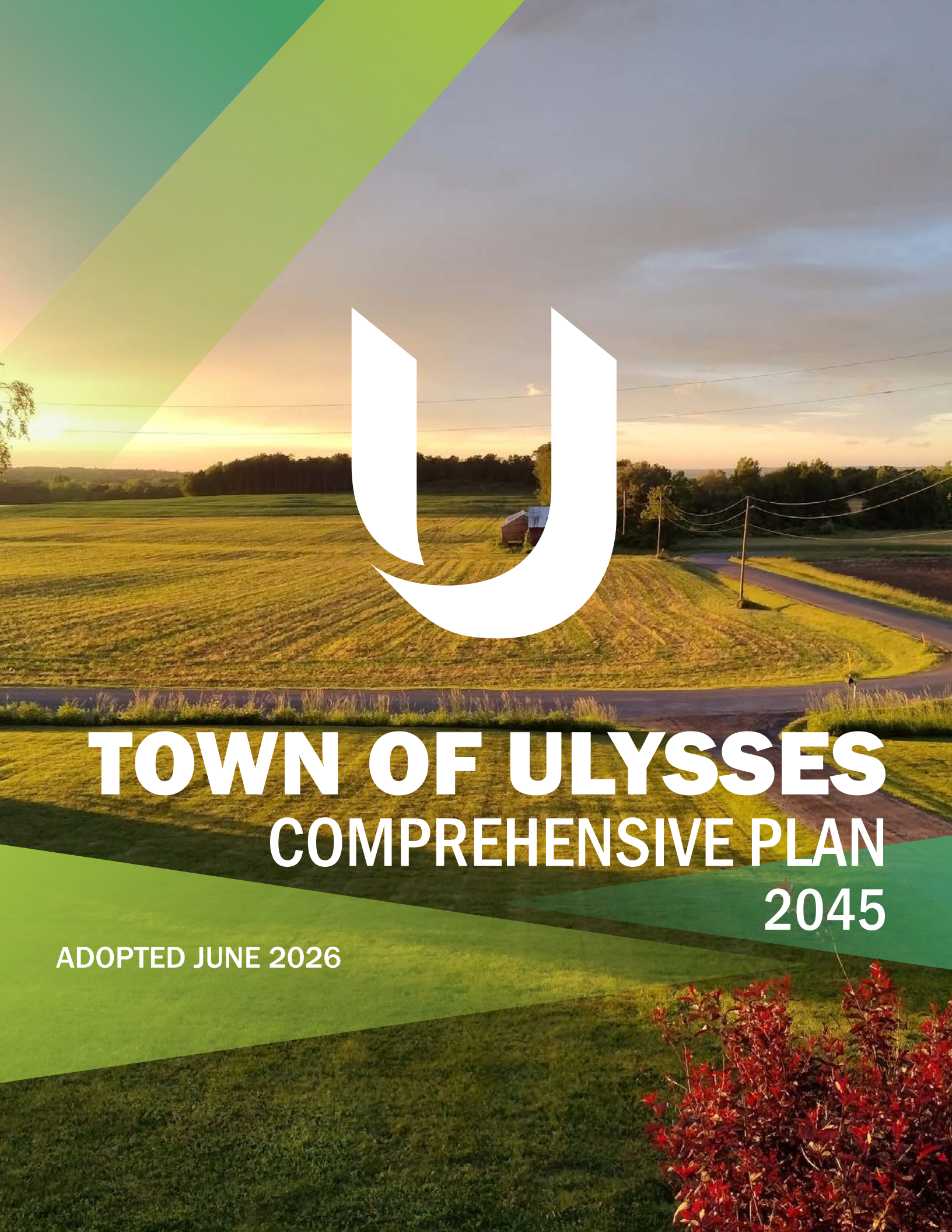


TOWN OF ULYSSES
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
2045

ADOPTED JUNE 2026

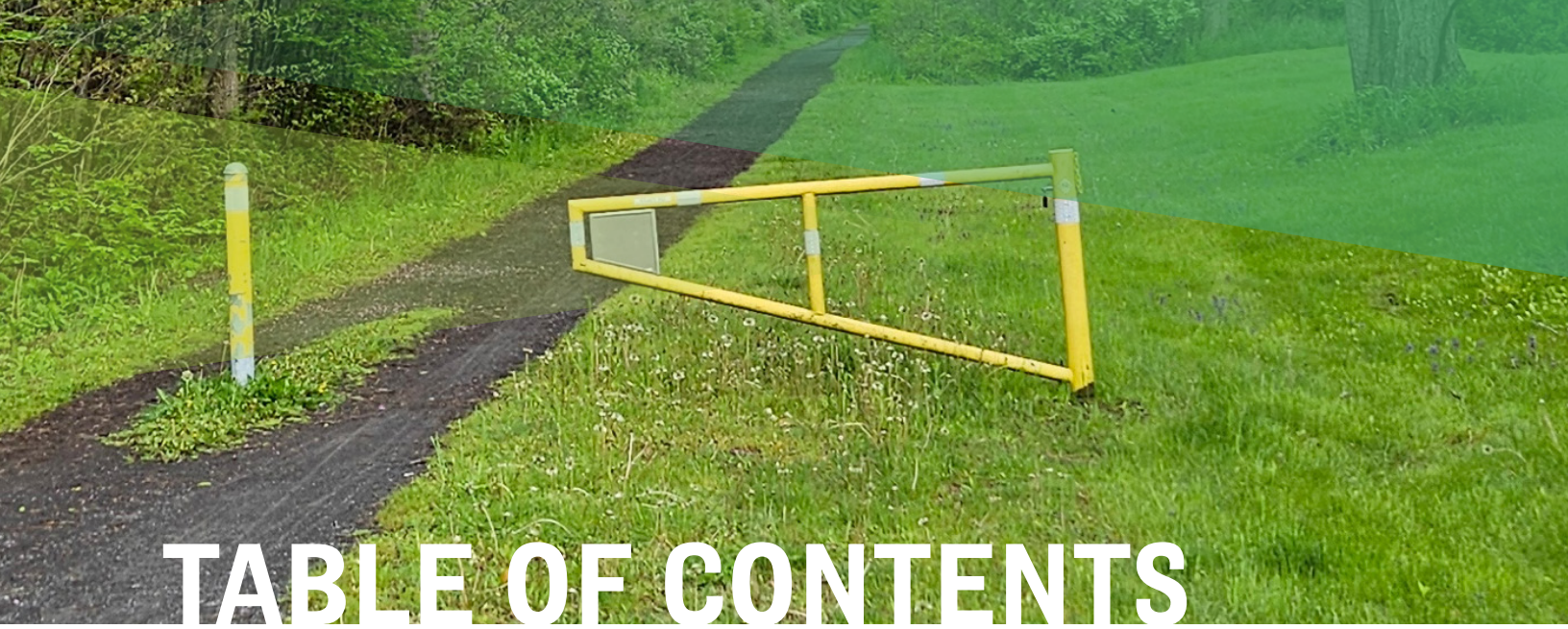


TABLE OF CONTENTS

00 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY . . . 3

01 INTRODUCTION . . . 24

02 LAND USE AND RURAL ISSUES . . . 40

03 CLIMATE CHANGE AND RESILIENCY . . . 76

04 HOUSING . . . 97

05 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT . . . 128

06 TRANSPORTATION . . . 161

07 CAPITAL FACILITIES, SERVICES, AND UTILITIES . . . 192

08 ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES . . . 212

09 COMMUNITY WELL-BEING . . . 232

10 BUILT ENVIRONMENT . . . 249

11 APPENDICES . . . 268

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

A Comprehensive Plan is a document that guides a community's development over the next 15 to 20 years, through a unified vision established by the community. The comprehensive plan acts as a blueprint for how to achieve the community's vision for the future. It is a tool that guides everyday descisions a municipality makes on various planning topics including, but not limited to: land use, transportation, housing, capital facilities, parks, and the environment. The plan uses a long-range lens and incorporates topics that address the physical, social, and economic health of the community. Plan guidance is intentionally general. It provides broad policy direction that is actionable, meaning it can realistically be achieved within the first few years of the plan being adapted. The comprhensive plan is not stagnant; it is a living document that is adaptable to evolving conditions and priorities.

The Ulysses 2045 Comprehensive Plan is a 20-year vision and roadmap for the Town's future. It guides decisions about where to focus new residential, commercial, and employment growth; how to protect rural character and agricultural heritage; where to make capital investments in municipal water, stormwater, parks, and other public facilities and services; how to adapt to a changing climate and preserve natural resources; and how to improve the multimodal transportation system. Ulysses 2045 is the framework for major decisions that support sustainable growth and enhance residents' quality of life. It shapes how Ulysses will look, feel, and operate over time, preparing the Town to face challenges and opportunities today and into the future, and reflecting the collective values and future vision of the community.

Although not mandatory, State law identifies the following topics that may be included: regional needs, demographic trends, environmental and historic resources, utilities and infrastructure, housing and future housing needs, land uses, existing and proposed recreation facilities, locations of commercial and industrial facilities, and economic development strategies. Comprehensive plans are usually developed for a 15 to 20-year horizon with anticipated periodic updates made every 10 years and smaller revisions added as needed. Development regulations, such as zoning, must be reliant on and consistent with a local government's comprehensive plan. An adopted plan is required to qualify for many State and Federal grants and funding programs.

The Town adopted its first Comprehensive Plan in 1999 and adopted and updated it in 2009. This periodic Comprehensive Plan update builds on the 2009 Comprehensive Plan, as many identified trends and issues remain relevant. The updated plan and its goals, objectives, and policies improve the Town's eligibility for funding and grants, and guide decision-making in the face of adversity.

HOW WAS IT DEVELOPED?

Ulysses 2045 was a collaborative effort of elected leadership, a community-based steering committee, Town staff, key stakeholders, and the community at-large. The plan was developed over two and a half years, and included data analysis, a review of existing and prior plans, an extensive public engagement effort, and plan element drafting.

Project phases included:

Phase 1: Plan Scoping – Prior to developing the plan itself, Town leadership and the project steering committee worked to ensure that the final product would serve the evolving needs of the community. The project is supported with funding from New York State's Climate Smart Communities program, so plan scope must be aligned both with the goals of that program and the planning needs of the Town.

Phase 2: Existing Conditions Analysis – The steering committee reviewed a wide-range of demographic and market data, as well as a series of prior and existing plan documents for the Town, County, and Region. These were used to create a foundation from which plan elements would be built.

Phase 3: Public Engagement – While shown here as a standalone phase, public engagement guided all aspects of plan development. The steering committee, who met monthly, ensured that all meetings were open to the public, and that time was dedicated on each agenda to public feedback. Additionally, focus groups, public forums, a community survey, and a project website were all used to provide the public with information, and to receive feedback. The extensive public engagement events and results can be found in the appendix and is also further summarized in the plan.

Phase 4: Initial Plan Drafting – Leveraging the existing conditions information, as well as community feedback, the steering committee developed a draft vision for the plan, as well as goals, objectives, and policy guidance for each plan element.

Phase 5: Plan Review and Finalization – The initial plan elements were reviewed in multiple drafts by the steering committee and public, and final edits were developed according to steering committee prioritization.

Phase 6: Adoption – The plan will be reviewed by the Town Board and County Planning Board, and sent to New York State Agriculture and Markets with a request for discretionary review. An additional public hearing will be held. The State Environmental Quality Review Act – Type 1 review will be conducted prior to adoption.

While not a formal legislative document, as adopted, the plan will serve as a guiding policy framework for future Town activities – from planning and zoning board reviews, to policy and program development, to the Town Budget itself. All facets of Town operations are influenced by plan recommendations.

KEY METRICS

The Ulysses Comprehensive Plan is grounded in actionable data from a wide variety of sources. The steering committee evaluated data sets from local, state, and federal sources to create an accurate picture of current conditions in the Town, as well as challenges and opportunities to realizing the community vision.

Key Points Include:

- Over 40% of Town residents are age 55 or older, while residents under age 25 represent only 25% of the population.
- Around 25% of Town households earn less than $50,000 per year; about 10% of households earn less than $25,000.
- The Town's median household income is just under $79,000; while the average household income is over $100,000 – indicating many households with much higher incomes.
- Over 60% of homes in Ulysses are owner-occupied; with over 50% of homes being constructed more than 50 years ago.
- Nearly 90% of land area in the Town is either agricultural, open space, or comprised only of other natural resources (i.e. open water, wetlands, etc.).

The plan works to identify opportunities to retain our aging population, while reinforcing a quality of life that is attractive to young people and new families. Additionally, recognizing the number of families with financial need, the plan seeks to identify economic opportunities to facilitate meaningful work for all Town residents. A balance is sought to create opportunities for limited and sound growth, without diminishing valuable agricultural assets and natural ecosystems.

III. ULYSSES 2045 VISION

Ulysses is a welcoming and engaged rural community in the Finger Lakes region. We care about our environment, quality of life, and the well-being of our residents. Our commitment to sustainable and regenerative practices reflects our desire to safeguard our natural resources, agricultural land, and beautiful lakeshore for future generations. We value our farmers and agricultural assets. We prioritize connecting our residents to each other and our community. We support creating welcoming community spaces where people of all ages and abilities can come together and feel a sense of belonging. We are committed to sustainable development that encourages growth yet protects our cherished small-town character and natural resources. We recognize the need for diverse housing options so that everyone can find a place to call home and remain a part of our community for years to come. We are dedicated to fostering economic development initiatives that uplift local businesses, expand services, and create job opportunities that equitably meet the needs of our community. We are proactive in climate change preparedness and take pride in being a resilient community that encourages sustainable practices to protect the environment.

LAND USE AND RURAL ISSUES

As the Town of Ulysses evolves, land use throughout the community must be approached with intentional thought and strategy. The land use recommendations in this document are intended to serve as a conceptual guide for realizing the Town's broad land-use priorities. This chapter, just like this document, is not intended to remain static for the next 20 years. Rather, this chapter weaves the vision and values of the community into land use recommendations that remain at a conceptual level to guide longer-term development decisions amidst changing conditions to allow for flexibility regarding zoning boundaries, permitted uses, dimensions and performance standards, and form and design guidelines. The Town's future land use character areas are described and shown on the following page.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goals

- Facilitate and encourage land use within the Town that furthers the Town's goals as established in this Comprehensive Plan.
- Preserve farmland now and for future generations.
- The Ulysses community will be a responsible steward of rural land.

Objectives

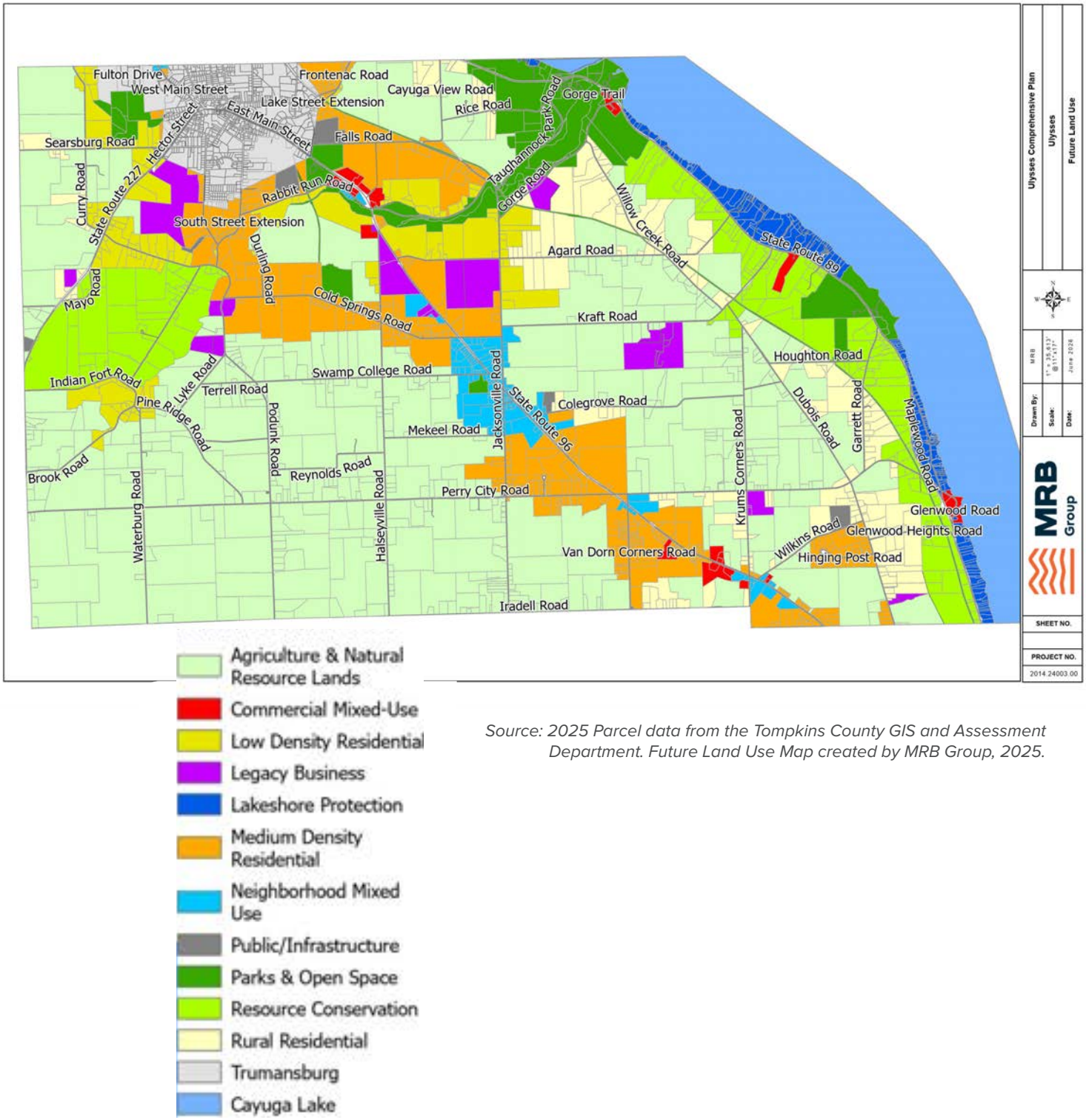
- Identify and pursue tools to encourage appropriate land uses.
- Assist farmers in protecting farmaland and keeping it active through financial programs.
- Provide resources to farmers that keep farmland active and productive.
- Actively support farmland through land use planning, education, and advocacy.

FUTURE LAND USE

Future Land Use Character Area Description:

- Parks and Open Space land use focuses on the conservation and enhancement of open, natural, and improved areas.
- Lakeshore Protection designation is designated to protect the defining natural features of the Town, such as Cayuga Lake, and scenic viewsheds along the Cayuga Lake Scenic Byway.
- Resource Conservation designation contains an environmentally sensitive landscape (steep slopes, highly erodible soils, etc), as a result, development should not jeopardize the natural environment.
- Agricultural and Natural Resources land use provides for, protects, and conserves agricultural and forest resource lands.
- Rural Residential land use accommodates single detached residential development primarily on, or adjacent to, lots less than seven acres in area and not in active agricultural use.
- Low-Density Residential land use focuses on housing and complementary uses at a low-density residential scale, predominately reflecting existing residential uses in areas of the Town without existing public water and/or sewer facilities, and which are not anticipated to have these services during the term of the plan.
- Medium Density residential land use designation accommodates housing at a medium density scale currently served, or anticipated to be served by, public water and/or sewer facilities.
- The Neighborhood Mixed-Use designation accommodates a denser residential community and a range of allowable non-residential uses to support those communities.
- The Legacy Business character area is intended to recognize and support long-standing, locally owned commercial establishments that do not align with the permitted uses of any existing character area, land use, or existing development regulations.
- Commercial Mixed-Use land use is established primarily for areas that have historically been developed with non-residential uses outside of hamlets.
- Public Institutional is established primarily for areas developed with public and quasi-public land uses, e.g., schools, government buildings, and churches.

Figure LR-3



Source: 2025 Parcel data from the Tompkins County GIS and Assessment Department. Future Land Use Map created by MRB Group, 2025.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND RESILIENCY

The Climate Change & Resiliency Element is a new chapter for the Town's Comprehensive Plan intended to address climate change preparedness and adaptation. Climate change refers to long-term shifts in regional temperature and weather patterns. While these can be naturally occurring, human activities associated with energy and land use can increase greenhouse gas emissions. These human activities have primarily driven changes over the past 200 years.

Consequences of climate change, particularly relevant to Ulysses, include increased droughts, fires, flooding, and catastrophic storms. These severe events can affect our health, agricultural productivity, housing, and safety.

This element examines the current and projected impacts of climate change and offers tools to help with decision making for adapting to climate change. One particular tool of importance, such as a Climate Action Plan, will help guide Town decisions. The Plan will serve as a framework for measuring, planning, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Goals and Objectives

Goals

- Collaborate with local and regional partners to implement climate change prepardness and adptation efforts.
- Increase climate change adaptation, mitigation, and preparedness efforts and public awareness.
- Reduce adverse impacts to natural resources and ecosystems caused by climate variability.
- Identify vulnerabilities and impacts of climate change and extreme weather and ways to reduce adverse impacts.

Objectives

- Establish and strengthen connections with local and regional partners and discuss opportunities for collaboration that address climate change challenges and resiliency initiatives. Work with Town leadership, key stakeholders, and residents to explore options for expanding water access.
- Actively communicate with the public on climate change prepardness intiatives that the Town is pursuing at the local and regional scale.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND RESILIENCY, *continued*

Objectives, *continued*

- Identify opportunities to mitigate adverse impacts to the natural environment.
- Explore opportunities for incorporating sustainable development practices, recycling, and reuse strategies to improve community resiliency.
- Protect water quality and reduce impacts of flooding throughout Ulysses.
- Inventory and assess vulnerabilities and other impacts related to climate change and extreme weather. Develop adaptation strategies and work with partners on implementation.

HOUSING

The Housing Element is a new chapter for the Town's Comprehensive Plan. The Town has expressed the desire to become more environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable. To help achieve that vision, the Town must consider the influence that housing may have on overall sustainability. Housing units, depending on their various built characteristics, can have different energy use impacts and may encourage more environmentally friendly transportation choices. The Town's housing stock can also improve economic sustainability by creating or expanding affordable housing options, which encourages a larger labor pool and employers to invest in the community. Housing can also create social sustainability by integrating a diverse population or providing housing that ensures vulnerable populations have access to safe, healthy, and affordable living conditions. During the community survey, the Town discovered dissastifaction with the range of housing options available in Ulysses.

Goals and Objectives

Goals

- Provide sufficient, sustainable housing opportunities to meet the needs of present and future residents of Ulysses that are safe, environmentally friendly, accessible, attractive, and affordable for all income levels.

Objectives

- Strive to meet current and projected regional housing needs of all economic and demographic groups by increasing Ulysses' housing supply.
- Provide fair and equal access to housing for all people in Ulysses.
- Achieve a mix of housing types that provide opportunity and choice in Ulysses for people of various ages, races, ethnicities, and cultural backgrounds and for a variety of household sizes, types, and incomes.
- Encourage the creation of senior housing.
- Achieve healthy, safe, and environmentally sustainable housing that is adaptable to changing demographic conditions.
- Work to make it possible for households of all income levels to live affordably in Ulysses, and reduce over time the unmet housing needs of lower-income households in Town.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic development helps a community identify opportunities for future growth and prosperity by examining the current economic conditions and creating a roadmap towards a successful future. Economic development can be a complex process that touches many aspects of a community, including workforce development, housing, transportation, land use, quality of life, marketing, branding, and more. Due to the complex nature of economic development, some goals and objectives within this chapter will be intertwined with goals in other chapters, recognizing that successful economic development requires collaboration with other organizations and alignment with broader goals and priorities.

Goals and Objectives

Goals

- The Town will promote economic diversity in order to enhance the economic health of the community.
- The Town will encourage redevelopment and improvements to promote economic development and improve the quality and character of its neighborhoods.
- Encourage employers to make use of the local workforce and increase opportunities for citizens to have access to local employment.
- The Town will strive to meet the land use needs, utility, and transportation requirements to encourage businesses to locate and grow in Ulysses.

Objectives

- Identify opportunities for economic growth and diversification based on local and regional opportunities.
- Create opportunities for diversification within exisiting industries and promote business retention and expansion.
- Encourage new development and redevelopment to create more opportunities for business and economic growth.
- Maintain and enhance neighborhoods through infrastructure and building improvements, historic preservation, and the creation of new housing and amenities.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, *continued*

Objectives

- Create more opportunities for employers in the Town of Ulysses to engage the local workforce.
- Create more opportunities for workers within the Town of Ulysses to gain the skills necessary to make them attractive to local employers.
- Make the necessary utility and infrastructure improvements to ensure the Town can grow its population and business community sustainably.

TRANSPORTATION

The Transportation Element is a new chapter for the Town's Comprehensive Plan intended to address issues related to the transport of people and material goods. It considers the factors that influence or are influenced by transportation choices and evaluates and suggest changes to the systems of transportation in the Town to better align the transportation system with the Town goals. This element broadly considers the streets, sidewalks, transit, and regional trails within and reasonably near the Town to evaluate how to improve them over the planning horizon.

Goals and Objectives

Goals

- Create a multitude of safe and efficient transportation options throughout the Town for all users and reduce the environmental impacts of the transportation sector.
- Reduce negative transportation externalities and environmental impacts.
- Improve transportation safety for road users throughout Ulysses.

Objectives

- Support and provide additional opportunities for people to utilize alternative modes of transportation, including public transit, bicycles, and walking.
- Facilitate shifts in transportation choice to low impact transportation modes and electric vehicles, and facilitate the reduction in vehicle miles traveled.
- Eliminate severe and fatal collisions in the Town including with vulnerable road users like pedestrians and cyclists.

CAPITAL FACILITIES, SERVICES, AND UTILITIES

The Capital Facilities Element is a new chapter for the Town's Comprehensive Plan focusing on future opportunities to improve capital facilities, services, and utilities in the Town of Ulysses. This includes emergency services, public buildings, educational institutions, recreational facilities, water and sewer infrastructure, energy, and future capital improvement needs. In this element, challenges and opportunities that pertain to access and availability of utilities, emergency services, parks and recreational spaces, and waste management are identified.

Goals and Objectives

Goals

- Explore options to make water in the Town more accessible, affordable, and safe.
- Improve roadways to improve transportation and safety in the Town.
- Maintain the Town of Ulysses' high quality of life through improved capital facilities, utilities, and services.

Objectives

- Work with Town leadership, key stakeholders, and residents to explore options for expanding municipal water services in areas of the Town that are appropriate for increased residenential or business development. Particular emphasis should be in areas where existing Town-owned or Village-owned infrastructure is available and where replacements, extensions, and corrections would improve infrastructure systems and their users.
- Explore options for expanding sewer and wastewater services in the Town.
- Make roadway repairs and improvements to make traveling in the Town safer for drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians.
- Preserve the Town's treasured characteristics by making well considered investments and improvements to services that will enhance quality of life, while protecting valued natural resources.
- Enhance local healthcare, emergency services, and fire department services.

ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES

The Environment and Natural Resources Element focuses on the natural features that define Ulysses. These natural features contribute to the quality of life and scenic beauty that is cherished by the community. The abundance of open fields, woodlands, wetlands, waterfalls, agricultural fields, gorges, and lakeshore are important natural resources that provide habitats for plants and wildlife. The policies contained in this element concern broad choices the Town might make about where and how to protect natural resources and mitigate adverse impacts to them. Many of these approaches involve collaboration with local, regional, state, and federal entities.

Goals and Objectives

Goals

- Continue to proactively preserve and protect the natural and environmental resources in Ulysses.
- Protect water resources in the Town of Ulysses.
- Promote natural resources within the Town of Ulysses.

Objectives

- Work with local and regional entities to protect natural and environmental resources.
- Develop strategies and engage in planning efforts to protect water resources and improve water quality.
- Promote and support educational opportunities to connect the public with natural resources within Ulysses.

COMMUNITY WELL-BEING

The Community Well-Being Element is focused on providing safe, healthy, and enjoyable ways for residents of Ulysses to enjoy its natural, cultural, and historic resources. Additionally, it's focused on identifying appropriate opportunities for all age groups to actively participate in the local community. The section includes an assessment of how various factors can impact someone's overall well-being. Access to services, feeling a sense of belonging, and having access to social and recreational amenities can improve the overall well-being of individuals. In this element, challenges that may negatively impact an individual's well-being are identified. Recommendations to address these challenges involve a collaborative approach among local organizations, county resources, and the community.

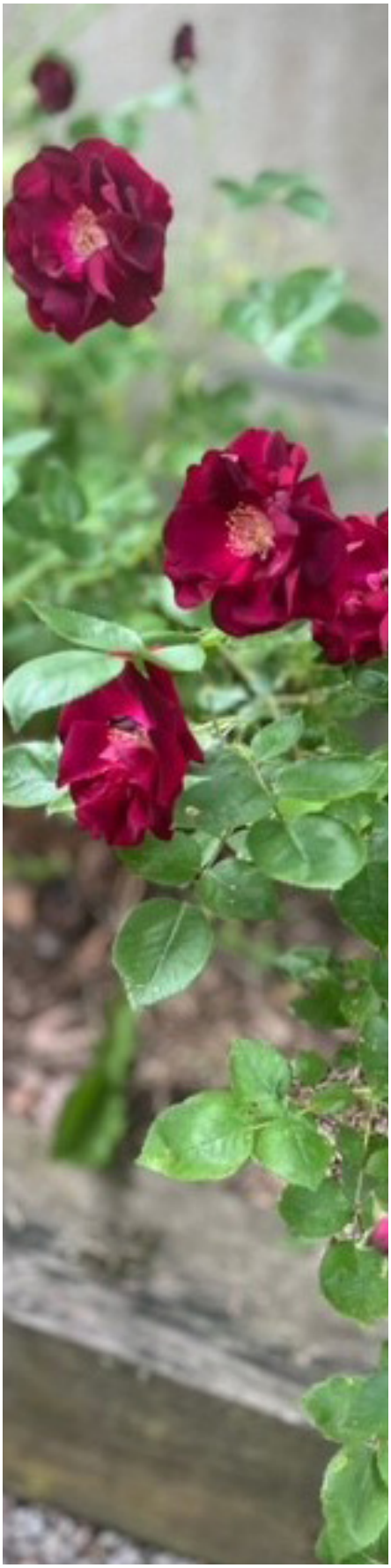
Goals and Objectives

Goals

- Improve park and recreational facilities for the continued use and enjoyment of residents and visitors of the Town of Ulysses
- Expand multi-modal transportation options to support safe traveling for all.
- Improve access to fresh food throughout Ulysses.
- Promote a sense of community.
- Create a healthy long-living community.

Objectives

- Identify opportunities to expand parks, recreation facilities, and community spaces.
- Support expanded public transportation options and multi-modal traveling options for residents.
- Identify opportunities to expand access to fresh food for residents.
- Promote a welcoming and inclusive community that residents feel connected to.
- Integrate healthy living principles into Ulysses.



BUILT ENVIRONMENT

This element is intended to address the three-dimensional, built environment. It examines the general image of the community; the character of its neighborhoods; the quality of buildings, roads, and public spaces; and its historical attributes.

Goals and Objectives

Goals

- Collaborate with local and regional partners to implement historic preservation efforts.
- Promote cultural and historical resources within the Town.
- Incorporate hazard mitigation and climate resiliency methods into historic preservation and built environment improvement efforts.
- Explore funding opportunities for rehabilitation and preservation efforts.
- Maintain and enhance Ulysses' unique character and sense of place, including its natural setting, history, human-scaled development, and community identity as the Town grows.
- Enhance the physical character and distinctive qualities of neighborhood communities throughout the Town.

Objectives

- Establish and strengthen connections with local and regional partners and discuss opportunities for collaboration.
- Enhance, preserve, and promote the historic character and historic communities of Ulysses.
- Explore opportunities for incorporating landscaping green infrastructure techniques into historic preservation and built environment initiatives.
- Assist residential and commercial property owners seeking grant funding for rehabilitation projects.
- Create a positive, pleasant impression for residents and visitors with attractive entryways, focal points, and dramatic viewpoints.
- Ensure that development, particularly commercial and multi-family development, has a high quality of design with respect to elements such as public spaces, pedestrian amenities, landscaping, building forms, and materials.

BUILT ENVIRONMENT, *continued*

Objectives, *continued*

- Encourage redevelopment and infill in appropriate future land use character areas that will incorporate a mix of uses, support pedestrian activity and transit services, support appropriately scaled economic activity, and exhibit a distinctive design character. Redevelopment should support appropriately scaled economic activity in various locations throughout Town.
- Enhance the visual appearance of all new developments and for the Town as a whole.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A special thank you to the multiple individuals that have contributed time and effort to the development of the Ulysses 2045 Comprehensive Plan.

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Tai Basilius (2023 – 2026)
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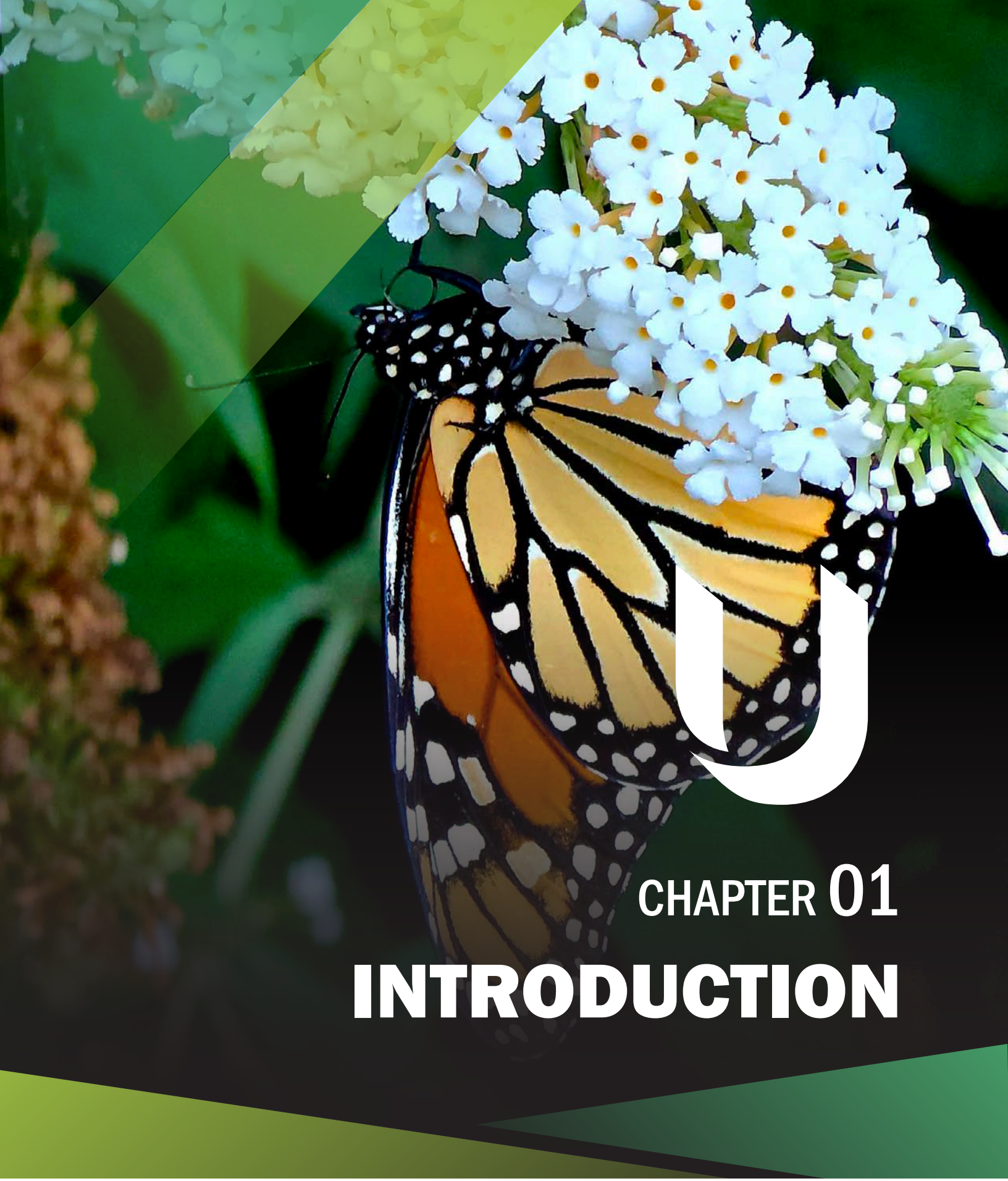
Mark Washburn, *Code Enforcement Officer*
Michelle Wright, *Second Deputy Supervisor (2023 – 2024)*

A special thank you is further extended to all of the community members who participated in the planning process.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The Town of Ulysses is located on the traditional homelands of the Gayogo̱hó:nǫʾ (the Cayuga Nation). The Gayogo̱hó:nǫʾ are members of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, an alliance of six sovereign nations with a historic and contemporary presence on this land. The confederacy precedes the establishment of Ulysses, New York state and the United States of America. We acknowledge the painful history of Gayogo̱hó:nǫʾ dispossession, and honor the ongoing connection of Gayogo̱hó:nǫʾ people, past and present, to these lands and waters.



CHAPTER 01

INTRODUCTION

I. THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

A **20-year vision and roadmap** for Ulysses' future.

The Ulysses 2045 Comprehensive Plan is a 20-year vision and roadmap for Ulysses' future. The Comprehensive Plan guides Town decisions on where to focus new residential, commercial, and employment growth; how to best maintain the Town's rural character and agricultural heritage; where to make capital investments such as municipal water, stormwater management, parks, and other public facilities and services; how to adapt to a changing climate and preserve natural resources; and how to improve the multimodal transportation system. Ulysses 2045 is the framework for many of Ulysses' big-picture decisions on how to sustainably grow and improve the quality of life of its residents. It shapes how Ulysses will look, feel, and operate over time, and prepares the Town to face challenges and opportunities today and into the future, reflecting the collective values and future vision of the community.

Under Section 272-A of New York State's Town Law, (Consolidated Laws of New York Chapter 62 Article 16), towns are authorized to create and adopt comprehensive plans. Comprehensive plans are not laws, but rather a compilation of materials that identify goals, objectives, and policies that will facilitate the community's vision of itself in the future. The Town's authority to develop this long-range plan represents an important opportunity to guide growth and promote the health, safety, and general welfare of its residents, while also considering the broader needs of the surrounding region.

While not required, State law identifies the following topics that may be included: regional needs, demographic trends, environmental and historic resources, utilities and infrastructure, housing and future housing needs, land uses, existing and proposed recreation facilities, locations of commercial and industrial facilities, and economic development strategies. Comprehensive plans are usually developed for a 15 to 20-year horizon with anticipated periodic updates made every 10 years. Less extensive revisions and updates may, and should, be incorporated into the comprehensive plan as needed. Development regulations, such as zoning, must be reliant on and consistent with a local government's comprehensive plan, and in order to be eligible for numerous grants and loans from certain state infrastructure programs, comprehensive plans are required.

The Town adopted its first Comprehensive Plan in 1999 and adopted an updated Plan in 2009. This Comprehensive Plan periodic update builds on the previously adopted 2009 Comprehensive Plan, as many identified trends and issues remain relevant. The updated plan and its respective goals, objectives, and policies further improve the Town's access to state funding and grants and help guide decision-making in the face of future adversity.

Newer concerns have arisen since the last plan, such as the impacts of climate change on the community. In 2022 the Town, a certified Bronze Climate Smart Community, was awarded funding by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation's Climate Smart Communities Program to update its 2009 Comprehensive Plan. The intent of this update was to incorporate sustainability elements throughout to better plan for imminent challenges associated with climate change and to equitably meet the energy efficiency, affordability, and greenhouse gas reduction goals of the Town and New York State. This updated Plan provides guidance and context essential to building local capacity and to guide land use planning, policies, and investment to address critical climate disruption challenges.

A. HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

The Ulysses 2045 Comprehensive Plan guides the Town's development over about a twenty-year planning period and serves as a tool to assist the Town Board, Planning Board, Town staff, and others involved in making public infrastructure and land use decisions. It's a blueprint for the future character of the Town. It guides decisions on land use, transportation, housing, capital facilities, economic development, parks, and the natural and built environment. It identifies potential opportunities for funding and establishes the basis for zoning and development regulations, and how the Town interprets and administers them.

POLICIES OBJECTIVES GOALS

The Comprehensive Plan starts with this introduction, explaining the purpose of this plan, states the overall vision for each element, summarizes the planning framework and process, and provides a broad demographic summary. The rest of the document is organized into elements or chapters.

There are nine elements: Land Use, Housing, Economic Development, Transportation, Capital Facilities and Utilities, Environment and Natural Resources, Climate Change and Resiliency, Community Well-Being, and Built Environment.

Goals, objectives, and policies provide the means for Ulysses to grow and prosper, and maintain the unique character of the Town for current and future generations. Each Comprehensive Plan element contains goals, objectives, and policies that are numbered and labeled according to its respective element. Goals, objectives, and policies are defined as follows:

Goals are desired outcomes or intended achievements.

Objectives are discrete pieces of work that the Town will take on to implement the Comprehensive Plan, usually with the intent to be completed within a designated time frame.

Policies establish guiding actions and commitment to these goals, provide the framework for future decision making, and authorize the regulations to implement them.

B. USE OF POLICIES IN ALL ELEMENTS OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Each element of the Comprehensive Plan includes objectives and policies that the Town should consider to realize the community's vision and goals, as outlined in the plan. It is not possible to implement all policies called for by the Comprehensive Plan simultaneously. Therefore, the Town government collectively, which includes the Town board, administration, individual departments, boards, and committees, will use the objectives and policies in the plan to guide work programs, budgets, capital improvement programs, and action programs. Over time, the Comprehensive Plan objectives and policies will be implemented as priorities dictate and resources allow. Occasionally, there will be a need to re-evaluate and amend objectives and policies as stated in the Comprehensive Plan as the community's priorities and values change.

The Town shall maintain discretion in determining how the policies of the Comprehensive Plan are to be interpreted and implemented. The Comprehensive Plan shall not commit the Town to actions that are not fiscally sustainable over time.

C. ELEMENT SUMMARIES

All elements of the Comprehensive Plan are interrelated. No one element should be reviewed in isolation. As a result, there are goals, objectives, and policies that overlap between the elements described below and is reflected in detail in Appendix A.

- **The Land Use and Rural Issues** section provides a description of the overall development pattern and character of the area to inform and guide future investment and development. The Town is comprised of mostly agricultural and rural or low-density residential development. The Comprehensive Plan provides guidance for potential residential growth located along existing or planned municipal water infrastructure, and a few targeted areas of compact mixed-use and commercial development, which are primarily on major corridors with key transportation connections.

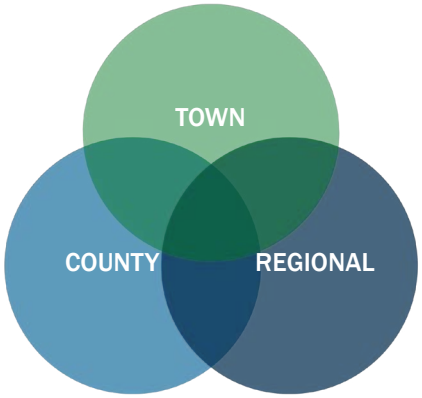
- **Housing** addresses the types of homes, the variety of homes that are accessible to individuals and families, and promotes the addition of dwellings that are safe and healthy, affordable, and resource efficient.
- **Economic Development** explains opportunities to grow and enhance local business and to sustainably plan and build upon future potential employment options.
- **Transportation** addresses future desires of the regional transportation system through respective goals, objectives, and policies. The Comprehensive Plan envisions creating safe and healthy connections for people to work, live, and play. In order to achieve this vision, the plan gives insights into current conditions relating to mobility, accessibility to transit, health and environmental impacts, and regulatory impacts. The plan also considers the expanding transportation options being brought by technological innovation and seeks to enhance opportunities for residents and visitors to be less dependent on personal automobiles.

- **Capital Facilities, Services, and Utilities** describes the infrastructure needed to support current and future development, essential public facilities, economic development, facilities management, and inventory of facilities. It also helps guide future capital projects and financing strategies.
- **Environment and Natural Resources** addresses the natural environment and resources in the Town, including streams, wetlands, soil maps, geologically hazardous areas/steep slopes, open space, and Cayuga Lake.
- **Climate Change and Resiliency** addresses and analyzes ways to reduce overall greenhouse gas emissions and enhance resiliency to, and avoid the adverse impacts of, climate change, including ways to reduce localized greenhouse gas emissions and avoid creating or worsening localized climate impacts to vulnerable populations and overburdened communities.
- **Community Well-Being** examines existing social and recreational programs and describes the importance of having a safe and healthy place to enhance the well-being of residents to meet essential human needs.

- **Built Environment** describes the integration of building and site design to promote human and environmental health and safety that fits into the community. It establishes links between building and site design, streets and the public realm; historic and cultural resources and scenic viewshed preservation; integration of nature into the built environment; and energy and resource efficient neighborhoods and buildings.

II. PLANNING BACKGROUND

A. TOWN, COUNTY, AND REGIONAL PLANS



The following adopted plans provide specific details and actions for many of the policy areas addressed in the Comprehensive Plan. Each has its own set of goals, objectives, policies, and implementable elements. These plans are valued partners in the growth and development of the Town and are referenced here to avoid duplicating information in each applicable element of the Comprehensive Plan.

- 2022 Tompkins County Resiliency and Recovery Plan
- 2018 Town of Ulysses Natural Resource Inventory
- 2009 Town of Ulysses Comprehensive Plan
- 2013 Town of Ulysses Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan
- 2008 Route 96 Corridor Management Study
- 2001 Cayuga Lake Scenic Byway Corridor Management Study
- 2015 Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan (five year review update in 2019).

There are additional plans that impact the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan maintained by other agencies, including Tompkins County, the Village of Trumansburg, New York State Parks and Historic Preservation, the Trumansburg Central School District, and the Ithaca City School District.

B. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

An active community involvement program is an essential part of the development of the Comprehensive Plan. Community outreach began with the development and guidance of the Public Participation Plan. The Town engaged with the community to talk with residents and hear firsthand the impacts of life in Ulysses for them, their families, and their neighbors.

Understanding our community is understanding where people live, work, and go to school,

Understanding our community is understanding where people live, work, and go to school, and learning what the public opinions are on current and future Town developments. This was accomplished by meeting with a host of people at numerous events and public meetings including, five public hearings, four focus groups, and three open house events since September 2024. In 2024-2025, the committee was also present at the Village of Trumansburg's Winterfest events held each December, and tabled at a Trumansburg Farmers Market event.

During various community events, the committee shared updates about the plan and provided the opportunity for the public to engage with the committee in an informal setting Specifically, the first open house that had a turnout of 70 people allowed the community to engage in a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats analysis for each planning element, while the second and third open houses allowed the community to provide feedback on the goals and objectives created for the plan. The second open house had 8 participants, and the third open house had 22 participants. Specific community members were identified

to participate in focus groups that discussed each planning element's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. 41 community members participated in the focus groups. As of December 2025, there were 13 interested community members who provided feedback on the draft chapters of the plan during the Committee's public hearings.

