural Economic Development Plan in December 2001. This is a comprehensive document that provides an inventory of the resources, land use, development, economics, trends and markets as they relate to the county's agricultural industry. Goals, Objectives and an Action Plan were developed to address the following major initiatives:

1. Implement an Added Value Enterprise System
2. Coordinate a Direct Marketing Initiative
3. Develop an Agricultural Tourism Initiative
4. Create a Forest Management Initiative
5. Institute an Agricultural Planning Initiative
6. Encourage an Agricultural Awareness Initiative

Transportation Tomorrow: 2035

The Binghamton Metropolitan Transportation Study (BMTS) is the designated transportation planning agency for the greater Binghamton area. In 2010, it adopted *Transportation Tomorrow: 2035 - Creating a Sustainable Future* as its plan for this region. *Transportation Tomorrow: 2035* lays out the following goals:

Sustainability Goals:

- To reduce the per capita amount of carbon-based energy consumed and greenhouse gases produced by the transportation sector by 50% by 2035
- To enhance the livability of the Region with appropriate transportation investment

Accessibility Goal

- To ensure that the regional transportation system provides convenient mode-neutral access to destinations including employment, education, and services



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Mobility Goal

- To create a regional transportation system that provides travel choices so personal travel and goods movement can maximize efficiency

Safety Goal

- To create a regional transportation system that provides safe and secure travel for all users and all modes

System Preservation Goal

- To maintain the regional transportation system in a state of good repair

Binghamton Metropolitan Greenway Study

Also drafted by BMTS, the Binghamton Metropolitan Greenway Study addresses trail development in the Southern Tier. The purpose of the Greenway Study is to determine the feasibility of developing a network of riverbank trails. The study, completed in 1999, identifies 13 trail master plans. These are comprised mostly of off-road trails, supplemented by on-road bikeways and sidewalk links. Connecting these disparate elements is the Binghamton Metropolitan Bicycle Route System. The following are the 13 trail master plans presented by the Greenway Study:

- Village of Owego to the Hickories Trail (4 miles +/-)
- NY Route 17/I-86 Multi-Use Trail (7 miles +/-)
- Town of Union Trails (10 miles +/-)
- Town of Vestal Trails (10 miles +/-)
- Vestal Parkway Trail (3.5 miles +/-)
- City of Binghamton Trails (3 miles +/-)
- Otsiningo Park Trail Network (3 miles +/-)
- Chenango Bridge Trail (2 miles +/-)
- Port Dickinson Park Trail Network (10 miles +/-)
- Schnurbush Park Trail Network (1.5 miles +/-) and Veterans River Park Trail (1 mile +/-)

The work of the Greenway Study is expanded by the *Four Rivers Waterfront Public Access Plan* which is discussed below.

Four Rivers Waterfront Public Access Plan

Broome County has four rivers: Susquehanna, Tioughnioga, Chenango, and Delaware that cover more than 89 miles of waterway that run through 22 waterfront



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communities. These communities collaborated on a Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan (LWRP) to create the *Four Rivers Waterfront Public Access Plan*. Through this inter-municipal plan, there are now common goals for waterfront development across the county. These are as follows:

1. Access - Improve public access to all riverfronts
2. Economic Development - Stimulate economic revitalization in Broome County's riverfront communities
3. Community Health - Enhance health and quality of life for all residents and visitors
4. Ecology and Environment - Enhance the biodiversity of the region
5. Flood Control - Sensitively reuse lands prone to flooding
6. Connectivity - Connect communities through their riverfronts
7. Transportation - Establish an intermodal transportation system that connects the riverfronts

By participating in the LWRP process, these waterfront communities can advance projects for funding by New York State.

Susquehanna Heritage Area Management Plan

The Susquehanna Heritage Area was first recognized by the New York State Legislature in 1982 as a vehicle to identify, promote, and develop the historic, cultural, recreational, and natural resources in Broome County. During a 2009 update to the plan, the Susquehanna Heritage Area was expanded to encompass Broome and Tioga Counties.