The steering committee also developed a survey to capture a large population of the community that may not have the ability to engage in the events described above. The comprehensive plan committee collected 385 survey responses. The survey respondent age-breakdown closely reflected the demographic distribution of the Town's population. The survey link was widely distributed between December 2024 and March 2025 via mailings, posters, community events, and the Town's newsletter, social media, and website.

The survey results, open house feedback, focus groups, and public hearing comments are provided in Appendix B.

III. ULYSSES 2045 VISION

Ulysses is a welcoming and engaged rural community in the Finger Lakes region. We care about our environment, quality of life, and the well-being of our residents. Our commitment to sustainable and regenerative practices reflects our desire to safeguard our natural resources, agricultural land, and beautiful lakeshore for future generations. We value our farmers and agricultural assets. We prioritize connecting our residents to each other and our community. We support creating welcoming community spaces where people of all ages and abilities can come together and feel a sense of belonging. We are committed to sustainable development that encourages growth yet protects our cherished small-town character and natural resources. We recognize the need for diverse housing options so that everyone can find a place to call home and remain a part of our community for years to come. We are dedicated to fostering economic development initiatives that uplift local businesses, expand services, and create job opportunities that equitably meet the needs of our community. We are proactive in climate change preparedness and take pride in being a resilient community that encourages sustainable practices to protect the environment.

IV. DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

Demographics provides the Town with an understanding of community characteristics now and in the future. Demographic data can help the Town properly plan for present and future needs relating to various planning elements addressed in this document, such as parks and recreation, housing, infrastructure, and services. The demographics provided in this chapter summarizes the more detailed analysis provided in the Housing and Economic Development Chapters. Please note, Town US Census data does not include the Village. Village data is explicitly called out when applicable.

Population

Since 2010, the population of the Town has remained relatively stable, with only a small decrease (.01%). Tompkins County saw a significant increase in population over the same period, growing by 4,010 individuals or 3.9%. The Southern Tier Region, on the other hand, saw a significant population decline, with a loss of 29,925 individuals or 4.5% of its total population. Over the next five years, the population in each geography is expected to decline, with the largest percentage loss in the Region, followed by the Town, then the County.

Though the population for the Town saw slight decreases since 2010, the number of households has increased by a greater amount, in part due to shrinking household sizes. The number of households in the Region has remained relatively stable, with only a small increase. Tompkins County saw significant increases in the number of households since 2010, adding 4,158 new households for a change of 10.7%.

Table IN-1

Demographic Fundamentals				
POPULATION				
	2010	2024	Change	% Change
Town of Ulysses	4900	4894	-6	0%
Tompkins County	101564	105574	4010	4%
Southern Tier Region	657909	627984	-29925	-5%
PROJECTED POPULATION				
	2024	2029	Change	% Change
Town of Ulysses	4894	4830	-64	-1%
Tompkins County	105574	105463	-111	0%
Southern Tier Region	627984	616581	-11403	-2%

Source: Esri forecasts for 2024 and 2029. U.S. Census Bureau 2000 and 2010 decennial Census data.

Over the next five years, the number of households is expected to remain relatively stable or increase slightly.

Racial Composition

The majority of the Town is White (86.4%). The second largest racial group is two or more races (8.9%), followed by Hispanics (3.8%). Shares of each racial group follow the same ranking in the County and Region, though percentage amounts differ, with the County being the most racially diverse geography.

Table IN-2

Racial Composition 2024			
	Town of Ulysses	**Tompkins County**	**Southern Tier Region**
White Alone	86%	73%	83%
Black Alone	2%	5%	4%
American Indian Alone	0%	0%	0%
Asian Alone	1%	11%	4%
Pacific Islander Alone	0%	0%	0%
Some Other Race Alone	1%	3%	2%
Two or More Races	9%	9%	7%
Hispanic Origin	4%	7%	5%
Diversity Index	30	51.7	36.5

Source: Esri forecasts for 2024. U.S. Census Bureau 2000 and 2010 decennial Census data.

Age Distribution

The largest share of the Town's population, **41.4% is over the age of 55, which is the highest of any geography. Similarly, the Town has the smallest proportion of residents aged 25 and younger,** at 24.7% compared to 39.6% in the County and 31% in the Region. Each geography has a similar proportion of the population aged 25 to 55, ranging from 34% to 34.5%.

The median age in the Town is 47.8, significantly higher than both the County and the Region median ages of 31.8 and 41, respectively.

Table IN-3

Age Distribution 2024			
	Town of Ulysses	Tompkins County	Southern Tier Region
0 - 4	4%	4%	5%
5 - 9	5%	4%	5%
10 - 14	6%	4%	5%
15 - 24	10%	28%	16%
25 - 34	10%	15%	12%
35 - 44	13%	10%	11%
45 - 54	12%	9%	11%
55 - 64	15%	10%	13%
65 - 74	15%	9%	12%
75 - 84	*9%*	*5%*	*7%*
85+	*3%*	*2%*	*3%*

Source: Esri forecasts for 2024. U.S. Census Bureau 2000 and 2010 decennial Census data.

Household Income

Median household income in the Town is $76,879 and is anticipated to increase by 9.1% to $83,867 in 2029. The Town's median household income is just below that of the County, which is $77,610. The Region's median household income is the lowest compared to Tompkins County and the Town at $63,557, but is expected to increase the most, both by dollar and percent change. The average household income in the Town is $100,921, which is significantly higher than the median household income.

Table IN-4

Demographic Fundamentals				
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME				
	2024	**2029**	**Change**	**% Change**
Town of Ulysses	$76,879	$83,867	$6,988	9.1%
Tompkins County	$77,610	$86,334	$8,724	11.2%
Southern Tier Region	$63,557	$72,528	$8,971	14.1%
AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD INCOME				
	2024	**2029**	**Change**	**% Change**
Town of Ulysses	$100,921	$117,003	$16,082	15.9%
Tompkins County	$107,905	$123,544	$15,639	14.5%
Southern Tier Region	$89,028	$101,949	$12,921	14.5%

Source:

Esri forecasts for 2024 and 2029. U.S. Census Bureau 2000 and 2010 decennial Census data.

10.2% of Ulysses households earn $25,000 or less annually and about a quarter earn under $50,000. In the County and Region, 19.2% of households earn below $25,000. Just over a third (34%) of the Town's households make $100,000 or more each year. The County has a slightly higher percentage of households earning $100,000 or more each year at 38.4%, and the Region has the lowest percentage at 30.3%.

Table IN-5

Household Income Distribution 2024			
	Town of Ulysses	Tompkins County	Southern Tier Region
<$15,000	5%	13%	11%
$15,000 - $24,999	5%	6%	8%
$25,000 - $34,999	3%	4%	7%
$35,000 - $49,999	12%	9%	12%
$50,000 - $74,999	22%	16%	18%
$75,000 - $99,999	18%	13%	13%
$100,000 - $149,999	19%	19%	17%
$150,000 - $199,999	6%	7%	7%
$200,000+	8%	12%	7%

Source: Esri forecasts for 2024. U.S. Census Bureau 2000 and 2010 decennial Census data.

Employment

The figure below shows the industry sector composition of Tompkins County. Overall, the County added 722 jobs since 2010, for a 1% increase.

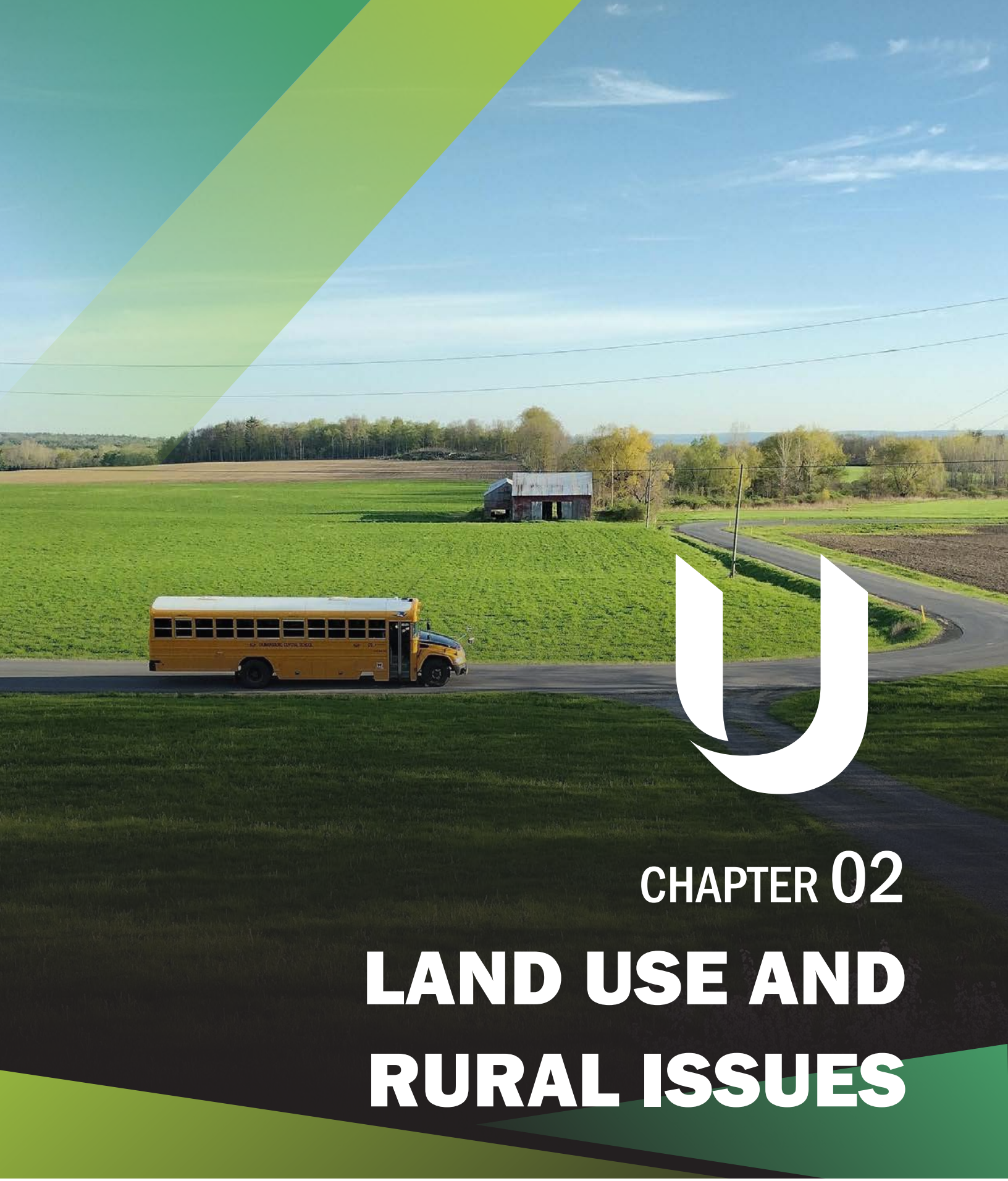
The top industries are educational services, health care and social assistance, and government. Together, these three industries constitute 58.7% of the County's total jobs in 2024.

By job count, the industries that saw the largest growth since 2010 are educational services, health care and social assistance, and management of companies and enterprises. The industries that saw the largest decreases are government, retail trade, and manufacturing.

Table IN-6

Employment Change by Sector, 2010-2024						
NAICS & Description		Tompkins County				
		2010	2024	% of Total Jobs	# Change (2010-2024)	% Change (2010-2024)
61	Educational Services	17,644	19,355	36.3%	1,710	10%
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	5,616	6,045	11.3%	429	8%
90	Government	7,190	5,918	11.1%	(1,272)	(18%)
44	Retail Trade	4,965	4,251	8.0%	(714)	(14%)
72	Accommodation and Food Services	3,708	3,500	6.6%	(208)	(6%)
31	Manufacturing	3,109	2,652	5.0%	(457)	(15%)
54	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	2,175	2,511	4.7%	336	15%
81	Other Services (except Public Administration)	1,870	2,097	3.9%	227	12%
52	Finance and Insurance	1,099	1,144	2.1%	44	4%
56	Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	719	962	1.8%	244	34%
23	Construction	942	947	1.8%	5	0%
11	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	509	614	1.2%	106	21%
53	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	547	571	1.1%	24	4%
71	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	314	537	1.0%	223	71%
42	Wholesale Trade	438	453	0.8%	14	3%
48	Transportation and Warehousing	599	451	0.8%	(148)	(25%)
55	Management of Companies and Enterprises	65	420	0.8%	355	545%
51	Information	496	362	0.7%	(135)	(27%)
21	Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	268	212	0.4%	(56)	(21%)
22	Utilities	269	170	0.3%	(99)	(37%)
99	Unclassified	46	139	0.3%	92	199%
	TOTAL	52,589	53,311	100.0%	722	1.0%

Source: Lightcast forecasts for 2024. U.S. Census Bureau 2000 and 2010 decennial Census data.



CHAPTER 02

LAND USE AND RURAL ISSUES

I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

As the Town of Ulysses evolves, land use throughout the community must be approached with intentional thought and strategy. The land use recommendations in this document are intended to serve as a conceptual guide for realizing the Town's broad land-use priorities. These recommendations are not intended to provide an exhaustive list of areas primed for development or create regulation of specific parcels; this document merely intends to guide future land use decisions.

This chapter, just like this document, is not intended to remain static for the next 20 years. Rather, this chapter weaves the vision and values of the community into land use recommendations that remain at a conceptual level to guide longer-term development decisions amidst changing conditions to allow for flexibility regarding zoning boundaries, permitted uses, dimensions and performance standards, and form and design guidelines. It further reinforces community priorities to encourage stable growth that maximizes the use of existing resources and minimizes negative environmental impacts.

It is important to note that land use is not regulatory like zoning. The Future Land Use Plan is a summary of the community's vision. The principle tool of accomplishing this vision will be through appropriate zoning regulations.

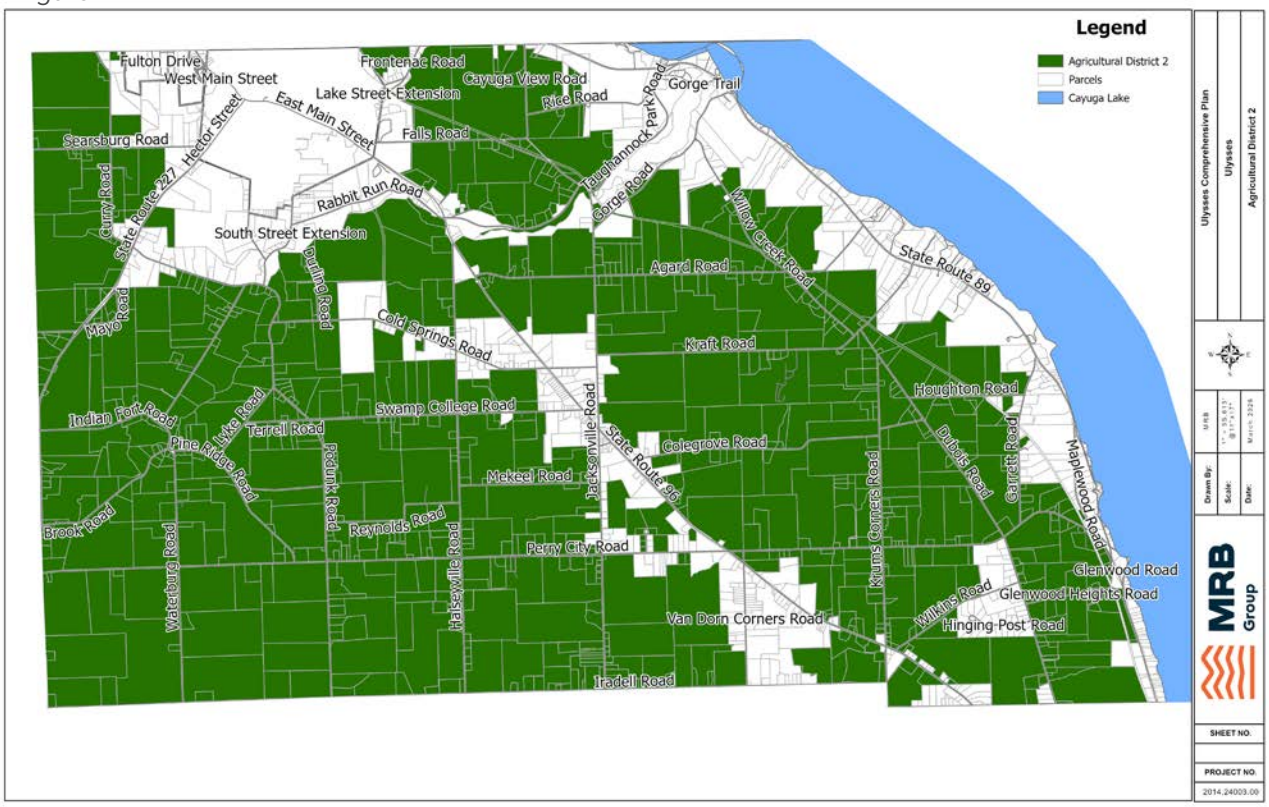
Ulysses is a rural community with strong ties to agriculture, and it is crucial that land use recommendations are made with agriculture and rural issues in mind. As a result, this chapter addresses rural issues first before analyzing current land use, future land use, and zoning.

II. RURAL ISSUES

Agriculture

Agriculture is the dominant land use in the Town of Ulysses, and most of the Town falls within the Tompkins County Agricultural District #2 (Figure LR-1). Land in the Agricultural District is subject to regulations set forth in Article 25-AA of the New York State Agriculture and Markets Law and has additional protections and incentives to encourage continued agricultural use of the land, including favorable tax assessments and protection against unreasonable laws and other provisions. The Town has also adopted a Right to Farm provision through its Zoning Law.

Figure LR-1

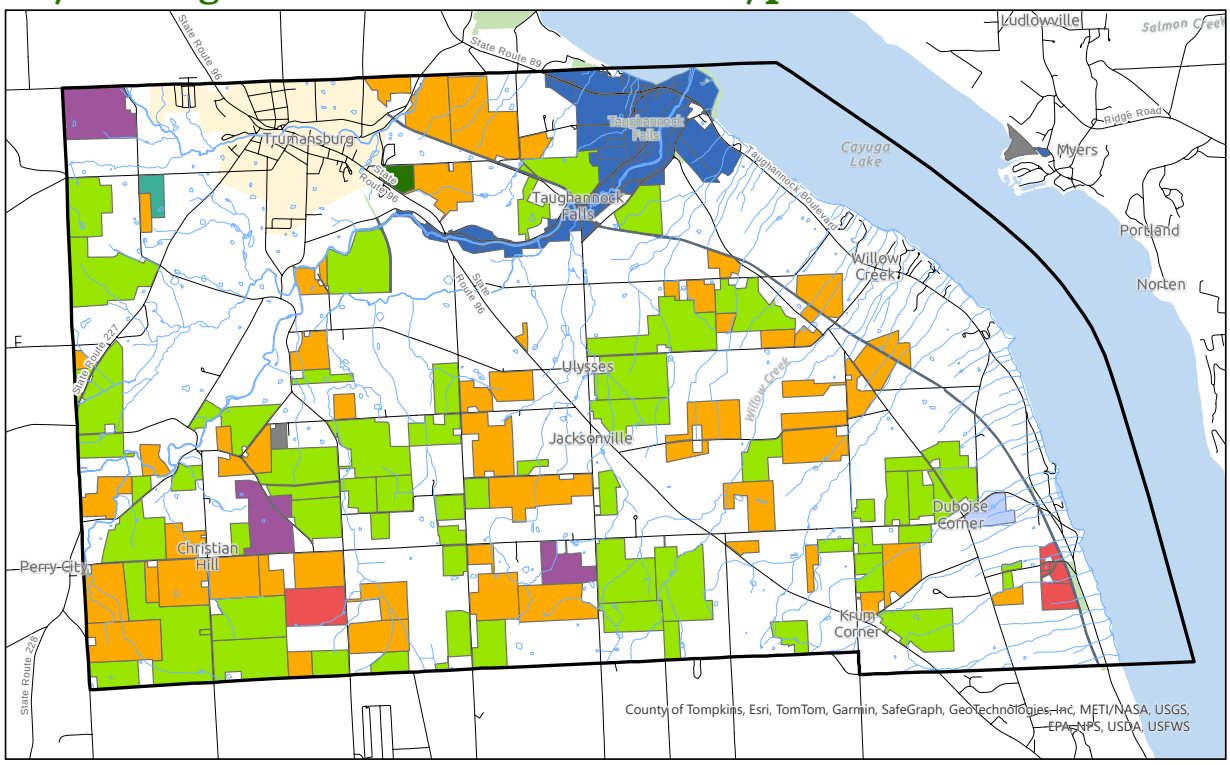


Data source: Tompkins County, 2023

Agricultural activity in the Town includes both field crop cultivation and livestock production. The most common crops are corn, soybeans, hay, wheat, oat, barley, and rye. There are also a few horse farms, fruit and vegetable farms, vineyards, tree farms/nurseries, and various livestock farms, including beef, bison, sheep/lamb, meat goats, at least one apiary, and a few rabbits and alpaca (Figure LR-2).

Figure LR-2

Ulysses Agricultural and Forest Subtypes



Agricultural and Forest Subtypes
DESCRIPTION
- Cattle farm
- Dairy farm
- Field crops
- Horse farm
- Poultry farm
- Priv forest
- State park
- Vac farmland
- All other values

0 0.5 1 1.5 2 Miles

Data source: Tompkins County

In 2013, the Town adopted an Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan.[1] **The goals of the Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan were to strengthen the agricultural economy, improve public understanding of farming, establish appropriate tax policies that support farming, and enhance land use policies to better protect farmland.**

The Plan recognized that agricultural land in the Town is under threat of conversion due to development pressure from Ithaca, which is within a relatively short commuting distance from the Town. A more recent threat to the continued vitality of Ulysses' is the impact of climate change. The 2010 Tompkins County Conservation Plan identified a large swath of the Town as an Agricultural Resource Focus Area to prioritize for protection.

Open Space

Due to the rural and agricultural nature of the Town, much of it can be categorized as open space, including forests, farms, and rural residential land. However, most of this open space is not protected from future development.

The largest protected open space in the Town of Ulysses is Taughannock Falls State Park, which was created in 1925 and is 750 acres. The park features the 215-foot tall Taughannock Falls, which is the highest single-drop waterfall within the United States east of the Rocky Mountains. The park offers hiking and nature trails, camping, picnicking, swimming, fishing, ice skating, sledding, and cross-country skiing.

Other protected open spaces in Ulysses include Cayuga Nature Center, Smith Woods (Town owned), Salo Habitat Nature Preserve (Town owned), Jacksonville Community Park and the Black Diamond Trail.

1. *Town of Ulysses. (2013, February). Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan. https://townofulyssesny.gov/__cms/docs/AFPP-FINAL_ADOPTED_02-26-13-with_MAPS.pdf*

Jacksonville Community Park

Rural Visioning efforts

Through various forms of public engagement, the public expressed their love for the rural character that Ulysses provides. Many appreciate the local agriculture in Ulysses, but have concerns about the type of agricultural industry and their impact on the environment. When asked about future development, 70.9% of respondents indicated they would like to see local agriculture (e.g., vineyards, orchards, agritourism, small-scale animal husbandry and crops, CFAs, etc.) The public felt that there are opportunities for more small-scale agriculture and agritourism, especially along main roads. The public expressed concern about industrial agriculture and did not feel it was appropriate for Ulysses. Respondents also expressed concern about water and sewer development in rural areas. Respondents felt that adding water and sewer in rural areas could potentially create development pressure and suggested it should occur where new development is appropriate and planned for to preserve rural character.

During Open House #1, the public felt that local CSAs and small organic farms were strengths for Ulysses. Farm-runoff, development pressure, and zoning regulations that impact agricultural land were expressed as weaknesses. Threats identified included monocrops, escalating land taxes that can put farmers out of business, and large developments. Opportunities identified included utilizing tools to protect farmland, such as easements and transfer of development rights (TDRs). Farmworker housing near farms was also shared as an opportunity.

An agriculture and land use focus group met during the discovery phase of the planning process and consisted of a combination of local farmers and residents. Members of the focus group expressed that generational farms and CSAs are important to the community. Having locally sourced food that people know where it comes from is important, especially with the current grocery industry challenges.

It was also expressed that non-farmers and young people need to be more exposed to farming. Farmers would like to partner with the school more, and to have more farming/agriculture services programs (like BOCES) for the Trumansburg School District. Focus group members also expressed that it is challenging for younger generations interested in farming to get involved due to high land costs or large corporations

buying large quantities of land. Finding resources (especially financial resources) for younger generations to get farmland or get involved in the farming industry would be beneficial. Tax exemptions for having farmland (open space or forested) were brought up as a major benefit.

Water districts, and more specifically where they are developed, were brought up as a concern. Sometimes the community "buy in" is a tough sell. The focus group members discussed that there's a potential interest in developing water districts and water service where it makes sense to prevent them from being in areas that could threaten farmland. It was emphasized that finding a balance is essential.

The perception of farmers was also brought up as a challenge. Some farmers feel they are seen as an inconvenience. It was expressed that there could be more education/signage on how this is a Right to Farm community.

III.EXISTING LAND USE

To evaluate the existing land use within the Town of Ulysses, this report will calculate the information from the 2015 Land Use and Land Cover Mapping Project prepared by Tompkins County. This will allow comparisons with the 2008 Land Use and Land Cover Mapping Project that was used in the 2009 Comprehensive Plan. Unfortunately, this is the most recent Land Use and Land Cover data from Tompkins County. A change comparison is provided in Table 1.

As shown, there had not been substantial changes between 2008 and 2015. The largest changes were the growth in Vegetative Cover areas and the reduction in Agricultural Land. This change is seemingly the result of former Agricultural Land being left vacant and growing into brushland or other dense vegetative areas. It should be noted that some small changes in acreage such as the amount of Open Water are likely to be due to technical differences in the data and GIS programs. Additionally, the table merges data classification changes between the two mapping projects, so Inactive Agriculture is included in the Agricultural Land, and distinctions between brush and forest were consolidated into the Vegetative Cover category.

Table LR-1: Land Use / Land Cover Category

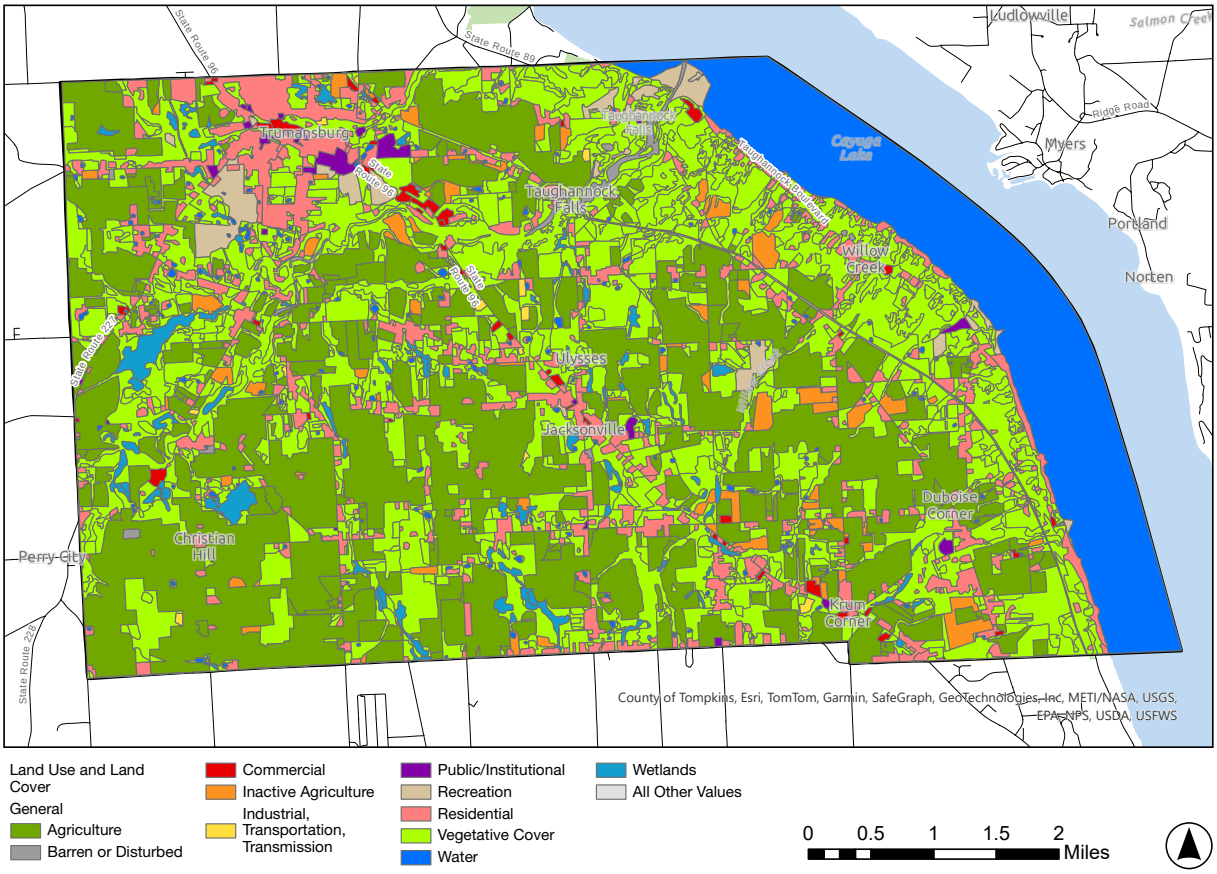
Land Use / Land Cover Category	2008		2015		Change (2015 - 2008)	
	Total Acres	% of Total Acres	Total Acres	% of Total Acres	Total Acres	% of Total Acres
Residential	1,790	7.9%	1871	8.2%	81	0.3%
Commercial	91	0.4%	108	0.5%	17	0.1%
Industrial	28	0.1%	32	0.1%	4	0.0%
Outdoor Rec-rea-tion	295	1.3%	351	1.5%	56	0.2%
Institutional	56	0.2%	65	0.3%	9	0.1%
Agriculture	9,217	40.7%	8519	37.5%	-698	-3.2%
Vegetative Cover	8,197	36.1%	8701	38.3%	504	2.2%
Wetland	411	1.9%	413	1.10%	2	-0.1%
Open Water	2,519	11.1%	2554	11.2%	35	0.1%
Disturbed Land	79	0.3%	91	0.4%	12	0.1%

Calculation of 2008 classification and acreage are adapted from 2008 Land Use and Land Cover Mapping Project, and 2015 calculations are adapted from the 2015 Land Use and Land Cover Mapping Project. The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation has adopted new wetland jurisdictional criteria which further defines how wetlands are now classified. Therefore, the wetlands data provided in this table may not be 100% accurate.

Source: Tompkins County Department of Planning and Sustainability.

Figure LR-3

Ulysses Land Use And Land Cover



Data source year: 2015.

The Land Use and Land Cover Mapping Project provide additional details on the types of land cover such as the type of residential use or type of agricultural land. The five largest land cover types are Agricultural Cropland (7,184 Acres), Deciduous Forest Land (3,988 Acres), Natural Lake/Pond (2,525 Acres), Brush land (1,581 Acres), and Residential (1,577 Acres).

II. FUTURE LAND USE

The Town of Ulysses is committed to preserving its rural landscape and sensitive environmental features, while also promoting sustainable economic development and needed housing growth. These two goals will require intentional planning through designating specific areas for growth, and creating policies and regulations to preserve green space and agricultural land. The Town should prioritize development near existing infrastructure, which will help to prevent sprawl and maintain the rural character of the Town's agricultural landscape.

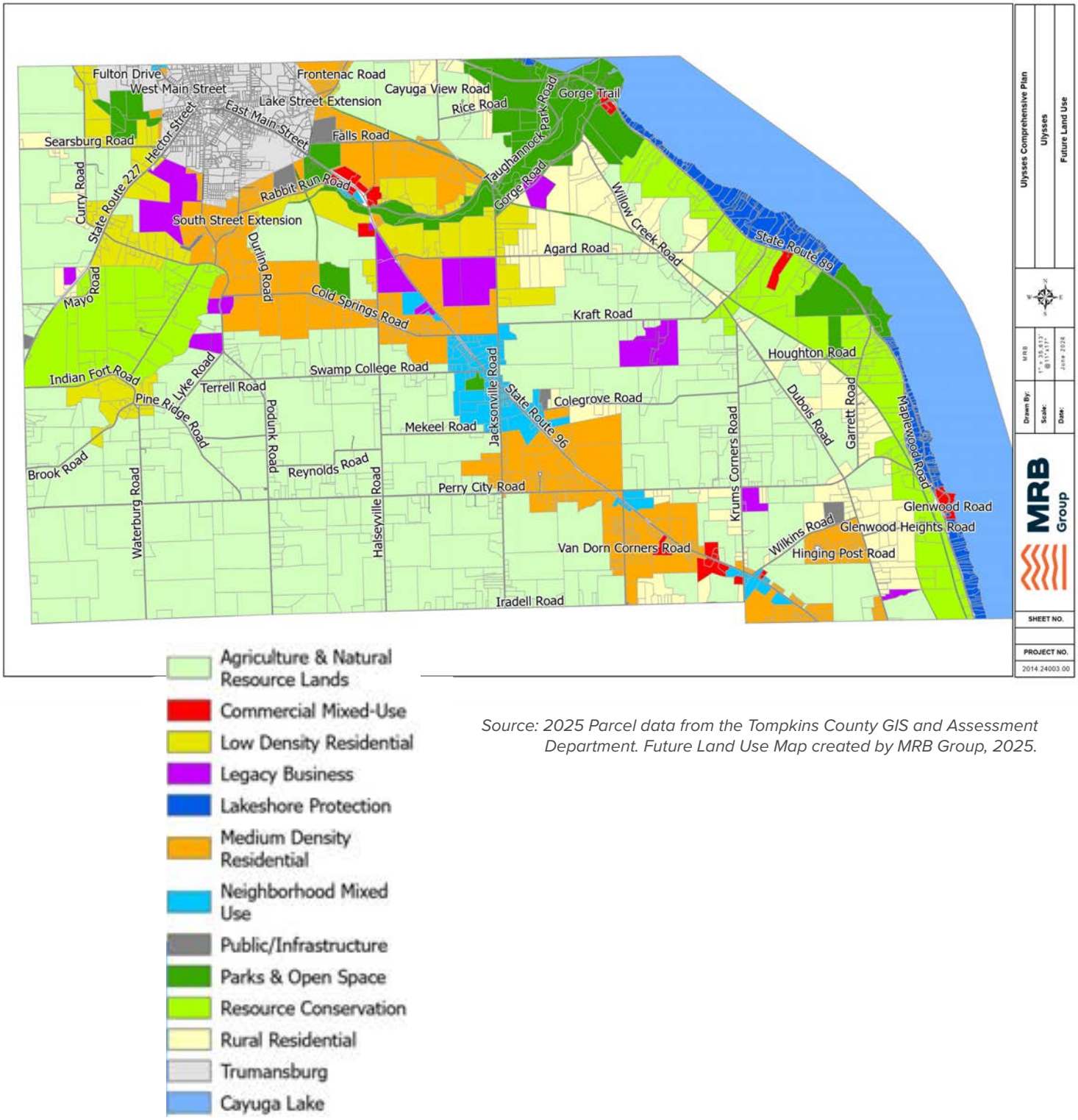
Housing opportunities such as accessory dwelling units, cottage court dwellings, small dwellings, small lots, and "missing middle housing" will be supported. Missing middle housing refers to housing that provides diverse housing options along the spectrum of affordability. Typical middle housing types include multiunit structures such as townhomes, duplexes, triplexes, and fourplexes. Other examples include cluster homes and cottage courts.

Grocery stores, restaurants, day cares, health and fitness facilities, among other services will be integrated into and support surrounding neighborhoods. Wineries, breweries, farm to table restaurants, and similar uses will be supported as compatible agricultural uses to support the farm economy in the Town.

Future Land Use Character Areas and the Future Land Use Map

This section contains two components – Future Land Use Character Areas and the Future Land Use Map. Character areas are packages of potential land uses assigned to specific geographies in the Town. These suggested uses conceptualize a high-level description of typical potential development within the area. Character areas will guide future zoning updates and development regulations to advance the goals outlined in the Comprehensive Plan. The Future Land Use Map is a visual representation of the geographic allocation of the character areas. The Future Land Use Map is intended to be a guide to land use decisions and should not be interpreted to supersede the judgment of the Town Board and Planning Board when reviewing each application or project before them on a case-by-case basis. Further, future decisions regarding changing a parcel's land use may be unclear when the property's boundaries are close or border a different character area. In this case, use the character area descriptions to make an informed decision.

Figure LR-3



Source: 2025 Parcel data from the Tompkins County GIS and Assessment Department. Future Land Use Map created by MRB Group, 2025.

Land uses within Ulysses are regulated by the designations contained in the zoning and development regulations in the Town's Zoning Code, and other design, development, and environmental regulations. The Town's eleven proposed general land use categories or character areas and acreages are shown on the Future Land Use Map and incorporate:

- **Parks + Open Space**
- **Lakeshore Protection**
- **Resource Conservation**
- **Agriculture and Natural Resource Lands**
- **Rural Residential**
- **Low Density Residential**
- **Medium Density Residential**
- **Neighborhood Mixed-Use**
- **Legacy Business**
- **Commercial Mixed-Use**
- **Public/Institutional**

General Future Land Use Categories:

Parks + Open Space

The Parks and Open Space land use designation is established primarily to provide for the conservation and enhancement of open, natural, and improved areas. These specific areas are valuable for their environmental, recreational, green infrastructure, and scenic character benefits.

Recommended Primary Uses: Parks, playgrounds, athletic facilities, trails, supportive buildings and facilities, waterfront amenities, and large natural areas.

Example Areas: Taughannock Falls State Park, Jacksonville Community Park, Salo Habitat Nature Preserve (Town owned), Smith Woods (Town owned), Trumansburg Golf Club, Cayuga Nature Center, and the Black Diamond Trail.

Geographic Patterns: Aside from a concentration along the Taughannock Creek corridor, there are no particular patterns in the dispersion of parks and open spaces within the Town.

These lands are and should remain primarily undeveloped, providing ample natural areas and recreation opportunities that are a respite from the active urban environment.

Design Considerations: ***These lands are and should remain primarily undeveloped, providing ample natural areas and recreation opportunities that are a respite from the active urban environment.*** However, it is important that select parks have up-to-date improvements and amenities that enhance the park experience. Although almost all of the parks and open space addressed in the example areas are not owned by the Town and consequentially do not have to follow local land use regulations, it is important that the Town makes clear its expectations and desires for these types of facilities. The Town should apply high standards of landscape design and quality architecture for park facilities, especially parks that are within its control.

Multi-use trails are a critical element of the Town's landscape, especially in the context of parks and open space. Further expansion of the trail system is a high priority and is outlined below. As described in the Community Well-Being Element, it is highly recommended that the Town increase its resources dedicated to park amenities, design, development, and maintenance. The value of parks, open spaces, and multi-use trails, as well as the potential for more and better facilities, was one of the most common points of feedback throughout the community engagement process.

Lakeshore Protection

The Lakeshore Protection character area is designated to protect the defining natural features of the Town, such as Cayuga Lake, and scenic viewsheds along the Cayuga Lake Scenic Byway (State Route 89). Important features within the Lakeshore area include mature forests, fragile cliffs, tributaries, and seasonal streams that feed into Cayuga Lake. Numerous soil types found within the Lakeshore area are highly erodible due to their characteristics and or slope steepness. Lastly, due to the character area's sensitive and important plant species, geology, and mature forests, portions of this character area are identified as Unique Natural Areas by the Tompkins County Environmental Management Council.

The Unique Natural Areas include Willow Creek Glen and Lake Slopes (UNA-61), Maplewood Glen and Lake Slopes (UNA-62), and Glenwood Ravine and Lake Slopes (UNA-91).

Recommended Primary Uses: single-family homes, natural areas, public access to the waterfront, and ecologically-conscious local commercial businesses (e.g., ecotourism, hospitality, and water-dependent uses.)

Example Areas: Willow Creek Glen and lake slopes (UNA-61), Maplewood Glen and lake slopes (UNA- 62), and Glenwood ravine and lake slopes (UNA 61), lakeshore homes found along most of State Route 89 (Cayuga Lake Scenic Byway), and Cayuga Lake.

Geographic Patterns: This character area can be found along the lakeshore following State Route 89 (Cayuga Lake Scenic Byway). The topography in this character area ranges between approximately 400 and 510 feet.

Design Considerations: Due to the character area's sensitive natural features, potential future development may create a negative environmental impact and should be reviewed carefully. Specifically, along the lakeshore, building design and setback standards, residential density, shoreline landscaping, dock standards, and green infrastructure guidelines should continue to be re-evaluated when updating the Town's zoning. This reassessment will ensure that the lake and surrounding natural environment are protected.

Resource Conservation

Similar to the Lakeshore Protection character area, the intent of the resource conservation land use is to preserve the Town's natural features. This land is made up of mature forests, farmland, plant and wildlife habitat, streams, and other natural features. This area contains steep slopes, wetlands, and highly erodible soils. Portions of this land use are identified as Unique Natural Areas by the Tompkins County Environmental Management Council (UNA 59: Hart Woods Unique Natural Area, UNA-61: Willow Creek Glen and Lake Slopes, UNA-62: Maplewood Glen and Lake Slopes, and UNA-91 Glenwood Ravine and Lake Slopes.

Recommended Primary Uses: small-scale agriculture, natural areas, single-family homes, and ecologically conscious local commercial businesses (e.g., ecotourism, hospitality, and water-dependent uses).

Example Areas: Forests included in the Town's unique natural areas are located south of Glenwood Heights Road to the Town of Ithaca municipal line. Two small New York State Department of Conservation wetlands are located on Glenwood Heights Road.

Geographic Patterns: Ecologically and topographically sensitive land areas begin on the west side of State Route 89 and end halfway up from State Route 89 to Dubois Road or Willow Creek Road. It continues from the Ithaca Townline to Taughannock Park. The topography in this character area ranges between approximately 600 and 850 feet. Sensitive lands are also between Indian Fort Road, Waterburg Road, Curry Road, and State Route 227.

Design Considerations: Given the environmental sensitivity of this land, new development should be limited and carefully reviewed. New development should occur only if it does not create negative environmental impacts. Developments unsuitable to this character area may result in unstable slopes, increased erosion, and degraded water quality in streams and lakes. Environmental protection tools such as stream buffers, conservation easements, and deed restrictions should continue to be implemented.

Agriculture and Natural Resource

The Agricultural and Natural Resources land use designation is established primarily to provide for, protect, and conserve agriculture and forest resource lands. Farms and timber lands provide economic, social, cultural, and environmental benefits. This Comprehensive Plan ensures that these lands will continue to be viable for farming, farm-related uses, and habitat restoration today and into the future.

Agricultural Resource lands are those lands with soils, climate, topography, parcel size, and location characteristics that have long-term commercial significance for farming.

The Town is committed to preserving and enhancing the agricultural land base, promoting economic activities, and marketing support for a strong agricultural industry.

The agricultural community faces significant challenges in preserving the agricultural land base and a viable agricultural industry, including conversion of agricultural lands to development; conflict with neighboring residential uses; drainage impacts; climate change impacts; and other disruptions that affect the function and value of agricultural land.

Forest Resource lands are those lands that - due to soils, climate, topography, parcel size, and location - have long-term significance for forestry. These lands also serve as critical habitat, preserve open space, and provide significant environmental services. For these reasons, the Town is committed to preserving and enhancing a forest land base and promoting a forestry industry. The intent is to ensure that forest lands are conserved and managed to provide sustainable forest yields, job stability, ecological values, and the strengthening of a viable and sustainable industry.

Recommended Primary Uses: Farming and agriculture, single detached dwelling units for farmsteads and non-farmsteads, employer-provided farmworker housing, duplexes, and associated accessory uses.

Example Areas: The most notable agricultural lands are found west of Podunk Road to the Schuyler County line between Iradell Road and Perry City Road. Forested lands are located south of Glenwood Heights Road to the Town of Ithaca municipal line.

Geographic Patterns: Roads and property boundaries roughly follow historic lot maps, geographic features such as streams, and other natural features like slopes and quality agricultural soils.

Design Considerations: To provide ample long-term opportunities for the agricultural community, these lands should remain primarily undeveloped, aside from structures for agricultural use and housing for farm owners and farm workers. The Town should apply strict regulatory measures for the conversion of these lands away from agriculture and natural resource uses, along with prescriptive development standards that would minimize conflicts between agricultural and non-agricultural uses in new developments.

The Town will need to perform a periodic update to the 2013 Ulysses Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan. As described in the Environment and Natural Resources Element, it is highly recommended that the Town increase and develop additional resources dedicated to assisting farm owners and operations from development pressure, such as small lot road frontage housing development.

The value of agricultural lands and the benefit they provide to the community is another common point of feedback throughout the community engagement process. For example, a majority of survey respondents indicated that farmland and agricultural resources and its protection were very important to them.

Area undeveloped by buildings: ≥95%

Rural Residential

The Rural Residential land use designation is established primarily to accommodate single detached residential development primarily on, or adjacent to, lots that may support small scale farming. These parcels may be impacted by environmental factors such as wetlands, streams, and steep slopes that make them less conducive to larger agricultural uses.

Recommended Primary Uses: Small scale farming, single detached dwelling units, and accessory dwelling units.

Example Areas: 2500 block of Agard Road, 3000 – 3200 block of Jacksonville Road, and 5100 – 6300 block of Iradell Road.

Geographic Patterns: Economic pressure on farmland and other factors over the decades has created a hodgepodge pattern of smaller lots subdivided off from active farmland for single detached residential uses with no cohesive development pattern.

Design Considerations: These lands are primarily developed with single detached dwelling units, generally one to two stories tall, and accessory structures. Lots are generally large with a mix of manicured lawns and gardens and some fields and woodland.

Area undeveloped by buildings: ≥85%

Low Density Residential

Low-Density Residential land use focuses on housing and complementary uses at a low-density residential scale, predominately reflecting existing residential uses in areas of the Town without existing public water and/or sewer facilities, and which are not anticipated to have these services during the term of the plan.

Recommended Primary Uses: Single detached dwelling units, duplexes on larger lots, and accessory dwelling units.

Example Areas: Properties along Taughannock Boulevard, 3000 – 4000 block of Garrett Road, 5000 – 5300 block of Perry City Road, and 5000 – 5100 block of Terrel Road.

Geographic Patterns: Similar to the Rural Residential area, smaller lots subdivided piecemeal from larger parcels for single detached residential uses overtime has created an eclectic mishmash with no cohesive development pattern.

Design Considerations: These lands are primarily developed with single detached dwelling units and duplexes or accessory dwelling units, generally one to two stories tall, and accessory structures. Lots are generally smaller than the Rural Residential area but require sufficient space to accommodate for wells and on-site sewerage systems and replacement areas per Tomkins County Whole Health Department.

Area undeveloped by buildings: ≥75%

Medium Density Residential

The Medium Density Residential land use designation is established primarily to accommodate housing at a medium density scale, including missing middle housing, currently served, or anticipated to be served by, public water and/or sewer facilities. These areas are generally outside a hamlet or planned neighborhood node.

Recommended Primary Uses: Single detached dwelling units, duplexes, attached townhomes, and accessory dwelling units.

Example Areas: Properties adjacent to the Village of Trumansburg, Jacksonville Heights properties along Highway 96, properties along Highway 96 not in a Neighborhood Mixed-Use area or Commercial area, properties along Cold Springs Road, properties along Jacksonville Road north of Perry City Road, and properties along Van Dorn Corners Road south of Highway 96.

Geographic Patterns: Often developed as part of a common plan of development, with land use density intensifying over time. Residences are in walkable proximity and connected with local streets.

Design Considerations: These lands are developed with a mix of single detached dwelling units to smaller multi-dwelling units such as duplexes, triplexes, attached townhouses, cottage courtyard dwellings, and garden apartments. Regulations should accommodate emerging housing types that diversify our housing stock, reflecting changing demographics, household sizes, and lifestyle preferences yet are compatible with the character of the existing neighborhood.

The Town is recommended to develop a Housing Action Plan, see Policy LR-P-1.1.6, and, as further described in the Housing Element. It is also recommended that the Town increase and develop additional resources to encourage increased housing options, including missing middle housing. The need for increased affordable housing for all community members is a key point of feedback throughout the community engagement process.

Area undeveloped by buildings: ≥50%

Neighborhood Mixed-Use

The Neighborhood Mixed-Use land use designation is established primarily to accommodate a denser residential community and a range of allowable non-residential uses to support those communities including live-work spaces. These areas are primarily located in or adjacent to a hamlet or neighborhood node.

Recommended Primary Uses: Residential dwelling units, non-residential uses that will complement the immediate neighborhood such as retail, food establishment, office, service, etc.

Example Areas: Jacksonville Hamlet, properties adjacent to the Village of Trumansburg, other historic and emerging hamlets such as Dubois Corner, Krum Corner, Willow Creek.

Geographic Patterns: Historically, the Town had several dispersed hamlets that incorporated various non-residential uses such as schoolhouses, places of worship, and other services amongst a denser residential development compared to the surrounding rural agricultural areas.

Over decades, many of those non-residential uses disappeared, but the pattern in the built environment remains.

Design Considerations: Mixed-use development should have a vertical and/or a horizontal element. Vertical mixed-use refers to individual buildings that have both a residential and non-residential use. The so-called "Main Street" vernacular building generally contains uses such as retail, restaurants, or services on the first floor with offices and/or housing on upper floors. Horizontal mixed-use refers to buildings or neighborhoods where there are a mix of uses within walking or biking distance of each other.

Vertical mixed-use has long been a highly desired form in and around core centers and nodes along primary transit corridors, while horizontal mixed-use has been a desired form along key arterials and in neighborhoods, new core centers, along with the 'suburban re-revolution.' Regulations for the Neighborhood Mixed-Use areas should be tailored for each area that promotes safe pedestrian and non-motorized traffic, ensures redevelopment and infill development complement the existing and sometimes historic vernacular, and will be flexible to accommodate changing demographics and lifestyle preferences.

Public/Common Open Space: ≥25% of development site

Legacy Business

The Legacy Business character area is intended to recognize and support long-standing, locally owned commercial establishments that do not align with the permitted uses of any existing character area, land use, or existing development regulations. These businesses often predate current land use regulations and have operated for decades in their present locations. These specific locations are identified on the future land use map to preserve their existence without enabling broader or more intensive development. Any proposed business or land use that differs substantially from the prior business or land use should undergo a strict Planned Unit Development (PUD) review to ensure compatibility with the surrounding area.

Primary uses: Independently operated commercial businesses.

Example areas: Specific businesses are not identified as ownership may change during the duration of this comprehensive plan.

Geographic patterns: These are located throughout Ulysses, so there are no geographic patterns.

Design considerations: The traffic patterns and interaction with neighboring properties should always be consistent with historical patterns, with no adverse impacts. Environmental and utility impacts should be equal to or less than that of the previous use.

Specific Planned Unit Development (PUD) review design considerations will be required for any future business that is not similar in nature to the former use of the site. These considerations are intended to ensure that future commercial planned unit developments remain compatible with surrounding land uses, existing infrastructure, and the long-established development pattern of the site. Buildings should be harmonious with neighboring properties, with their scale, density, and overall site layout carefully reviewed to reflect both the historic operation of the site and the character of adjacent land uses. Landscape buffering should be incorporated where necessary to mitigate potential impacts, particularly where surrounding land uses differ. Future developments should provide logical connections to the existing street and pedestrian network and, where applicable, support walkability. Natural features and open space should be preserved on site whenever possible.

Commercial Mixed-Use

The Commercial Mixed-Use land use designation is established for areas that have been developed with non-residential uses such as retail, lodging/event spaces, and office/service use outside of hamlets. Commercial mixed-use also applies to light industrial and light manufacturing activities that are not resource-intensive and do not cause major pollution that disrupts human health and the environment. Light industrial activities will allow closer proximity to other land uses, such as residential zones. The designation may also apply to new areas, provided that the change in land use is market driven and not purely speculative.

Recommended Primary Uses: A range of multi-unit dwelling units and non-residential uses such as retail, food establishment, entertainment, office, professional services, commercial storage, clinics, automotive services, research and development, printing and publishing, etc., but not of a heavy industrial or heavy manufacturing nature.

Example Areas: Specific businesses are not identified as ownership may change during the duration of this comprehensive plan.

Geographic Patterns: There has been little in the way of commercial development in the Town outside of the Village of Trumansburg. The few pockets that do exist are located near the Village, along Highways 89 and 96, and a few sporadic planned unit developments or non-conforming uses prior to zoning codes.

Design Considerations: In some areas, the commercial mixed-use designation will include multifamily residential and community-oriented public uses. A mix of uses including residential uses is encouraged or may be required near transit hubs. Commercial mixed-use areas should be supported by public facilities and services, including utilities (water, sewer, stormwater), pedestrian and bicycle routes, transit, or be located along arterials capable of handling traffic impacts, and easy access for EMS.

More intentional design standards are needed to mitigate the auto-oriented nature of these land uses, including restricting front yard parking. Shared parking facilities and cross access between private developments should be promoted whenever possible. Pedestrian safety and experience should be prioritized while balancing the needs of the automobile. This includes the provision of amenities such as ample sidewalks and pedestrian connectivity within the site, landscaping, transit stops, bicycle parking, and highly visible crosswalks.

In order to maximize the best use of land and retain open space as much as possible, single detached dwelling units and single-story commercial structures should be discouraged, multi-story buildings should be encouraged or required as much as possible, and overall site-design should create little aesthetic impact to adjacent properties that have a less intense land use designation. Buildings should be attractively designed and should address the public realm on all visible sides. Landscape and hardscape areas should be designed as integral features of development and should incorporate best practices with stormwater management. In general, design elements related to architecture, landscaping, site plans, and signage should create an aesthetically appealing experience that is appropriate in scale and form and provides pedestrian connectivity internally and with surrounding land uses where feasible.

For re-development or potentially new future development, regulatory measures should include ways to buffer light industrial uses with adjoining non-industrial areas, such as substantial landscape buffers to soften any visual, aesthetic, light, and noise impacts. Generally, light industrial activities will produce limited to no loud noises, light disturbances, and foul odors. Light industrial activities will not produce toxic air, water, or soil. Light industrial uses that don't affect areas outside of this designation should have flexible standards that do not unduly burden the productive use of these areas for employment and producing goods and products.

Public/Common Open Space: ≥50% of development site

Public/Institutional

The Public/Institutional land use designation is established primarily for areas developed with public and quasi-public land uses e.g., schools, government buildings, and churches.

Recommended Primary Uses: Campuses and associated buildings/grounds for schools, museums, community centers, and other civic institutions. This land use category also includes essential public facilities, those facilities that are typically difficult to site e.g., airports, state educational facilities, state or regional transportation facilities, state and local correctional facilities, solid waste handling facilities, and in-patient facilities.

Example Areas: Trumansburg Central School District, Trumansburg Fairgrounds, and Ulysses Town Highway Barn.

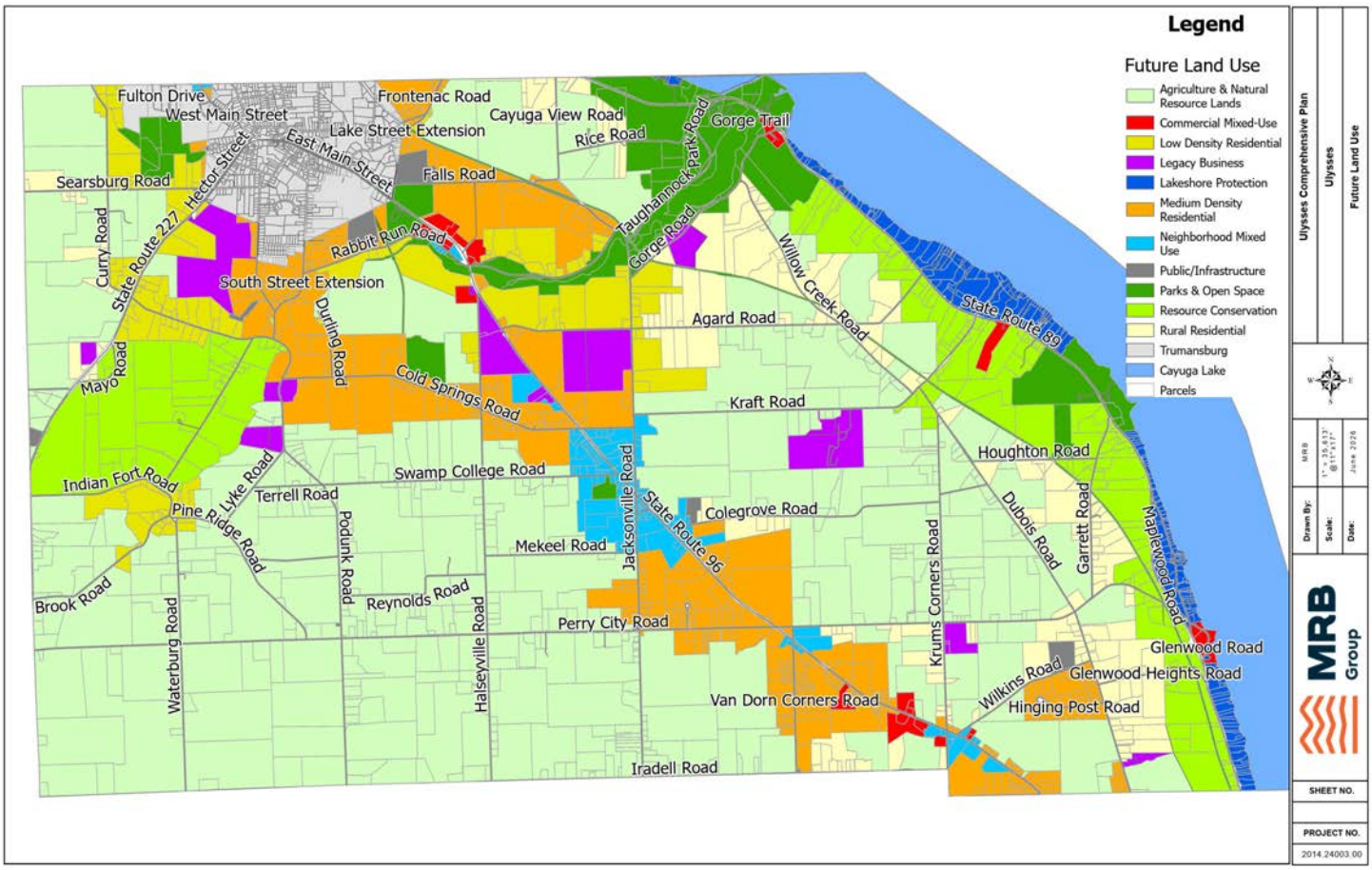
Geographic Patterns: Similar to the Commercial Mixed-Use and Industrial land use designations, there has been little in the way of public/institutional development in the Town.

Design Considerations: These areas may not warrant their own zoning district in a future code update, but are important to recognize at this stage as different in character than their surroundings. Therefore, the difference between locations identified with this land use designation has no significance in terms of recommendations or regulations, rather they may be absorbed by an adjacent zoning district subject to use and design regulations of that district. Any new area proposed with this land use designation whose use is not compatible with the existing or adjacent zones, may best be regulated with a Planned Unit Development (PUD).

Future Land Use Map

The Future Land Use Map and associated character areas are a depiction of the type of development envisioned throughout the Town of Ulysses. The Future Land Use Map is the broad geographic representation of the many goals within this Comprehensive Plan. The map spatially summarizes the future land uses described above.

Figure LR-3



Source: 2025 Parcel data from the Tompkins County GIS and Assessment Department. Future Land Use Map created by MRB Group, 2025.

IV.ZONING AND LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS

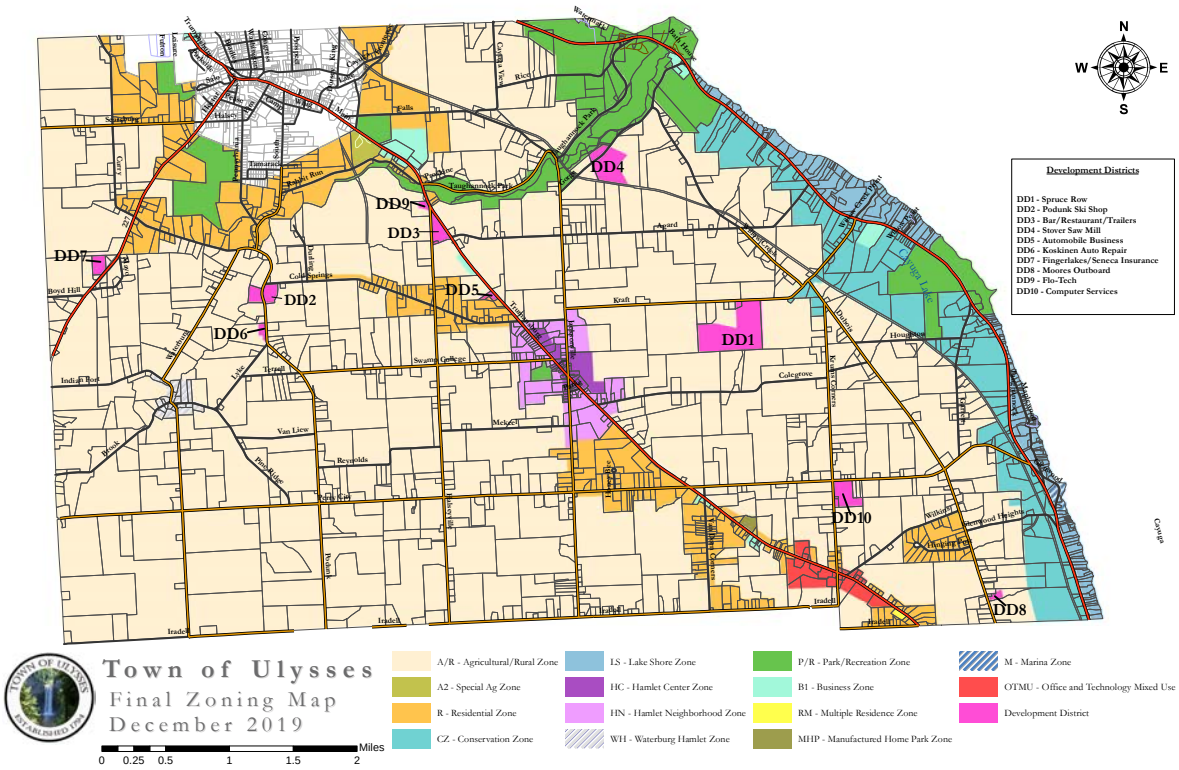
The Future Land Use Plan and zoning regulations work in tandem to create a full picture of how land will be used. For this reason, it is important to provide an assessment of the current zoning to determine what changes may be needed to implement the Future Land Use Plan.

Chapter 212 of the Town of Ulysses Code contains the Town's Zoning and Subdivision Regulations. The Law was adopted in 2013 and amended in its entirety in 2019. The Town is broken into zoning districts which classify the allowable uses, dimensional requirements, and other development standards. Table 2 provides a breakdown of the districts and the land area they cover within the Town. Map 3 shows the Town's current zoning map.

Table LR-2. Zoning Districts

Zone	Zone Name	Acres	% of Town
A2	Special Ag Zone	27	0.14%
AR	Agricultural/Rural Zone	14661	74.56%
B1	Business Zone	83	0.42%
CZ	Conservation Zone	1027	5.22%
DD	Development District	208	1.06%
HC	Hamlet Center Zone	69	0.35%
HN	Hamlet Neighborhood Zone	247	1.26%
LS	Lake Shore Zone	381	1.94%
M	Marina Zone	12	0.06%
MHP	Manufactured Home Park Zone	8	0.04%
OTMU	Office and Technology Mixed-Use	94	0.48%
PR	Park/Recreation Zone	1084	5.51%
R	Residential Zone	1713	8.71%
RM	Multiple Residence Zone	3	0.02%
WH	Waterburg Hamlet	46	0.23%

Figure LR-5



Source. Town of Ulysses Zoning Map, 2019

A2 – Special Agricultural Zone

The purpose of the A2 — Special Agricultural Zone is to encourage the continuing tradition of annual agricultural fairs, which are an integral part of the Town's heritage, as well as other cultural and civic events, displays, exhibitions and entertainment events that occur within the typical fairgrounds complex.

The Trumansburg Fairgrounds (privately owned) parcel on State Route 96 is the only parcel of land within the Town that is included within this district. Permitted uses include agricultural uses like farm operations and commercial or entertainment uses such as racing, exhibitions, live entertainment, stables, flea markets, and other similar uses.

A/R – Agricultural / Rural Zone

The A/R — Agricultural/Rural Zone is primarily intended to preserve farming and agricultural lands in the Town and to maintain open space and the quality of life enjoyed by residents of the Town. This zone prioritizes and preserves viable agriculture in the Town by providing an area where agricultural operations and agricultural-based enterprises

are the predominant active land uses in the zone. The Agricultural/Rural Zone protects existing agricultural areas by limiting suburban and urban development; encourages the continuation of agriculture as a viable economic activity and way of life; reduces land use conflicts; protects ecological and natural resources; and preserves open space.

B1 – Business Zone

The purpose of the B1 — Business Zone is to provide opportunities for neighborhood-scale retail commercial development in appropriate locations in the Town of Ulysses to serve the needs of local residents, and to provide the Town with the ability to assert reasonable controls over commercial development consistent with the Ulysses Comprehensive Plan and the goals of organized and logical growth, increased employment opportunities, and an increased tax base.

Within this zone there are no uses or activities permitted by right, and any proposed activity requires Planning Board review. Permitted uses include a diverse selection of commercial, restaurant, office, and institutional uses. Specially permitted uses include one- and two- family residences, multi-dwelling buildings, vehicle sales, and major solar collection systems. There are no minimum lot areas or lot widths required, the minimum front setback is 30 feet, maximum lot coverage is 70%, and there are buffer requirements.

There are 32 parcels that are at least partially zoned as B1 occurring in 6 clusters. They are located on Route 96 or Route 89. The requirement for all activities to undergo Planning Board review may be a deterrent to economic development and growth.

CZ – Conservation Zone

The purposes of the Conservation Zone are to preserve the outstanding natural features in the Town of Ulysses in accordance with the Town of Ulysses Comprehensive Plan (2009), to provide a regulatory framework through which development can occur with minimal environmental impact, to preserve existing areas of contiguous open space, prevent destruction of natural areas, preserve existing and potential agricultural land, and promote mechanisms that protect these areas, such as enlarged stream buffer areas, conservation

easements, and deed restrictions when considering any future land development, and to preserve the scenic beauty of the area to promote tourism as an important benefit to the Town of Ulysses.

Principally permitted uses are single- and two-family residences and farm operations. Some small scale commercial or institutional uses and restaurants are permitted by site plan or special use permit. Minimum lot areas are 5 acres, lot widths are 450 feet, and setbacks are 75 feet from the roadway, among many other dimensional requirements. The district also includes detailed requirements for elements like streams, vegetation, stormwater, soil erosion, and a limitation on future subdivisions.

DD – Development District

The purpose of the Development District is to give flexibility to accommodate such developments, which would be beneficial to the community, but are not now permitted in any established zone. These developments will comply with the Ulysses Comprehensive Plan and this chapter. There are 10 specific development districts. Each includes different permitted uses and specifications.

HC – Hamlet Center Zone

The purpose of the HC — Hamlet Center Zone is to provide opportunities for village- and hamlet-scale residential and small-scale, pedestrian-oriented, commercial development to serve the varied needs of local residents, to encourage redevelopment of the Town's hamlet, and to provide the Town with the ability to assert reasonable controls over such development consistent with the Ulysses Comprehensive Plan and the goals of organized and logical growth, increased employment opportunities and an increased tax base.

Principally permitted uses include single- and two-family residences. Uses permitted with site plan approval include a diverse array of commercial office, institutional, and restaurant uses and multifamily residences. The minimum lot area is 10,000 square feet, minimum lot width is 50 feet, front setbacks are five or zero feet depending on the use, and the lot coverage is 50%. Additionally, the district provides form-based requirements that require architectural features to improve the hamlet aesthetic.

HN – Hamlet Neighborhood Zone

The purpose of an HN — Hamlet Neighborhood Zone is to provide opportunities for village- and hamlet-scale residential development to serve the varied housing needs of the residents, while preserving the historical nature of the Town. This zone encourages the redevelopment of the Town's hamlets while providing the Town and residents of the zone with the ability to assert reasonable controls over development that is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, the historic nature of the zone, and organized and logical growth.

Principally permitted uses include single- and two-family residences. Uses permitted through site plan review include multi-family residence, childcare centers, and institutional uses. Minimum lot areas are 0.5 acres, minimum lot width is 50 feet, front setbacks are 20 feet, and maximum lot coverage is 30%.

LS – Lake Shore Zone

The purposes of the Lakeshore Zone are to protect the fragile environment of the lakeshore, that area east of State Route 89 to the center line of Cayuga Lake, in accordance with the Town of Ulysses Comprehensive Plan (2009), to provide a regulatory framework through which development can occur with minimal environmental impact, and to develop design standards for houses and accessory buildings that create a harmonious effect for the natural environment and the residents.

Principally permitted uses are single- and two-family residences, and some small scale commercial or institutional uses and restaurants are permitted by site plan or special use permit. Minimum lot areas are 2 acres along the lakefront and 5 acres for non-lakefront lots, lot widths are 250 feet, and setbacks are 50 feet from the roadway and the waterfront, among many other dimensional requirements.

M – Marina Zone

The purpose of the MZ — Marina Zone is to preserve and protect the natural, environmental, and historic resources of the lakeshore and to provide waterfront access to Cayuga Lake.

The only principally permitted use is for recreational facilities. Additional uses permitted by site plan or special use permit include restaurants, offices, hotels, and campgrounds. The minimum lot area is five acres, minimum lot width is 250 feet, minimum front setback is 50 feet, and maximum lot coverage is 5%. Additional design standards are provided for streams, vegetation and additional elements.

MHP – Manufactured Home Park

The purpose of the MHP — Manufactured Home Park Zone is to expand opportunities for quality and affordable housing in the Town and to protect existing and future single-family and two-family residential neighborhoods, consistent with the Ulysses Comprehensive Plan and the goals of organized and logical growth, increased employment opportunities and an increased tax base.

Permitted uses include campgrounds, single- and double-wide manufactured homes, and single- and two-family residences. Specially permitted uses include childcare centers, community centers, and major solar collection systems. The minimum lot area is one-acre, the maximum density is one dwelling unit per 6,000 square feet of lot area (7 du/ac), the minimum lot width is 160 feet, front setbacks are 50 feet, and the maximum lot coverage is 50%.

OTMU – Office and Technology Mixed-Use

The purpose of the OTMU — Office Technology Mixed-Use Zone is to provide for employment, support local entrepreneurs, and stimulate local economic development by providing areas where land uses may include office, research and development; light industrial; overnight lodging accommodations, and commercial and service businesses to support area workers and residents. This zone is intended for low-impact and moderate-impact employment uses, which may benefit from close proximity to, but clear separation from, residential neighborhoods, and is located adjacent to a state highway access point.

Principally permitted uses include agricultural events, stables, and farm operations. Numerous uses are permitted through site plan approval including offices, studios, light industry, restaurants, and many more. There are no minimum lot areas or lot widths, minimum front setbacks are 50 feet, and maximum lot coverage is 50%.

PR – Parks/Recreation Zone

The purpose of the PR — Park/Recreation Zone is to protect those natural areas and scenic and recreational resources within the Town of Ulysses that contribute to the high quality of life and economic vitality of the Town.

Parks and agricultural uses are principally permitted. Uses permitted by special use permit include low impact uses like campgrounds, cemeteries, golf courses, and parks. The minimum lot area is 10 acres, minimum lot width is 400 feet, minimum front setback is 75 feet, and maximum lot coverage is 5%.

R – Residential Zone

The purpose of the R — Residential Zone is to provide for moderate-density residential development in areas served by public water and/or public sewage. Development densities when combined with cluster residential subdivision development options have the potential for providing attractive, quality neighborhoods while preserving important open space resources consistent with the Ulysses Comprehensive Plan and the goals of organized and logical growth, increased employment opportunities, and an increased tax base.

Permitted uses are farm operations, single- and two-family residences. Some public or services uses such as childcare centers, churches, libraries, golf courses and others are permitted with site plan or special use permit approval. Minimum lot sizes are 32,000 square feet with lot width of 160 feet and front setbacks of 50 feet. Maximum lot coverage is 7.5%.

RM – Multiple Residence Zone

The purpose of the RM — Multiple-Residence Zone is to expand opportunities for quality and affordable rental housing in the Town and to protect existing and future single-family and two-family residential neighborhoods, consistent with the Ulysses Comprehensive Plan and the goals of organized and logical growth, increased employment opportunities and an increased tax base.

Principally permitted uses in this district include multi-family residences, single- and two-family residences, and major solar collection systems. Uses permitted by special use permit include childcare centers and community centers. Minimum lot area is one-acre, maximum density is 1 dwelling unit per 3,500 square feet of lot area (12 du/ac), lot width is 160 feet, front setbacks are 50 feet, and maximum lot coverage is 50%.

WH – Waterburg Hamlet

The purpose of the WH — Waterburg Hamlet Zone is to provide opportunities for village- and hamlet-scale residential development to serve the varied housing needs of the residents while preserving the historical nature of the Town. This zone encourages the redevelopment of the Town's hamlets while providing the Town and the residents of the zone with the ability to assert reasonable controls over development in the designated zone that is consistent with the Ulysses Comprehensive Plan, the historic nature of the zone, and organized and logical growth.

Principally permitted uses are single- and two-family residences. Uses permitted by Site Plan review include institutional uses like churches, libraries, and community centers. The minimum lot area is two acres, the minimum lot width is 400 feet, the minimum front setback is 50 feet, and maximum lot coverage is 15%.

V. GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

The following section contains the goals, objectives, and policies for the Land Use and Rural Issues element. This section states the Town's policies for addressing the land use and rural needs of the Town of Ulysses. Most importantly, it identifies how to start implementing the comprehensive plan.

Goal:

LR-G-1 Facilitate and encourage land use within the Town that furthers the Town's goals as established in this Comprehensive Plan.

Objective:

LR-O-1.1 Identify and pursue tools to encourage appropriate land uses.

Policies:

LR-P-1.1.1	Revise the Town's Zoning and Development Ordinances and Zoning Map to align with the Comprehensive Plan's land use and development recommendations.
LR-P-1.1.2	Create a Hamlet Area Development Plan that focuses on improving Jacksonville's public realm and sense of place.
LR-P-1.1.3	Pursue and create a Local Waterfront Revitalization Program through the NYS Department of State.
LR-P-1.1.4	The Town will increase its resources dedicated to park amenities, design, development, and maintenance.

LR-P-1.1.5	Perform a periodic update to the Agricultural Protection Plan and increase resources to assist farm owners and operations in finding relief from development pressures.
LR-P-1.1.6	Develop a Housing Action Plan, identify appropriate density in future zoning, and provide resources to encourage increased housing options including missing middle housing.
LR-P-1.1.7	Create design standards for commercial and housing developments on Route 96.
LR-P-1.1.8	Identify multimodal enhancements where Medium Density Residential is identified on the future land use map.

Goal:

LR-G-2 Preserve farmland now and for future generations.

Objective:

LR-O-2.1 Assist farmers in protecting farmland and keeping it active through financial programs.

Policies:

LR-P-2.1.1	Work with interested landowners in participating in the purchase of development program that protects farmland and sensitive natural resources. Coordination with the County, Cornell Cooperative Extension, NY State, and local land trusts is key.
LR-P-2.1.2	Create a transfer of development rights feasibility study to determine if there is a market for development, landowner and community interest, and assess land use regulations.
LR-P-2.1.3	Identify loan and grant programs for young people interested in buying farm property.
LR-P-2.1.4	Inform farmers of the financial benefits of Agricultural Assessment and Agricultural Exemptions.

Objective:

LR-O-2.2 Provide resources to farmers that keep farmland active and productive.

Policies

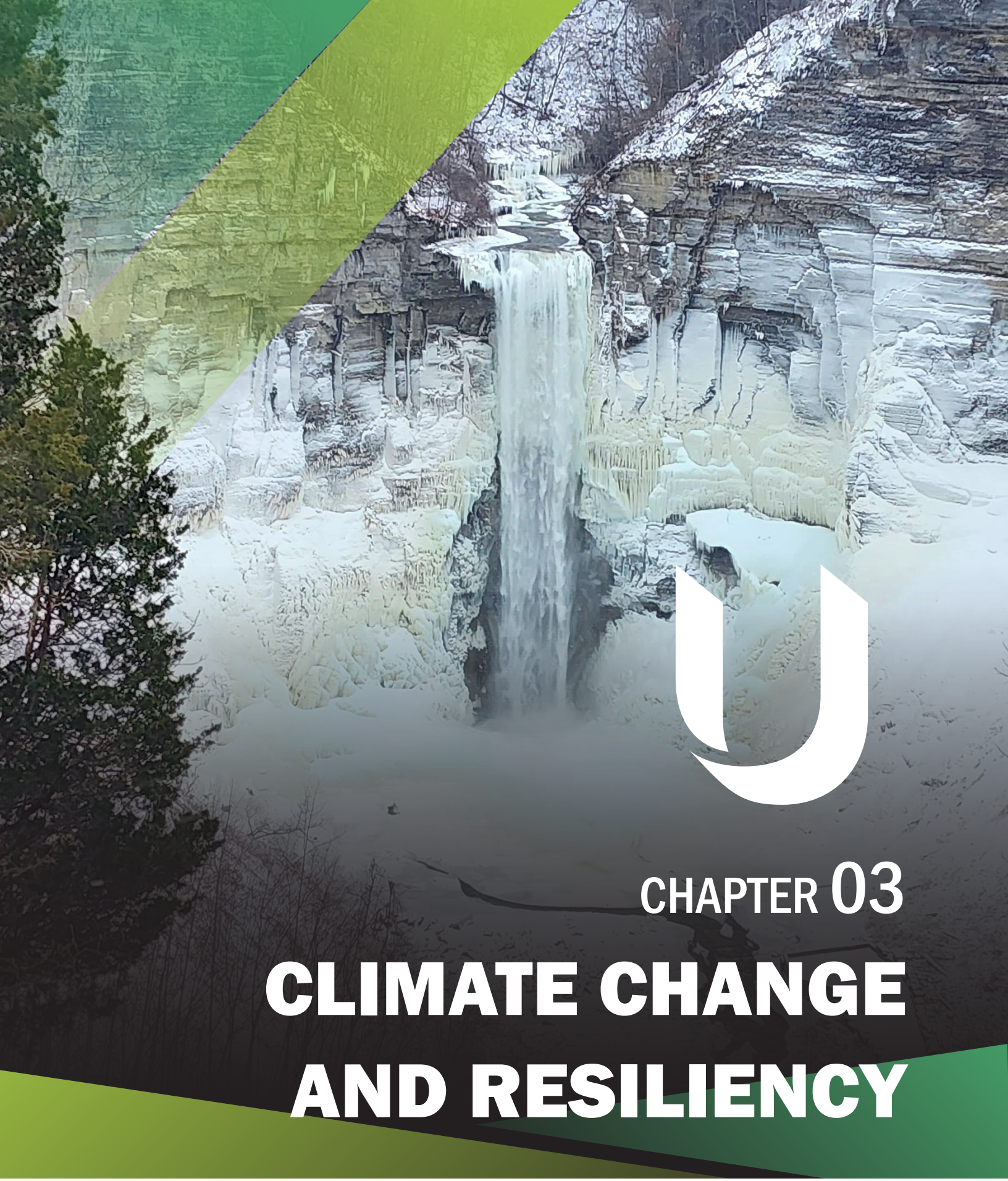
LR-P-2.2.1	Support the long-term viability of agriculture in Ulysses by coordinating with Cornell Cooperative Extension, the Soil and Water Conservation District, and other regional partners to provide technical assistance, succession planning resources and education programs for farmers.

Objective:

LR-O-2.3 Actively support farmland through land use planning, education, and advocacy.

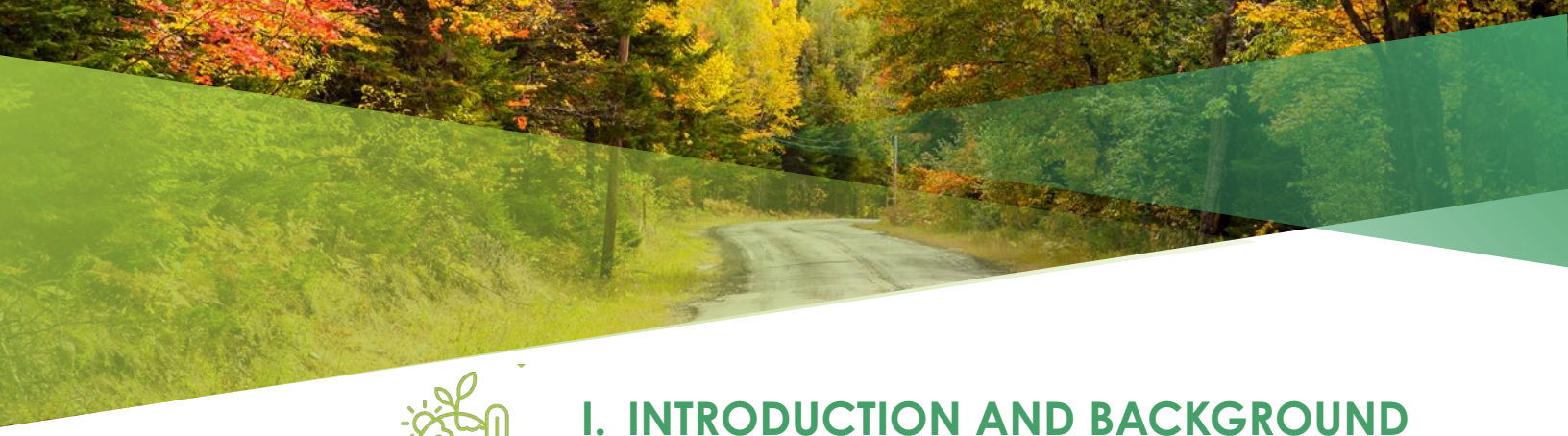
Policies

LR-P-2.3.1	Identify locations where additional right-to-farm signs would be appropriate.
LR-P-2.3.2	Allow conservation subdivision land use regulations that preserve farmland and reduce sprawl on parcels that plan to be subdivided.
LR-P-2.3.3	In accordance with the Town's Agriculture and Farmland protection plan, re-establish and support agriculture committees in the Town to provide input from local farmers, farmland owners, and agricultural businesses on how to expand and support a diversity of agricultural activities in Ulysses.



CHAPTER 03

CLIMATE CHANGE AND RESILIENCY



I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A. 2025 UPDATE CREATING A CLIMATE CHANGE & RESILIENCY ELEMENT

The Climate Change & Resiliency Element is a new chapter for the Town's Comprehensive Plan intended to address climate change preparedness and adaptation. Climate change refers to long-term shifts in regional temperature and weather patterns. While these can be naturally occurring, human activities associated with energy and land use can increase greenhouse gas emissions. These human activities have primarily driven changes over the past 200 years. Consequences of climate change, particularly relevant to Ulysses, include increased droughts, fires, flooding, and catastrophic storms. These severe events can affect our health, agricultural productivity, housing, and safety. This element examines the current and projected impacts of climate change and offers tools to help with decision making for adapting to climate change. It's based on several guiding laws, policies, planning efforts, and community guidance, including the following:

- Tompkins County Countywide Planning Policies
- 2008 Route 96 Corridor Management Study
- 2001 Cayuga Lake Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan
- 2023 New York State Hazard Mitigation Plan – MitigateNY
- 2019 Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act
- 2022 Tompkins County Resiliency and Recovery Plan
- 2021 Tompkins County Hazard Mitigation Plan Update
- 2004 Cayuga Lake Local Waterfront Revitalization Program: Cayuga Lake Waterfront Plan
- Public outreach and visioning comments received as part of the public participation process for the plan update.

This element is not meant to be free-standing; it relates to a number of other elements in a complementary manner. In particular, the elements concerning transportation, land use, housing, natural resources, and community well-being all have issues involving climate change and resiliency.

B. IMPLEMENTATION OF CLIMATE CHANGE & RESILIENCY SINCE THE 2009 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ADOPTION

The 2009 Comprehensive Plan did not include a Climate Change and Resiliency segment. The Town of Ulysses realizes the adverse impacts that climate change and natural disasters have on the natural environment, built environment, and residents, emphasizing the importance of implementing planning actions. Including a Climate Change and Resiliency priority area in the Comprehensive Plan serves to provide guidance to help reduce GHG emissions, prepare for climate emergencies, and improve our resilience to natural disasters and adverse impacts related to climate change. Goals, objectives, and actions will align with regional and state initiatives to reduce the impacts of climate change and identify opportunities for collaboration to achieve goals set forth by Tompkins County and New York State.

II. PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES INFLUENCING ULYSSES' CLIMATE CHANGE AND RESILIENCY ELEMENT

A. TOMPKINS COUNTYWIDE PLANNING POLICIES

The Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan includes planning principles centered around sustainability and resiliency. Planning principles focus on making sure Tompkins County is a place where natural features and working rural landscapes are preserved and enhanced, ensuring energy systems meet community needs without contributing additional greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, and ensuring all communities

are prepared for the economic, environmental, and social impacts of climate change.

The Tompkins County Hazard Mitigation Plan focuses on improving the resiliency of systems that support public health and sustainable development, increasing partnerships that improve hazard risk knowledge and mitigation, protecting and restoring natural ecosystems to reduce flood risk, enhancing mitigation collaboration and coordination among emergency service agencies to further support life safety and economic resiliency, and promoting and strengthening healthy and equitable environments for all residents with special considerations for those who are socially and physically vulnerable.

CLIMATE PRIORITIES AND CONCERNS AT-A-GLANCE

- Climate change preparedness and hazard mitigation
- Need to plan for climate extremes and migration
- Impacts of climate change on water quality and natural resources
- Incorporating green/ sustainable construction practices
- Impacts of Harmful Algae Blooms (HABs)
- Effects of climate change on historic resources and Unique Natural Areas (UNAs)
- Affordability of solar on a residential scale
- Expanding the presence of EV charging stations
- Local and regional coordination for climate change preparedness and resilience
- Needed expansion of composting, recycling and reuse
- Reducing carbon use and increasing resiliency in Town operations

B. ULYSSES VISIONING EFFORTS

During the visioning phase of the comprehensive planning process, various exercises were conducted to facilitate feedback from the public about climate change and resiliency. The following topics were brought up as priorities that the comprehensive plan update should focus on:

- Clarity and promotion of climate change preparedness and hazard mitigation
- Planning for climate extremes and climate migration, perhaps through a Climate Action Plan
- Assessing the impacts of climate change on water quality and natural resources
- Incentives for incorporating green/sustainable construction practices
- Addressing Harmful Algae Blooms (HABs) and mitigating their impact on water quality
- Climate change preparedness to protect historic resources and Unique Natural Areas (UNAs)
- Affordable solar (residential scale)
- Expanding EV charging
- Partnering with local and regional entities on climate change preparedness and resilience initiatives
- Expanding composting, recycling, and reuse efforts
- Carbon reduction and greater resiliency for Town operations

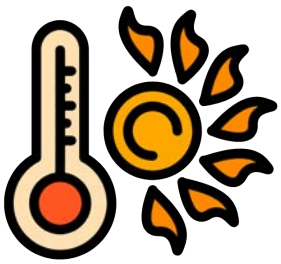
In the community survey, 48.6% of respondents indicated that they are "neutral" in satisfaction with the Town's climate change preparedness efforts, while 27.7% indicated they are satisfied, and 23.7% indicated they are unsatisfied. 63% of respondents indicated they were satisfied with the Town's waste, recycling, and materials management.

When asked about how important certain issues are when considering the future growth of Ulysses, 60% of respondents indicated that climate change preparedness was important to them. 58% of respondents also indicated that hazard mitigation & emergency preparedness is important to them.

III. INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS OF EXISTING AND PROJECTED CLIMATE CHANGE AND RESILIENCY NEEDS

A. EXISTING CLIMATE CONDITIONS AND RESOURCES

Like much of central and upstate New York, the Town of Ulysses has a humid continental climate and experiences four distinct seasons. The Köppen climate classification scheme divides climates into five main climate groups: A (tropical), B (arid), C (temperate), D (continental), and E (polar). The second letter indicates the seasonal precipitation type, while the third letter indicates the level of heat. Ulysses has both Dfa and Dfb Köppen-Geiger classifications. Along the lakefront it is categorized as Dfa, while the rest of Town is categorized as Dfb. Regions classified as Dfa have a hot summer and humid continental climate. Similarly, regions classified as Dfb have warm summers with a humid continental climate.



According to the 2024 New York State Climate Impact Assessment, since the 20th century, average temperatures in New York State have increased by almost 2.6 degrees Fahrenheit.[1]

1. *Stevens, A., & Lamie, C., Eds. (2024). New York State Climate Impacts Assessment: Understanding and preparing for our changing climate. https://nysclimateimpacts.org*

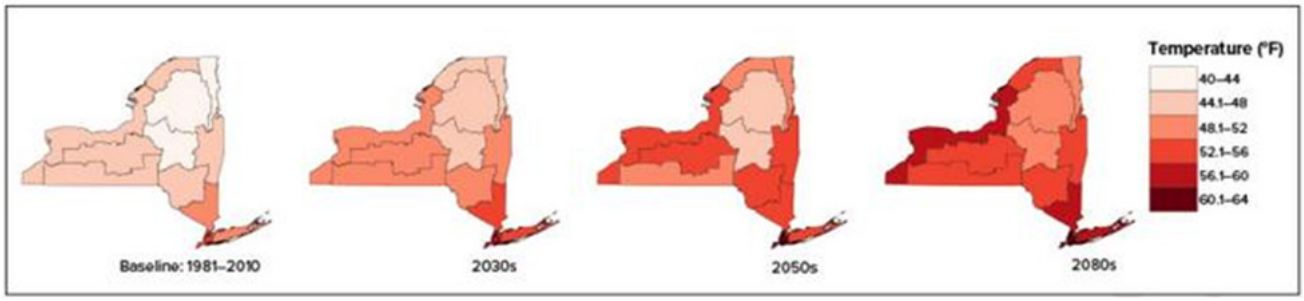
According to this assessment, average annual precipitation has also increased. **Even with initiatives underway to limit our greenhouse gas emissions, average temperatures and precipitation will continue to increase, likely resulting in more frequent and intense rainstorms, seasonal droughts, and heat waves.**

In the Central/Finger Lakes region, average temperatures are projected to increase between 4.6 and 6.4 degrees Fahrenheit by the 2050s, compared with the 1981–2010 average. This increase in average temperatures means there will be more days over 90 degrees Fahrenheit (24 to 42 days per year compared to a historical average of nine) and fewer days below freezing (78 to 110 days compared to a historical average of 134). Warmer winter temperatures also mean less precipitation will fall as snow and more will fall as rain. However, changing weather patterns mean more of this precipitation will fall in heavy bursts, leading to flash flooding. Short-term droughts could increase, lasting weeks to months.

Warmer air temperatures could also lead to an increase in Cayuga Lake's surface water temperature, resulting in thermal stratification (i.e., an increased difference between surface and deep-water temperatures). Stratification prevents the water from mixing, harming aquatic life. At the same time, warmer lake temperatures provide the ideal environment for cyanobacteria and algae to thrive, contributing to harmful algal blooms that create health risks for swimming and fishing, and can impact the local economy that depends on water-based recreation.

Figure CR-1

Projected Annual Average Temperature in New York State



Source: 2024 New York State Climate Impacts Assessment

Climate change impacts will affect all Ulysses residents but can be unevenly distributed due to social and economic factors and thus disproportionally affect residents with fewer resources or support systems. For example, some households may not be able to afford air conditioning and are more likely to suffer from heat-related illnesses. Evacuation in an extreme event may be more difficult due to transportation and lodging costs and rebuilding afterwards may be more difficult.

Climate Change willl also likely impact agricultural production. **Extreme heat and prolonged periods of rain can have adverse impacts on farming, especially during crucial farming periods, such as planting and harvesting.** For example, warmer temperatures in late winter could cause grapevines and other fruit crops to blossom early; a late spring frost can then damage the crop. In 2014, wine growers in the region lost up to two-thirds of their crop due to spring frost. The spring frost in 2023 was also particularly bad for wine growers in the region due to unusually high temperatures in the 80s in April. Other types of farmers are also likely to be affected. For example, high temperature and humidity can lead to heat stress in dairy cows, reducing milk production, and in severe cases, resulting in illness or death.

Ulysses was previously designated as a Bronze Certified Climate Smart Community. A Bronze Level designation is the initial level of certification for local governments that have demonstrated their commitment to climate action and have taken steps to implement climate-smart policies and projects.

Ulysses was previously designated as a Bronze Certified Climate Smart Community. A Bronze Level designation is the initial level of certification for local governments that have demonstrated their commitment to climate action and have taken steps to implement climate-smart policies and projects. To be designated a certification level, points must be earned for the completion of selected priority actions and pledge elements. The point requirement for being a Bronze level designation is 120 points. The Town of Ulysses earned 149 points in 2018 and was certified on September 28, 2018. Some benefits of being designated a Climate Smart Community include State-level recognition for community leadership, streamlined access to resources, and can elevate or score to be more competitive for grants, especially NYSDEC grants. Certification actions can improve air quality, increase energy efficiency and independence, and conserve green space for recreation and biodiversity. The Conservation and Sustainability Advisory Council (CSAC) is working through renewal efforts to stay certified and the Town remains committed to participation in the Climate Smart Communities Program. Ulysses has also been a participant in the NYS Clean Energy Communities Program. The CSAC

SUSTAINABLE TOWN ACTIVITIES (EXAMPLES)

1. 100% Renewable Energy for municipal building:

- Roof mounted solar at Town Hall and Highway Barn.
- Installation of a ground mount solar array (in progress)

2. Buildings and facilities:

- Air-source heat pumps for the Town Hall and Highway Barn HVAC system.
- LED lighting
- Energy Recovery Ventilation system in Town Hall

3. One Electric Vehicle used for various Town activities.
4. Two publicly accessible electric charging stations at Town Hall
5. Conversion of all ten town-owned incandescent powered streetlights to LED powered streetlights.
6. Government Operations Greenhouse Gas Inventory, Government Building Energy Audit, and Municipal Building Benchmarking.

has primarily led these efforts and is currently designated as a Three Star Clean Energy Community. To date Ulysses has recieved approximately $265,000.00 in grant funding from these two programs.