The goal of the Susquehanna Heritage Area is to use the historic, cultural and natural resources of Broome and Tioga Counties to strengthen regional identity, enhance local quality-of-life, support the local economy, and promote stewardship. This goal is achieved through the partnership and coordinated activities of a wide range of local and regional organizations with technical support from the New York State Heritage Area Program. The following is a summary of the goals and objectives of the updated Management Plan:

Preservation:

- Identify, preserve, protect and enhance historic, buildings, structures, districts, and landscapes within the SHA
- Assist local government and interest groups in developing and implementing resource management tools aimed at protecting the character of historic resources.



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- Encourage the use of design guidelines to ensure compatibility with neighboring historic structures and sites.

Education:

- Promote public awareness through the thoughtful interpretation of the themes of the Susquehanna Heritage Area
- Develop a coordinated regional system of gateways, wayfinding and interpretive signage to help visitors experience the Susquehanna Heritage Area

Recreation:

- Create an inventory of natural areas, scenic landscapes, and viewsheds to ensure they are protected
- Establish and promote pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular routes along designated scenic roadways and along corridors linking the historic, recreational, and cultural resources within Broome and Tioga Counties.
- Create enhanced access, usage, and recreational opportunities along the Susquehanna and Chenango Rivers
- Continue improvements and enhancements to multi-use trails, promenades, plazas, parks, streetscapes, and other pedestrian-oriented spaces within the Heritage Area

Revitalization:

- Use heritage resources to promote and stimulate economic activity in village centers and to promote entrepreneurial activity and small business development.
- Strengthen historic community centers through community revitalization initiatives, such as the Main Street program.
- Support local communities in their efforts to promote cultural tourism as a powerful economic catalyst for community improvement and revitalization.

Marketing:

- Develop marketing materials and a cohesive signage and wayfinding program specific to the Heritage Area, including a website that highlights the historic context, interpretive themes, and resources within the Susquehanna Heritage Area.

Partnerships:

- Form partnerships with local, regional, state, and national organizations, agencies, and stakeholders to support the implementation of Management Plan Amendment strategies.



Broome County Hotel-Motel Fund

In addition to plans and studies, the County can actively foster change through investments and initiatives. One of the most potentially creative initiatives is the Broome County Hotel-Motel Fund.

Broome County established a dedicated fund for economic development with a 2% occupancy tax on hotel and motel rooms. Through this tax, the County raises approximately \$500,000 per year. Historically, this 'Hotel-Motel Fund' has been split between two broad categories of programs/projects: 1) Brownfield Cleanup and Redevelopment; 2) Economic Development and Marketing. To guide this program, the County Planning Department has issued a policy and application form.

For brownfield sites, three criteria are used to select sites:

Threat to Public Health and Safety

- Known or suspected contamination with exposure route(s) that threaten onsite employees/visitors or offsite businesses and residents
- Deteriorated building condition including imminent collapse or threat to trespassers

Site Control

- County or BCIDA owned
- Imminent County Foreclosure
- Willing participant/Site Access Agreement
- Court order/Temporary Incident of Ownership

Economic Development Potential

- Acreage, commercial zoning, good highway access, adequate utilities, building size and condition, location within an established Brownfield Opportunity Area
- Where County investment will spur development, redevelopment, or increased purchased price at County disposition.

For economic development projects, Hotel-Motel funds are used as follows:

- Aim economic development activities at 4-5 specific high impact industries
- Include entrepreneurship as an important economic development target
- Engage in activities that nourish a diverse population of young, educated workers



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- Engage in corridor-based land use improvements
- Improve Broome County's land stock by strategically redeveloping brownfield sites and expand infrastructure to support new development in carefully selected locations.
- Transform CBDs into vibrant community cores for business, entertainment, and living.
- Create a single website as the portal for economic development marketing and information
- Organize regularly scheduled marketing missions to regions outside of New York's Southern Tier

And finally, the Hotel-Motel marketing effort has three goals:

- Unite the *Greater Binghamton* community behind a single marketing message
- Build a positive perception of Greater Binghamton as a location for high impact businesses
- Create awareness with site selectors, business owners and entrepreneurs of *Greater Binghamton* as a potential location for relocation and expansion.

The County has in recent years attempted to leverage this small fund with grants and private dollars to maximize its impact. The amount of dollars leveraged is one of the items reviewed by the County in assessing applications by outside agencies for Hotel-Motel funds.

Greater Binghamton Innovation Center

Funded by State and Federal grants, the Greater Binghamton Innovation Center provides affordable office space for entrepreneurs and fledgling companies. Located at 123 Court Street in downtown Binghamton, the Innovation Center has a range of space available from single cubicles up to 688 square foot offices. Tenants receive basic Internet, local phone service, printing/scanning/photocopying and front desk reception services. To date, two businesses have grown up at the incubator and have graduated into privately leased space: White Knight Productions and Virtosphere. White Knight Productions is a video production company, and Virtosphere is the creator of a completely immersive virtual reality system that is used by military trainers and in the entertainment industry. The Innovation Center maintains nearly 100% occupancy.



Capital Improvement Plan

Broome County Government uses a capital improvement plan (CIP) to manage its larger infrastructure projects. The CIP lists all proposed projects over a 5 year time horizon. This includes infrastructure such as bridge work and major new buildings, as well as large equipment purchases ranging from dump trucks and loaders to computer servers and IT hardware. Through the CIP process, these expenditures are appropriately budgeted for. Projects proposed for the CIP are all reviewed and ranked by the Planning Department and then approved by a CIP committee consisting of the County Executive, the Director of Management and Budget, the Commissioner of Planning, the Commissioner of Public Works, the Chairman of the Legislature, the Chairman of the Finance Committee and the Chairman of the Public Works Committee.

Through the CIP process, the Planning Department, and the County in general, can guide development to some degree. For example, when a water line was extended up Airport Road to serve the Greater Binghamton Regional Airport and the Broome Landfill (both County-run facilities) there was the potential to spur development into the Airport Corridor. This would be furthered if the County decides to extend sewer lines to the same facilities. By guiding infrastructure investments through the CIP, the County can foster development in specific areas.

Broome County Land Bank Corporation

The Broome County Land Bank is one of 8 land banks established in New York under recently approved enabling legislation. The mission of the Broome County Land Bank is to foster economic and community development by acquiring, holding, managing, developing and marketing distressed, vacant, abandoned and underutilized properties. The Broome County Land Bank has adopted the following goals:

Goals:

- Stem Disinvestment in the Neighborhoods Surrounding Abandoned Properties
- Protect the Public Health and Safety by Securing and Remediating Abandoned Properties
- Return Vacant, Abandoned, and Tax-Delinquent Properties to Productive Use
- Turn Vacant Spaces into Vibrant Spaces
- Provide a Mechanism for Coordinating Reuse of Flood Impacted Properties, Primarily for Hazard Mitigation Efforts
- Promote Increased Levels of Home Ownership



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The Broome County Land Bank Corporation is expected to begin acquiring properties for redevelopment in late 2013.

Broome County Industrial Development Agency

The Broome County Industrial Development Agency (BCIDA) is a public benefit corporation chartered by the State of New York overseen by a nine member board appointed by the Broome County Legislature. The BCIDA offers companies comprehensive services including needs assessment, site selection, financial incentives, and access to other public-sector programs.

The BCIDA owns and manages a 600 acre corporate park in Conklin, NY, and more than 1.2 million square feet of real estate in the community including the L3 Link Simulation & Training building in Kirkwood, NY, and the BAE Systems building in Johnson City, NY. Over its 35 year history, the BCIDA has facilitated more than 120 projects with a capital investment of more than \$425 million.

The BCIDA is the only Industrial Development Agency operating in Broome County. The County recently created a sister agency to the BCIDA: The Broome County Local Development Corporation. The intent of this county-wide local development corporation is to give the BCIDA an opportunity to fund or participate in projects that would not be eligible for Industrial Development Agency funds.

Because of its extensive resources both in terms of real estate and financial reserves, and its ability to flexibly undertake certain types of projects, the BCIDA is one of the most potent tools available to County decision makers.