The Town is fully committed to providing clean energy and a sustainable future for all its citizens. The Town has proactively taken action to increase municipal energy efficiency and greenhouse gas reduction, and will continue to do so in the future.

The 2021 Tompkins County Hazard Mitigation Plan Update included a hazard profile and vulnerability assessment of the infestation of invasive species. NYSDEC defines invasive species as non-native plant and animal species that can cause harm to the environment, the economy, or human health. Not only do invasive species threaten biodiversity, they can also cause or result in the following:

- Habitat degradation and loss
- The loss of native fish, wildlife, tree, and plant species
- The loss of recreational opportunities and income
- Impact water quality
- Crop damage and diseases in humans and livestock
- Risks to public health and safety (NYSDEC 2018)

Appendix E features a list of animals, plants, insects, and pathogens that have impacted natural areas of the Finger Lakes Region identified in the Tompkins County Hazard Mitigation Plan Update. Giant Hogweed, Hydrilla, Sirex Woodwasp (SW), Asian Longhorned Beetles (ALB), Spotted lanternfly (Lycorma deliculta), and Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) are a few of the invasive species that are of special concern within Tompkins County. Hydrilla can especially be a threat to residents along the coast of Cayuga Lake, as this weed can grow up to an inch per day, and as a result, produce dense mats of vegetation. According to the Tompkins County Hazard Mitigation Plan Update, the mats of vegetation can prevent sunlight from entering the water and absorb oxygen, causing uninhabitable aquatic environments. Waterfront communities are vulnerable to potential economic impacts as Hydrilla has the ability to degrade the overall waterbody, devalue waterfront property, and hinder tourism activity.

Giant Hogweed is known to invade old fields and native habitats such as open woodlands. It's a threat to residents because brushing against or breaking the plant releases sap that, combined with sunlight and moisture, can cause a severe burn within 24 to 48 hours.

Dry weather and droughts for prolonged periods of time can lead to wildfires. Wildfires can burn and spread among natural or unnatural vegetation with the ability to threaten lives and property. This can especially be a threat to farmers and their crops. The NYS Hazard Mitigation Plan identified wildfires as a hazard of concern. As of October 2025, Tompkins County was not included in any FEMA wildfire-related disaster declarations. The Tompkins County Hazard Mitigation Plan identified wildfires as a potential threat that could happen, but not as a hazard that would pose a significant threat to Tompkins County.

Organizations Involved in Climate Change and Resiliency Initiatives

Various organizations at the local, regional, and state level are involved in climate change and resiliency initiatives. These organizations provide a variety of tools and resources made available to the public to aid municipalities, institutions, and the public in decision making pertaining to climate change preparedness, adaptation, mitigation, and resiliency.

LOCAL

Local Organizations

- Town of Ulysses Conservation and Sustainability Advisory Council (CSAC)
- Town of Ulysses Water Source Protection Plan Committee (WSPPC)
- Town of Ulysses Habitat Nature Preserve Advisory Committee (HNPAC)
- Town of Ulysses Bee Friendly Community Committee (BFCC)
- Town of Ulysses Tree Advisory Council

Regional Organizations

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

REGIONAL

- Cornell University
- Cornell Cooperative Extension
- Cornell Climate Smart Farming Team
- Tompkins County Climate Protection Initiative (TCCPI)
- Tompkins County Planning & Sustainability
- Tompkins County Emergency Preparedness

STATE

State Organizations

- New York Rural Water Association (NYRWA)
- New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA)
- New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC)
- New York State Association of Conservation Commission (NYSACC)

Other Organizations

- Ithaca Neighborhood Housing Services
- Local Solar farms
- Tompkins County Soil and Water
- Cayuga Lake Watershed Network
- Environmental Management Council

Online Resources

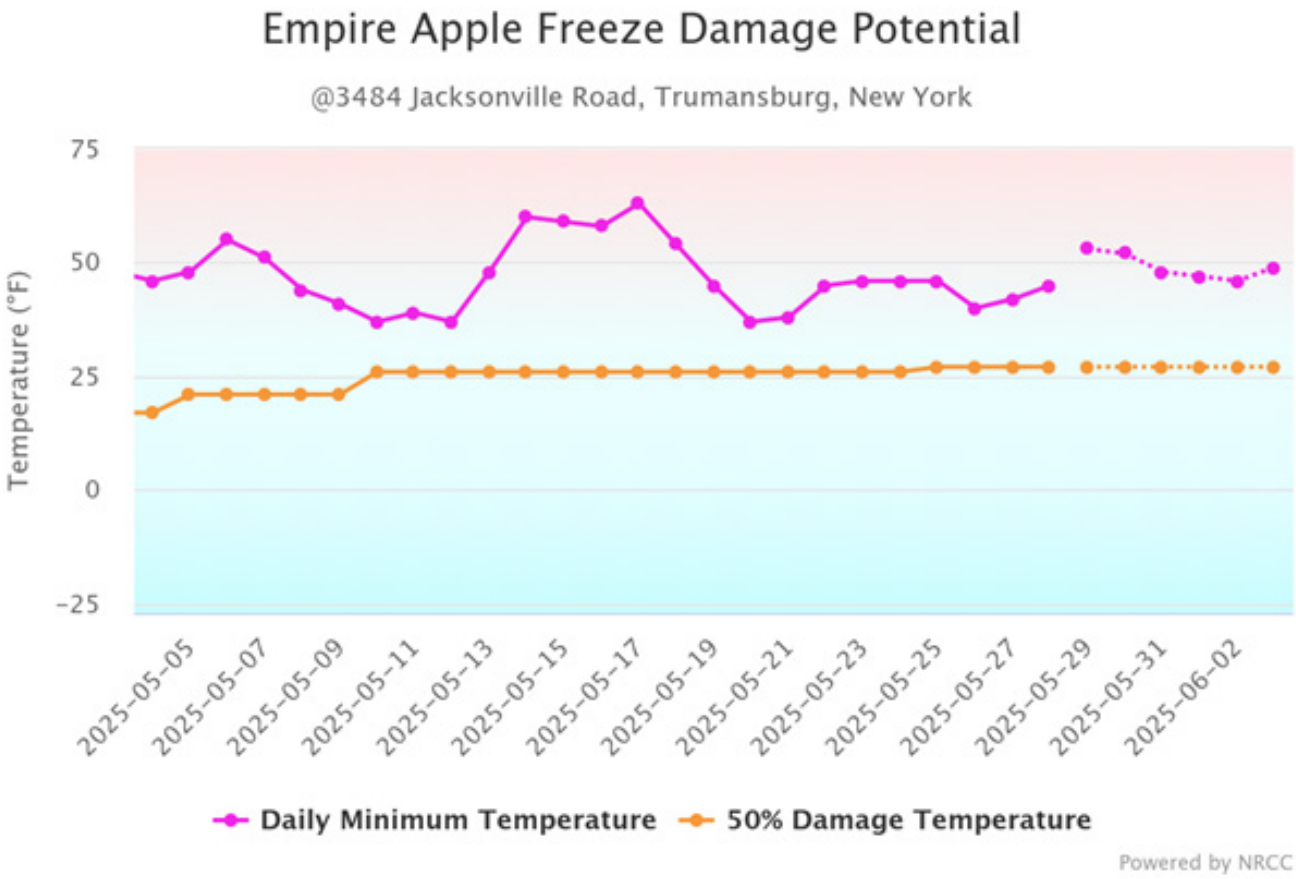
In the last decade, different online tools, climate action plans, and best practices have been launched to proactively prepare for climate change, analyze trends, and aid leaders in decision making. In addition to these tools, programs such as the Climate Smart Communities Program and the Clean Energy Communities programs have also helped municipalities become more sustainable and reduce their carbon footprint.

Climate Smart Farming

Climate Smart Farming (CSF) is a voluntary initiative of Cornell University that focuses on helping farmers increase agricultural productivity and sustainable farming incomes while reducing GHG emissions through best management practices. CSF offers a variety of online resources, such as climate smart farming tools, online courses, adaptation strategies, mitigation strategies, and other State and Federal resources. The Climate Smart Farming tools provided are intended to help farmers make informed decisions about production systems based on location-specific climate data, weather forecasts, and future outlooks. Figure CR-2 shows an example of a projection generated from the CSF Apple State & Freeze Damage Probability Tool. This tool is designed to give a graphical view of freeze risk, with a 6-day forecast included, based on 10%, 50%, and 90% damage temperature, for a variety of apple cultivars.

New York State Climate Impacts Assessment

Figure CR-2



This online assessment offers a snapshot of climate impacts in the Central/Finger Lakes Region. Looking at climate change threats through a regional lens allows us to understand regional climate projections and impacts, and provides insight to where regional collaboration opportunities exist for future initiatives. Additionally, case studies are shared giving detailed examples of other Finger Lake communities and industries that have experienced similar impacts and how they developed their adaptation strategies.

B. CHALLENGES FOR CLIMATE CHANGE & RESILIENCY CLIMATE CHANGE PREPAREDNESS

The County and State have invested in hazard mitigation planning and/or climate action preparedness planning. Through Tompkins County, Ulysses has a hazard mitigation plan in place to help reduce loss from future hazard events. However, the Town does not have a climate action plan. While not required, having these types of plans in place can help with proactively preparing for climate challenges, emergencies, and natural disasters much more effectively.

Climate Change Impacts to Recreation and Tourism

While the public enjoys different outdoor activities year-round, some seasonal activities can be impacted by climate change. With warming temperatures, especially lingering into the winter months, this can negatively impact snow-related activities that depend on snow and cold temperatures. While some winter activities may have a shorter period to be enjoyed, warmer spring and fall temperatures could potentially result in a longer season for cycling, hiking along the Black Diamond Trail, and other warm-weather activities like boating in Cayuga Lake. During the summer months, warm water and a large amount of rainfall can cause harmful algae blooms, resulting in limited recreational activities and tourism. The northeast particularly is popular in the fall for fall foliage and associated activities, however, warm temperatures can put foliage viewing at risk. Regionally, climate change could alter the timing and duration of fall foliage, with the potential of dying off without changing color, which can negatively impact fall tourism.

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2. *Cornell University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences; Climate Smart Farming Program*

Agritourism activities can also be negatively impacted by climate change. Excessive rain can damage crops and fields that are dependent on agritourism, which can delay these activities from occurring and place a financial burden on farmers.

Climate Change Impacts to Agriculture

Climate change can still have an impact on agricultural operations. Even though global temperatures have increased, spring frosts and freezes are not receding as quickly as flowering is advancing due to warmer temperatures, resulting in increased risk for damaging cold snaps.[2] This requires special attention to monitoring the level of freeze tolerance of crops over time and assessing the level of frost injury to crops impacted by freezing/sub-freezing temperatures.

Increased precipitation can also negatively impact agricultural operations. Flooding can cause damage to crops, delay planting, and impact harvesting operations. Heavy rain events can result in soil loss from erosion and contaminate waterways with agricultural runoff. Additionally, extreme weather events such as heavy rain and wind can damage barns, structures, and equipment that are needed for successful agricultural operations. Without nearby servicing facilities, this can delay farming operations and pose a challenge for farmers who have to send away their equipment for servicing, especially if it is for a long duration of time.

Climate Change Impacts to Vulnerable Populations

While the impacts of climate change affect everyone, certain populations are more vulnerable than others. Vulnerable communities are challenged with not being able to physically and/or financially react to natural disasters compared to everyone else. Individuals with disabilities, low-income households, and individuals 65 and older can be especially affected by the impacts of climate change. Air quality can have adverse impacts on individuals with chronic illnesses (such as asthma) and those 65 and older. Vulnerable populations will have unique needs that need to be accommodated when engaging in climate change preparedness and hazard mitigation planning. A spatial understanding of overall social vulnerability in Tompkins County, as well as vulnerability at the census-tract level, is provided in Appendix C.

C. PROJECTED CLIMATE CHANGE & RESILIENCY NEEDS

- Developing a Climate Action Plan
- Encouraging the use of more renewable resources to reduce Ulysses' carbon footprint
- Collaborating with local, regional, and state partners to implement climate change preparedness, hazard mitigation, and resiliency efforts
- Increasing public awareness of climate change impacts and actively communicate local climate change preparedness efforts
- Enhancing energy efficiency throughout Ulysses, especially with new residential and commercial development
- Developing climate change and hazard mitigation strategies for agricultural operations
- Improving resiliency to climate impacts, especially for vulnerable populations
- Exploring incentivizing the use of green infrastructure and sustainable development practices for commercial development

IV.GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

The following section contains the goals, objectives, and policies for the Climate Change and Resiliency Element of the Comprehensive Plan. This section states the Town's policies for addressing climate change preparedness and resiliency needs. This section also provides recommendations for local, regional, state, and federal resources that can be utilized to implement goals centered around climate change preparedness and resiliency. Goals, objectives, and policies also focus on collaborative opportunities with local and regional partners to create alignment with initiatives at the Town and Regional level. State plans and guidelines can be helpful templates for structuring plans and initiatives and ensure they align with State goals for climate change preparedness and resiliency.

Goal:

CR-G-1 Collaborate with local and regional partners to implement climate change preparedness and adaptation efforts.

Objective:

CR-O-1.1 Establish and strengthen connections with local and regional partners and discuss opportunities for collaboration that address climate change challenges and resiliency initiatives. Work with Town leadership, key stakeholders, and residents to explore options for expanding water access.

Policies:

CR-P-1.1.1	Actively communicate with the Village of Trumansburg, Tompkins County, institutions, and organizations about collaborative opportunities that address greenhouse gases and energy use reduction challenges. Use these connections and insights to assist the community in reducing energy cost and use.

CR-P-1.1.2	Collaborate with Tompkins County to assess how Ulysses can contribute to addressing regional challenges and implementing policies outlined in the "Cleaner Greener Southern Tier Regional Sustainability Plan."
CR-P-1.1.3	Connect local farmers with Cornell's Climate Smart Farming Program to learn about Climate Smart Farming tools that assist them with decision making for agricultural operations.
CR-P-1.1.4	Work with the Trumansburg Central School District, Ithaca City School District, nearby institutions, and engage citizens to create opportunities to learn about climate change and resiliency. Collaborate with nearby institutions to create volunteer opportunities for students interested in this field.
CR-P-1.1.5	Work with Tompkins County on strengthening recycling and reuse services and opportunities both in the County and the Town of Ulysses.

Goal:

CR-G-2 Increase climate change adaptation, mitigation, and preparedness efforts and public awareness

Objective:

CR-O-2. Actively communicate with the public on climate change preparedness initiatives that the Town is pursuing at the local and regional scale.

Policies:

CR-P-2.1.1	Create a Climate Action Plan by collaborating with regional and county agencies.
CR-P-2.1.2	Communicate with residents about climate change preparedness, sustainability initiatives, and the work of Town committees and regional partners.
CR-P-2.1.3	Research the feasibility of incorporating renewable resources throughout the Town.
CR-P-2.1.4	Gather feedback from the public on climate change impacts they are facing and how it's affecting their quality of life.

CR-P-2.1.5	Develop a volunteer group with the Habitat Nature Preserve Advisory Committee and the Bee Friendly Community Committee to lead scheduled tours of significant natural areas in the Town. Invite landowners to participate by welcoming tour groups on their land, where necessary.
CR-P-2.1.6	Work with the Village of Trumansburg on developing a coordinated, Town wide emergency preparedness plan that incorporates hazard mitigation efforts.
CR-P-2.1.7	Improve Ulysses' hazard preparedness by proactively sharing information and best practices with property owners and encourage them to take preventive actions in areas that are especially susceptible to hazards. Work with the County to implement Town specific hazard mitigation projects identified in the Tompkins County Hazard mitigation plan.
CR-P-2.1.8	Collaborate with necessary agencies to educate the public on specific, individual, and household natural disaster preparedness and recovery activities.
CR-P-2.1.9	Support public education initiatives related to agriculture, environmental stewardship, transportation safety, and climate resilience through partnerships with local institutions, community organizations, and regional agencies.

Goal:

CR-G-3 Reduce adverse impacts to natural resources and ecosystems caused by climate variability.

Objective:

CR-O-3.1 Identify opportunities to mitigate adverse impacts to the natural environment.

Policies:

CR-P-3.1.1	Identify opportunities to improve carbon sequestration and storage in forests, wetlands, and soils.
CR-P-3.1.2	Identify opportunities to enhance the enforcement of ordinances, regulations, and other mechanisms that can facilitate resilient and sustainable construction standards.

Objective:

CR-O-3.2 Explore opportunities for incorporating sustainable development practices, recycling, and reuse strategies to improve community resiliency.

Policies:

CR-P-3.2.1	Identify ways to incorporate hazard mitigation into land-use planning and natural resource management.
CR-P-3.2.2	Expand composting and recycling opportunities throughout Ulysses. Encourage and educate the public on compositing, recycling, and reuse practice benefits.
CR-P-3.2.3	Promote resilient and sustainable land use practices to increase overall natural resilience.
CR-P-3.2.4	Encourage the material reuse of salvageable construction materials, which reduces carbon emissions and environmental waste.

CR-P-3.2.5	Consider adopting a deconstruction ordinance and incentives like fast tracking building permits for deconstruction sites. Utilize CROWD for assistance.
CR-P-3.2.6	Promote renewable energy development, including community solar, rooftop solar, battery storage, distributed energy resources, and other local clean energy opportunities.
CR-P-3.2.7	Identify suitable parking lots and flat rooftop locations and encourage property owners to install solar energy systems.
CR-P-3.2.8	Explore opportunities to promote renewable and environmentally-friendly energy sources in the Town, in alignment with the New York State Energy Plan.

Objective:

CR-O-3.3 Protect water quality and reduce impacts of flooding throughout Ulysses.

Policies:

CR-P-3.3.1	Share resources from FEMA and other agencies that provide mitigation strategies for homeowners to reduce flooding impacts.
CR-P-3.3.2	Complete a Town-wide hydrology study to assess climate change impacts on Cayuga lake, tributaries, and water resources.
CR-P-3.3.3	Promote awareness and facilitate public information on harmful algae bloom occurrences and contributing factors, in collaboration with local and regional Non-government organization's, watershed organizations, and the New York State Departmnt of Environmental Conservation.
CR-P-3.3.4	Continue to engage municipal staff in training on stormwater management regulations and techniques.

Goal:

CR-G-4 Identify vulnerabilities and impacts of climate change and extreme weather and ways to reduce adverse impacts.

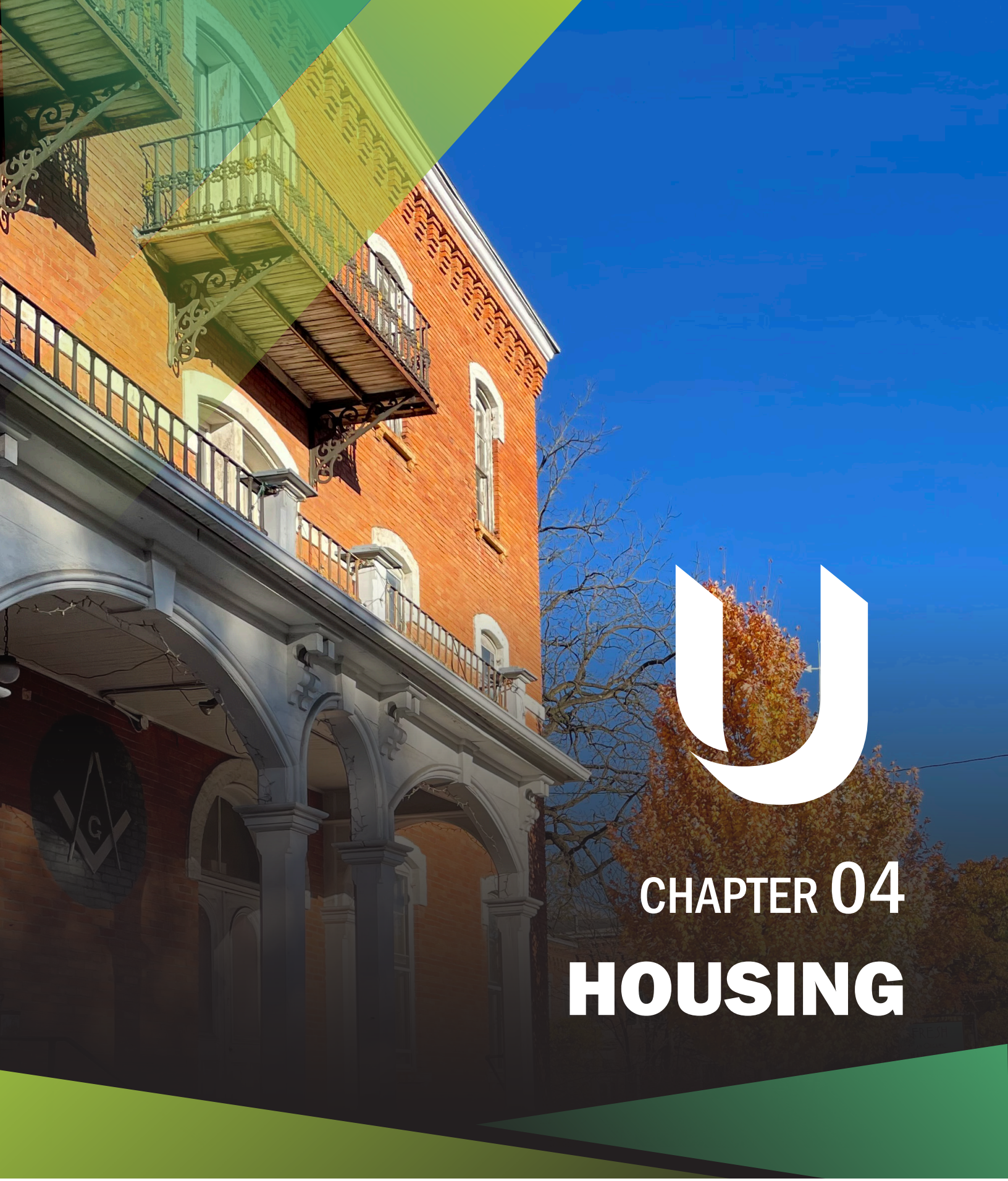
Objective:

CR-O-4.1 Inventory and assess vulnerabilities and other impacts related to climate change and extreme weather. Develop adaptation strategies and work with partners on implementation.

Policies:

CR-P-4.1.1	Conduct a Climate Vulnerability Assessment based on current and future climate hazards. Work to identify those individuals and groups most physically and socially vulnerable to local hazard risk. Prioritize vulnerabilities to identify appropriate adaptation strategies. Consider working with the Climate Smart Communities program for funding assistance to implement the study.
CR-P-4.1.2	Assess potential impacts of climate change hazards on infrastructure. Consider incorporating Climate Protection Levels (CPLs) into building codes and/or future design standards. CPLs are measures aimed at enhancing building resilience and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, thereby mitigating the impacts of climate change.
CR-P-4.1.3	Develop a Climate Action Plan that is in alignment with the Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan and other regional initiatives/plans.
CR-P-4.1.4	Support County Emergency Management's efforts related to community preparedness requirements and response. Advocate for preparedness needs specific to Ulysses, especially planning for vulnerable populations.
CR-P-4.1.5	Minimize the loss of human life and structures from flooding and erosion hazards by implementing management measures outlined in the Cayuga Lake LWRP.

CR-P-4.1.6	Educate the public on invasive species, especially those found in Ulysses, and the impacts they can have on residents and the natural environment.
CR-P-4.1.7	Conduct a community wide greenhouse gas inventory.



CHAPTER 04
HOUSING

I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A. 2025 UPDATE CREATING A NEW HOUSING ELEMENT

The Housing Element is a new chapter for the Town's Comprehensive Plan derived from the following guiding laws, policies, planning efforts, and community guidance:

- Consolidated Laws of New York
- Tompkins County Countywide Planning Policies
- Tompkins County Housing Strategy
- Tompkins County 2024 Housing Snapshot
- Tompkins County Economic Development Strategy
- 2024 New York State Housing Compact

"...Affordable housing is a critical foundation to economic development."

Public outreach and visioning comments received as part of the public participation process for the plan update illustrated that the community believes issues relating to housing are serious and need addressing. Specifically, during the community survey, the Town discovered dissastifaction with the range of housing options available in Ulysses.

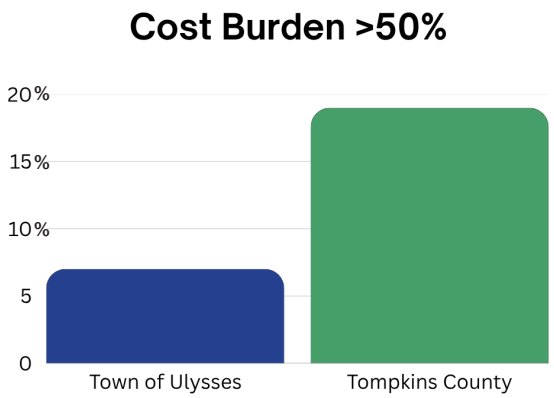
The Town has expressed the desire to become more environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable. To help achieve this vision, the Town must consider the influence that housing may have on overall sustainability. Housing units, depending on their various built characteristics, can have different energy use impacts which might encourage more environmentally friendly transportation choices. The Town's housing stock can also improve economic sustainability by creating or expanding affordable housing options, which encourages a larger labor pool and employers to invest in the community. Housing can also create social sustainability by integrating a diverse population or providing housing that ensures vulnerable populations have access to safe, healthy, and affordable living conditions. These considerations of how housing influences sustainability will be explored throughout this element.

The Town believes that all people should have access to housing that is sustainable, meaning that it is among other characteristics, safe, affordable, and accessible. As the number of Ulysses households grow, its housing supply must expand and diversify to meet the needs of every household, offering accessible, affordable, and inclusive options for all demographics, including federal, state, and locally protected classes. Protected classes include families with children, older adults, people with disabilities, etc. The Town will need to proactively work to ensure people are able to remain in their neighborhoods with their established community resources and institutions, and ensure quality housing options exist throughout the Town for people of all backgrounds.

Housing within a community must be diverse. Within each phase of a person's life their demands for housing and the qualities of that housing will be different. A young college graduate might want a rental property that is small and convenient to nearby amenities. That same graduate upon beginning a family might want to purchase a larger house on a large lot in a quiet section of Town. Then 30 years later, after the kids have grown and left, this person might want to downsize to a smaller home with less maintenance and underutilized space. Finally, perhaps if this person loses independence, they may move into a child's home for caretaking or may enter an assisted living facility or senior community. This path is not followed by everyone, but it illustrates that apartments, single-family homes, townhomes, accessory dwelling units (in-law apartments), and residential communities and facilities provide housing choices to residents so that their needs can be met as their circumstances change.

When housing is scarce, it can cause prices to rise, which can affect any potential homebuyer and affects marginalized populations the most. Over time, homeowners can gain significant wealth that they can pass down to their descendants, while renters and new homeowners face an increasing risk of becoming housing-cost burdened. The result is significant economic disparity. Addressing injustices and protecting all residents, especially marginalized populations, is a primary focus of the Housing Element of this Plan and is a key component of creating socially sustainable housing.

Figure H-1



Severely Cost Burdened Households within the Town of Ulysses and Tompkins County as a percent of total households. Source: US HUD Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) data, 2017-2021.

One way the Town can work to create social sustainability and equity is by creating and preserving affordable housing for all income levels that will result in economically diverse neighborhoods. Creating this type of housing is particularly important for lower-income households who are most adversely affected by rising housing costs.

Creating this type of housing is also a way to expand housing options in historically unaffordable neighborhoods with access to jobs, schools, and transit. As the Town develops, evaluates, and implements land use and housing policies and programs, it will engage historically underrepresented communities in the process. By collaborating with the larger community on these projects, the Town should aim to help reverse known trends of social inequity.

When this Plan refers to "affordable housing," it generally means housing that households can afford without sacrificing essential needs like food and health care.

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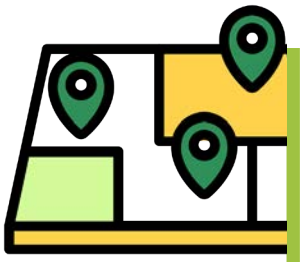
When this Plan refers to "affordable housing," it generally means housing that households can afford without sacrificing essential needs like food and health care. The federal definition of "affordable" by the Department of Housing and Urban Development is housing on which the occupant is paying no more than 30% of gross income for housing costs, including utilities. When this document refers to "cost burdened," this means households paying over 30% of their income on their monthly housing cost, including utilities. When this document mentions "severe cost burden," it means the household is paying over 50% of their income on housing costs, including utilities. See the table below for estimates of monthly housing costs as 30% of income for low-income households in the Ithaca MSA. Affordable housing includes rent/income-restricted housing, as well as housing that is low cost without any subsidy or incentive.

Table H-1

	Persons in Family					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Extremely Low (30%) Income Limits ($)	$633	$723	$813	$903	$975	$1,079
Very Low (50%) Income Limits ($)	$1,054	$1,204	$1,354	$1,504	$1,625	$1,745
Low (80%) Income Limits ($)	$1,685	$1,925	$2,166	$2,406	$2,599	$2,791

Estimated Maximum Monthly Housing Expenses as 30% of Income for Low Income Households. Source: HUD Income Limits, FY 2025.



Local zoning regulations can have a substantial impact on housing price, typology, and general availability.

The Town must keep in mind that resident incomes are also being consumed by goods that are increasing in price, such as health care, higher education, vehicle ownership, and groceries. Even if housing costs are kept to 30%, residents may struggle with the bundle of goods they must consume.

B. IMPLEMENTATION OF HOUSING POLICIES SINCE THE 2009 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The 2009 Comprehensive Plan provided a few actions specifically related to housing and zoning changes. In 2019, the Town revised the Zoning Ordinance in its entirety. As SEQR and state law require that zoning conform with the Comprehensive Plan, it is assumed that the relevant goals within the 2009 Comprehensive Plan were addressed as part of this process.

Local zoning regulations can have a substantial impact on housing price, typology, and general availability. Generally speaking, requirements that necessitate more land, floor area, materials, or time to develop housing will reduce the supply and make housing more expensive. Additionally, some local regulations restrict what types of housing can be permitted, such as townhouses, apartments, small units, or mixed-use projects. As people age or general circumstances change throughout life, the demand for different types of housing changes. Allowing different options allows the local market to reflect the diverse demand for housing within communities.

The Town has very permissive standards for accessory dwelling units, which are a great asset to promoting this useful housing typology. Also, because the Town does not establish minimum off-street parking requirements, housing can be produced and rented at lower rates.

In the 2009 Town of Ulysses Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Plan, areas are identified as "Village Residential" or "Mixed-Use Hamlet." The Village Residential area is characterized by a variety of residential types, including multi-family, townhouses, and single-family units, as well as bed and breakfast establishments or small-scale commercial uses. The plan specifically says the Village Residential area should have smaller lots. The Mixed-Use Hamlet area is characterized as single-family residential units, townhouses, multi-family residential units, commercial uses, mixed-use buildings, community facilities and social institutions, plus parks and open space.

However, the current zoning could be improved to better reflect these goals. Within the current Residential Zoning district, which covers much of the land within the 2009 Village Residential area, the minimum required lot area is nearly one acre. This minimum lot size will create sprawling residential development patterns in these areas while not protecting environmentally sensitive areas or agricultural operations. Similarly, the Hamlet Neighborhood and Hamlet Center Zones, which cover much of the land within the Mixed-Use Hamlet area, could be improved to better support housing development by reducing the minimum lot area and allowing a greater diversity of housing options by-right. Multiple-Family Residences in these zoning districts require at least 1,000 square feet of open space per dwelling unit – which in some cases is more area than would be in each dwelling unit– which likely acts as a major deterrent to their development, and limits the ability of new development to fit into and contribute to the surrounding built environment. Within the Agricultural Zone that covers 75% of the Town, homes require 2-acre minimum lot sizes and 400 feet of lot frontage. Among other requirements, these standards legally require sprawling housing developments that increase costs, reduce walkable developments, and consume precious and irreplaceable agricultural or natural resources. The Town has a robust cluster subdivision ordinance that could be improved by requiring clusters without the need for a Planning Board determination.

C. 2045 POPULATION FORECASTS

The population in Tompkins County for 2045 is projected to be 116,286 in the Tompkins County Long Range Transportation Plan, which is an increase from the 2020 County population of 105,740. A specific breakout projection for municipalities is not provided in the plan. If the trend relative to the share of population continues, the Town of Ulysses would represent about 4.2% of the County's total population by 2045, making the Town's population an estimated 4,884.[1]

This population estimate is based on a linear projection of annualized growth from 1990 to 2020. It therefore does not factor in possible immediate or future immigration trends due to climate change or other extenuating circumstances like the impact the COVID-19 pandemic had on migration to the upstate NY area in 2020 and 2021.

1. *American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table B01003 showed 2021 Town of Ulysses at 4937, Tompkins County at 105,638. The same table showed for 2011, Town of Ulysses at 4898 and Tompkins county at 101033.*

II. PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES INFLUENCING ULYSSES' HOUSING ELEMENT

A. TOMPKINS COUNTYWIDE PLANNING POLICIES

Principal

Tompkins County has one principle and multiple policies to support housing as identified in its countywide comprehensive plan. The main housing principle states that Tompkins County will be a place where housing is affordable, safe, energy efficient, and appealing. Tompkins County identified numerous policies to support this housing principle. Policies include encouraging a variety of housing options, supporting new affordable developments for a range of income brackets, promoting energy efficient housing, providing housing for an aging population, improving the existing housing stock, and maintaining an adequate supply of housing for people requiring supportive services.

B.ULYSSES VISIONING EFFORTS

During engagement efforts focused on housing within the community, participants actively provided their insights, identifying key strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities.

Positive aspects highlighted by the public that are considered to be valuable assets to the local housing landscape include the established Crescent Way development, ongoing new construction initiatives, and the presence of well-maintained historic homes. The exercise also revealed several areas of concern, including a lack of diverse and affordable housing options, an overabundance of short-term rentals such as Airbnbs in the surrounding area, insufficient sewer and water infrastructure to support higher-density housing projects, a shortage of multifamily housing units, and general concerns regarding existing housing conditions.

Looking ahead, the community identified several potential threats to the housing environment, including the continued proliferation of short-term rentals, transportation safety issues in residential areas for pedestrians and motorists, and the challenges associated with sprawl. Challenges include water and sewer expansion, increased energy usage, and land consumption. Conversely, the public also offered a range of promising opportunities for improving housing within the community. These suggestions encompassed the development of more affordable housing options, the diversification of housing types available, the implementation of thoughtful new development, the creation of more senior housing options, and the undertaking of necessary infrastructure improvements.

The Town must consider multimodal travel options so that households without access to vehicles or with mobility impairments can still safely travel to destinations.

III. INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS OF EXISTING AND PROJECTED HOUSING NEEDS

A. HOUSING INVENTORY

Location

Beyond the critical nature of simply having shelter, housing must be near destinations. Work must be within a comfortable travel distance – usually no more than 30 minutes – and other destinations like groceries, parks, schools, and restaurants. These additional destinations must be near enough to be accessible, although perhaps not a daily destination. In the pursuit of equitable outcomes, the Town must consider multimodal travel options so that households without access to vehicles or with mobility impairments can still safely travel to destinations. Reducing transportation emissions is largely related to reducing vehicle miles traveled, so the Town can further its sustainability goals by encouraging housing development within a walkable distance to transit or destinations.[2]

2. *Building for proximity: The role of activity centers in reducing total miles traveled | Brookings. https://www.brookings.edu/articles/building-for-proximity-the-role-of-activity-centers-in-reducing-total-miles-traveled/*

Utilizing the Smart Location Database from the US EPA, within the Town, the most location efficient neighborhoods are around the periphery of the Village of Trumansburg and in the Southeast corner of the Town along the border with the Town of Ithaca. See the Smart Location Database Map for additional information (Appendix C). While not all areas of the Town should be densely populated with housing and jobs, the Town should consider whether the current distribution and amount are desirable.

Housing Characteristics

As mentioned above, diverse housing characteristics are desired by different residents at different times. Figure 3 below shows that the Town of Ulysses is not estimated to contain any 0 Bedroom (studio) apartments and has fewer than the County's number of 1-bedroom apartments. These units can be beneficial to communities by providing more affordable options. Each additional bedroom and additional square foot of living space generally translates into a higher price. By offering smaller units, residents can spend less money on housing, which allows them to use those funds for other important expenses.

Table H-2

	Bedrooms	
	Town of Ulysses	Tompkins County
Total:		
No bedroom	0.0%	4.4%
1 bedroom	7.4%	14.9%
2 bedrooms	22.8%	24.1%
3 bedrooms	48.3%	34.9%
4 bedrooms	19.9%	15.9%
5 or more bedrooms	1.6%	5.8%

Source: US Census Bureau, 2022 5 Year American Community Survey.

Table H-3 shows that the Town's housing is substantially single-family detached housing. Generally speaking, buildings with higher unit totals will only occur where land values are high and land availability is constrained – it is therefore not surprising and not an indication of failure that single-family homes are predominant. However, single-unit attached buildings (i.e. townhomes) and two-to-four-unit buildings are realistic options to create housing choices even within more rural areas. The Town of Ulysses provides fewer of these housing typologies as a percent of housing totals than the Region. Townhomes and small, multifamily options are currently prohibited building types through most of the Town due to zoning regulations, so their respective numbers may be less a result of consumer demand and market forces than regulatory burdens.

Table H-3

Housing Units By Units In Structure, 2023

	Town of Ulysses	Tompkins County	Southern Tier Region
Total	2,453	46,728	311,922
1, detached	75.8%	51.0%	63.6%
1, attached	0.4%	3.3%	1.9%
2	4.2%	8.9%	8.8%
3 or 4	4.6%	6.9%	5.2%
5 to 9	2.6%	7.5%	4.2%
10 to 19	1.7%	4.4%	2.3%
20 to 49	2.7%	4.9%	2.1%
50 or more	0.0%	5.4%	2.5%
Mobile home	8.1%	7.7%	9.4%
Boat, RV, van, etc.	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2022 American Community Survey.

The type and size of housing available will also impact the energy usage and sustainability of a household. While there are many determinants of a housing unit's energy efficiency, one of the simplest factors is the impact of exterior building exposure. Because energy transfers through exterior surfaces and penetrations, a housing unit with more exterior exposure will generally be less efficient. This means that multi-family buildings where each housing unit has fewer wall surfaces exposed to the exterior or small buildings which have less indoor climate to control, will generally be more efficient than large single-family detached housing units where the building is exposed on all sides. The Town can therefore reduce residential sector emissions by encouraging the supply of multifamily homes and smaller housing typologies.[3,4] Similarly dense housing types, particularly apartments, reduce the amount of impervious surface needed per housing unit, which reduces stormwater impacts and land conversion.

Figure H-2

Source. Location Efficiency and Housing Type. Jonathan Rose Companies LLC, with support from US EPA, Revised March 2011

3.. *Location Efficiency and Housing Type | US EPA. https://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/location-efficiency-and-housing-type*

4. *Material flows and GHG emissions from housing stock evolution in US counties, 2020–60 | Buildings & Cities. https://journal-buildingscities.org/articles/10.5334/bc.126*

Housing Age and Production

The Town of Ulysses has the oldest housing stock after the Southern Tier Region. Of the 2,453 houses accounted for over half, 56.9%, of homes in the Town were built prior to 1970. These homes have a higher likelihood of containing hazards like lead, radon, and asbestos. Homes built later than 2010 make up a small share of the housing stock in each geography. It's also important to note that as residents age, older structures are less likely to be ADA accessible and less easily renovated to accommodate disabled individuals due to narrower door frames and other designs.

However, there are benefits to maintaining an older stock of homes as well. Older homes, for various reasons, often have design elements or specific history and cultural relevance that help contribute to a sense of place. Also, when a home is demolished and rebuilt with new materials, it is often less sustainable due to the embodied energy loss caused by the demolition, in addition to the landfill waste from construction materials. For these reasons, the re-use of buildings is included as a strategy within the New York State Climate Action Council Scoping Plan. Further, older homes were often built with architectural details representative of a local vernacular which allows them to be more functional and responsive to the local climate. The Town recognizes that there are positives and negatives to the maintenance, demolition, or rebuilding of existing homes that should be navigated thoughtfully.

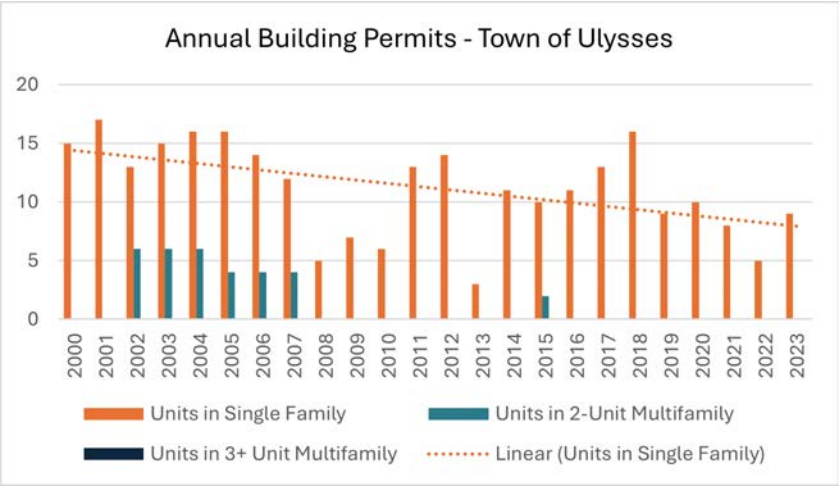
Table H-4

Housing Units By Year Structure Built, 2023

	Town of Ulysses	Tompkins County	Southern Tier Region
Built 2020 or later	0.0%	0.4%	0.1%
Built 2010 to 2019	5.3%	8.9%	4.0%
Built 2000 to 2009	4.9%	7.7%	5.9%
Built 1990 to 1999	13.7%	13.2%	9.0%
Built 1980 to 1989	8.0%	12.4%	10.9%
Built 1970 to 1979	11.2%	13.1%	12.8%
Built 1960 to 1969	6.8%	9.3%	10.6%
Built 1950 to 1959	12.3%	8.0%	11.1%
Built 1940 to 1949	5.3%	3.0%	6.0%
Built 1939 or earlier	32.5%	24.2%	29.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2022 American Community Survey.

Figure 3



Source: US Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2000-2023.

Based on building permit data available through the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, **the Town of Ulysses has seen reduced housing production over the past 20 years.** The Town has permitted less single and two-family dwellings than in the early 2000s. The Town has also not permitted any three or more dwelling unit buildings since 2000. The Town has constructed 29 housing units between 2020 and 2024, which is consistent with the trends of the past 20 years.

Importantly, the price of constructing new housing has risen dramatically since 2000, more than tripling from around $124,000 to $428,000 in 2024 based on a survey by the National Association of Home Builders. The Town has minimal control over most aspects of construction costs like labor and materials, but it can reduce soft costs and land costs through permitting and zoning reform. It can also reduce some costs for utility construction by proactively extending water and sewer into desired areas.

Table H-5

Table 2. SINGLE-FAMILY HOMES SALES PRICE BREAKDOWN HISTORY[3]

Sale Price Breakdown	1998	2002	2004	2007	2009	2011
1. Finished Lot Cost	23.6%	23.5%	26.0%	24.5%	20.3%	21.7%
2. Total Construction Cost	54.8%	50.8%	51.7%	48.1%	58.9%	59.3%
3. Financing Cost	1.9%	2.1%	1.8%	2.4%	1.7%	2.1%
4. Overhead and General Expenses	5.7%	5.5%	5.8%	7.0%	5.4%	5.2%
5. Marketing Cost	1.4%	2.4%	1.9%	2.5%	1.4%	1.5%
6. Sales Commission	3.4%	3.7%	3.0%	4.3%	3.4%	3.3%
7. Profit	9.2%	12.0%	9.8%	11.2%	8.9%	6.8%
8. Total Sales Price ($)	**$ 226,680**	**$ 298,412**	**$ 373,349**	**$ 454,906**	**$ 377,624**	**$ 310,619**
Sale Price Breakdown	**2013**	**2015**	**2017**	**2019**	**2022**	**2024**
1. Finished Lot Cost	18.6%	18.2%	21.5%	18.5%	17.8%	13.7%
2. Total Construction Cost	61.7%	61.8%	55.6%	61.1%	60.8%	64.4%
3. Financing Cost	1.4%	1.3%	1.8%	1.7%	1.9%	1.5%
4. Overhead and General Expenses	4.3%	5.6%	5.1%	4.9%	5.1%	5.7%
5. Marketing Cost	1.1%	0.8%	1.2%	1.0%	0.7%	0.8%
6. Sales Commission	3.6%	3.2%	4.1%	3.7%	3.6%	2.8%
7. Profit	9.3%	9.0%	10.7%	9.1%	10.1%	11.0%
8. Total Sales Price ($)	**$ 399,532**	**$ 468,318**	**$ 427,892**	**$ 485,128**	**$ 644,750**	**$ 665,298**

Source: NAHB Construction Cost Surveys, 1998-2024

D. Occupant Tenure and Characteristics

There are 2,550 housing units in the Town of Ulysses. The majority of homes (62.5%) in the Town are owner-occupied, the highest compared to the surrounding geographies. The Town has the smallest share of renter-occupied units, at 24.4%.

Table H-6

Housing Tenure 2024

	Town of Ulysses	Tompkins County	Southern Tier Region
Owner-Occupied	63%	44%	55%
Renter-Occupied	24%	45%	30%
Vacant Units, Rate	13%	11%	16%
Total Housing Units	2,550	48,396	314,466

Source: Esri forecasts for 2024 and 2029. US Census Bureau, 2022 5 Year American Community Survey.

The American Community Survey by the US Census Bureau provide fine grained data to better understand the characteristics of households in the Town. As previously discussed, housing needs are impacted by the circumstances facing residents. Tables H-7 and H-8 break down household structure by age and other details. The Town has a higher percentage of married-couple family households – both owner and renter occupied- than Tompkins County. The Town of Ulysses also has a higher percentage of households occupied by those aged 65 and over and living alone. These residents are at higher risk of disabilities and may need assistance with services like nutrition assistance, transportation, health care, home maintenance, and home repair in the future.

Table H-7

Owner Occupied Household Type and Age, 2022

	Tompkins County	Town of Ulysses
Total Occupied Households:	42,984	2,274
Owner occupied:	54.3%	70.9%
Family households:	38.2%	55.1%
Married-couple family:	32.4%	43.1%
Householder 15 to 34 years	1.7%	1.3%
Householder 35 to 64 years	19.9%	25.2%
Householder 65 years and over	10.8%	16.5%
Other family:	5.8%	12.0%
Male householder, no spouse present:	1.6%	0.9%
Householder 15 to 34 years	0.1%	0.0%
Householder 35 to 64 years	1.2%	0.7%
Householder 65 years and over	0.3%	0.2%
Female householder, no spouse present:	4.2%	11.1%
Householder 15 to 34 years	0.3%	0.3%
Householder 35 to 64 years	3.0%	5.5%
Householder 65 years and over	1.0%	5.3%
Nonfamily households:	16.1%	15.9%
Householder living alone:	11.5%	11.2%
Householder 15 to 34 years	0.7%	0.0%
Householder 35 to 64 years	5.0%	3.6%
Householder 65 years and over	5.8%	7.6%
Householder not living alone:	4.6%	4.7%
Householder 15 to 34 years	1.4%	0.0%
Householder 35 to 64 years	1.9%	2.0%
Householder 65 years and over	1.2%	2.7%

Source: US Census Bureau, 2022 5 Year American Community Survey.

Table H-8

Renter Occupied Household Type and Age, 2022

	Tompkins County	Town of Ulysses
Total Occupied Households:	42,984	2,274
Renter occupied:	45.7%	29.1%
Family households:	11.8%	14.1%
Married-couple family:	7.0%	10.3%
Householder 15 to 34 years	3.5%	6.8%
Householder 35 to 64 years	2.9%	2.2%
Householder 65 years and over	0.6%	1.3%
Other family:	4.8%	3.8%
Male householder, no spouse present:	1.3%	0.9%
Householder 15 to 34 years	0.3%	0.0%
Householder 35 to 64 years	0.9%	0.9%
Householder 65 years and over	0.1%	0.0%
Female householder, no spouse present:	3.5%	2.9%
Householder 15 to 34 years	1.4%	0.0%
Householder 35 to 64 years	2.0%	2.9%
Householder 65 years and over	0.2%	0.0%
Nonfamily households:	33.9%	15.0%
Householder living alone:	20.9%	12.5%
Householder 15 to 34 years	10.0%	0.5%
Householder 35 to 64 years	6.6%	7.1%
Householder 65 years and over	4.3%	4.9%
Householder not living alone:	13.0%	2.5%
Householder 15 to 34 years	12.1%	1.4%
Householder 35 to 64 years	0.8%	0.8%
Householder 65 years and over	0.2%	0.3%

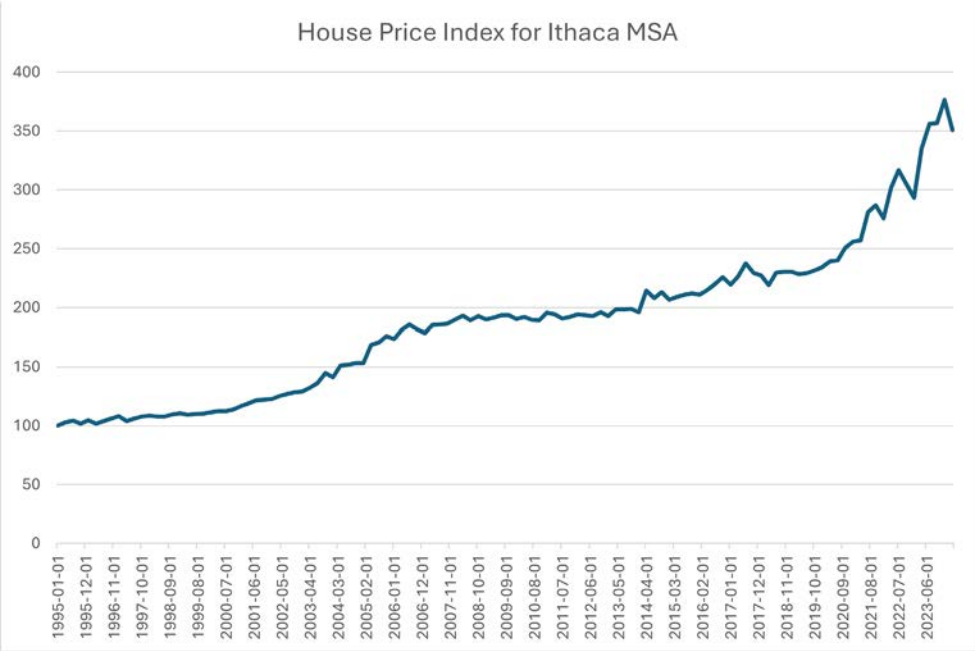
Source: US Census Bureau, 2022 5 Year American Community Survey.

Housing Costs and Affordability

Within the Ithaca MSA, home prices have dramatically risen over the past decade. Using the Federal Housing Finance Agency's House Price Index, house prices have risen 214% since 2000 and 85% since 2010.

The FHFA House Price Index is a broad economic measure of the movement of single-family house prices in the United States. These trends also increase costs for local businesses who have to pay employees more to account for a higher cost of living and other inflationary impacts.

Figure H-3



Source: Federal Reserve Economic Data, 2025.

Home ownership in the Town is less affordable than in the County and the Region. In 2024, the Town's median home value was $363,085, which is over $30,000 more than the County's, and just under double of the Region's. A household income of at least $116,960 is needed in the Town to avoid being cost-burdened by home ownership. According to the Ithaca Board of Realtors, the Area Median Family Income for Tompkins County is $122,000, which would allow enough income to purchase a $300,000 home.

Table H-9

Housing Affordability - Owner-Occupied Housing, 2024			
	Town of Ulysses	Tompkins County	Southern Tier Region
Median Home Value - 2024	$363,085	$330,445	$182,967
10% Down Payment	$36,309	$33,045	$18,297
Remaining Balance	$326,777	$297,401	$164,670
Average Mortgage @7% for 30 Years	$2,174	$1,979	$1,096
Estimated Additional Costs*	$750	$691	$429
Estimated Monthly Mortgage Costs	$2,924	$2,670	$1,525
Household Income Threshold	$116,960	$106,800	$61,000
**Include Zillow estimated insurance, PMI, and taxes*			
Source: Esri; Zillow Mortgage Calculator; MRB Group			

Source: Esri forecasts for 2024 and 2029. U.S. Census Bureau 2000 and 2010 decennial Census data Zillow Mortgage Calculator, MRB Group.

Table H-10

Housing Affordability - Renter - Occupied Housing, 2024			
	Town of Ulysses	Tompkins County	Southern Tier Region
Median Contract Rent	$1,018	$1,191	$800
Household Income Threshold	$40,720	$47,640	$32,000

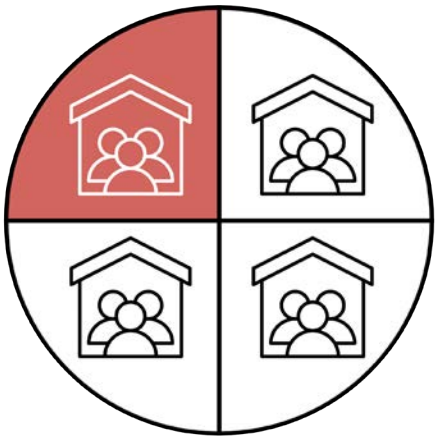
Source: Esri; MRB Group, 2024

Rental housing in the Town is the second most expensive after the County. The median contract rent in the Town is $1,018, which requires a household income threshold of $40,720 to avoid being cost-burdened.

Table H-11

Housing Costs as a Percent of Household Income		
	Tompkins County	Town of Ulysses
Total Occupied Housing Units:	43269	2257
Percent of Households Cost Burdened:	33.7%	25.0%
Owner-occupied housing units:	23291	1572
Less than $20,000:	744	58
30 percent or more	606	40
$20,000 to $34,999:	1623	165
30 percent or more	854	119
$35,000 to $49,999:	1582	249
30 percent or more	679	119
$50,000 to $74,999:	3107	187
30 percent or more	613	30
$75,000 or more:	16067	906
30 percent or more	879	87
Renter-occupied housing units:	19978	685
Less than $20,000:	4331	81
30 percent or more	4199	81
$20,000 to $34,999:	2602	71
30 percent or more	2275	29
$35,000 to $49,999:	3241	122
30 percent or more	2275	43
$50,000 to $74,999:	3104	201
30 percent or more	1690	16
$75,000 or more:	5029	190
30 percent or more	505	0

Source: US Census Bureau, 2023 5 Year American Community Survey.



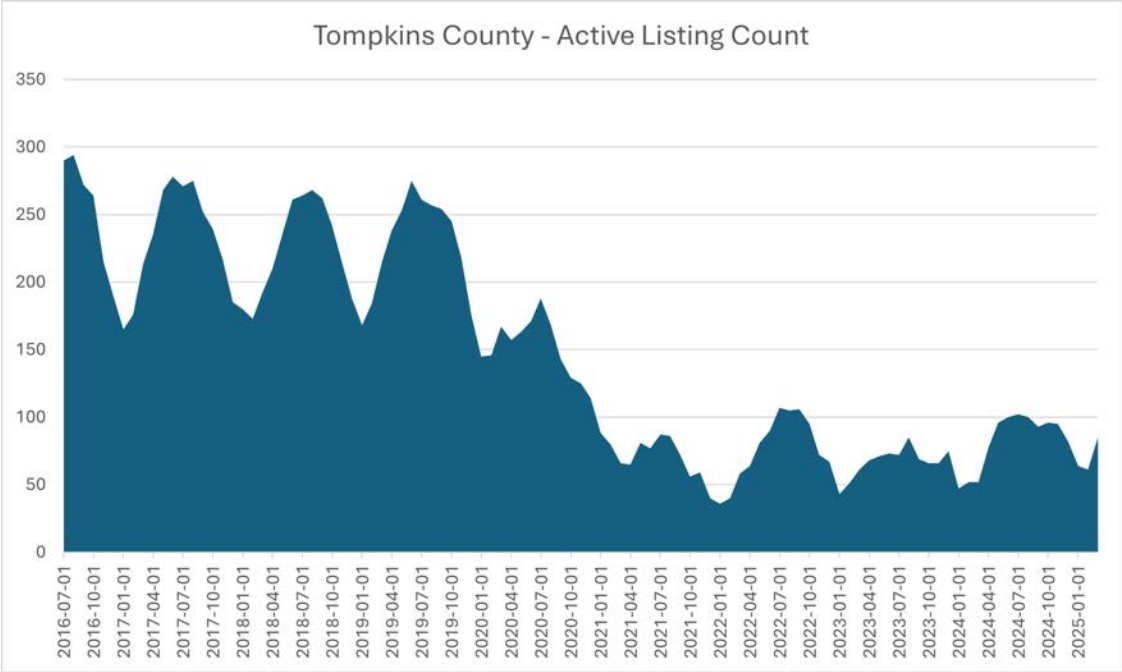
The American Community Survey estimates that in 2023, around 25% of households within the Town of Ulysses are cost burdened by housing. This is less than the rate for Tompkins County. **Although the Town is better situated than the County, this remains a substantial portion of the Town's population – 1 in every 4 households – that is cost burdened by housing.** These households have less to spend on other essential services like healthcare and groceries and may see more adverse health outcomes. They also may have less disposable income to spend and circulate within the local economy. Though cost burdens impact households across the income spectrum, low-income households are particularly vulnerable where over half of all households making under $50,000 are estimated to be cost burdened.

Housing Availability and Vacancy

Over the last 10 years, Tompkins County has seen a dramatic reduction in the active listings of homes for sale. Active listings have dropped from an average of 231 between 2016 and the end of 2019 to an average of 75 active listings between 2022 and 2025 – a reduction of 68%. According to a July 1, 2025 Zillow search, there are only 3 active home listings within the Town of Ulysses, ranging from $435,000 to $1,250,000 list price. Tompkins County has seen a dramatic reduction of homes for sale, dropping from around 230 active listings per month prior to 2020 to 90 active monthly listings after 2020. From October 2021 to October 2024, there have been no more than 10 active home listings within the 14886 zip code[5]. The 14850 Zip Code - which covers nearly the entirety of the City of Ithaca, the Town of Ithaca, the Village of Lansing, and portions of the Towns of Dryden, Danby, Enfield, and Ulysses – has averaged only 45 active listings per month from May 2022 to May 2025. This period of substantial listing declines coincides with the dramatic increase in the home price index above.

5. *Realtor.com Real Estate Data and Housing Market Trends. https://www.realtor.com/research/data/*

Figure H-4



Source: Federal Reserve Economic Data, 2025

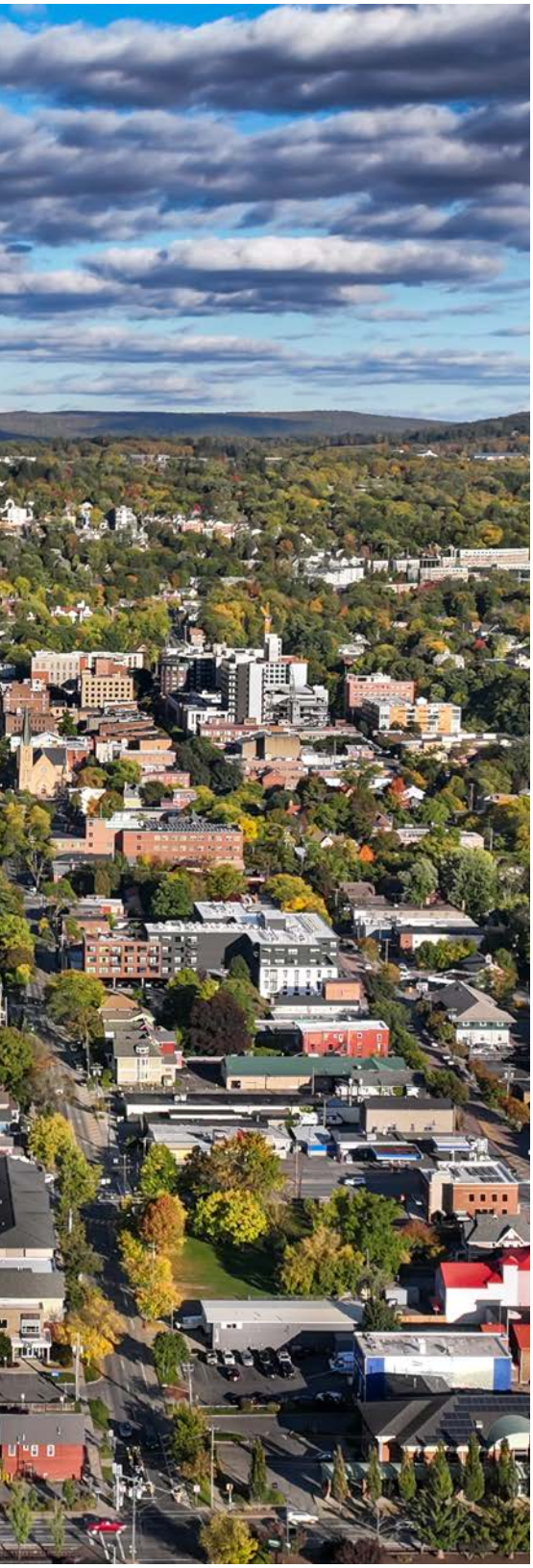
About 13% of the Town's housing units are vacant, 29.1% of which are seasonal/occasional homes, and a quarter of which are for rent. Approximately 3% of the Town's housing units are not temporarily vacant after removing units for rent and seasonal occupancy.

Table H-12

Vacant Units 2024			
	Town of Ulysses	Tompkins County	Southern Tier Region
Total Vacant Units	242	4,093	47,866
For rent	3%	17%	11%
Rented, not occupied	0%	17%	4%
For sale only	0%	5%	5%
Sold, not occupied	0%	2%	3%
Seasonal/occasional	69%	10%	41%
For migrant workers	0%	0%	0%
Other	28%	49.7%	36.6%

Esri forecasts for 2024 and 2029. U.S. Census Bureau 2000 and 2010 decennial Census data.

Putting these two indicators together, there are roughly 2.1% of housing units available for sale or rent at a given time. This is well below the generally targeted 5% rate, which represents a healthy availability rate .



Effectively, there is a shortage of available housing within the Town. When housing is in short supply, purchasers will bid up prices – at least partly explaining the large growth in house prices. In order to address housing affordability, it is necessary for the Town and region to address the issue of the market supply of housing.

Existing Housing Needs

Drawing upon the preceding analysis and the specific insights shared by residents, the Town's housing needs can be categorized into four primary areas: affordability, housing type diversity, supply, and quality.

The issue of affordability is clearly impacting the Town's residents, largely stemming from the growth of the Ithaca Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). While this challenge affects the Town of Ulysses, it appears to be a broader regional issue rather than solely a consequence of local actions, suggesting the importance of exploring regional solutions.

Furthermore, th**e Town lacks a diverse housing stock.** This deficiency encompasses a limited availability of smaller units, townhouses, duplexes, cottage courts, and larger multifamily buildings. This lack of variety can prevent community members from finding housing options that adequately meet their diverse needs and lifestyles.

The Town also faces a shortage of overall housing supply. This scarcity, potentially exacerbated by the prevalence of short-term rentals, means there are simply not enough housing units available for sale or rent to satisfy the current demand within both the Town and the wider Region.

Finally, the Town's housing stock is generally older compared to the surrounding Region. This age contributes to a greater need for repairs, potentially compromising the health of residents and often resulting in lower energy efficiency, among other negative consequences. Still, these older homes add irreplaceable character to the community, and it may be more sustainable to renovate existing homes than demolishing and rebuilding them.

The Town should attempt to construct 151 new units by 2045, or about 8 units per year.

Projected Housing Needs

If the projected population number from Section I.C. is accurate, it is unlikely that the Town will require substantial new housing production to meet that population. However, new housing will need to be constructed as older housing units fall into disrepair and need to be demolished, or as new housing is constructed to meet the changing needs of the population.

According to the New York State Housing Compact, communities should target a 1% growth rate in their housing stock every three years. **Using this framework, the Town of Ulysses should attempt to construct 151 new units by 2045, or about 8 units per year. This rate is about equal the number of recent annual building permits provided by HUD.**

IV. GOAL, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

The following section contains the goal, objectives, and policies for the Comprehensive Plan's Housing Element. This section states the Town's policies for meeting the community's housing needs***. However, meeting housing needs will require the action of individual households, other organizations, including for-profit and non-profit housing developers, other municipalities, county governments in the region, and the state and federal government***s. Since data indicates that the housing needs of Ulysses households are more severe, the policies herein provide more attention to the housing needs of households earning 80% or less of Area Median Income (AMI) for Tompkins County.

concept photo

Housing Goal:

H-G-1 Provide sufficient, sustainable housing opportunities to meet the needs of present and future residents of Ulysses that are safe, environmentally friendly, accessible, attractive, and affordable for all income levels.

Objective:

H-O-1.1 Strive to meet current and projected regional housing needs of all economic and demographic groups by increasing Ulysses' housing supply.

Policies:

H-P-1.1.1	Consider research and analysis, including housing studies and zoning audits, to identify strategies that increase housing supply and affordability in Ulysses.
H-P-1.1.2	Provide density bonuses to developers seeking to construct income restricted affordable housing, as well as affordable cluster developments.
H-P-1.1.3	Proactively advertise to regional, responsible developers, engineers, and financial institutions that the Town is open for housing growth within the proposed growth areas.

Objective:

H-O-1.2 Provide fair and equal access to housing for all people in Ulysses.

Policies:

H-P-1.2.1	Work with county and regional partners to promote fair housing choices and foster inclusive communities that are free from discrimination through actions, such as affirmative marketing, and fair housing education and enforcement.
H-P-1.2.2	Coordinate with other jurisdictions in the region, to identify and remove potential barriers to stable housing for individuals and families, such as illegal housing screening practices.
H-P-1.2.3	Work to decrease disparities in homeownership.

H-P-1.2.4	Encourage development of dense, mixed-use areas along the Route 96 transit stops and where social and community service providers (non-profits, government offices, day cares, etc.) are permitted.
H-P-1.2.5	Adopt incentive zoning regulations to provide flexibility to developers that propose amenities regarding equal access, among other opportunities to the Town.

Objective:

H-O-1.3 Achieve a mix of housing types that provide opportunity and choice in Ulysses for people of various ages, races, ethnicities, and cultural backgrounds and for a variety of household sizes, types, and incomes.

Policies:

H-P-1.3.1	Annually monitor and consider changes to the Future Land Use Map designations and Policies of the Land Use Element as needed to provide for a wide range of housing types in the Town including, but not limited to: single detached dwelling units, housing to provide an alternative to home ownership, and moderate and high density multi-unit dwellings in order to accommodate the projected population and household income levels for the Town.
H-P-1.3.2	Promote housing alternatives to large lot single detached dwelling units.
H-P-1.3.3	Revise the zoning code to include permissions for Courtyard Housing and reduce the regulatory burden for other housing typologies including lot size restrictions, areas where permitted, and other elements.
H-P-1.3.4	Explore legal options for designating housing types below a certain threshold or within certain areas as Type 2 actions under SEQR.

Objective:

H-O-1.4 Encourage the creation of senior housing.

Policies:

H-P-1.4.1	Revise zoning to allow different types of senior housing development, such as independent living, supportive living, and assisted living facilities.
H-P-1.4.2	Identify available sites that would be ideal for senior housing and share them with potential developers. Include information about how to overcome any potential zoning or permitting issues.

Objective: H-O-1.5 Achieve healthy, safe, and environmentally sustainable housing that is adaptable to changing demographic conditions.

Policies:

H-P-1.5.1	Adopt template house plans that meet the Town's sustainability goals and explore streamlining the review process for these specific designs.
H-P-1.5.2	Encourage the construction of prefabricated housing such as modular and manufactured homes, yurts, container houses, and tiny homes.
H-P-1.5.3	Extend services such as water and sewer to neighborhoods where housing growth is desired, but not to areas where land is intended to be protected. Allow dedication of privately constructed sewers if within cluster subdivisions and other similar types of higher density subdivisions.
H-P-1.5.4	Develop and adopt sustainability goals for new construction based on New York State standards.

Objective:

H-O-1.6 Work to make it possible for households of all income levels to live affordably in Ulysses, and reduce over time the unmet housing needs of lower-income households in Town.

Policies:

H-P-1.6.1	Support the development and preservation of affordable housing through tools and actions such as land banking, public or non-profit acquisition of buildings, housing co-ops, and mixed income housing initiatives.
H-P-1.6.2	Ensure the zoning code does not unduly restrict manufactured and prefabricated homes as a source of affordable housing, recognizing that NYS Executive Law provides limited ability of localities to restrict manufactured homes.

POTENTIAL MEASURES

V. POTENTIAL MEASURES TO IMPLEMENT HOUSING POLICIES

The following items are listed as potential housing implementation strategies that could be selected by the Housing Advisory Committee and Town Board. Some of the following measures are directly related to policies that could also be identified in the land use element. The measures listed herein are discretionary on the part of the Town and shall not be considered as a mandate unless and until the Town prioritizes such actions and identifies and allocates the necessary resources to implement a specific measure.

Related to Objective H-O-1.2

1. Support programs and actions that will encourage developments to provide a range of housing units with a mix of household incomes and discourage developments that would create high concentrations of low-income housing.

Related to Objective H-O-1.5

2. Work closely with federal and state agencies to maximize the amount of public funding available for housing rehabilitation in Ulysses.
3. Work closely with private local financial institutions, non-profit housing organizations, the construction industry, the business community, and charitable organizations to maximize the amount of private funding available for housing rehabilitation in Ulysses.

Related to Objective H-O-1.6

4. Develop and adopt a Local Project Review Procedures Ordinance that establishes clear and transparent processes for all projects that require permits and/or environmental review.
5. Expedite the review process for affordable mixed-use and mixed-income housing developments.

6. Develop and foster collaborative relationships with Ithaca Neighborhood Housing Services and other agencies to identify opportunities for increasing funding that supports low-income housing development, rehabilitation, and repair in Ulysses.

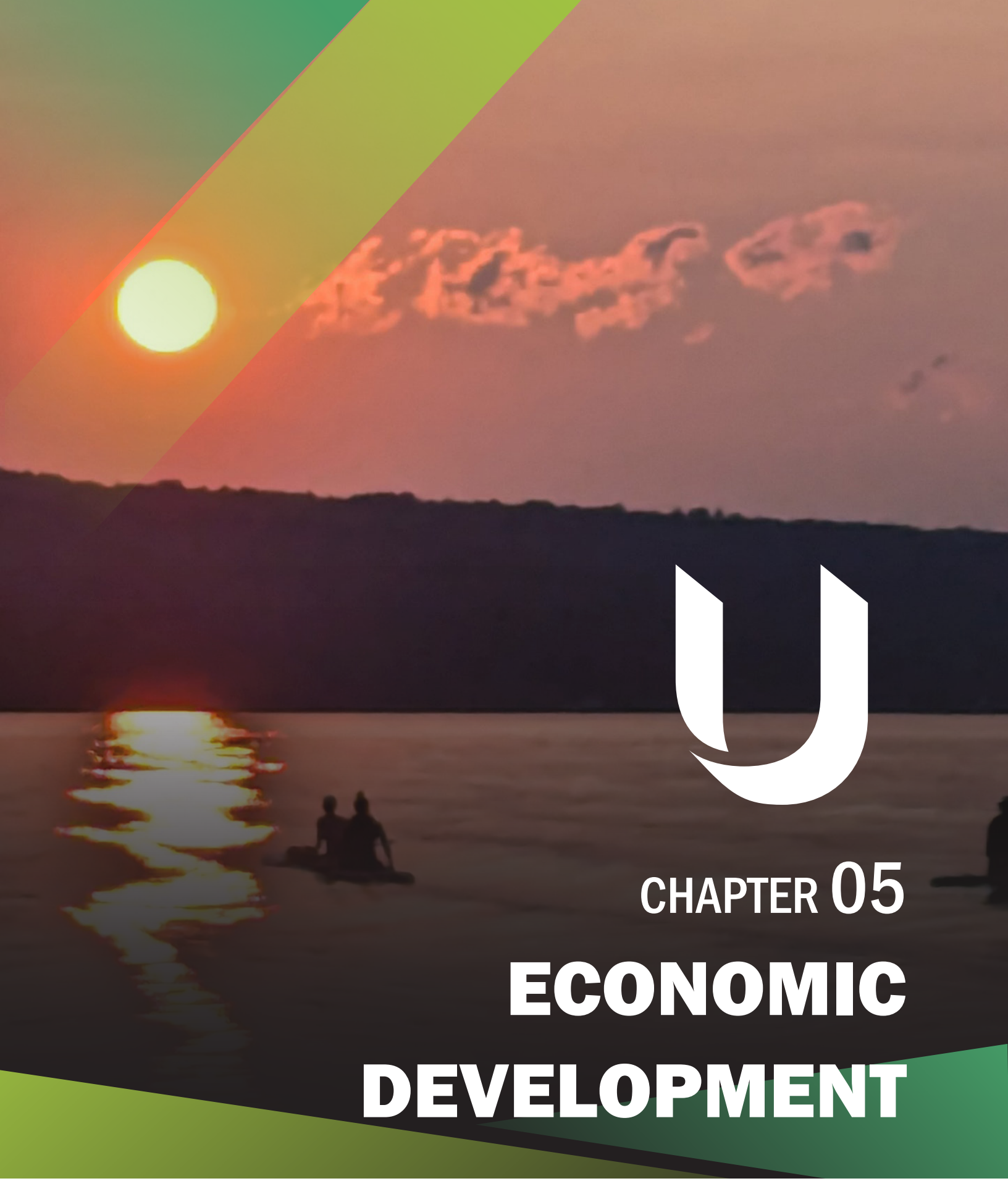
7. Lobby to increase the amount of funding available to subsidize rental housing for low-income households and special needs populations.

8. Work closely with Tompkins County and neighboring municipalities to monitor trends in the demand, production, and costs of various types of housing in the region to better understand regional housing needs and how such needs may affect Ulysses.

MEASURES RELATED TO THE LAND USE ELEMENT

Related to Objective H-O-1.2

1. Encourage development in commercial and mixed-use areas to provide a mix of housing.



CHAPTER 05

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A. 2025 UPDATE AND PURPOSE FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT

The purpose of economic development is to help communities like Ulysses identify opportunities for future growth. Examining current economic conditions will lead to a successful economic future. Economic development can be a complex process that touches many aspects of a community, including workforce development, housing, transportation, land use, quality of life, marketing, branding, and more. While economic development activities often focus on business attraction, growth, expansion, and retention, it is important to note that economic vitality is not dependent on a certain type or size of business. A prosperous economy is not only built on large employers, but also depends on having a thriving ecosystem of small and micro-businesses. The Town of Ulysses welcomes entrepreneurs across all sectors and aims to foster an inclusive environment where businesses of any type — whether rural, digital, creative, trade, or service-oriented — can start, grow, and succeed. Due to the complex nature of economic development, some goals and objectives within this chapter are intertwined with goals in other chapters. Ulysses recognizes that successful economic development requires collaboration with other organizations and aligning with the plan's goals and priorities.

Materials reviewed to develop this chapter include:

- Tompkins County Countywide Planning Policies
- Tompkins County Economic Development Strategy 2.0
- 2021 Trumansburg Comprehensive Plan
- 2023 Southern Tier Strategic Plan
- Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Plan 2021-2027
- Public outreach findings from a community focus group and survey with more than 300 responses. All input was received as part of the public participation process for the plan update.

This element is not meant to be free-standing; it relates to a number of other elements in a complementary manner. In particular, the elements concerning transportation, land use, housing, and community well-being all have issues relating to economic development.

B. OVERVIEW OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POLICIES FROM THE 2009 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The local economy policy area from the previous 2009 Comprehensive Plan included goals, objectives, and actions pertaining to economic development. The three main objectives include understanding the role of agriculture in the local economy and supporting local farming businesses; diversifying the local economy by supporting and promoting tourism-based opportunities; and striking a balance between limiting new development in the Town and creating a business-friendly environment.

II. PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES INFLUENCING ULYSSES' ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT

A. TOMPKINS COUNTYWIDE PLANNING POLICIES

Tompkins County should be a place where economic prosperity is accessible to all. Numerous policies were identified to support this principle. Policies include supporting high-quality employment opportunities that provide living wages and benefits; promoting the growth and development of local businesses; encouraging the purchase of local goods and services; and developing a strong rural land based economy. The County also desires to tap into higher education and economic development agencies to diversify and expand the local economy; attract and support people working to start and grow competitive businesses; and ensure that all residents can develop the skills necessary to obtain high quality employment.

B. ULYSSES VISIONING EFFORTS

During the visioning phase of the comprehensive planning process, various exercises were conducted to facilitate feedback from the public about economic development. The following topics were brought up as priorities that the comprehensive plan update should focus on:

1. **Promoting tourism opportunities**
2. **Need for recreational spaces and amenities for youth/all ages**
3. **Developing an economic development committee**
4. **Jacksonville Hamlet center development**
5. **Adaptive reuse of existing buildings to provide more retail and services**
6. **Expanding housing and having more diverse options available**
7. **Having more grocery/local food options**
8. **More locally owned businesses, especially dining, entertainment and retail**

Throughout the survey and in person events, the public conveyed that they often do their shopping within the Village of Trumansburg or larger cities such as Ithaca. **Many expressed that they would like to do more shopping locally and be able to support local businesses more. However, this does not mean that they want big-box stores located within Ulysses.** The public expressed their appreciation for local shops and want to continue to support additional small businesses in the future. The public suggested focusing on hamlet development and bringing additional services and retail there.

Managing economic development initiatives can involve a lot of different entities and can be challenging for municipal staff alone to manage. Designating an economic development committee can also help with implementation

efforts pertaining to economic development. Through Town advisement, the committee can ensure economic development goals set forth by the Comprehensive Plan are being met in an equitable manner and align with the County's economic development goals.

70% of survey respondents indicated they would like to see local agriculture (e.g., vineyards, orchards, agritourism, small-scale animal husbandry and crops, CFAs, etc.) as their top choice of non-residential development in the Town of Ulysses. 50% of respondents also indicated that they would like to see more mixed-use locations (combination of uses, e.g., office, retail, commercial, residential, etc.) throughout Ulysses.

70%

would like to see local agriculture as their top choice of non-residential development

50%

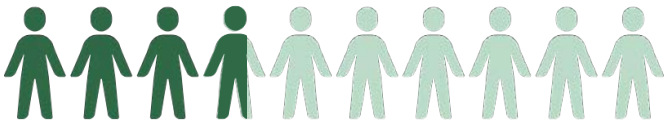
would like to see more mixed-use locations throughout Ulysses.

43.6%

would like to see transit-oriented development.

38.5%

would like to see institutions within Ulysses.



43.6% of respondents indicated they would like to see transit-oriented development (focused nodal development along transit routes/stops to reduce reliance on private vehicles). 38.5% of respondents indicated they would like to see institutions (public use buildings, educational, healthcare, etc.) within Ulysses.

III. INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS OF THE EXISTING ECONOMY, CHALLENGES, AND PROJECTED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

A. EXISTING ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

The following economic base report examines the historical, current, and projected economic conditions of the Town of Ulysses ("the Town"), Tompkins County ("the County"), and the Southern Tier Region ("the Region"). The purpose of this analysis is to provide a data-driven foundational understanding of the market to ground the current conditions section of the Comprehensive Plan.

Market Area

The following geographies are used in this analysis: 1) Town of Ulysses, 2) Tompkins County, and 3) the Southern Tier Region, which includes the counties of Steuben, Schuyler, Chemung, Tioga, Tompkins, Broome, Chenango, and Delaware. We include these geographies in our analysis to more accurately identify unique trends in the Town within the context of regional economic and market conditions (Appendix C).

Demographic Overview

Since 2010, the population of the Town has remained relatively stable, with only a small decrease.[1] The County saw a significant increase in population over the same period, growing by 4,010 individuals or 3.9%. The Region, on the other hand, saw a significant population decline, with a loss of 29,925 individuals or 4.5% of the Region's total population. Over the next five years, the population in each geography is expected to decline, with the largest percentage loss in the Region, followed by the Town, then the County (Table ED-1).

The median age in the Town is 47.8, significantly higher than both the County and the Region median ages of 31.8 and 41, respectively. Median age in each geographic area is anticipated to increase in the next five years, though the Town will see the lowest increase of the geographies (Table ED-2).

See housing chapter 1.C 2045 population forecast, which shows the county continuing to grow to 116,000.

1. *Though the table shows a decrease of 6 individuals (0.1%), the small geography of the town means that this is more likely to be measurement error. The takeaway should instead be that there was a small decrease in population, rather than any numerical value that may be more accurate for larger geographies.*

Though the population for the Town saw slight decreases since 2010, the number of households has increased by a greater amount, in part due to shrinking household sizes. The number of households in the region has remained relatively stable, with only a small increase. Tompkins County saw significant increases in the number of households since 2010, adding 4,158 new households for a change of 10.7%. Over the next five years, the number of households is expected to remain relatively stable or increase slightly.

Table ED-1

Demographic Fundamentals

POPULATION				
	2010	2024	Change	% Change
Town of Ulysses	4,900	4,894	(6)	(0.1%)
Tompkins County	101,564	105,574	4,010	3.9%
Southern Tier Region	657,909	627,984	(29,925)	(4.5%)
PROJECTED POPULATION				
	2024	2029	Change	% Change
Town of Ulysses	4,894	4,830	(64)	(1.3%)
Tompkins County	105,574	105,463	(111)	(0.1%)
Southern Tier Region	627,984	616,581	(11,403)	(1.8%)
HOUSEHOLDS				
	2010	2024	Change	% Change
Town of Ulysses	2,138	2,218	80	3.7%
Tompkins County	38,967	43,125	4,158	10.7%
Southern Tier Region	265,154	265,281	127	0.0%
PROJECTED HOUSEHOLDS				
	2024	*2029*	*Change*	*% Change*
Town of Ulysses	2,218	2,235	17	0.8%
Tompkins County	43,125	44,298	1,173	2.7%
Southern Tier Region	265,281	266,721	1,440	0.5%

Source: Esri forecasts for 2024 and 2029. U.S. Census Bureau 2000 and 2010 decennial Census data.

Median household income in the Town is $76,879 and is anticipated to increase by 9.1% to $83,867 in 2029. The Town's median household income is just below that of the County, which is $77,610. The Region's median household income is the lowest compared to Tompkins County and the Town at $63,557, but is expected to increase the most, both by dollar and percent change. The average household income in the Town is $100,921, which is significantly higher than the median household income.

The median home value in the Town is the greatest compared to Tompkins County and the Southern Tier Region at $363,085. By 2029, it is expected to have increased by 16.3% to $422,316. The median home value in the County is only slightly lower than the Town at $330,445. The Region has a significantly lower median home value of $182,967—just over half of the County and Town's median home values.

Table ED-2

Demographic Fundamentals				
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME				
	2024	2029	Change	% Change
Town of Ulysses	$76,879	$83,867	$6,988	9.1%
Tompkins County	$77,610	$86,334	$8,724	11.2%
Southern Tier Region	$63,557	$72,528	$8,971	14.1%
AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD INCOME				
	2024	2029	Change	% Change
Town of Ulysses	$100,921	$117,003	$16,082	15.9%
Tompkins County	$107,905	$123,544	$15,639	14.5%
Southern Tier Region	$89,028	$101,949	$12,921	14.5%
MEDIAN HOME VALUE				
	2024	2029	Change	% Change
Town of Ulysses	$363,085	$422,316	$59,231	16.3%
Tompkins County	$330,445	$386,564	$56,119	17.0%
Southern Tier Region	$182,967	$201,809	$18,842	10.3%
MEDIAN AGE				
	2024	2029	Change	% Change
Town of Ulysses	47.8	48.4	0.6	1.3%
Tompkins County	31.8	32.9	1.1	3.5%
Southern Tier Region	41.0	42.0	1.0	2.4%

Source: Esri forecasts for 2024 and 2029. U.S. Census Bureau 2000 and 2010 decennial Census data.

Educational Attainment

Nearly all residents in the Town of Ulysses have graduated from high school or have an equivalent education, at 97%. Tompkins County also has a high percentage of residents who have completed at least high school, at 96%. The Region has the lowest percentage of residents who have completed high school or an equivalent education, at 92.3%. Less of the Town's population has a bachelor's degree or higher than the County, at 51.7% compared to 58.8%. Less than a third of the Region's population has a bachelor's degree or higher.

Table ED-3

Educational Attainment 2024

	Town of Ulysses	Tompkins County	Southern Tier Region
Less than 9th Grade	0.9%	1.7%	2.3%
9th to 12th Grade	2.0%	2.5%	5.4%
High School Diploma/GED	16.6%	16.7%	31.9%
Some College	16.7%	12.0%	14.9%
Associate Degree	12.0%	8.5%	13.2%
Bachelor's Degree	28.5%	25.1%	16.4%
Graduate Degree or Higher	23.2%	33.7%	15.9%

Source: Esri forecasts for 2024 and 2029. U.S. Census Bureau 2000 and 2010 decennial Census data.

Household Income Distribution

10.2% of Ulysses households earn $25,000 or less annually, and about a quarter earn under $50,000. In the County and Region, 19.2% of households earn below $25,000. Just over a third (34%) of the Town's households are high-income earners, making $100,000 or more each year. The County has a slightly higher percentage of households earning $100,000 or more each year at 38.4%, and the Region has the lowest percentage at 30.3%.

Table ED-4

Household Income Distribution 2024

	Town of Ulysses	Tompkins County	Southern Tier Region
<$15,000	5.1%	13.4%	11.0%
$15,000 - $24,999	5.1%	5.8%	8.2%
$25,000 - $34,999	3.3%	3.7%	7.3%
$35,000 - $49,999	12.3%	9.4%	12.3%
$50,000 - $74,999	22.3%	15.9%	17.8%
$75,000 - $99,999	17.9%	13.4%	13.1%
$100,000 - $149,999	19.4%	19.0%	16.5%
$150,000 - $199,999	6.3%	7.2%	7.1%
$200,000+	8.3%	12.2%	6.7%

Source: Esri forecasts for 2024 and 2029. U.S. Census Bureau 2000 and 2010 decennial Census data.

Age Distribution

The largest share of the Town's population, 41.4% is over the age of 55, which is the highest of any geography. Similarly, the Town has the smallest proportion of residents aged 25 and younger, at 24.7% compared to 39.6% in the County and 31% in the Region. Each geography has a similar proportion of the population aged 25 to 55, ranging from 34% to 34.5%.

Table ED-5

Age Distribution 2024			
	Town of Ulysses	Tompkins County	Southern Tier Region
0 - 4	4.4%	3.7%	4.7%
5 - 9	5.3%	3.7%	5.0%
10 - 14	5.5%	3.8%	5.3%
15 - 24	9.5%	28.4%	16.0%
25 - 34	9.9%	14.9%	12.1%
35 - 44	12.5%	10.4%	11.4%
45 - 54	11.6%	9.2%	10.9%
55 - 64	14.9%	9.7%	13.3%
65 - 74	15.4%	9.3%	12.0%
75 - 84	8.6%	4.9%	6.6%
85+	2.5%	1.9%	2.7%

Source: Esri forecasts for 2024 and 2029. U.S. Census Bureau 2000 and 2010 decennial Census data.

Racial Composition

The Town is the least racially diverse community compared to Tompkins County and the Southern Tier Region, with a diversity index of 30. The closer the index is to 100, the closer the population is to having equal shares of each race. White individuals constitute 86.4% of the Town's population, the most of any geography. The second largest racial group is those of two or more races at 8.9%, followed by Hispanic individuals at 3.8%. Shares of each racial group follow the same ranking in the County and Region, though percentage amounts differ, with the County being the most racially diverse geography.

Table ED-6

Racial Composition 2024			
	Town of Ulysses	**Tompkins County**	**Southern Tier Region**
White Alone	86%	73%	83%
Black Alone	2%	5%	4%
American Indian Alone	0%	0%	0%
Asian Alone	1%	11%	4%
Pacific Islander Alone	0%	0%	0%
Some Other Race Alone	1%	3%	2%
Two or More Races	9%	9%	7%
Hispanic Origin	4%	7%	5%
Diversity Index	30	51.7	36.5

Source: Esri forecasts for 2024 and 2029. U.S. Census Bureau 2000 and 2010 decennial Census data.

At-Risk Population

The Town has the lowest number of households living below the poverty level at only 4% compared to the County's 17% and the Region's 15%. Only 2% of households in the Town do not have access to a vehicle, while the County and Region have 13% and 11% of households without access to a vehicle, respectively. Over a quarter of the Town's population is aged 65 and over, the most of any geography. A fifth of the Town's households have an individual with a disability, which is the same as the County and lower than the Region's 28%.

Table ED-7

Poverty Statistics, 2024			
	Town of Ulysses	Tompkins County	Southern Tier Region
Households Below the Poverty Level (%)	4%	17%	15%
Households Below the Poverty Level (#)	98	7,251	40,390
Households without a Vehicle	2%	13%	11%

Source: Esri forecasts for 2024 and 2029. U.S. Census Bureau 2000 and 2010 decennial Census data.

Table ED-8

At-Risk Populations, 2024			
	Town of Ulysses	Tompkins County	Southern Tier Region
Households with Disability	20%	20%	28%
Population 65+	26%	16%	21%
Households without a Vehicle	2%	13%	11%

Source: Esri forecasts for 2024 and 2029. U.S. Census Bureau 2000 and 2010 decennial Census data.

Commuting

The County has a net commuting inflow of 8,521 individuals. Tioga County provides the greatest net inflow of individuals, at 2,603. The largest net outflow for Tompkins County is to Onondaga County (-366), Ontario County (-295), and Erie County (-202) (Appendix C).

INDUSTRY ANALYSIS

Industry Composition

The figure on the following page shows Tompkin's County industry sector composition. Overall, the County added 722 jobs since 2010, for a 1% increase.

The top industries are educational services, health care and social assistance, and government. Together, these three industries constitute 58.7% of the County's total jobs in 2024.

By job count, the industries that saw the largest growth since 2010 are educational services, health care and social assistance, and management of companies and enterprises. The industries that saw the largest decreases are government, retail trade, and manufacturing.

Table ED-9

Employment Change by Sector, 2010-2024						
NAICS & Description		Tompkins County				
		2010	2024	% of Total Jobs	# Change (2010-2024)	% Change (2010-2024)
61	Educational Services	17,644	19,355	36.3%	1,710	10%
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	5,616	6,045	11.3%	429	8%
90	Government	7,190	5,918	11.1%	(1,272)	(18%)
44	Retail Trade	4,965	4,251	8.0%	(714)	(14%)
72	Accommodation and Food Services	3,708	3,500	6.6%	(208)	(6%)
31	Manufacturing	3,109	2,652	5.0%	(457)	(15%)
54	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	2,175	2,511	4.7%	336	15%
81	Other Services (except Public Administration)	1,870	2,097	3.9%	227	12%
52	Finance and Insurance	1,099	1,144	2.1%	44	4%
56	Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	719	962	1.8%	244	34%
23	Construction	942	947	1.8%	5	0%
11	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	509	614	1.2%	106	21%
53	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	547	571	1.1%	24	4%
71	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	314	537	1.0%	223	71%
42	Wholesale Trade	438	453	0.8%	14	3%
48	Transportation and Warehousing	599	451	0.8%	(148)	(25%)
55	Management of Companies and Enterprises	65	420	0.8%	355	545%
51	Information	496	362	0.7%	(135)	(27%)
21	Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	268	212	0.4%	(56)	(21%)
22	Utilities	269	170	0.3%	(99)	(37%)
99	Unclassified	46	139	0.3%	92	199%
	TOTAL	52,589	53,311	100.0%	722	1.0%

Source: Lightcast forecasts for 2024. U.S. Census Bureau 2000 and 2010 decennial Census data.

REAL ESTATE MARKET ANALYSIS

Housing Tenure

There are 2,550 housing units in the Town of Ulysses. The majority of homes (62.5%) in the Town are owner-occupied, the most of any geography. The Town has the smallest share of renter-occupied units, at 24.4%. About 13% of the Town's housing units are vacant, 29.1% of which are seasonal/occasional homes, and a quarter of which are for rent. The Region has the largest share of seasonal/occasional vacant homes, and the largest share of vacant homes in general. The County has the largest share of renter-occupied housing.

Table ED-10

Housing Tenure 2024			
	Town of Ulysses	Tompkins County	Southern Tier Region
Owner-Occupied	63%	44%	55%
Renter-Occupied	24%	45%	30%
Vacant Units, Rate	13%	11%	16%
Total Housing Units	2,550	48,396	314,466

Source: Esri forecasts for 2024 and 2029. U.S. Census Bureau 2000 and 2010 decennial Census data.

Table ED-11

Vacant Units 2024			
	Town of Ulysses	Tompkins County	Southern Tier Region
Total Vacant Units	242	4,093	47,866
For rent	3%	17%	11%
Rented, not occupied	0%	17%	4%
For sale only	0%	5%	5%
Sold, not occupied	0%	2%	3%
Seasonal/occasional	69%	10%	41%
For migrant workers	0%	0%	0%
Other	28%	49.7%	36.6%

Source: Esri forecasts for 2024 and 2029. U.S. Census Bureau 2000 and 2010 decennial Census data

Housing Characteristics

About three-quarters of the Town's homes are single-family detached, a greater amount than the County's 49.4% and the region's 63.5%. The Town has the smallest share of multifamily housing and the largest share of mobile homes (11.2%). Esri data for the Village of Trumansburg indicates that there are 129 mobile home units, which constitute just under half of the Town's total.

Table ED-12

Housing Units By Units In Structure, 2024

	Town of Ulysses	Tompkins County	Southern Tier Region
Total	2,499	47,362	313,114
1, detached	73.8%	49.4%	63.5%
1, attached	0.2%	3.9%	2.0%
2	3.4%	8.8%	8.9%
3 or 4	6.6%	6.8%	5.0%
5 to 9	1.4%	7.8%	4.2%
10 to 19	1.4%	5.1%	2.4%
20 to 49	2.0%	4.9%	2.1%
50 or more	0.0%	5.8%	2.5%
Mobile home	11.2%	7.5%	9.3%
Boat, RV, van, etc.	**0.0%**	**0.0%**	**0.1%**

Source: Esri forecasts for 2024 and 2029. U.S. Census Bureau 2000 and 2010 decennial Census data

The Town has the oldest housing stock after the Southern Tier Region. Over half, 55.4%, of homes in the Town were built prior to 1970. These homes have a higher likelihood of containing hazards like lead paint, radon, and asbestos. Homes built later than 2010 make up a small share of the housing stock in each geography.

Table ED-13

Housing Units By Year Structure Built 2024			
	Town of Ulysses	Tompkins County	Southern Tier Region
Built 2020 or later	0.0%	0.8%	0.3%
Built 2010 to 2019	6.3%	8.4%	4.1%
Built 2000 to 2009	3.7%	7.5%	6%
Built 1990 to 1999	13.6%	13.5%	8.7%
Built 1980 to 1989	9.5%	12.8%	10.9%
Built 1970 to 1979	11.4%	12.4%	12.7%
Built 1960 to 1969	5.8%	8.4%	10.7%
Built 1950 to 1959	13.9%	7.7%	11%
Built 1940 to 1949	5.4%	2.7%	5.9%
Built 1939 or earlier	30.3%	25.8%	29.8%
Total	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**

Source: Esri forecasts for 2024 and 2029. U.S. Census Bureau 2000 and 2010 decennial Census data

Housing Affordability

Home ownership in the Town is less affordable than in the County and Region. The Town's median home value is $363,085, which is over $30,000 more than the County, and just under double the Region's median home value. A household income of at least $116,960 is needed in the Town to avoid being cost-burdened by home ownership. Cost-burden is defined as households that spend more than 30% of their income on housing costs.

Table ED-14

Housing Affordability - Owner-Occupied Housing, 2024

	Town of Ulysses	Tompkins County	Southern Tier Region
Median Home Value - 2024	$363,085	$330,445	$182,967
10% Down Payment	$36,309	$33,045	$18,297
Remaining Balance	$326,777	$297,401	$164,670
Average Mortgage @7% for 30 Years	$2,174	$1,979	$1,096
Estimated Additional Costs*	$750	$691	$429
Estimated Monthly Mortgage Costs	$2,924	$2,670	$1,525
Household Income Threshold	$116,960	$106,800	$61,000

*Include Zillow estimated insurance, PMI, and taxes

Source: Esri forecasts for 2024 and 2029. U.S. Census Bureau 2000 and 2010 decennial Census data, Zillow Mortgage Calculator, and MRB Group.

Rental housing in the Town is the second most expensive after the County. The median contract rent in the Town is $1,006, which requires a household income threshold of $40,240 to avoid being cost-burdened. In the Village of Trumansburg, there are approximately 92 active Airbnb listings, and a handful throughout the rest of the Town. In June, these rentals have an average daily rate of $368 and an occupancy rate of 56%.[2]

Table ED-15

Housing Affordability - Renter - Occupied Housing, 2024

	Town of Ulysses	Tompkins County	Southern Tier Region
Median Contract Rent	$1,018	$1,191	$800
Household Income Threshold	$40,720	$47,640	$32,000

Source: Esri forecasts for 2024 and 2029. U.S. Census Bureau 2000 and 2010 decennial Census data, Zillow Mortgage Calculator, and MRB Group.

2. *https://rabbu.com/airbnb-data/trumansburg-ny*

B. CHALLENGES FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

CHALLENGES FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

1. Lack of affordable housing for residents:
2. Lack of diverse housing:
3. Transportation could be improved:
4. Slow, almost stagnant population growth:
5. Being wary of an over-reliance on tourism as a target:
6. Climate change and a lack of sustainability efforts could threaten the natural environment
7. Lack of some quality-of-life amenities:
8. Restrictive Zoning could inhibit growth:
9. Concerns about water availability, safety and cost:

Identifying challenges within the Town of Ulysses' economy provides a better understanding of the current state of the economy and how to move forward. Many of these challenges are directly responded to in project needs and economic development goals, objectives, and policies.

Lack of affordable housing for residents:

Both data and stakeholder feedback identified affordable housing as a major challenge. The projected income needed to afford a home in the Town is $116,960, while the Town's median income in 2024 was $76,879. Many responses to the community survey also reference housing availability and affordability as an opportunity for improvement. The Town had only 179 vacant housing units in 2024, compared to more than 3,000 in Tompkins County and more than 47,000 in the Southern Tier Region. Out of the Town's 179 vacant units in 2024, only about 25% were available to rent, which means there were likely less than 50 units for rent available. Without housing growth, the Town will have a hard time attracting new residents because there are very few units for rent and homes for sale within the Town.

Lack of diverse housing:

Findings show that there are few options for multi-unit housing, like apartments, townhomes, condominiums, high-end larger single-family homes, or senior living, with 75.8% of housing in the Town being single-family detached homes. With fewer homes for sale, and most of them being single-family homes, many individuals who might want to live in the Town might be unable to because there is not a housing option that suits their lifestyle and/or budget.

Transportation could be improved:

Many stakeholders reported that they wanted to see improvements in both pedestrian and vehicle transportation infrastructure. There were several calls for improved sidewalks and bike lanes to encourage sustainable transportation, while also making it safe for walkers and cyclists. Many stakeholders also suggested expanding TCAT bus services, although this will need to be a collaborative effort with Tompkins Consolidated Area Transit, Inc.

Slow, almost stagnant population growth:

The Town of Ulysses experienced a .1% population decline from 2010-2024. A declining or stagnant population will be a challenge because the Town's largest industries (education, government, and healthcare) are all industries that often grow and decline with the population. Population decline or stagnation could mean less economic activity in these industries, less job growth, and fewer students and workers in the Town in the future.

Being wary of an over-reliance on tourism as a target industry:

The Region's natural beauty and lakes make it an ideal location for tourism, making it one of the Town's leading industries. However, tourism is an industry that can face challenges, especially since the industry has only recently recovered from the COVID-19 pandemic. Tourism can change year-to-year depending on economic conditions and it is often an industry that suffers during economic downturns. Within a community, tourism jobs don't always pay the highest wages, with jobs in the hospitality or service industry. Tourism can be an economic growth and marketing opportunity but should be balanced with other economic activities.

Climate change and a lack of sustainability efforts could threaten the natural environment:

Recent concerns about global warming and harmful algal blooms have residents concerned that the beauty and natural environment of the area are threatened. Many residents cite the landscape as a key factor in their decision to choose and stay in the Town because it contributes to their quality of life. The natural landscape is also key to the economy, with agriculture and tourism being dependent on the health and sustainability of the natural environment. If the natural environment is not protected, it could detract from the quality of life and have negative impacts on the Town and Regional economies.

Lack of some quality-of-life amenities:

Many residents were effusive in their praise for the Town, the landscape, and their quality-of-life, but did acknowledge there could be more local amenities. Most often residents requested more parks, recreational facilities, and athletic

facilities, both indoor and outdoor, to serve residents. There is a desire to see more space created for both family and teenage activities that are not tied to facilities at the school district, and are accessible for free to lower-income families. This is a well-known community need, and the Town has made significant strides to improve its recreational options over the past decades, such as launching the Trumansburg Community Recreation organization in 2016 and providing activities like summer camps for Town residents. Residents also said more restaurants, coffee shops, and specialty stores are welcome, but are not interested in big box or chain retailers. Stakeholders strongly emphasized that for big box or chain shopping needs, they could easily access Ithaca, and wanted to see more local, homegrown businesses within the Town itself.

Restrictive zoning could inhibit growth:

Some stakeholders mentioned that restrictive zoning, particularly for businesses and homes, could be a factor in less economic activity and slow population growth. Without business and developer-friendly zoning, those with business or housing opportunities could locate elsewhere in the Region where they feel it's easier to build.

Concerns about water availability, safety and cost:

Access to safe and affordable water is key for both business and residential growth. Many residents feel their water could be unsafe or that making it safe is costly, but there does not appear to be consensus on how to move forward. While water accessibility will be explored in more detail in other areas of this plan, its importance to economic development should be noted.

C.PROJECT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

The following are key themes that emerged from our research and stakeholder engagement that will be necessary for further successful economic development efforts. While these topics might not cover every facet of economic development, which can be complex and reach into many areas of government, business, and residential life, they do highlight important needs for the Town of Ulysses moving forward.

Collaboration with local, regional, and state entities:

Ulysses will likely need to collaborate with partners inside and outside of the Town to realize their full economic development potential. The Town will need to collaborate with Tompkins County, the Southern Tier Economic Region, and the State of New York to achieve its economic goals. Recognizing where the Town can lead or initiate projects and what players need to be involved will help them establish how to move forward to achieve economic prosperity.

Recreational areas and quality-of-life improvements:

The Town has heard feedback from residents about recreation and has made significant advancements in its parks and recreation offerings over the last decade. While maintaining and improving quality of life remains a primary concern for residents based on their feedback in community surveys, it's also an area where improvements are actively being made. Improvements to recreational facilities, local trails, and increased programming have all been implemented. Noting that residents still see this as an area for improvement is important and suggests that more could be done, but it's also important not to discount the strides that have previously been made in this area.

More affordable and accessible housing: Another key theme from stakeholder engagement was affordable housing. Many residents expressed concern that their children could not locate in the Town, that if they lost their current home, they couldn't find or afford another, or that seniors would need to leave if unable to age in place. While housing is explored more in-depth in other areas of this plan, it's also essential for economic growth. Without places for residents and workers to live, there will likely be continued slow or stagnant population growth, which negatively affects the Town's largest industries.

IV.GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

There are ample opportunities for growth, new businesses, and industry in the Town of Ulysses. The Town will need to harness these opportunities and pursue new industries to promote further economic growth throughout its geography. Increased growth may mean better jobs and wages for residents, more jobs located within the Town, and an improved tax base. As the Town grows, more businesses can support the local tax base, helping the Town provide the services the community values and desires.

However, making these investments should not detract from what residents and businesses love about being in Ulysses – the small-town charm, open green space, local agriculture, access to outdoor amenities like Cayuga Lake and the Black Diamond Trail, and the natural beauty of the area. These recommendations seek to identify opportunities for economic growth while maintaining the character of the Town that is so highly valued.

The following section contains the goals, objectives, and policies of the Comprehensive Plan's Economic Development element. This section states the Town's policies for addressing economic development needs. Collaboration with other local, regional, and state entities will be necessary to complete some of these policies.

Goal ED-G-1 The Town will promote economic diversity in order to enhance the economic health of the community.

Objective:

ED-O-1.1 Identify opportunities for economic growth and diversification based on local and regional opportunities.

Policies:

ED-P-1.1.1	Consider conducting a target industry analysis to identify new target industries based on data and stakeholders for the Town to pursue. Potential industries to consider could include light manufacturing, semi-conductor suppliers, local agriculture, agricultural supply, and more.
ED-P-1.1.2	Identify educational opportunities locally and/or in the region that align with target industries to ensure that future business opportunities can be connected to the local workforce.
ED-P-1.1.3	Create an inventory of current assets for target industries to understand what amenities the Town currently has to offer to new target industries, as well as opportunities to provide more assets.
ED-P-1.1.4	Build on the Region's strengths in semi-conductor and electronics manufacturing by attracting small suppliers or related businesses to the Town, possibly along Route 96.
ED-P-1.1.5	Consider crafting new incentive policies that target businesses that align with the Town's target industries and business sectors. Provide support for new businesses that create jobs in the Town that would support a resident, such as providing above average wages, benefits, and opportunities for career development.
ED-P-1.1.6	Encourage and support small businesses of all types, including home-based, mobile, and online businesses, by ensuring zoning, permitting, utilities and support services are inclusive and flexible.
ED-P-1.1.7	When exploring potential new industries or businesses, consider its resource intensity and community impact.

Objective:

ED-O-1.2 Create opportunities for diversification within existing industries and promote business retention and expansion.

Policies:

ED-P-1.2.1	Engage current business owners and leaders in the Town to better understand the local business environment. Find ways to enhance current assets and address challenges.
ED-P-1.2.2	Promote housing and population growth in the Town to provide existing industries like education, healthcare, government, and retail with access to customers and workers.
ED-P-1.2.3	Facilitate better connectivity for small businesses, entrepreneurs, and sole proprietors to services offered County-wide and Regionally (e.g. Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce, Trumansburg Chamber, Small Business Development Center, and Consolidated Funding opportunities).

Goal:

ED-G-2 The Town will encourage redevelopment and improvements to promote economic development and improve the quality and character of its neighborhoods.

Objective:

ED-O-2.1 Encourage new development and redevelopment to create more opportunities for business and economic growth.

Policies:

ED-P-2.1.1	Identify and market existing areas for development, targeting new industry that will provide good jobs and sustained economic activity for the community.
ED-P-2.1.2	Consider local zoning codes and restrictions and identify if changes need to be made to promote new development and redevelopment for businesses.
ED-P-2.1.3	Develop building and preservation codes for home remodels to ensure historic buildings are preserved, which preserves the character of the community.
ED-P-2.1.4	Ensure future building and infrastructure improvements protect the Town's natural environment and promote sustainable development.

Objective:

ED-O-2.2 Maintain and enhance neighborhoods through infrastructure and building improvements, historic preservation, and the creation of new housing and amenities.

Policies:

ED-P-2.2.1	Consider adopting policies that would require landlords to maintain properties and providing support to do so, such as training, connecting them to affordable financing, and creating stronger connections with landlord associations. These actions will ensure that the existing housing stock does not deteriorate and further limit housing opportunities.
ED-P-2.2.2	Maintain the Ulysses Town Historian position to preserve the community's history, identify opportunities for historic events and information sessions, and contribute to preservation and tourism efforts.

Goa:

ED-G-3 Encourage employers to make use of the local workforce and increase opportunities for citizens to have access to local employment.

Objective:

ED-O-3.1 Create more opportunities for employers in the Town of Ulysses to engage the local workforce.

Policies:

ED-P-3.1.1	Coordinate with the Trumansburg Chamber of Commerce and County organizations to market available jobs for the local workforce, including promoting job fairs and career training opportunities.
ED-P-3.1.2	Market employment opportunities in Ulysses in the larger region, attracting more workers to the Town.

Objective:

ED-O-3.2 Create more opportunities for workers within the Town of Ulysses to gain the skills necessary to make them attractive to local employers.

Policies:

ED-P-3.2.1	Explore options to introduce more career and technical education in target industries or key skills for students at the high school level, enabling them to graduate with a certificate and/or real-world job experience in fields relevant to the Town's economy, such as agriculture.
ED-P-3.2.2	Partner with TST BOCES to provide adult education within the Town of Ulysses, enabling adults to expand their skill set in target industries.
ED-P-3.2.3	As applicable, explore apprenticeship and internship opportunities at businesses within the Town of Ulysses, engaging regional high school and college student populations and promoting real-world job experience.
ED-P-3.2.4	Engage partners like the Tompkins County Workforce Development Board and TST BOCES to provide services within the Town of Ulysses, like offering job seeker and/or training services from the Trumansburg Library once a week or holding workshops.

Goal:

ED-G-4 The Town will strive to meet the land use needs, utility, and transportation requirements to encourage businesses to locate and grow in Ulysses.

Objective:

ED-O-4.1 Make the necessary utility and infrastructure improvements to ensure the Town can grow its population and business community sustainably.

Policies:

ED-P-4.1.1	Review current development and land use codes to ensure they align with the community's future land use needs, such as more commercial space for businesses and opportunities for denser housing.
ED-P-4.1.2	Make necessary roadway improvements to ensure that traveling along major roads in the Town, especially Route 96, medium density areas on the future land use map, and access points to the Black Diamond Trail are safe for vehicles, cyclists, and pedestrians.
ED-P-4.1.3	Align with local and regional initiatives to protect local natural resources, especially water.
ED-P-4.1.4	Work with TCAT to increase the frequency of bus service within the Town, specifically on the weekends and after 5 pm on weekdays.
ED-P-4.1.5	Invest in sustainable energy and utilities that align with local and regional sustainability efforts.

CHAPTER 06

TRANSPORTATION

I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A. 2025 UPDATE: CREATING A TRANSPORTATION ELEMENT

The Transportation Element is a new chapter for the Town's Comprehensive Plan intended to address issues related to the transport of people and material goods. It will consider the factors that influence or are influenced by transportation choices and will evaluate and suggest changes to the Town's transportation systems to better align the transportation system with the Town goals.

This element will broadly consider the streets, sidewalks, transit, and regional trails within and reasonably near the Town to evaluate how to improve them. This element is not meant to be free-standing as it relates to other elements such as land use, housing, natural resources and the built environment, climate change and resilience, and community well-being.

The Transportation Element is derived from and influenced by the following:

- Ithaca-Tompkins County Transportation Council - 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan
- Tompkins County Countywide Planning Policies
- 2008 Route 96 Corridor Management Study
- 2001 Cayuga Lake Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan
- New York State Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act

- 2017 Tompkins County Plug-in Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Plan
- 2020 Town of Ithaca Route 96 Pedestrian Study
- 2004 Cayuga Lake Local Waterfront Revitalization Program: Cayuga Lake Waterfront Plan
- Public outreach and visioning comments received as part of the public participation process for the plan update.

II. PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES INFLUENCING ULYSSES' TRANSPORTATION ELEMENT

A. TOMPKINS COUNTYWIDE PLANNING POLICIES

According to the Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan, transportation choices should be efficient, affordable, and healthy for people and the environment. The County desires to reduce the use of fossil fuels in transportation; support land use patterns that allow people to move efficiently and affordably; shift travel away from driving to less carbon intensive options; and maintain and improve critical elements of the existing transportation network. Most importantly, the County will consider the needs of populations that are challenged by transportation when developing transportation systems and alternatives.

B. ITHACA-TOMPKINS COUNTY TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL (ITCTC)

Vision:

ITCTC 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) embraces the concept of Sustainable Accessibility. This concept will transform transportation systems into mobility networks that meet the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, rail, freight, and motorists while addressing vehicular congestion, equity, energy and environmental concerns. Sustainable Accessibility can be defined as the ability to get to a destination or complete a task in an efficient, convenient, and reliable way, while using technologies and services that minimize environmental impacts, promote economic vitality and ensure equity in the provision of transportation to the community.

C. NEW YORK STATE

The State of New York has a large interest in the transportation system being one of the larger owners and operators of facilities. The State also provides substantial funding for all transportation initiatives and funds local transportation operations. They've adopted a number of relevant plans utilized herein such as the New York State Climate Action Council Scoping Plan, New York State's Transportation Master Plan for 2030, and the New York State Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. The latter two documents are at or nearing the end of their useful life and are currently being revised by the State. The State is drafting a New York State Transportation Master Plan for 2050, an update to their 2030 plan.

New York State Transportation Master Plan 2050 – Six Goals

Source: New York State Transportation Master Plan, June 2025 Draft

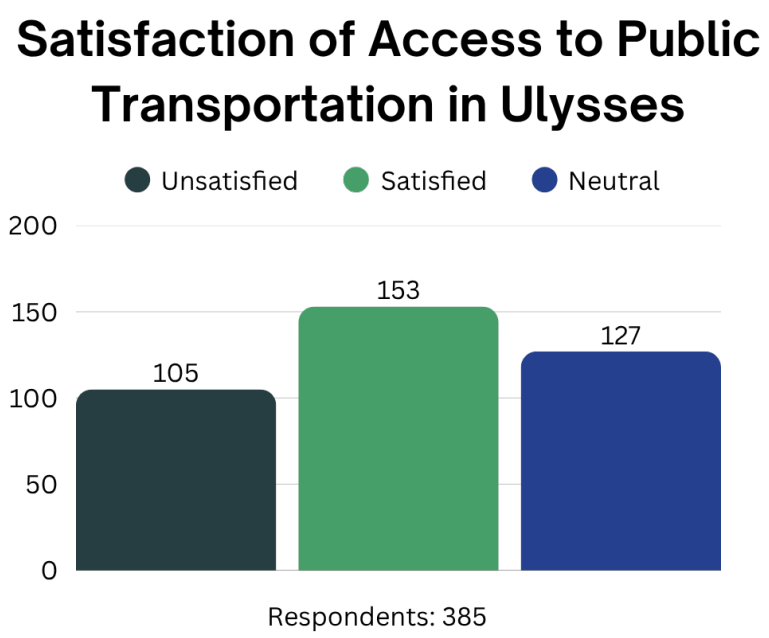
D. ULYSSES VISIONING EFFORTS

During the visioning phase of the comprehensive planning process, various exercises were conducted to facilitate feedback from the public about transportation. The following topics were brought up as priorities that the comprehensive plan update should focus on:

- **Expanding public transportation options (in addition to current TCAT service).**
- **Addressing the transportation gap in rural areas of Town where residents have a hard time getting to services.**
- **Creating more, safe designated bike lanes throughout the Town.**
- **Sidewalk improvements and expansion.**
- **Prioritizing hamlet center walkability.**
- **Assessing road safety and speed limits to protect pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists.**
- **Connectivity among the Black Diamond Trail, the Town of Ulysses, and Village of Trumansburg.**
- **Having more electric vehicle charging stations.**
- **Consideration for a car-share program.**
- **Having bikes/electric bikes available for rent.**
- **Consideration for having a park and ride in the Town.**

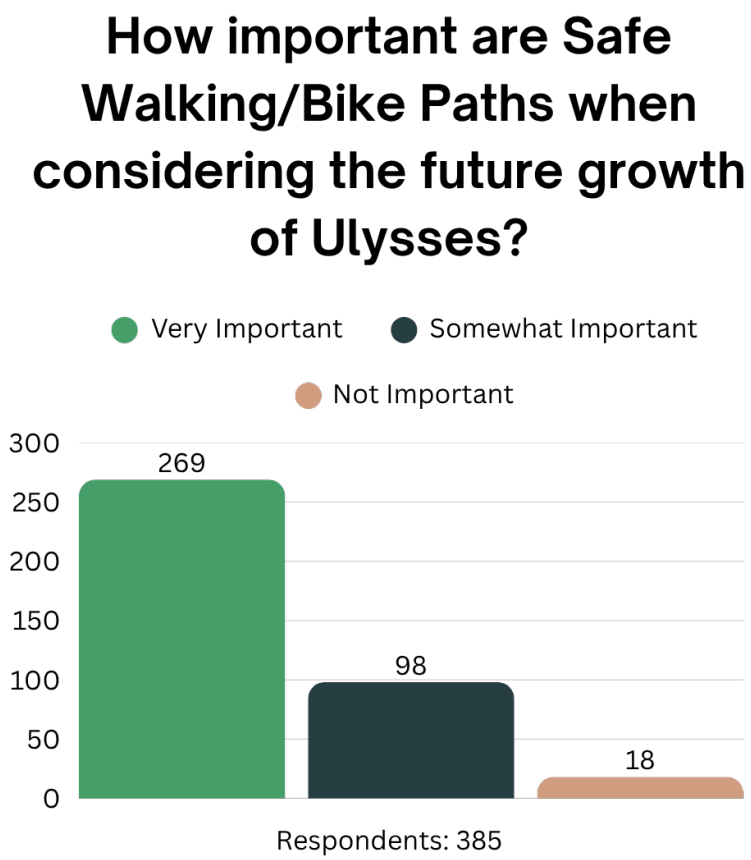
Of the 385 community members who responded to the transportation survey questions, 27% indicated they are not satisfied with public transportation access in the Town of Ulysses. 40% indicated they were satisfied and 33% responded that they felt neutral regarding access to public transportation (Appendix B.2).

Figure T-1



When asked about how important safe walking and bike paths were when considering the future growth of Ulysses, 70% of the 385 respondents indicated that safe walking/bike paths were very important to them and 25% said this was somewhat important to them. Only 5% of respondents said safe walking and bike paths were not important to them (Appendix B.2).

Figure T-2



III. INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS OF TRANSPORTATION IN ULYSSES

When thinking about transportation, it is often assumed that the personal vehicle is the ultimate mode of transport. However, the demand for transportation modes are as diverse as people themselves, and mode choice often relates to price – monetary, perceived, and time cost.

Consider that children under 16, older residents, and some disabled residents legally cannot drive. Other residents may be unable to afford the cost of owning and maintaining a vehicle. Still more residents may not want to drive due to concerns about environmental damage or the dangers of driving. **All residents should be able to independently move around their community, to a friend or family's house or to a park, school, or other service.**

Further, transportation emissions are the number one source of greenhouse gas emissions within Tompkins County. The transportation sector is also responsible for other forms of pollution and safety impacts to users proximate to the facilities. It's important to evaluate and understand how transportation choices subject people to impacts unrelated to their use (i.e. externalities such as pollution) so that policy makers can factor this into decision-making.

A. EXISTING TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

1. ACCESS AND COST

Accessibility refers to a traveler's ability to reach a destination or whether transportation options are available at all. It also considers transportation costs as this can be a major hinderance to accessibility.

Vehicle Availability

Throughout the Town, only 1.4% of households lack access to a vehicle. However, there may be some who are constrained by vehicle access, like a home with multiple workers but only one car. TCAT does provide transit services throughout portions of the Town in the greatest density of residences, traffic, and employment.

Cost of Vehicle Ownership

The Town acknowledges the increasing cost of vehicle ownership as a future planning challenge surrounding vehicular transportation. AAA estimates it costs around $12k per year for a new car, and those rising costs filter into the used car market.[1] As it is becoming less affordable to drive – people are looking for options to cut costs and some have no other option but to drive due to an insufficient public transportation system.

2. AVAILABLE NETWORK

Maintenance Jurisdiction

The map below (Figure T-3) shows the jurisdiction responsible for maintenance of roadways within the Town. The majority of lane miles are the Town's responsibility, although the County does manage a substantial portion of mileage in the Town as well.

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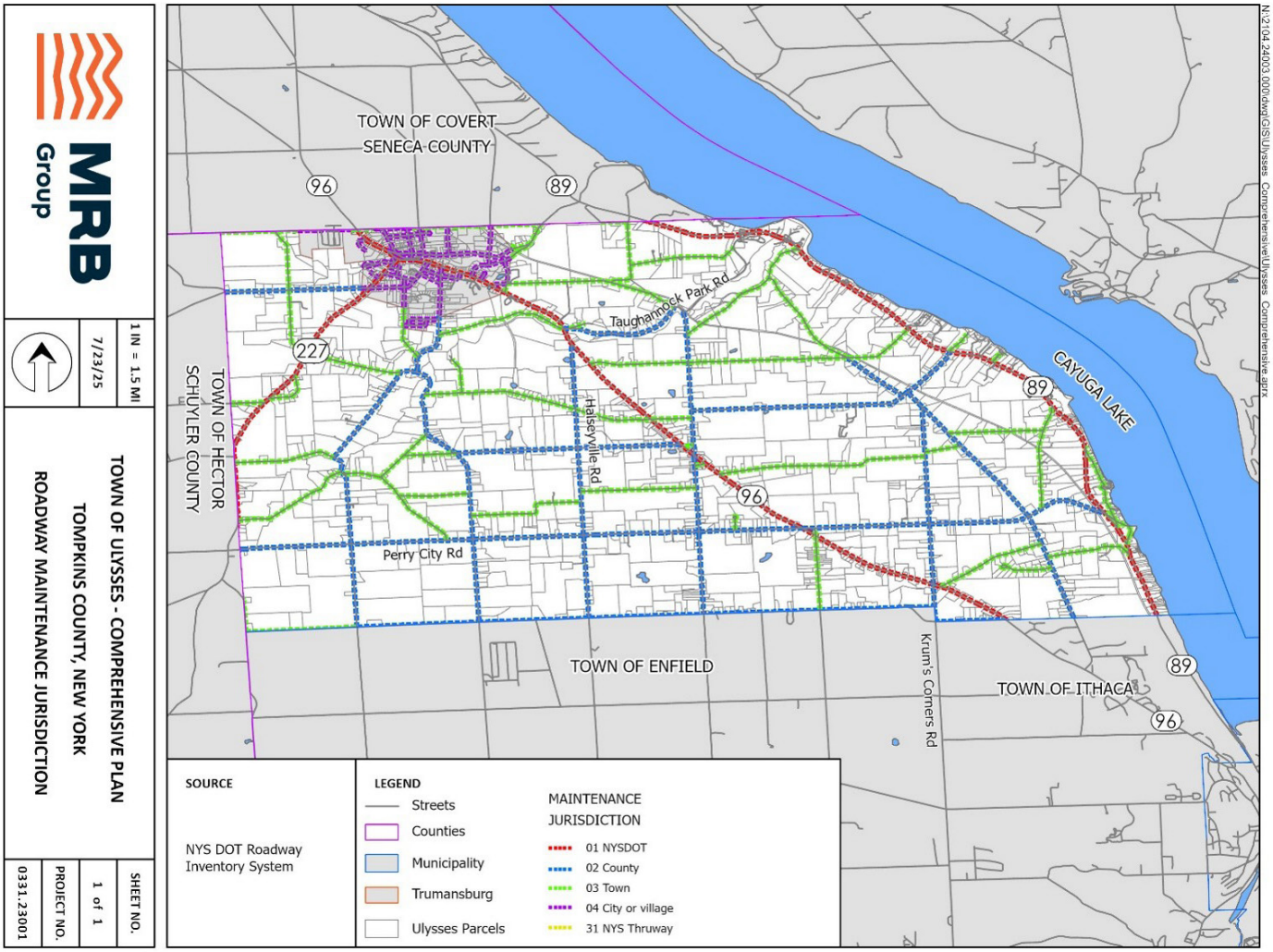
1. *Moye, B. (2024, September 5). AAA your driving costs: The price of new car ownership continues to climb . AAA Newsroom. https://newsroom.aaa.com/2024/09/aaa-your-driving-costs-the-price-of-new-car-ownership-continues-to-climb/*

Figure T-3


TOWN OF COVERT
SENECA COUNTY
96
89
227
TOWN OF HECTOR
SCHUYLER COUNTY
Taughannock Park Rd
Halseyville Rd
Perry City Rd
96
89
CAYUGA LAKE
TOWN OF ENFIELD
Krum's Corners Rd
TOWN OF ITHACA
89
96
SOURCE
NYS DOT Roadway Inventory System
LEGEND
Streets
Counties
Municipality
Trumansburg
Ulysses Parcels
MAINTENANCE JURISDICTION
01 NYSDOT
02 County
03 Town
04 City or village
31 NYS Thruway
MRB Group
1 IN = 1.5 MI
7/23/25
TOWN OF ULYSSES - COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
TOMPKINS COUNTY, NEW YORK
ROADWAY MAINTENANCE JURISDICTION
SHEET NO.
1 of 1
PROJECT NO.
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To address the problem of large truck traffic in the Finger Lakes area, NYS DOT restricts large trucks operating under a Special Hauling or Divisible Load permit from using designated highways in the Town of Ulysses. "Large trucks" refers to vehicles consisting of a tractor-trailer or truck-trailer combination with a trailer length of 45 feet or more. With some exceptions, permitted large trucks should not use any of the restricted highways designated by the NYS DOT which includes NYS Routes 89 and 96 within the Town of Ulysses (Appendix C).

Walk/Bike Infrastructure Gaps

1. **No marked bike lanes**
2. **Few sidewalks (limited to Hamlet of Jacksonville)**
3. **Pedestrians must often share the road**

Multimodal Transportation Infrastructure

Community walkability is influenced by the availability of infrastructure and the proximity to destinations. According to the ITCTC 2045 LRTP, within the Town of Ulysses **there are no marked bike lanes or identified sidewalks though there are small sections of sidewalk within the Hamlet of Jacksonville. Pedestrians can also utilize the Black Diamond Trail, but otherwise the lack of pedestrian infrastructure will require pedestrians to share the roads with vehicles (Appendix C). This can be particularly dangerous or prohibitive to disabled persons who cannot easily vacate the roadway for oncoming vehicles.**

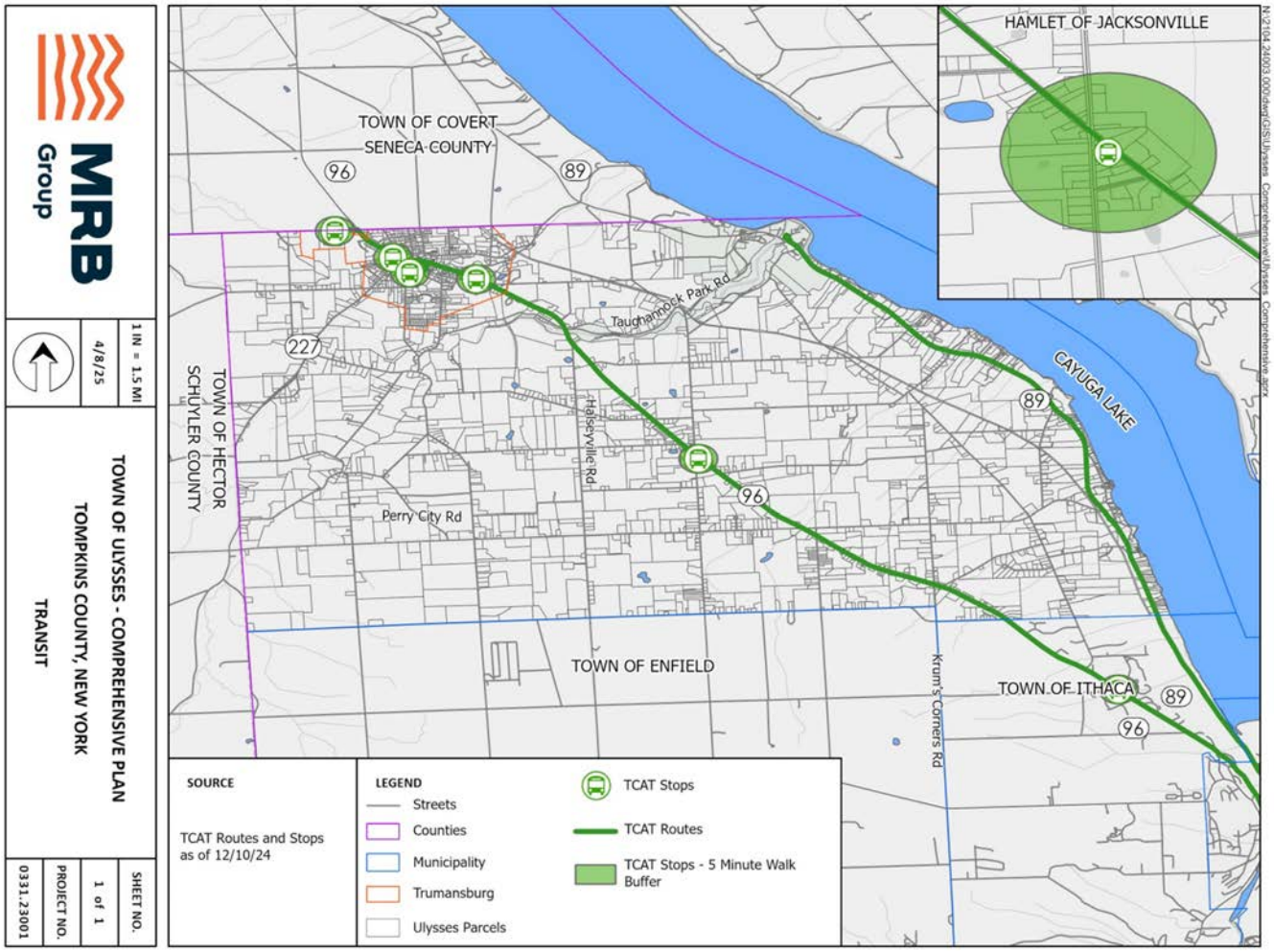
The ITCTC LRTP also notes that there are many roads with very good or excellent bike suitability (Appendix C). However, many of these roads do not have paved shoulders and are shared with vehicles operating at high speeds. To potential cyclists except those who are very serious – which is the majority of potential riders – these conditions would deter them from riding on these routes. There are estimated to be 0% of workers who commute via bicycle. In the past few years, recreational and casual cycling has exploded due to greater demands for outdoor recreation and the popularity of electric bikes, which are a low-cost and non-laborious manner of cycling to destinations.

There is a substantial trail, the Black Diamond Trail, within the Town that currently extends from Taughannock Falls to the City of Ithaca. This multi-use trail is a great recreational asset and provides a potential bike commuting route to Ithaca. The trail is 8.5 miles from Taughannock Park Rd to the intersection with the Cayuga Waterfront Trail and Route 89. It is proposed to be extended North to the Village of Trumansburg boundary.

Tompkins County Consolidated Area Transit (TCAT) is a public transportation network that provides service to the City of Ithaca, Town of Ulysses, and surrounding areas. TCAT is an independent organization that is not operated by the Town of Ulysses. Figure T-4 shows TCAT service within the Town of Ulysses including programmed route stops and a 5-minute walkshed buffer calculated from these stops for a person walking 3 feet per second or 2 miles per hour.

Very little of the Town and the Town's housing stock exists within this walkshed, which can challenge residents who rely on public transit or who don't have personal vehicles. Most stops are within the Village of Trumansburg. However, one stop exists within the Town of Ulyssess at the Hamlet of Jacksonville, though the bus will provide on-demand stops when requested in advance. The bus also has bike racks to accommodate users who mix transportation modes in their routes. Because the hamlet lacks widespread pedestrian infrastructure, utilizing its stops can be dangerous and unwelcoming, thereby deterring use except for those who have no other alternative.

Figure T-4


HAMLET OF JACKSONVILLE
TOWN OF COVERT
SENECA COUNTY
96
89
Taughannock Park Rd
227
TOWN OF HECTOR
SCHUYLER COUNTY
Halseyville Rd
Perry City Rd
CAYUGA LAKE
TOWN OF ENFIELD
Krum's Corners Rd
TOWN OF ITHACA
SOURCE
TCAT Routes and Stops as of 12/10/24
LEGEND
Streets
Counties
Municipality
Trumansburg
Ulysses Parcels
TCAT Stops
TCAT Routes
TCAT Stops - 5 Minute Walk Buffer
MRB Group
1 IN = 1.5 MI
4/8/25
TOWN OF ULYSSES - COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
TOMPKINS COUNTY, NEW YORK
TRANSIT
SHEET NO.
1 of 1
PROJECT NO.
0331.23001

An additional challenge relating to transit service is that the frequency of service is very limited. Service is offered Monday-Friday with consolidated service on Saturday and Sunday. At stops along Route 21 in the Town of Ulysses, a bus arrives once every 1.5 hours and services end at 6:20 PM. Weekend service is even more limited with only 4 bus runs on Saturday and 3 bus runs on Sunday. Route frequency and service span are especially important for ridership because it allows riders freedom and flexibility. These must be improved to increase ridership.

Another major transportation service provided for Ulysses and throughout Tompkins County is Gadabout Transit. Gadabout is a voluntary transportation service for Tompkins County residents who are 55 and older or are disabled. Fares are $2.00-$3.00 to ensure that older adults on fixed income or people with disabilities with limited earning power can independently care for themselves.

Technological Advances:

Air Delivery Services

Some retailers and businesses are experimenting with drone delivery services. Current delivery ranges are around 12 miles round trip, which could allow delivery from the Ithaca area to parts of the Town of Ulysses. Although this technology is currently only available in large cities of the South and Southeast, it's possible that it will expand to New York in the future.

Autonomous mobility

Autonomous vehicle technology is becoming increasingly prevalent in communities across the country as a result of advances in artificial intelligence. These vehicles have the potential to enhance traffic safety and efficiency, reduce vehicle emissions, and improve mobility for populations that cannot drive. As autonomous vehicles become more common, Ulysses will need to understand the positive and negative impacts this technology may have on bicyclist and pedestrian safety, and transportation infrastructure. Ulysses will need to proactively plan to ensure the built environment is safe and thriving.

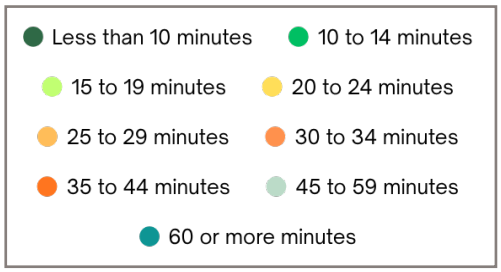
3. MOBILITY

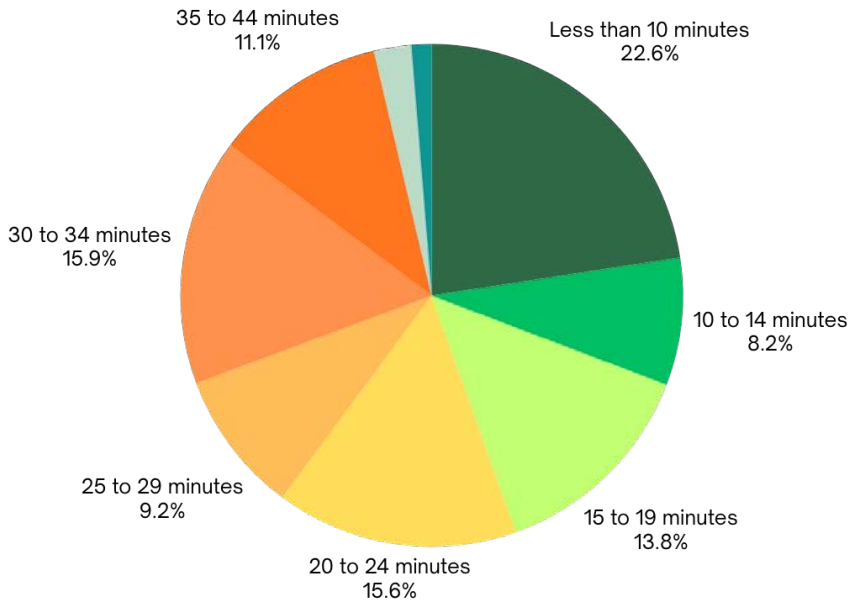
Commute Time

Commute times within the Town are reasonable with 70% of workers commuting in less than 30 minutes. This data represents all workers and not just drivers. 96% of the Town's workers commute in less than 45 minutes.

Travel to Work Time

Figure T-5



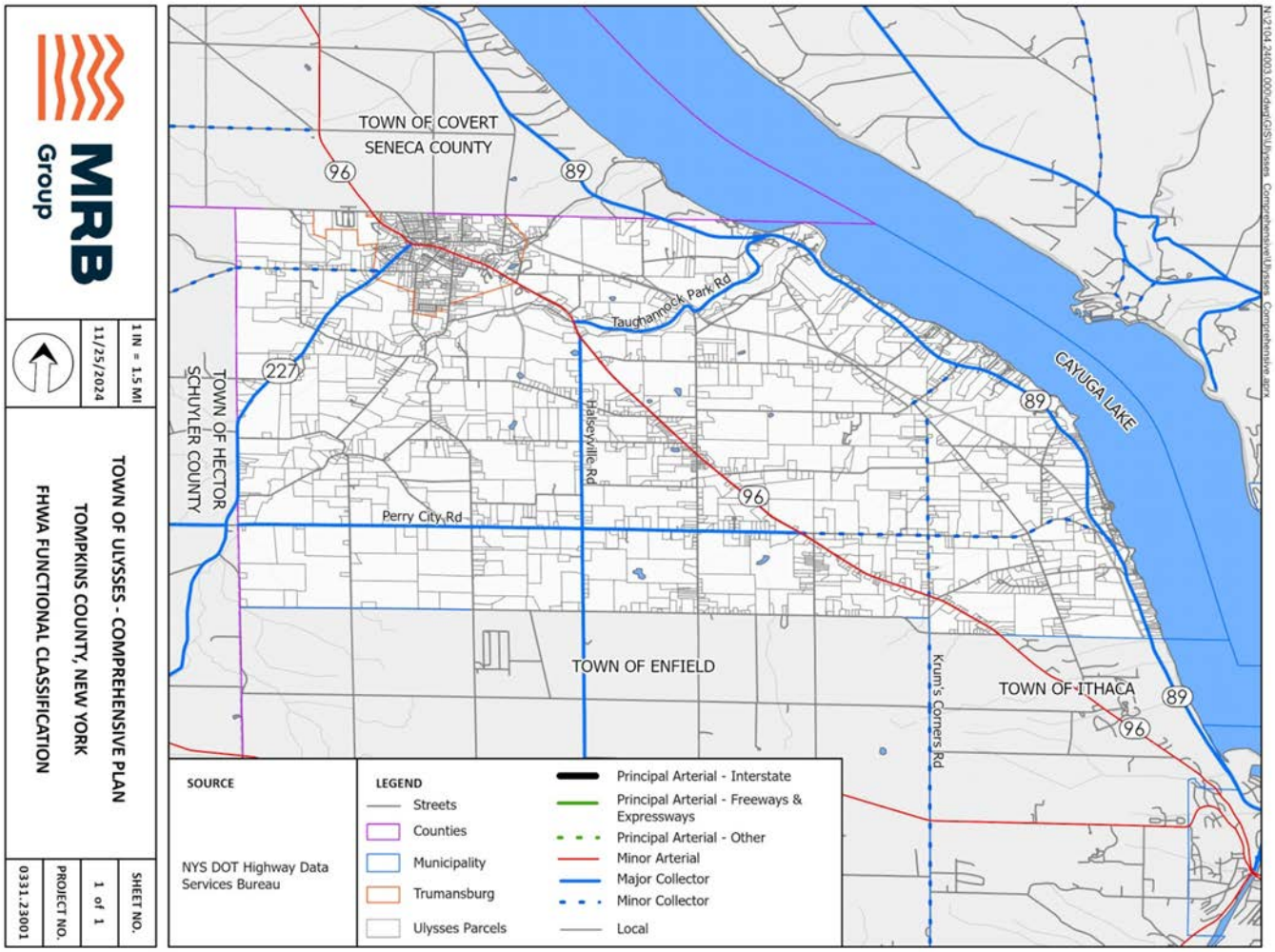


Source: U.S. Census Bureau. "Commuting Characteristics by Sex." American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table S0801, 2022, https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST5Y2022.S0801?t=Commuting&g=060XX00US3610975990. Accessed on November 28, 2024.

Functional Classification

Functional classification is an ordering system that defines the role of a road in serving the flow of trips through a highway network. Functional classification categorizes streets according to their mobility and their accessibility – basically their ability to move traffic and the ability to provide access to adjacent properties. Arterial roads provide the greatest mobility, but in doing so must limit accessibility to surrounding properties to keep traffic flowing. Local roads provide the greatest accessibility to nearby properties, and in doing so speeds are generally lower to accommodate numerous potential conflicts and turns. Figure T-6 shows the Town's functional classification system.

Figure T-6


TOWN OF COVERT
SENECA COUNTY
96
89
Taughannock Park Rd
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TOWN OF HECTOR
SCHUYLER COUNTY
Halseyville Rd
Perry City Rd
96
CAYUGA LAKE
89
TOWN OF ENFIELD
Krum's Corners Rd
TOWN OF ITHACA
89
96
SOURCE
NYS DOT Highway Data Services Bureau
LEGEND
Streets
Counties
Municipality
Trumansburg
Ulysses Parcels
Principal Arterial - Interstate
Principal Arterial - Freeways & Expressways
Principal Arterial - Other
Minor Arterial
Major Collector
Minor Collector
Local
MRB Group
1 IN = 1.5 MI
11/25/2024
TOWN OF ULYSSES - COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
TOMPKINS COUNTY, NEW YORK
FHWA FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION
SHEET NO.
1 of 1
PROJECT NO.
0331.23001

Congestion

According to the Ithaca-Tompkins County Transportation Council's Long-Range Transportation Plan, the regional Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Town of Ulysses, there are no identified or projected congested roadway segments within the Town of Ulysses. According to the report, "the output from the travel demand model for 2019 conditions and projections to 2040. The travel demand model is currently designed to model the afternoon peak hour (5-6PM). Therefore, the map may not highlight links that experience congestion at other times."

While not strictly a measure of congestion, Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) provides an estimate of traffic volumes across all days for a year of a given section of roadway. Within the Town, the highest AADT levels are found on Route 96 just South of the Village of Trumansburg. The second most trafficked road within the Town is Route 89. Generally, traffic levels throughout the Town are low, although the specific design of intersections and peak traffic times may create congested periods.

Condition

Data provided by NYS DOT shows the average highway surface score of tracked roadway segments of federal aid eligible highways in Town of Ulysses to be 8.11 out of 10 in 2020 and 2021. Tracked segments in Tompkins County average 6.92 out of 10. Only one segment in the Town, a segment of Perry City Road, is categorized as poor, and four are categorized as excellent.

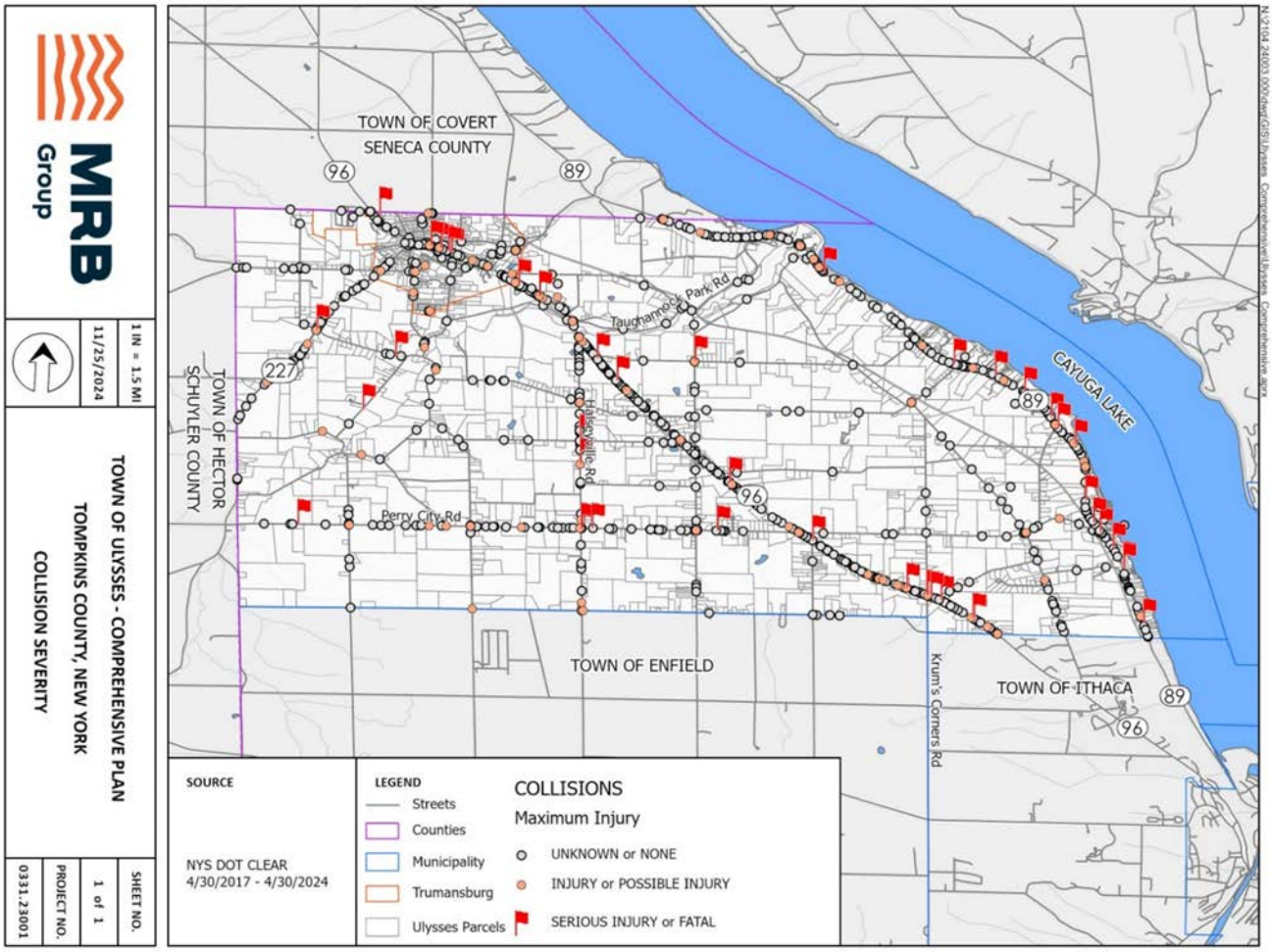
4. HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

Safety

The most important and noticeable impact on health caused by the transportation system are dramatic instances of fatal collisions and collisions that cause severe and debilitating injury. In other elements of this Comprehensive Plan, the outcomes of policies are substantially less impactful than the transportation system in which people have died or suffer severe injuries. The people who suffer are family

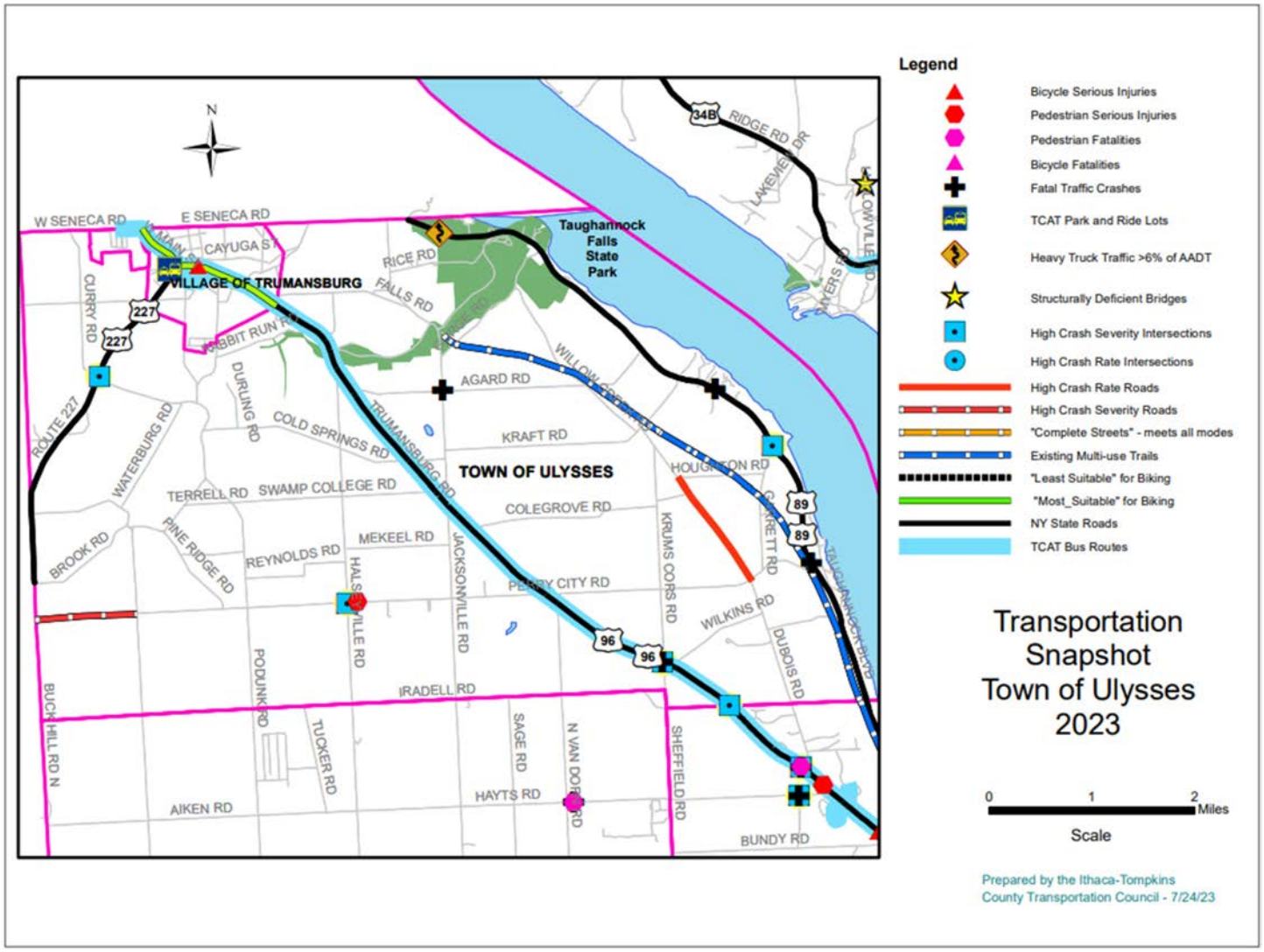
or neighbors and the community is worse off as a result. **There have been 87 instances of fatal or serious injury from traffic collision within the Town over 7 years, or about 12 per year. The highest concentration of severe collisions occurs within the Town along Routes 96 and 89 as shown in Figure T-7.**[2] These are the two most highly trafficked segments within the Town and are designed for the highest speeds. Tompkins County has also prepared a map, Figure T-8 showing intersections and routes designated as High Crash and High Severity.

Figure T-7



2. *Figure T-7 contains a large amount of informative data that is used to produce this map. Considering the size of the data, the Town and Planning Departments have access to this information and should be used by the Town when deemed appropriate.*

Figure T-8

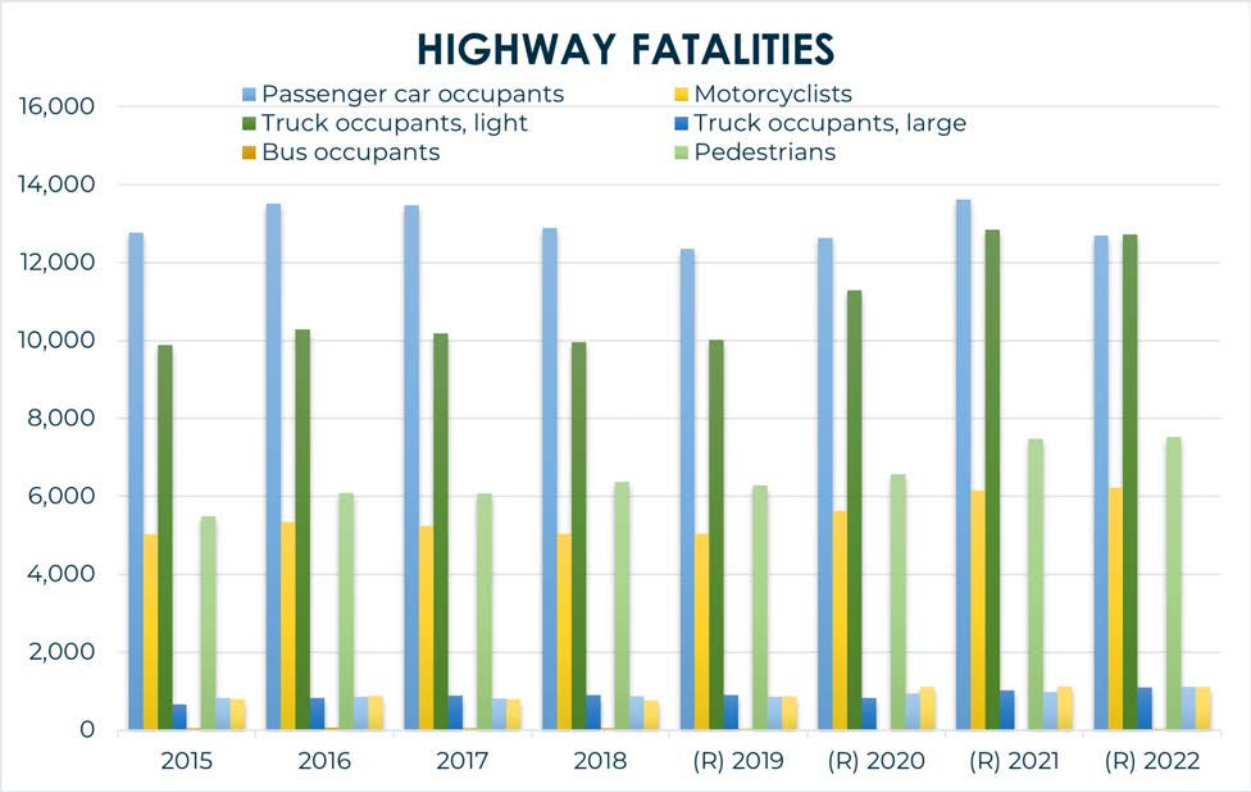


The Town recognizes that vehicle speed dramatically increases the severity and likelihood of collisions, especially in the context of unpredictable events like deer or pedestrian crossings. Street design is the best method to reducie vehicle speeds and can be done through a number of strategies including roundabouts, bumpouts, raised intersections, and non-roadway elements like street trees and constructing taller buildings or building closer to streets to narrow a driver's focus area.

Figure T-9

Buses are very safe from a collision perspective. In 2023, transit buses were involved in 8 total fatal collisions in NYS representing 0.5% of fatalities. Passenger Cars and Light Trucks represented 74.3%. Figure T-10 shows the national data for fatality rates by mode. Investing in transit could improve transportation safety in the Town.

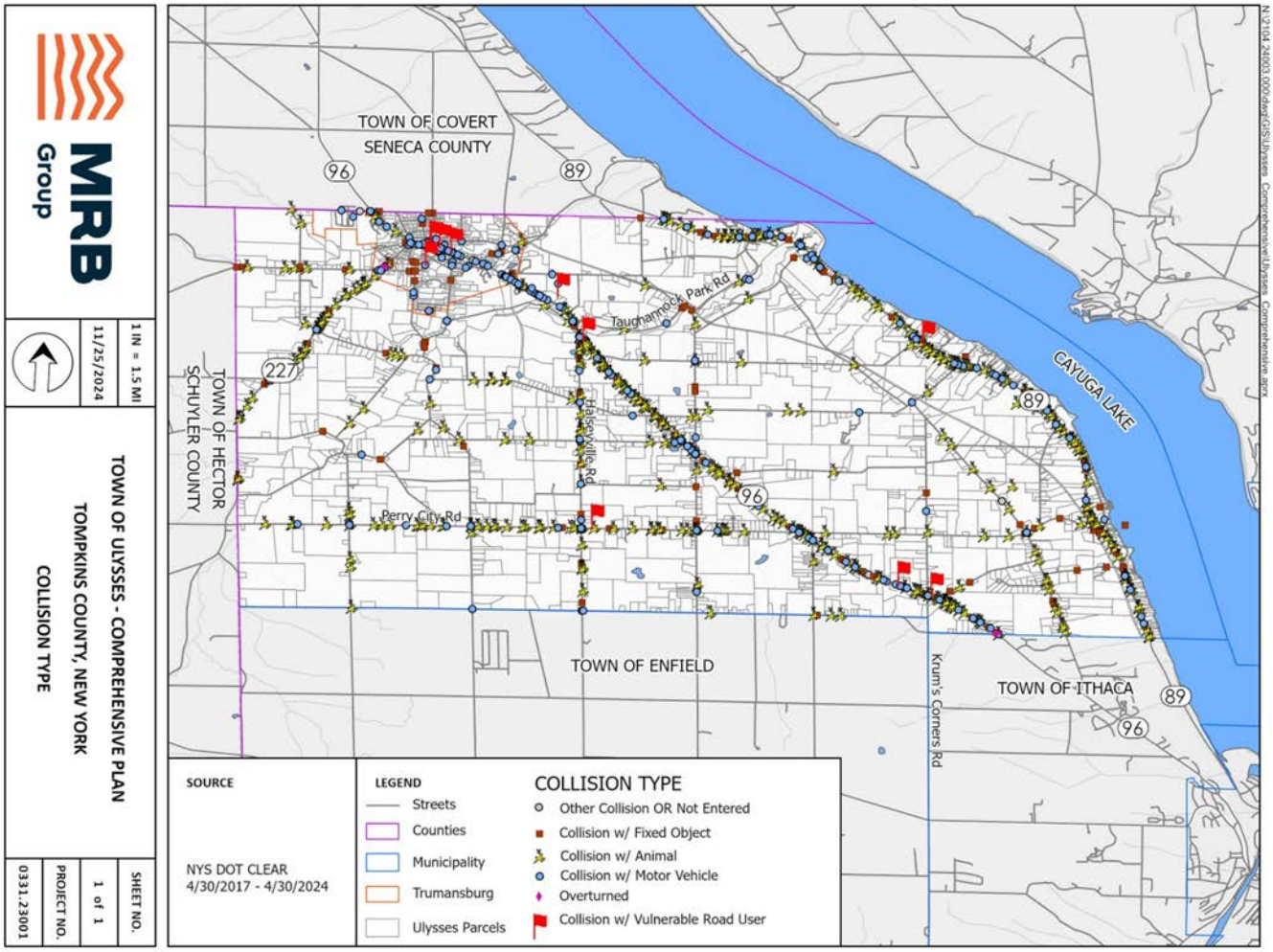
Figure T-10



https://www.bts.gov/content/transportation-fatalities-mode

Figure T-11 shows the types of collision occurring within the Town. Collisions with vulnerable roadway users are relatively rare, occurring only 11 times in the last 7 years. For areas that the Town wants to encourage pedestrian and bicycling traffic, adjacent roadways should be designed to reasonably minimize vehicle speeds and include designated bike and pedestrian facilities.

Figure T-11



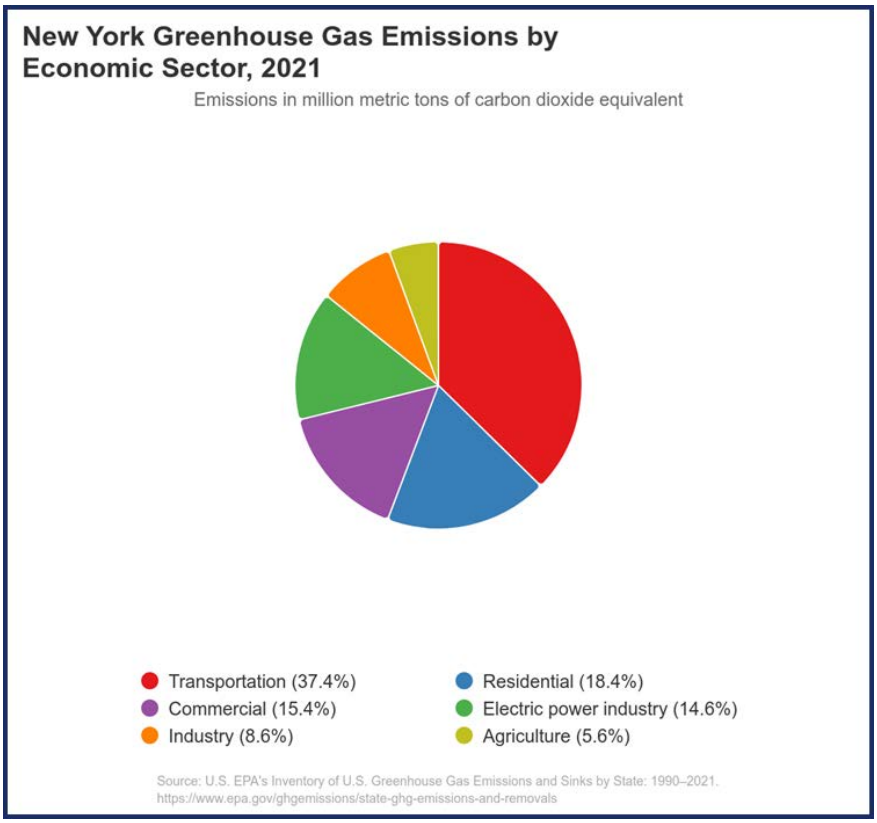
Public Health

Less discernable than the immediate and dramatic impacts of traffic collisions are how transportation modes influence the risk of other adverse health conditions. Some transportation options have positive health benefits like walking and biking which are associated with increased happiness and reduced risks of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and cancer mortality. For adolescents, active school transportation was associated with increased educational outcomes and school enjoyment. Conversely, driving, especially for long periods, is shown to increase risks of cardiovascular issues, obesity, stress, and worsen mental health for drivers .

Pollution

In 2021, the transportation sector created 37.4% of greenhouse gas emissions in New York State – more than double the residential sector which was second at 18.4% (Figure 12). This is mostly attributable to petroleum based on-road transportation but also includes emissions from air travel. The 2019 Tompkins County Greenhouse Gas Emission and Energy Use Inventory calculates this number for Tompkins County and shows similar numbers with the Transportation sector creating the most emissions at 34%. If drivers increasingly utilize electric vehicles this may reduce emissions, but the greatest benefits are created through encouraging shifts to more efficient travel options like transit, biking, and walking to reduce total Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT). Therefore, policies to reduce VMT and increase multimodal travel are also effective environmental policies.

Figure T 12



Vehicles also introduce other pollutants into the local environment, such as brake dust and exhaust particulates which can contribute to adverse health effects. Negative health impacts include asthma, pneumonia, and bronchitis. Tire wear also introduces microplastics into the air and water systems which expose people through direct ingestion, contact, and inhalation. Exposure may affect various bodily systems such as digestive, respiratory, endocrine, reproductive, and immune systems. Wherever possible, heavy vehicle traffic should not be located near dense residential areas due to these adverse health impacts. Shifting to electric vehicles may increase and worsen microplastic pollution due to the increased weight of the vehicles contributing to faster wear on tires, though electric vehicles generally reduce brake wear due to regenerative braking.

Other less appreciated forms of pollution or adverse external effects include road salt leading to watershed salination, oils and litter from the roadway infiltrating stormwater, parking areas increasing impervious surfaces and stormwater loads, heat islands from paved areas such as parking lots, and noise pollution. Again, a shift to other transportation modes and reducing Vehicles Miles Travelled can reduce some of these types of impacts.

5. LOCAL REGULATORY IMPACTS ON TRANSPORTATION

Some local regulations can influence the transportation options and choices of residents. For instance, zoning regulations that require additional space between destinations inherently make walking a less reasonable option by increasing travel times. This section will briefly evaluate the transportation impacts of some available regulations in zoning and subdivision requirements. It is not exhaustive but illustrative.

Zoning

If zoning prohibits a mix of uses and requires residences, workplaces, restaurants, and other amenities to be separated by large distances, it effectively requires

inhabitants to drive. This increases congestion and pollution effects from transportation. Additionally, zoning can be supportive of alternative transportation options by allowing dense, mixed-use development within a short distance of transit stops.

The Town's zoning is predominantly Euclidean, which generally requires the separation of uses. Potentially the Town might explore what non-residential uses are appropriate in the primarily residential areas and permit them as a method of reducing required travel distances. Additionally, Hamlet zoning areas provide opportunities for mixed-uses. The Waterburg Hamlet Zone is very limited in the mixed-uses allowed, and the dimensional requirements are likely to exclude any walkable development patterns due to large lot sizes and deep setbacks. The Hamlet Center and Hamlet Neighborhood Zones are much better in their mix of use permissions and dimensional requirements; some revisions may be appropriate upon a more detailed review of these areas. Finally, the Town has no minimum off-street parking requirements, which is a tremendous benefit to reducing the impacts of vehicular infrastructure and encourages other transportation modes.

Subdivision Design Standards

Subdivision requirements that necessitate or allow large cul-de-sac or large blocks can reduce block permeability for active transportation and reduce the feasibility of those transportation options. However, the Town of Ulysses Subdivision Road Design Standards are generally adequate in allowing narrow street design, limiting cul-de-sac, and reducing block lengths. Safety and alternative transportation options could be further supported by including requirements for constructing sidewalks, bike lanes, reducing turn radii, and other elements. Further, the Planning Board may ask developers to provide pedestrian, bike, and transit circulation plans to clearly evaluate how these users may navigate the site.

B. CHALLENGES FOR TRANSPORTATION

Limited Rural Access

Transportation options are scarce throughout the Town.

Transit Service

Public transit routes and frequency are extremely limited in the Town. This is especially important for late-night or weekend employment shifts.

Disabled and Dependent Residents

Transportation options are limited for residents who are disabled or are dependent on others for care.

Financial Burden

Low-income residents face financial barriers to using available transportation. These barriers include affording transportation itself, maintaining a personal vehicle, obtaining a driver's license, and potentially covering related fees.

First Mile/Last Mile Challenges

Residents in rural communities often live more than a mile from the nearest bus stop, making access to public transportation difficult. This "first mile/last mile" gap limits mobility, especially for those without a personal vehicle.

Funding

Transportation funding is programmed at the federal, state, and local levels, and due to political changes, some funding sources may be cut or not increased into the future.

Multimodal Infrastructure

There is limited existing multi-modal infrastructure within the Town.

Mixed-Use Areas

To limit the need for vehicle transportation trips and to reduce distances, destinations such as employment, shops, schools, day care, etc. must be located near housing, but there is limited mixed-use areas in the Town.

IV. GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

The following section contains the goals, objectives, and policies for the Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan. This section states the Town's policies for improving transportation options within the Town.

The foregoing sections have detailed the desires of multiple planning agencies operating within the Town of Ulysses to improve road safety, increase transportation options, and reduce the environmental impacts of the transportation system. This chapter demonstrated that within the Town there is one predominant transportation option – cars – and other options are in need of improvement. The condition of the roadways is broadly acceptable, and there is little congestion. There are areas within the Town, particularly the Hamlet of Jacksonville, which represent a great opportunity to expand those travel options. Finally, it was shown that car travel in particular is the least environmentally friendly transport option and may increase adverse health effects.

Goal:

T-G-1 Create a multitude of safe and efficient transportation options throughout the Town for all users, and reduce the environmental impacts of the transportation sector.

Objective:

T-O-1.1 Support and provide additional opportunities for people to utilize alternative modes of transportation, including public transit, bicycles, and walking.

Policies:

T-P-1.1.1	Coordinate land use planning with transportation elements by supporting mixed-use development near transit services and planning multimodal improvements in growth areas such as the Hamlet of Jacksonville.
T-P-1.1.2	Expand pedestrian infrastructure such as sidewalks, crossings, and walkable street networks, particularly in the Hamlet of Jacksonville, growth areas, and new subdivisions.
T-P-1.1.3	Improve bicycle connectivity by identifying local bike routes. Work with the New York State Department of Transportation and Tompkins County to identify and widen road shoulders as needed to ensure safety for cyclists and pedestrians.
T-P-1.1.4	Collaborate with the Tompkins Consolidated Area Transit, regional planning agencies, employers, and local partners to improve transit services, transportation programs, and funding opportunities for residents.
T-P-1.1.5	Develop and implement a First Mile/Last Mile Program to connect residents to the nearest bus stop and ensure they can connect to their desired destinations.
T-P-1.1.6	Improve connections to the Black Diamond Trail and other recreational routes by expanding trail access points, bicycle routes, and wayfinding information. Map preferred and safest cycling routes.
T-P-1.1.7	Connect neighborhoods to parks and other amenities and services with sidewalks, designated bikeways or bike paths, and safe infrastructure to ensure that residents can access them.
T-P-1.1.8	Make targeted infrastructure improvements for pedestrian and cyclist connectivity throughout the Town, like fixing sidewalks, widening and protecting bike lanes, installing lights, and making improvements as needed to enhance neighborhoods.
T-P-1.1.9	Ensure that public transit stops and routes within the Town are safe and maintained.

T-P-1.1.10	Advocate for expanded Tompkins Consolidated Area Transit service to address service gaps in Ulysses.
T-P-1.1.11	Conduct a sidewalk inventory, improve, and expand sidewalks throughout Ulysses where appropriate.

Goal:

T-G-2 Reduce negative transportation externalities and environmental impacts

Objective:

T-O-2.1 Facilitate shifts in transportation choice to low impact transportation modes and electric vehicles and facilitate the reduction in vehicle miles traveled.

Policies:

T-P-2.1.1	Identify the appropriate locations for and construct electric vehicle charging stations within the Town.
T-P-2.1.2	Convert the Town's fleet of vehicles to electric as they depreciate and are in need of replacement.
T-P-2.1.3	Explore alternatives to road salt and/or explore more efficient application methods for road salt.
T-P-2.1.4	Limit roadway widenings for travel lane expansions and clearing to minimize impacts to surrounding vegetative areas.
T-P-2.1.5	Explore methods for reducing speeds on rural roadways to minimize the severity and number of collisions with wild animals.
T-P-2.1.6	Explore the possibility and desirability of regulating drone delivery services within the Town.
T-P-2.1.7	Work with Ithaca Carshare to provide location options in Ulysses and Trumansburg.
T-P-2.1.8	Strongly consider the protection of native plants, habitats, and natural resources when expanding transportation infrastructure.

Goal:

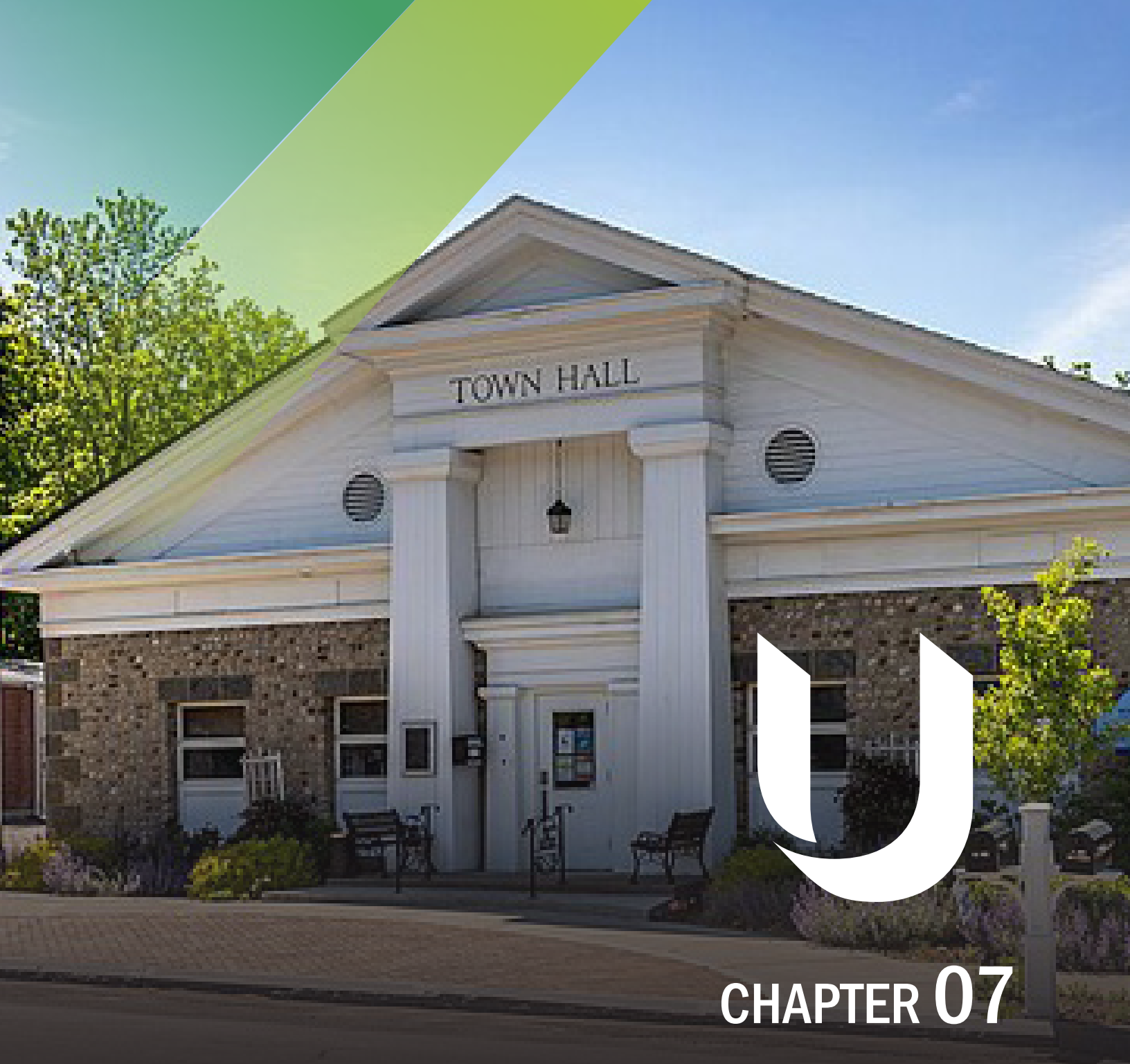
T-G-3 Improve transportation safety for road users throughout Ulysses

Objective:

T-O-3.1 Eliminate severe and fatal collisions in the Town including with vulnerable road users like pedestrians and cyclists.

Policies:

T-P-3.1.1	Develop a Local Road Safety Plan.
T-P-3.1.2	Work with the New York State Department of Transportation to install traffic calming or speed reduction techniques within the Hamlet of Jacksonville, and as population in the Hamlet grows, potentially signalized crossings.
T-P-3.1.3	Work with the New York State Department of Transportation and Tompkins County to identify methods to improve safety and identify potential traffic calming measures along the roads they own and operate.
T-P-3.1.4	Work with the Tompkins County Sheriff and New York State Police to explore options to expand speed enforcement along roadways. If possible, utilize camera technology.
T-P-3.1.5	Expand communication efforts to the public about their role in transportation safety.
T-P-3.1.6	Conduct annual reviews of safety outcomes to measure trends and target zero fatalities or serious injuries.
T-P-3.1.7	Create safe roadway connections to the Black Diamond Trail by including crossing markings, signage, and wide shoulders or pathways, among other potential improvements.



CHAPTER 07

CAPITAL FACILITIES, SERVICES, AND UTILITIES

I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A. 2025 UPDATE: CREATING A COMMUNITY CAPITAL FACILITIES, SERVICES, AND UTILITIES ELEMENT

The Capital Facilities Element is a new chapter for the Town's Comprehensive Plan focusing on future opportunities to improve capital facilities, services, and utilities in the Town of Ulysses. This includes looking at emergency services, public buildings, educational institutions, recreational facilities, water and sewer infrastructure, energy, and future capital improvement needs. In this element, challenges that pertain to access and availability of utilities, emergency services, parks and recreational spaces, and waste management are identified. Recommendations to address these challenges involve a collaborative approach among local organizations, county resources, and the community. Several guiding laws, policies, planning efforts, and community guidance have informed this chapter of the Ulysses Comprehensive Plan, including the following:

- Tompkins County Countywide Planning Policies
- 2023 New York State Hazard Mitigation Plan – MitigateNY
- The Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act
- New York's Energy Conservation Construction Code
- NYS Title 16 Department of Public Service – 16 CRR-NY
- NYS Energy Plan
- NYS 2005-2030 Transportation Plan
- Public outreach and visioning comments received as part of the public participation process for the plan update.

This element is not meant to be free-standing; it relates to several other elements in a complementary manner. In particular, the elements concerning transportation, land use, housing, environment and natural resources, the built environment, climate change and resiliency, and community well-being all have issues involving capital facilities, services, and utilities.

B. OVERVIEW OF CAPITAL FACILITIES, SERVICES, AND UTILITIES FROM THE 2009 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

In the 2009 Comprehensive Plan, objectives pertaining to utilities focused on finding a balance between providing utilities in Ulysses while preserving and protecting the rural character of the community. Additional objectives of the 2009 Comprehensive Plan included maintaining and expanding park and recreation facilities, creating cohesive pedestrian and bicycle networks throughout Ulysses creating a safe and welcoming environment for users, providing social and recreational programs for all ages, and providing public services to meet the needs of residents and visitors.

II. PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES INFLUENCING ULYSSES' CAPITAL FACILITIES, SERVICES, AND UTILITIES ELEMENT

A. TOMPKINS COUNTYWIDE PLANNING POLICIES

The Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan had various planning principles pertaining to capital facilities and utilities. One major principle is ensuring Tompkins County is a place where taxpayer dollars are invested in public infrastructure and facilities in the most efficient way possible. The County encourages strategic infrastructure investments that support community and economic development and meet the growing demands of residential, commercial, institutional, and industrial users. Cooperative agreements between governmental units were encouraged to help reduce costs by allowing equipment sharing and joint infrastructure investments, and by reducing duplication of efforts.

The County encourages strategic infrastructure investments that support community and economic development and meet the growing demands of residential, commercial, institutional, and industrial users.

The Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan also explores different patterns of development and their effects on the County. It encourages development in locations near employment centers and served by transit and trails. The Plan further states that supporting housing development in these areas and providing adequate sidewalks, bike facilities, and bus service can create a more robust transportation network, promoting livable communities, keeping transportation maintenance costs down, and reducing wear and tear on infrastructure.

Another major planning principle from the Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan is to ensure that Tompkins County is a place where the built environment promotes healthy, safe, and active lifestyles. Policies recommended to achieve this include fostering the expansion of a county-wide trail network, promoting parks, community facilities, recreational activities, and networks that support regular interaction and physical activity, and promoting bicycling and walking throughout the County by making these transportation modes safe, efficient, and appealing.

B. ULYSSES VISIONING EFFORTS

When exploring the issue of capital facilities, the largest need expressed by stakeholders was access to recreational facilities, which is covered in other areas of the Comprehensive Plan. Water quality and access was the biggest utilities related issue, which also relates to sewer and wastewater. Some residents were clear that they did not want to see an expansion of water districts without comparable investments in sewer. The Town does not have any sewer systems, while the Village of Trumansburg has a wastewater treatment plant and sewer system. Another major concern for residents is the safety and functionality of roadways, especially regarding roadway improvements and shared lanes for cyclists.

Input from stakeholders indicated there is a desire for more recreational facilities in the Town. Major state and community investments have been made to improve recreational offerings in the Town of Ulysses and Village of Trumansburg over the past several years. New York State Park funds provided enhancements at Taughannock Falls State Park and adjoining trails, while the Town and Village provided increased youth and recreational programming through joint funding and financial support from Tompkins County. Residents are looking for not only recreational space, but spaces within the community that promote gathering and engagement. There was a desire for this to be accessible to all ages, family-friendly, a place for teenagers, and possibly include senior programming.

Some stakeholders expressed concern at the availability of healthcare in the Town. While there are emergency medical services, primary care physicians, and other facilities, some stakeholders noted that these facilities might not be able to add new patients, meaning residents must travel outside of town for healthcare. While adequate healthcare facilities are reachable through different transit options within the region, there was still a desire to see more healthcare options locally.

If the Town wants to expand its water districts, then it's likely a good idea to expand sewer as well, which provides more services and coverage for residents but is also a larger and more expensive project. The Town should also consider future growth and make sure that planned expansions of water and

sewer services align with where the Town expects population growth to occur.

During the visioning phase of the comprehensive planning process, various exercises were conducted to facilitate feedback from the public about capital facilities, services, and utilities. The following topics were brought up as priorities that the Comprehensive Plan should focus on:

- Creating more recreational spaces for all ages – (i.e. parks, recreation center, dog parks)
- Advocating for expanded public transportation and expande multi-modal transportation options
- Creating and maintaine a sense of community and inclusion
- Continuing maintenance and support of local parks
- Expanding recreational opportunities and programming, especially for youth and seniors
- Investing in improvements (i.e. new sports fields and courts, trail enhancements, playgrounds)
- Continuing to preserve natural resources and outdoor spaces
- Exploring the feasibility for water and sewer service in strategic areas where it makes sense (areas where future growth is expected and could be supported)
- Expanding programming and recreational amenities and identify ways to make them more affordable for residents
- Attracting the next generation of volunteer firefighters
- Collaborating with the Village of Trumansburg and regional entities on utility improvement and recreational programming initiatives
- Considering renewable energy options (i.e. hydropower, solar)
- Developing a community reuse, recycling, and goods exchange space
- Partnering with local institutions and businesses to coordinate community use of facilities
- Exploring small-scale treatment facilities for septic/sewer in areas targeted for future development

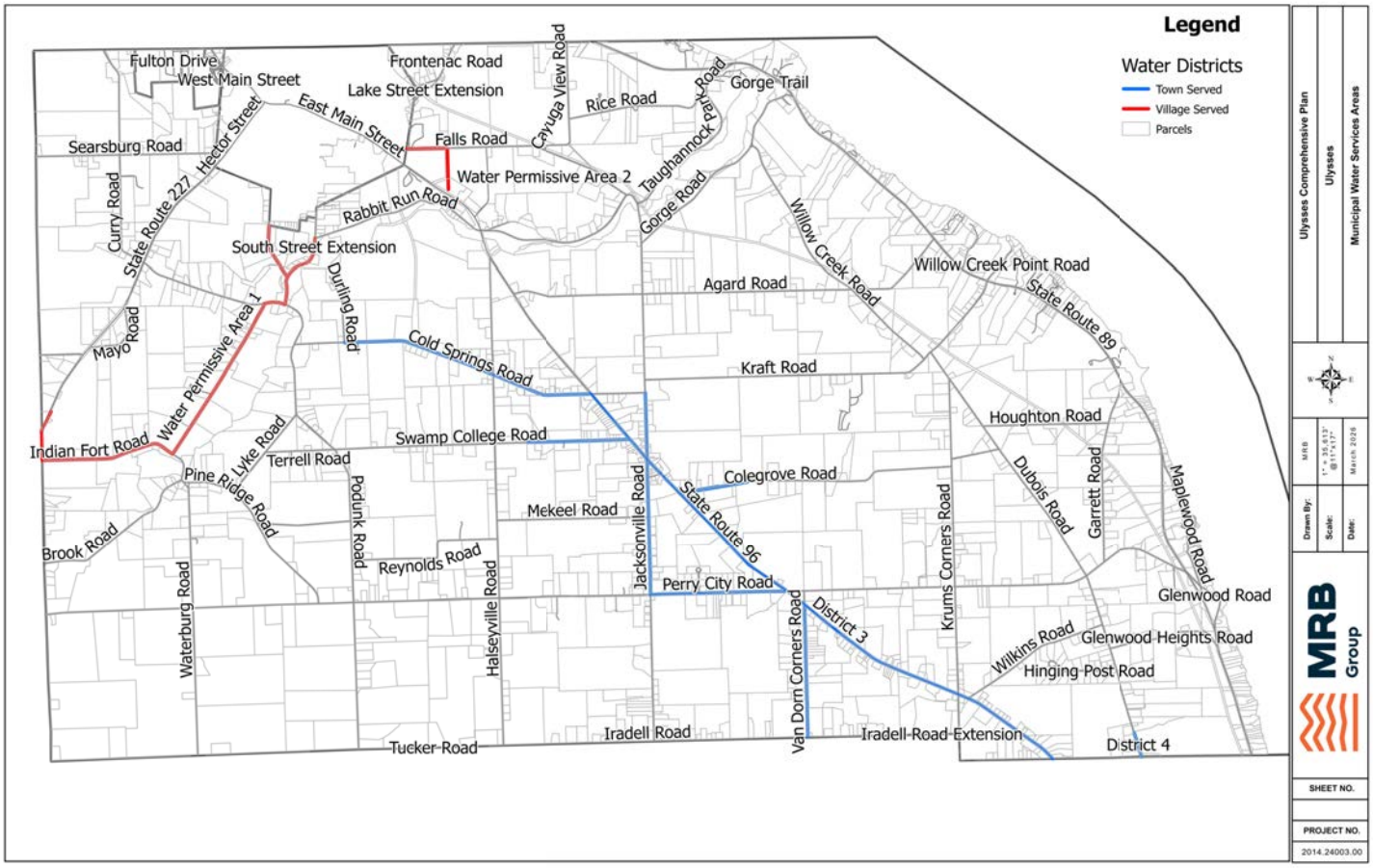
III. INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS OF EXISTING AND PROJECTED CAPITAL FACILITIES, SERVICES, AND UTILITIES

A. EXISTING CONDITIONS

There is a significant overlap in facilities and utilities among the Town of Ulysses, the Village of Trumansburg, and Tompkins County. For example, Ulysses manages the Town's Water District Numbers 1,2, 3, and 4, contracts with the Village of Trumansburg for EMS and fire protection services, and works with the Tompkins County Recycling and Materials Management Department for waste management, while electricity is primarily provided through the state-level New York State Electric and Gas (NYSEG). NYSEG is a private energy utility owned by an international entity, although NYSEG is still subject to utility regulations set by New York State, including reviewing and approving rate increases. This means that the Town is fully served when it comes to utilities, but it might not have control over the cost of services or how they're provided. Discussions around improvements to utilities in the Town focused on water, because making improvements to the Town's water district is much more feasible than changing prices or services at county- or state-level organizations.

Water is served by the Town and Village as shown in Figure CU-1. The Village of Trumansburg serves permissive service areas 1 and 2, while the Town serves districts 3 and 4. Approximately 323 properties are supplied with water by the Town, while 78 properties are supplied with water by the Village. The remaining and majority of properties in the Town rely on well water.

Figure CU-1



Source: MRB Group, 2026.

There seems to be interest in expanding the Town's water districts or creating a new district, but there are considerations and potential concerns from residents to address before moving this forward. In the 2024 Town of Ulysses Drinking Water Survey (348 total survey respondents), 60% of respondents indicated they were interested in changing to a municipal water source, and 47% of respondents indicated they would be willing to pay more than $500 annually for municipal service. 23% of respondents were uninterested in municipal drinking water, while 17% were neutral. The Ulysses Drinking Water Survey also found that more respondents reported drinking more bottled than municipal water – 62% of respondents got their drinking water from wells, 25% from bottled water, and 16% from municipal water.

The Town does not have storm or wastewater services. The Village of Trumansburg has its own sewer system, with a wastewater treatment plant located within the Village.

There are few healthcare facilities in the Town, which are critical for its aging population. There are providers in nearby Ithaca, but transportation to and from offices and appointments can be a challenge for those who do not drive or own a vehicle. Facilities within the Town include Trumansburg Family Medicine (in the Town of Covert and borders Ulysses), Juniper Manor Retirement Communities, HomeSteady Health Direct Primary Care, and Cayuga Addiction Recovery Services. Although facilities might be limited within the Town, residents can access healthcare outside of the Town at facilities like the Cayuga Medical Center and other Cayuga Health facilities in Ithaca within a 15-minute drive.

The Town contracts with the Village of Trumansburg for emergency medical services and the volunteer fire department. The Village received $3.5 million of federal funding in 2024 for a new fire and EMS facility, which will include new garage bays, private offices, radio rooms, bunk rooms, a decontamination and laundry room, and locker room.

Inventory

Government facilities

Town Hall
Town Barn campus
Trumansburg Fire Station
Ulysses Philomathic Library
Trumansburg EMS
Trumansburg Volunteer Fire Dept.

Recreation facilities

Town of Ulysses Salo Habitat Nature Preserve (Town owned)
Black Diamond Trail
Jacksonville Community Park
Three Falls State Park / formally Camp Barton
Town Park on Cold Springs Road
Cayuga Nature Center
Taughannock Falls State Park
Smith Woods (Town owned)
Trumansburg Fairgrounds
Trumansburg Golf Course
Trumansburg Conservatory of Fine Arts

Transportation

Tompkins Consolidated Area Transit
Walking & biking trails

Healthcare

HomeSteady Health Direct Primary Care
Trumansburg EMS
MVPT Physical Therapy
Synergy Trumansburg Physical Therapy
Cayuga Addiction Recovery Services
Trumansburg Family Dentistry
Trumansburg Optical

Affordable Senior Housing

Juniper Manor Retirement Community
Village Grove at Crescent Way

Education

Trumansburg Central School District
Ithaca City School District
Namaste Montessori School (NMS)
NMS– Elementary Campus
Trumansburg Nursery School
Trumansburg Community Nursery SchoolSmart Start – Daycare Center

Utilities

Town of Ulysses Water Districts
Trumansburg Water & Sewer
Bolton Point Southern Cayuga Lake Inter-municipal Water Commission
Department of Public Works
New York State Electric and Gas
Tompkins County Recycling and Materials Management

All of the above are facilities and utilities that serve the residents of Ulysses.

B. CHALLENGES IMPACTING CAPITAL FACILITIES, SERVICES, AND UTILITIES

Lack of direct control over utilities

Residents have concerns about utilities, but the Town has limited control over them. There are roadways in the community that are under regional or state control, and while the Town does have four water districts most do not – or cannot – utilize this service and instead have well water. Trash, recycling, electricity and gas are led by regional or state utility organizations. The Town does not provide trash collection. However, the County provides recommendations for five private companies for regular residential trash pickup within the Town, options for commercial and residential dumpster pickup services, and odd job cleanup. Without direct control over them, it could be challenging to address the concerns of residents.

Concerns about the safety and reliability of local water

The safety and availability of drinking water was the biggest issue stakeholders had regarding utilities. In the Town of Ulysses Drinking Water Survey conducted in 2024, 13% of respondents said they do not always have enough water. When asked in the community survey, residents were split on their opinions related to public water – 40% of respondents already have public water, 32.2% would like public water, and 27.8% do not want public water. Many residents reported challenges in getting adequate water to more rural areas, or noted that they use well water, which has at times dried up, been unsafe, or tasted bad. Respondents to the Ulysses Drinking Water Survey reported issues with water hardness (61% of responses), odor (33% of responses), and bad taste (28% of responses). There were also concerns about both municipal and well water safety. In the Ulysses Drinking Water Survey, 47% of respondents were concerned about impacts to the water supply from fertilizer and manure use, and 46% indicated concerned about extreme weather. This includes levels of trihalomethanes (THMs) that exceed the federal limit in Ulysses Water District 3, which were initially identified in 2014. The Town has since taken steps to reduce the level of THMs and mitigation efforts continue. Many stakeholders also noted that preserving the natural environment in the area will contribute to safer water for residents, especially those utilizing a well and are often dependent on groundwater access. Those with public water might be happy with the quality, but there were some cost concerns. As identified in the Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan, the availability of drinking water is primarily an issue in rural areas that obtain drinking water from groundwater. As more homes and businesses are built in these areas, they may increase demand for water from groundwater supplies, which can deplete resources.

In the Ulysses Drinking Water Survey, 47% of respondents were concerned about impacts to the water supply from fertilizer and manure use, and 46% indicated concerned about extreme weather.

Many stakeholders had concerns about water service and access, but there was no clear consensus on what should be done. Some residents are happy with their well water, while others are not. Some residents are happy with municipal water, and some are not. Cost does appear to be a major factor, and even if improvements were made to the Town's water districts, there are concerns it could become overly expensive or unaffordable. When asked in the community survey how much a resident was willing to pay for water, 16.2% said they were unwilling to pay for municipal water at any price, demonstrating resistance to municipal water.

However, some residents seem interested in municipal water but seemed unwilling to commit until they had a better understanding of the actual costs.

Many residents in the Comprehensive Plan's community survey, expressed concerns about the cost and quality of expanding services. Specifically, 16.2% of survey respondents stated they were unwilling to pay for municipal water at any price point. Residents indicated they were interested in affordable options for municipal water, but the definition of affordable varied among survey respondents. The majority of respondents, 35.3%, said they'd pay between $500 - $1,000 per year for water service, while 25.6% would pay less than $500, and 10.9% would pay more than $1,000. There were also conservation and water quality concerns. More information to demonstrate that the water districts could be expanded affordably and without sacrificing water quality could be helpful in gaining the support of residents.

Wastewater services

Many community survey respondents also emphasized that with water district expansions there should also be an equal investment in sewer infrastructure. While the Village of Trumansburg has sewer infrastructure, the Town does not have storm sewer or wastewater sewer infrastructure. Installing sewer infrastructure can be quite costly, and options for shared septic for onsite waste management have regulatory requirements that can be costly at all but small scales. The community might be less supportive of municipal water investments if not paired with feasible sewer or onsite wastewater treatment options. The ability to increase residential development density in areas served by municipal water is also constrained by the need for adequate wastewater management systems.

Sufficient resources for fire and emergency medical services

Residents expressed both concern at rising costs to fund fire and emergency medical services, but also noted that these are necessary and worthy investments. There was no clear middle ground between fully funding these services without significantly raising taxes. This could also include a component of messaging and letting residents know how much it costs to have adequate fire and EMS services based on current tax rates. The Town reviews this information each year in the Town budget, but residents might not be aware of this resource and might require more information. Again, while residents rarely

wanted to increase taxes, they agreed that fire and EMS were necessary and important services that should receive adequate funding.

Improved roads

Many stakeholders call for improved roadways, including improved sidewalks and bike lanes. These mostly stem from safety concerns. Residents and drivers stated that roadways are not wide enough to accommodate pedestrians and cyclists, and are concerned for pedestrians and cyclists who fear their safety from oncoming cars. Improved sidewalks and bike lanes would make all roadway users more confident while traveling in and around the Town. Roadway concerns also included road repairs; some felt that current approaches were too "patchwork" and that more expanded roadway improvements would be beneficial.

Concerns about trash and recycling

Some stakeholders expressed frustration and concern with trash and recycling services. Specifically for trash, many had complaints about the quality of service, cost of service, and issues with trash tags. Residents also seemed interested in improving recycling, expressing concerns that single stream recycling was ineffective or collected with trash. Some expressed interest in mandatory recycling or having a local recycling center, to ensure that the Town is committed to environmental sustainability through trash management and recycling.

New York State Electric and Gas

Some residents expressed frustration with the quality and price of service from NYSEG and suggested a locally and/or publicly owned renewable energy source would be preferable. While this might be important information for the Town to consider, it should also consider the feasibility of such recommendations. If local electric and gas is not possible, there could be opportunities to work more closely with NYSEG to meet the needs of customers in the Town. This also provides an opportunity to explore local and regional renewable energy sources and technologies. Older homes with aged heating systems can experience a financial burden due to more energy being required to adequately heat the home. Encouraging and supporting initiatives that can reduce energy should be a focus for the future.

Future Development and Wastewater Infrastructure

Providing proper wastewater infrastructure when developing denser housing is important and may create challenges. Ulysses lacks public sewer infrastructure, posing potential future challenges for denser housing development. The Town will need to identify the most viable wastewater options, like shared septic, to inform future housing development. Adequate infrastructure around denser development will protect the public health and safety of residents.

IV.GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

The following section contains the goals, objectives, and policies for the Capital Facilities, Services, and Utilities Element of the Comprehensive Plan. This section states the Town's policies for addressing capital facilities, services, and utilities needs. This section also provides recommendations for local, regional, state, and federal resources that can be utilized to implement goals centered around improving capital facilities, utilities, and services. Goals, objectives, and policies also focus on collaborative opportunities with local and regional partners to create alignment with initiatives at the Town and regional level.

Goal:

CU-G-1 Explore options to make water in the Town more accessible, affordable, and safe.

Objective:

CU-O-1.1 Work with Town leadership, key stakeholders, and residents to explore options for expanding municipal water services in areas of the Town that are appropriate for increased residenential or business development. Particular emphasis should be in areas where existing Town-owned or Village-owned infrastructure is available and where replacements, extensions, and corrections would improve infrastructure systems and their users.

Policies:

CU-P-1.1.1	Evaluate the expansion of municipal water service areas based on cost, community interest, and appropriateness for long term growth.
CU-P-1.1.2	Continue hazard mitigation efforts to monitor and reduce the level of THMs in the Town's water district, ensuring they are at acceptable and safe levels.
CU-P-1.1.3	Adopt the Town of Ulysses Drinking Water Source Protection Plan and proactively implement the strategies identified.
CU-P-1.1.4	Explore the creation, expansion, and repair of water infrastructure in order to protect the Town's water sources and ensure the Town has safe drinking water.

Objective:

CU-O-1.2 Explore options for expanding sewer and wastewater service in the Town.

Policies:

CU-P-1.2.1	Explore population projections and future land use maps to better understand where expanded services would be most feasible and have the greatest impact.
CU-P-1.2.2	Explore the feasibility of developing small-scale wastewater treatment facilities for septic and sewer in identified areas for future growth.
CU-P-1.2.3	Work with Tompkins County to share information on how residents can take advantage of New York State's Septic System Replacement Program, which was recently awarded $30 million in funding for Round 4 of the program.[1]
CU-P-1.2.4	Work with the Hamlet of Jacksonville, and Tompkins County to continually educate residents and businesses on how to properly care for well and septic systems, including any funding or resources that are available.
CU-P-1.2.5	Consider infrastructure and site needs for wastewater and sewer, ensuring the Town has adequate resources to make future improvements as necessary.
CU-P-1.2.6	Explore the possibility of tying into existing Town of Ithaca water and sewer systems to support a high density housing development near the southern Town line (similar to Woolf Lane in the Town of Ithaca).

[1] *Septic System Replacement Fund | Environmental Facilities Corporation*

Goal:

CU-G-2 Improve roadways to improve transportation and safety in the Town.

Objective:

CU-O-2.1 Make roadway repairs and improvements to make traveling in the Town safer for drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians.

Policies:

CU-P-2.1.1	Travel along roadways within the Town's control to create an inventory of necessary repairs.
CU-P-2.1.2	Collaborate with the Village of Trumansburg and Hamlet of Jacksonville, and address repairs on locally-owned roads.
CU-P-2.1.3	Work with Tompkins County and New York State Department of Transportation to make repairs and improvements to County- and State-owned roads.
CU-P-2.1.4	Work with state, regional, and local agencies to determine if there are available funding or collaborative opportunities that could help shoulder the cost of road repairs.
CU-P-2.1.5	Minimize flooding hazards and poor stormwater management by expanding the culvert assessment and improvement mapping and strategy the Town has started on.

Goal:

CU-G-3 Maintain the Town of Ulysses' high quality of life through improved capital facilities, utilities, and services.

Objective:

CU-O-3.1 Preserve and protect the Town's treasured characteristics by making well considered investments and improvements to services that will enhance quality of life, while protecting valued natural resources.

Policies:

CU-P- 3.1.1	Continue historic preservation efforts within the Town.
CU-P- 3.1.2	Explore options to more closely connect the Town's recycling services to reliable recycling and reuse services, making the Town's waste collection and removal efforts more environmentally friendly.
CU-P- 3.1.3	Utilize historic buildings and preservation as a tourism opportunity to bring visitors and investment to the Town.
CU-P- 3.1.4	Support initiatives and encourage best practices for improving energy efficiency in aging residential homes and commercial businesses.

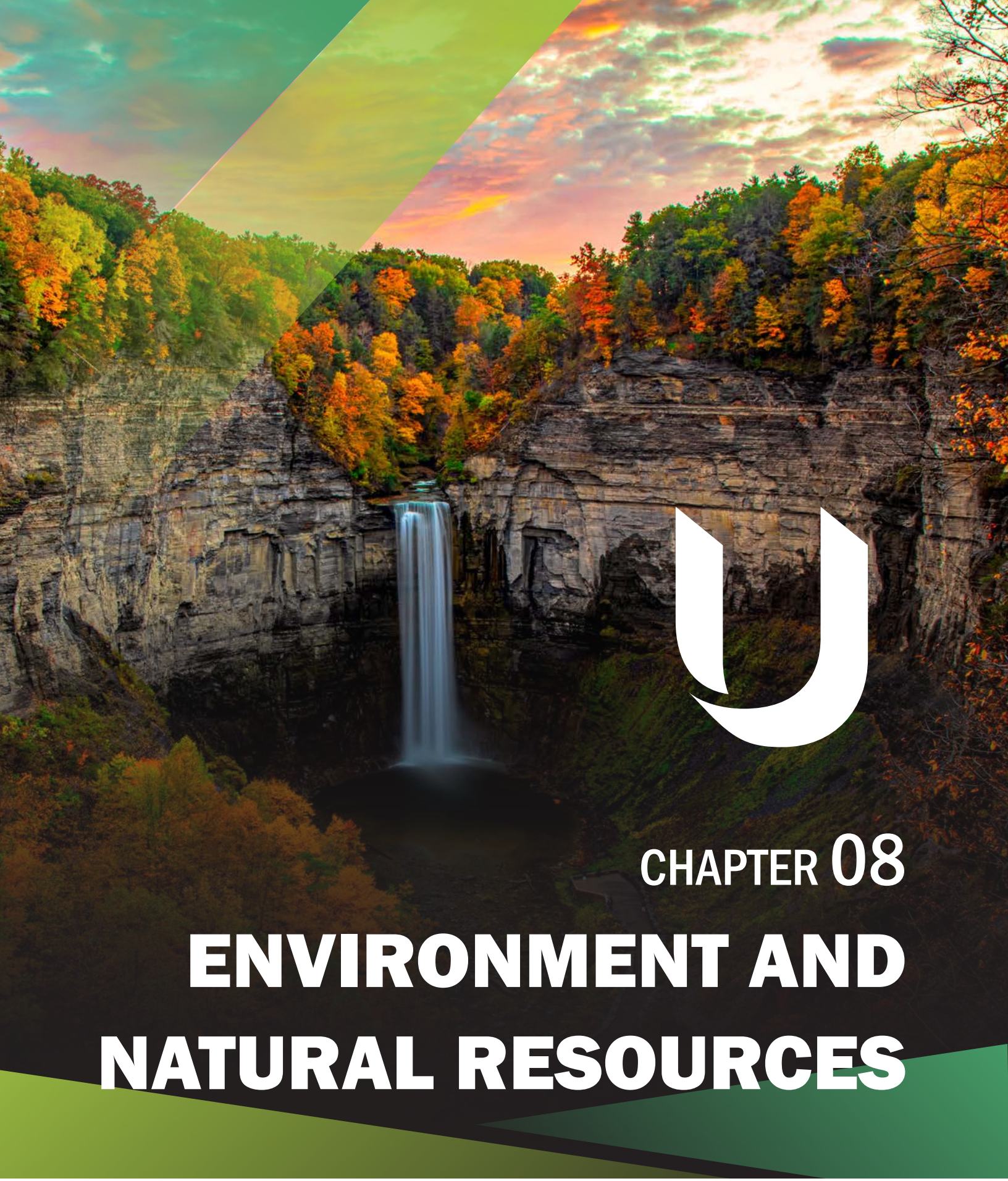
Objective:

CU-O-3.2 Enhance local healthcare, emergency services, and fire department services.

Policies:

CU-P-3.2.1	Explore options for further investment into the Village of Trumansburg's Emergency Medical Services and fire department.
CU-P-3.2.2	Explore opportunities and advocacy for regional Emergency Medical Services and fire coverage to minimize impact to tax payers.

CU-P-3.2.3	Continue to support the Village's firefighters and Emergency Medical Technicians as necessary within the Town's annual budget request. Review terms of this request to provide additional funding as necessary.
CU-P-3.2.4	Attract additional healthcare providers to the Town, increasing access for residents.



CHAPTER 08

ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES

I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A. 2025 UPDATE: CREATING AN ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES ELEMENT

The Environment and Natural Resources Element focuses on the natural features that define Ulysses. These natural features contribute to the quality of life and scenic beauty that is cherished by the community. The abundance of open fields, woodlands, wetlands, waterfalls, agricultural fields, gorges, and lakeshore are important natural resources that provide habitats for plants and wildlife. This element is based on several guiding laws, policies, planning efforts, surveys, public workshops, and community guidance, including the following:

- Tompkins County Countywide Planning Policies
- 2008 Route 96 Corridor Management Study
- 2001 Cayuga Lake Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan
- 2018 Town of Ulysses Natural Resources Inventory
- 2004 Cayuga Lake Local Waterfront Revitalization Program: Cayuga Lake Waterfront Plan
- Public outreach and visioning comments received as part of the public participation process for the plan update.

This element is not meant to be free-standing; it relates to a number of other elements in a complementary manner. In particular, the elements concerning climate change and resiliency, transportation, land use, housing, and community well-being all involve and/or influence the environment and natural resources within Ulysses. Accordingly, policies regarding environmental and natural resource issues need to be examined in the implementation of other parts of the Comprehensive Plan, and vice versa.

The policies contained in this element concern broad choices the Town will make about where and how to protect natural resources and mitigate adverse impacts to them. Many of these approaches involve collaboration with local, regional, state, and federal entities.

B. OVERVIEW OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES POLICIES FROM THE 2009 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The 2009 Comprehensive Plan highlights environmental and natural resource objectives. These objectives focus on preserving and protecting natural and environmental resources, protecting existing water resources, maintaining water quality, protecting existing air resources, and maintaining air quality for the health and safety of Town residents.

II. PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES INFLUENCING ULYSSES' ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES ELEMENT

A. TOMPKINS COUNTYWIDE PLANNING POLICIES

The Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan also focuses on protecting the environment and natural resources. Primary planning principles discussed in their plan include ensuring natural features and working rural landscapes are preserved and enhanced, and that water resources are clean, safe, and protected. Various recommendations are offered, including promoting best management practices that protect natural resources and productive working lands; improving public access to outdoor recreational resources and opportunities; protecting the ecological, economic, and recreational functions of Cayuga Lake; protecting streams and their watersheds to maintain water quality; manage stormwater and flooding; and enhance ecological diversity.

IDENTIFIED VISIONING PRIORITIES AT-A-GLANCE

1. Conserve natural resources, open space, and agricultural land
2. Protect natural resources from hazards and climate change
3. Protect water resources from Harmful Algae Blooms (HABs), especially Cayuga Lake
4. Connect the public to the natural environment
5. Maintain accessibility of Taughannock Falls State Park and Black Diamond Trail

B. ULYSSES VISIONING EFFORTS

During the visioning phase of the comprehensive planning process, various exercises were conducted to facilitate feedback from the public about the environment and natural resources. The following topics were brought up as priorities that the comprehensive plan update should focus on:

- Continuing conservation efforts of natural resources, open space, and agricultural land
- Protecting natural resources, especially from natural hazards and climate change
- Protecting water resources, especially Cayuga Lake from Harmful Algae Blooms (HABs)
- Connecting the public with the natural environment
- Keeping Taughannock Falls State Park and Black Diamond Trail accessible to all

Photo courtesy of Karen Meador

III. INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS OF EXISTING AND PROJECTED ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES NEEDS

A. INVENTORY OF EXISTING NATURAL RESOURCES

Ulysses features a variety of significant natural resources, including water resources, soils, and habitats. These natural resources are cherished by the community and contribute to the scenic beauty that Ulysses provides. These resources should be considered and protected when deciding on future development and conservation efforts.

Waterbodies and Watersheds

With approximately 7.25 miles of shoreline in Ulysses, Cayuga Lake is one of the most prominent natural features within the Town. Creeks that have a NYSDEC classification include Taughannock Creek, Taughannock Falls, Willow Creek, and Glenwood Creek. There are several other tributary creeks leading into Cayuga Lake. Additional tributaries include Jenny Creek, Reynoldsville Creek, Bolter Creek, Cold Springs Branch, Boardman Creek, and Trumansburg Creek. These waterbodies are used mainly for drinking water, recreation, tourism, and agricultural purposes. These waterbodies are also critical for the survival of various flora and fauna.

The Town of Ulysses is fully located within the Cayuga Lake watershed and is part of three sub-watersheds: the West Cayuga Lakeshore North Watershed, Taughannock Creek Watershed, and the West Cayuga Lakeshore South Watershed. In 2017, a Restoration and Protection Plan was prepared for the Cayuga Lake Watershed, updating the 2001 Restoration and Protection Plan. Since the 2001 Plan was issued, new threats to water quality and quantity and the overall health of the watershed have arisen, including invasive species such as Hydrilla verticillate (water thyme),

large-scale energy development, drought, and harmful algae blooms (HABs).

The Town is part of the Cayuga Lake Watershed Intermunicipal Organization and supports work to mitigate the effects and cause of HABs, as well as working with the Soil and Water Conservation District to map eroding ditches.

RELEVANT WETLAND PROTECTION LEGISLATION

- **2004:** Cayuga Lake LWRP
- **2017:** Cayuga Lake Restoration & Protection Plan
- **2019:** Ulysses Wetlands Map Adopted

Wetlands

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) regulates all freshwater wetlands greater than 12.4 acres in size under the Freshwater Act of 1975. Wetlands are classified according to the benefits they provide to the surrounding area. The NYSDEC also protects wetlands smaller than 12.4 acres in size when they are considered to have unusual local importance. Around each protected wetland is a 100-foot buffer that is also regulated to protect the wetland. The State regulates and tracks wetlands through its Environmental Resource Mapper (Appendix C).

New regulations implemented on January 1st 2025, provided 11 newly established statutory criteria to better define wetlands of unusual importance. These regulations also expand the wetland buffer, or "adjacent area" under NYSDEC's jurisdiction from 100 feet to 300 feet. With these regulations, new state regulated wetlands may be identified. On April 8,2026, the Albany Supreme Court annulled the 2025 wetland regulations for failing to comply with the State Environmental Quality Review Act. The State will continue to follow the older regulations until they identify and adopt new ones.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is responsible for regulating national wetlands and issuing permits for regulated activities under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. Any activity that occurs within the wetland or in the 500-foot buffer of the wetland is regulated.

There are two large state regulated wetlands in the Town. State regulated wetland ME-1 is located on the northeast corner of the intersection of Waterburg and Perry City Roads, southwest of Pine Ridge Road, and is 32.3 acres. The second State regulated wetland, TW-1, extends north from the southern town line between Halseyville Road and Jacksonville Road, ending south of Perry City Road,

and is 53.7 acres in size. There are also federally regulated wetlands throughout the Town. The largest is located near Bolter Creek, southeast of Mayo Road, and is approximately 95 acres.

The Town adopted a "Wetlands Map for the Town of Ulysses" on July 23, 2019 based on a County 2012 map. This map, recreated for the Comprehensive Plan, is in Appendix C.

Floodplains

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) updated the Town's Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) in 2025 (Appendix C). Most of the Town is outside of the "500-year" floodplain, but there are a few special flood hazard areas surrounding Trumansburg Creek, Taughannock Creek, Frontenac Creek, and Bolter Creek. Many of these areas lie in "100-year" flood-risk zones. This flood risk is defined by FEMA as a 1% chance of a flood occuring in any given year. The entire shoreline of Cayuga Lake in the Town of Ulysses is also classified as vulnerable to "100-year" floods. The frequency of flood events is likely to be higher in these hazard areas with climate change, as FEMA estimates rely on long-term data without any weighting for increased flood occurrences in more recent years.

Soils

Ulysses has an abundance of agriculturally productive farmland as reflected in its soil classifications (Figure EN-1). The majority of the Town consists of prime farmland. Prime farmland is defined as land with physical and chemical characteristics for producing food. This type of farmland can produce high yields of crops, resulting in economic benefits.[1] Farmland of statewide importance does not meet all the criteria of prime farmland, but possesses the right soil quality. If properly managed, this soil type can produce a high yield of crops.

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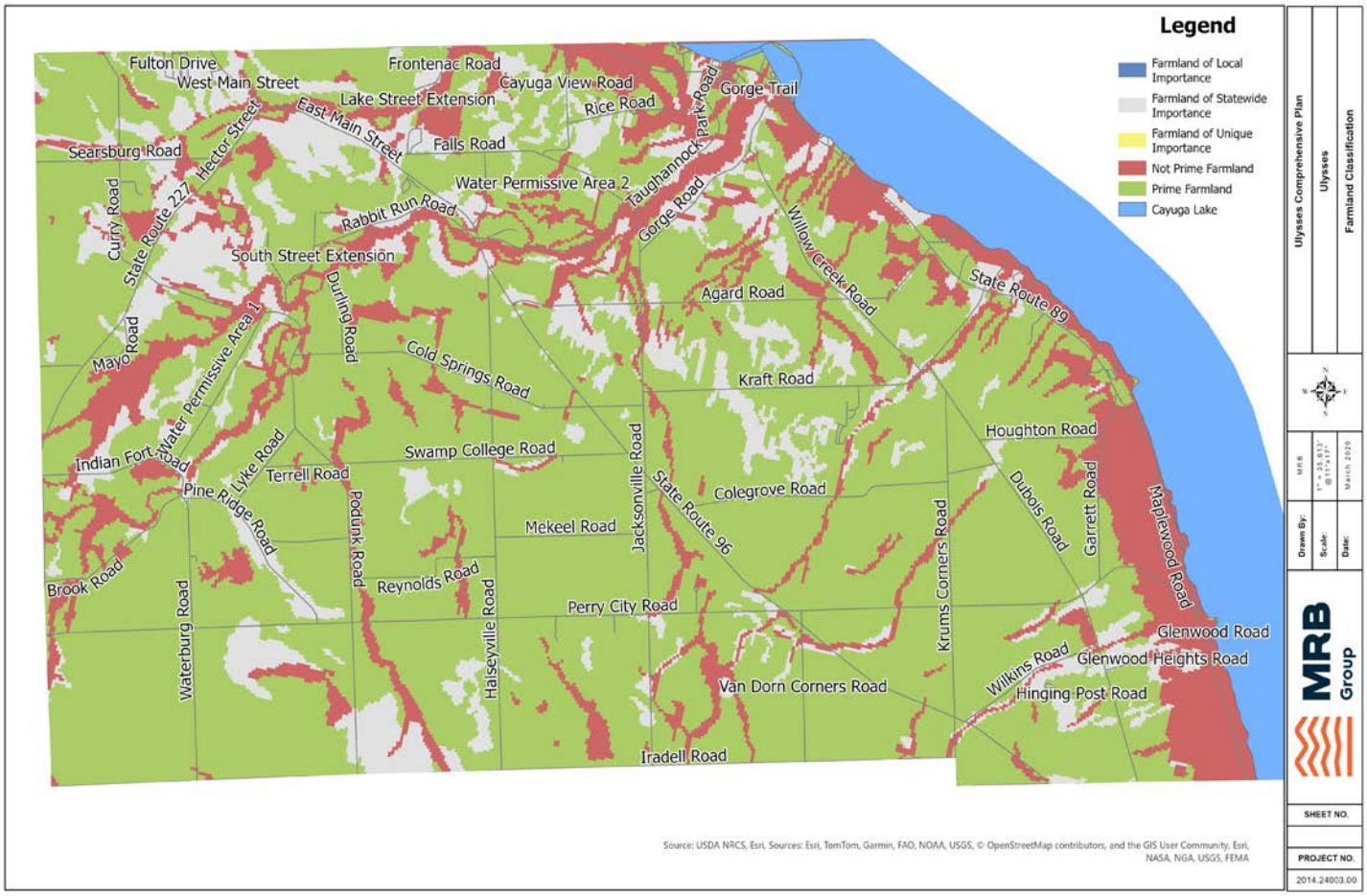
1. *USDA. (2015b). Prime farmland definition - 1 prime farmland soils (622.04). https://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/references/public/CO/5a_Prime_Farmland_Definition.pdf*

Prime farmland and farmland of statewide importance are conducive to farming, especially for growing hay, corn, oats, soybeans, and small grains. These rich soils will play an important role in future food security and food production for the region and beyond.

Some areas in the Town have hydrillic, poorly drained soils, and can indicate the potential presence of a wetland, even in areas that are not officially designated as such. Wetlands are productive and biologically diverse systems that enhance water quality, provide flood protection, maintain stream flows, and control erosion. Therefore, it is important that land with this type of soil is further analyzed for potential wetland presence before future development occurs.

Figure EN-1



Source: US Department of Agriculture (2026)

Taughannock Gorge

Topography

The topography in Ulysses varies. Higher elevation areas in the western portion of the Town mostly consist of slopes less than 3 percent, which is suitable for agriculture and most development. There are many areas with steeper slopes, such as those adjacent to creeks and the lakefront.

Figure EN-2

Source: NY State (2008)

Unique Natural Areas

The Tompkins County Environmental Management Council maintains an inventory of Unique Natural Areas in the County. Unique Natural Areas are sites with outstanding environmental qualities and deserve special attention for preservation and protection. A Unique Natural Area is determined based on whether it supports an important natural community, provides the best representation of a natural community, includes rare or scarce flora or fauna, has geological importance, or offers cultural significance. The inventory was updated in 2024 and includes nine areas in the Town of Ulysses. In addition to the two NYSDEC mapped wetlands, it includes the following:

- Taughannock Gorge
- Smith Woods (Town owned)
- Hart's Woods
- Willow Creek Glen and Lake Slopes
- Maplewood Glen and Lake Slopes
- Glenwood Ravine and Lake Slopes
- Poyer Orchard Diatreme

In addition, two Natural Features Focus Areas (NFFAs) were identified in the Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan in Ulysses: Taughannock Creek and the lakeshore. Both provide outdoor recreation, scenic views, critical habitat, and biodiversity benefits. The County identified priority actions for each NFFA to conserve and protect these areas.

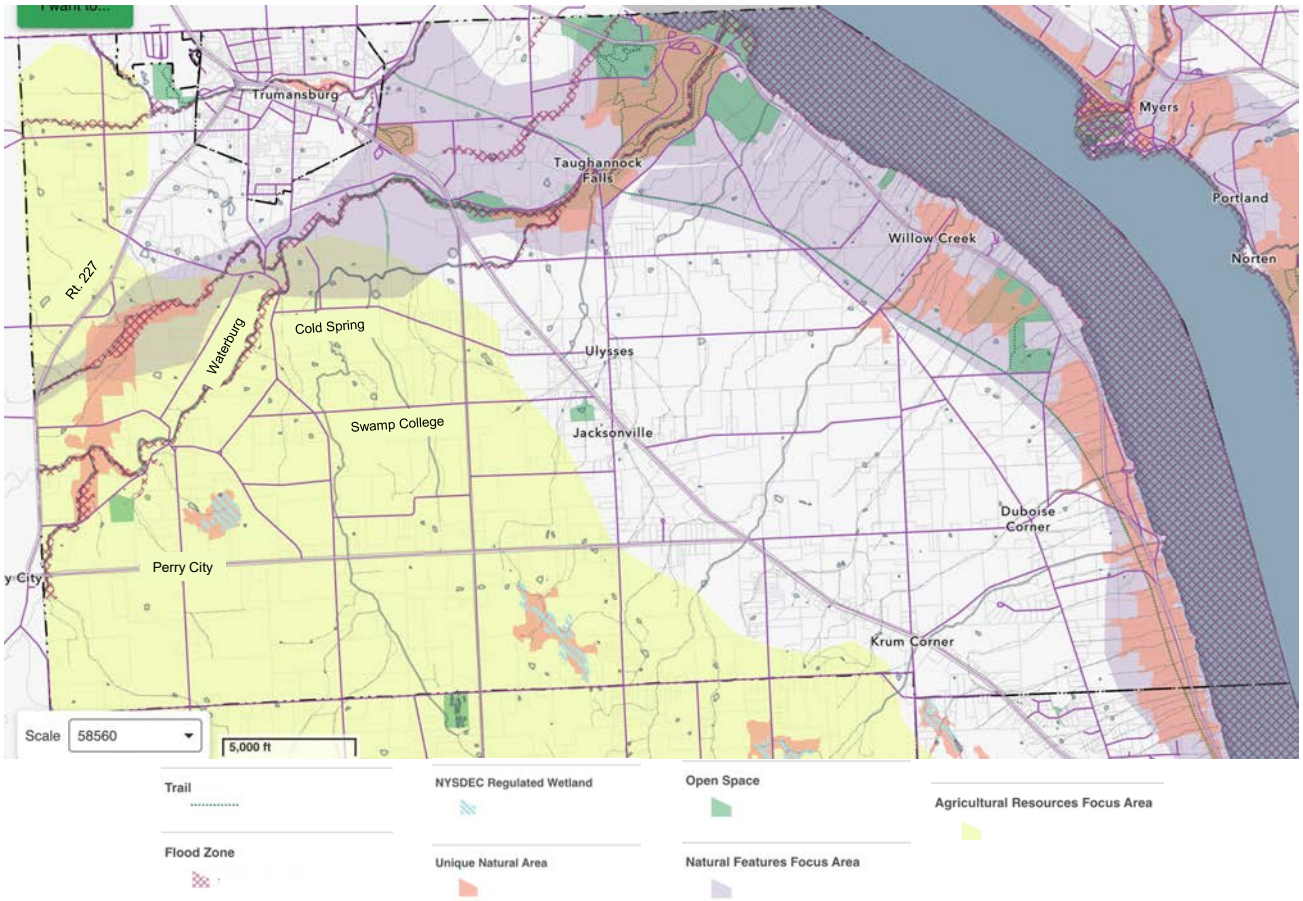
The Town can also consider designating areas as Critical Environmental Areas (CEAs). NYSDEC defines CEAs as areas in the state that have been designated by a local or state agency to recognize a specific geographical area with one or more of the following characteristics:

- A feature that is a benefit or threat to human health;
- An exceptional or unique natural setting;
- An exceptional or unique social, historic, archaeological, recreational, or educational value; or
- An inherent ecological, geological, or hydrological sensitivity to change that may be adversely affected by any physical disturbance.

Having CEA designations can protect the environment during future development, as a CEA alerts landowners and developers to the area's significance, and triggers special considerations during project evaluations under environmental review processes.

Figure EN-3

Natural Features Areas



Source: Tompkins County Natural Features Mapping Tool (year accessed 2026)

Endangered Species

NYS has a list of endangered, threatened, and special concern species. Some of these species can be found in Ulysses, especially along the shoreline of Cayuga Lake and within Cayuga Lake itself. **According to the NYSDEC Environmental Resource Mapper database, Lake Sturgeon and the Bald Eagle are two threatened species within the Town of Ulysses.** Pinedrops are an endangered plant species within Ulysses.

According to the NYSDEC Environmental Resource Mapper database, Lake Sturgeon and the Bald Eagle are two threatened species within the Town of Ulysses.

According to the New York State National Heritage Program, one population of Pinedrops is subject to flooding during severe flood events. The NYSDEC Environmental Resource Mapper also indicates that Ulysses, along the coast of Cayuga Lake, is in the vicinity of a significant Waterfowl Winter Concentration Area. A full list of state and federally protected species can be found at the link in Appendix D.

The Indiana Bat and Northern Long-eared Bat are federal-listed endangered species. The Tricolored Bat and Monarch Butterfly are proposed listed endangered species that the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) is closely monitoring. To ensure these species and habitats are not adversely impacted by future development projects, consultations and completion of determination through their Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) web application is strongly encouraged for planning purposes.[2] The IPaC tool is intended to streamline the Endangered Species Act (ESA) review process and evaluate potential impacts on USFWS jurisdictional resources, including threatened, proposed, and endangered species and critical habitats.

Monarch Butterfly catepillar. Photo courtesy of Karen Meador

B. CHALLENGES FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Various challenges exist for the environment and natural resources. Climate change can have a significant impact on natural resources including flooding from excessive rain, high temperatures, drought, and water quality for both drinking and recreation. Additionally, invasive species can expand and thrive in warmer habitats that were once colder as a result of climate change.

Having plans and resources in place to deal with natural disasters can help mitigate adverse impacts to both the built and natural environment. The Natural Resources Inventory, County Hazard Mitigation Plan, and the Cayuga Lake LWRP

2. *US Fish and Wildlife. (n.d.). Information for Planning and Consultation. IPaC. https://ipac.ecosphere.fws.gov*

are currently in place as guidance tools that can help with preservation techniques to protect natural resources from climate change and natural disasters.

Examples of Threats to Natural Resources

C.PROJECTED ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES NEEDS

Additionally the Town can consider the following:

- Engaging in hazard mitigation planning and climate change preparedness to protect the environment and natural resources
- Advocating for policies that protect natural resources and address climate change
- Collaborating with local and regional partners on initiatives to protect and enhance natural resources
- Continuing to promote natural resources within the community and the region
- Mitigating adverse impacts of invasive species to protect native vegetation and ecosystems
- Encouraging best management practices to protect water resources
- Encouraging development that does not destroy or adversely affect natural resources and the natural environment

IV. GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

The following section contains the goals, objectives, and policies for the Environment and Natural Resources Element of the Comprehensive Plan. This section states the Town's policies for addressing natural resource protection needs. This section also provides recommendations for local, regional, state, and federal resources that can be utilized to implement goals centered around environmental sustainability, such as conservation techniques, improving water quality, proactively planning for climate change, and hazard mitigation. Goals, objectives, and policies also focus on collaboration opportunities with local and regional partners to create alignment with initiatives at the Town and Regional level.

Goal:

EN-G-1 Continue to proactively preserve and protect the natural and environmental resources in Ulysses.

Objective:

EN-O-1.1 Work with local and regional entities to protect natural and environmental resources.

Policies:

EN-P-1.1.1	Actively communicate with the Village of Trumansburg, Tompkins County, institutions, and State/Federal Agencies about collaborative opportunities for conservation efforts and mitigating adverse impacts in Ulysses.
EN-P-1.1.2	Continue to periodically update the Town of Ulysses Natural Resources Inventory as a guide for conservation efforts. Utilize natural resources protection techniques such as regulatory tools, non-regulatory tools, and educational programs

EN-P-1.1.3	Actively engage and support the efforts of the Conservation and Sustainability Advisory Council (CSAC) in researching and recommending policies, procedures, and practices that enable the Town to manage and protect its natural resources, and promote environmental sustainability.
EN-P-1.1.4	Continue to advocate for public access and investment to outdoor recreation resources and opportunities, including Taughannock Falls State Park, the Black Diamond Trail, Three Falls State Park, the Jacksonville Community Park, and Town-owned parks."
EN-P-1.1.5	Identify opportunities for implementing initiatives that protect Unique Natural Areas defined in the Tompkins County Environmental Management Council's Unique Natural Areas Inventory. Consider creating Critical Environmental Areas for increased protection of specific habitats or species.
EN-P-1.1.6	Encourage and assist interested landowners in participating in a conservation easement program that protects unique and sensitive environmental features/resources on their property, and explore other incentive opportunities that provide for long-term protection of important resources on private land.
EN-P-1.1.7	Consider adopting lighting design standards for new commercial and residential properties that minimize light to preserve dark skies.
EN-P-1.1.8	In collaboration with the Bee and Tree Committees, encourage residents to create pollinator gardens to enhance biodiversity.

Goal:

EN-G-2 Protect water resources in the Town of Ulysses.

Objective:

EN-O-2.1 Develop strategies and engage in planning efforts to protect water resources and improve water quality.

Policies:

EN-P-2.1.1	Protect streams and their watersheds to maintain water quality, manage stormwater and flooding, and enhance ecological diversity. Develop a town-wide hydrology study as a tool to inform future actions.
EN-P-2.1.2	Ensure that future development and planning efforts are in compliance with NYSDEC wetland regulations enacted to protect existing wetlands and wetland habitats. Comprehensively re-evaluate streams and wetlands and amend regulations that pertain to and protect them using NYSDEC and USACE standards.
EN-P-2.1.3	Conduct and adopt a Local Waterfront Revitalization Program that incorporates watershed studies and plans. Focus on including permitted uses along the lake shore and waterward, review/permitting processes for proposed work in these areas, and include as part of that a shoreline access plan for new/re-development for all non-residential projects.
EN-P-2.1.4	Encourage proper disposal of hazardous wastes to mitigate contamination into water sources.
EN-P-2.1.5	Identify opportunities for watershed management initiatives, especially to address streambank erosion control as prioritized by the Cayuga Lake LWRP. Collaborate with appropriate partners and agencies for implementation as necessary.
EN-P-2.1.6	Continue to promote best management practices for agriculture, including nutrient management to protect water quality.

EN-P-2.1.7	Encourage residents to take the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network's lake friendly living pledge that helps reduce pollutants entering the Cayuga Lake watershed.
EN-P-2.1.8	Explore the feasibility of expanding or replacing public water systems in an effort to reduce the use of groundwater and reduce environmental impacts.
EN-P-2.1.9	Identify environmentally sensitive areas such as land subject to flooding currently and in the future, streams and riparian corridors, unbroken habitat areas, and other important features and restrict housing development within those areas.

Goal:

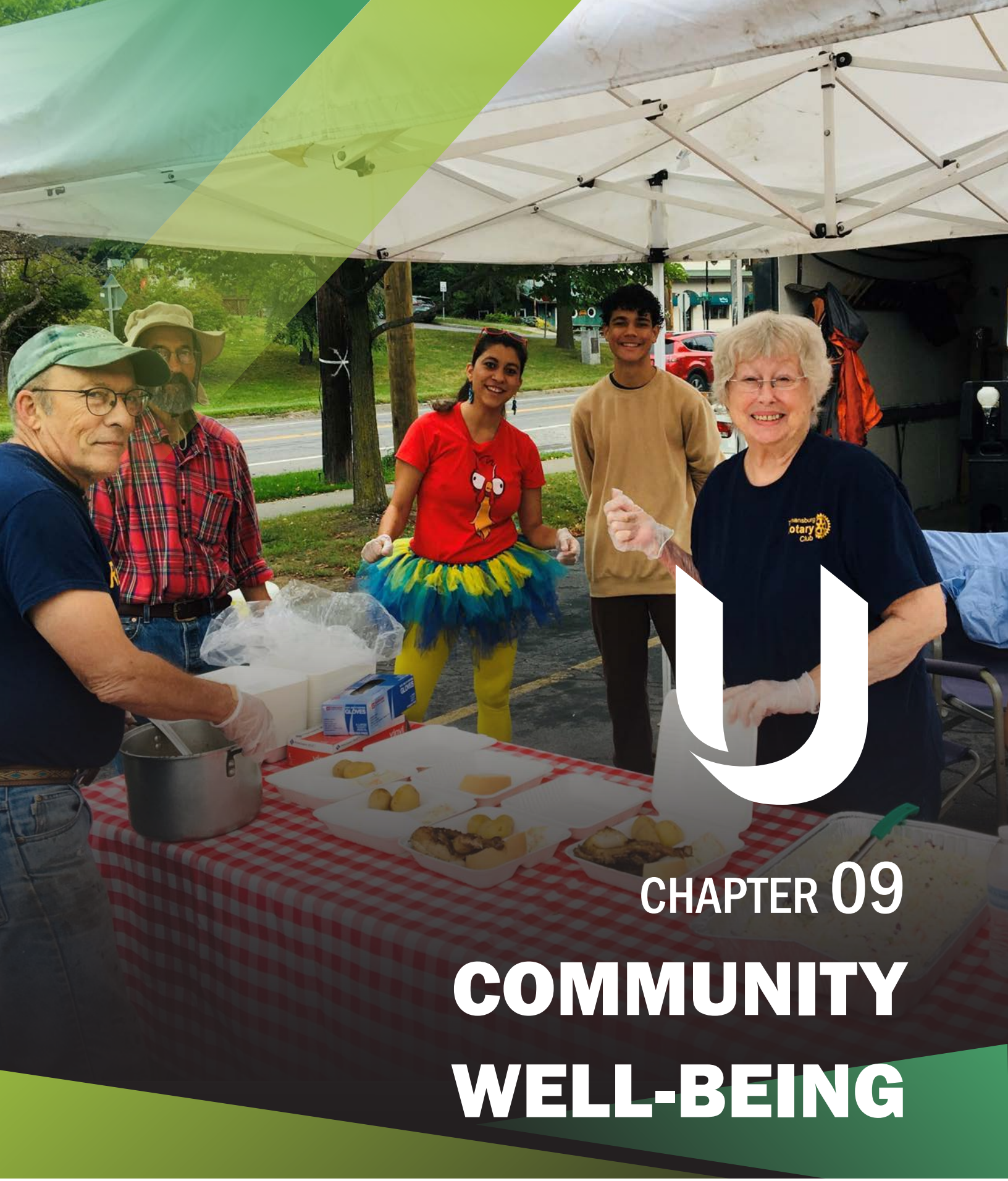
EN-G-3 Promote natural resources within the Town of Ulysses

Objective:

EN-O-3.1 Promote and support educational opportunities to connect the public with natural resources within Ulysses.

EN-P-3.1.1	Support opportunities to expand ecotourism in Ulysses. Collaborate with local institutions and committees to identify opportunities.
EN-P-3.1.2	Work with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to learn about threatened and endangered candidate species. Share resources and measures that can be taken to protect these species with future development as set forth by USFWS.
EN-P-3.1.3	Promote educational opportunities related to biodiversity, habitats, and environmental stewardship through partnerships with local organizations.

EN-P-3.1.4	Continue to promote the use of the Black Diamond Trail, Cayuga Nature Center, Jacksonville Community Park, Smith Woods (Town owned), Salo Habitat Nature Preserve (Town owned), and Taughannock Falls State Park to connect the public with the natural environment and identify opportunities to educate the public on these natural resources.
EN-P-3.1.5	Maintain and enhance natural areas throughout the Town of Ulysses. Explore funding resources to implement enhancements as time and resources allow.
EN-P-3.1.6	Develop a master plan for the Salo Habitat Nature Preserve (Town owned) to guide long-term care.
EN-P-3.1.7	Identify opportunities to incorporate biodiversity and native species as appropriate, along with removing invasive species on Town-owned recreational properties.
EN-P-3.1.8	Develop a Master Plan for Smith Woods (Town owned) to guide long-term care.



CHAPTER 09

COMMUNITY WELL-BEING

I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A. 2025 UPDATE: CREATING A COMMUNITY WELL-BEING ELEMENT

The Community Well-Being Element is a new Comprehensive Plan chapter intended to focus on the overall well-being of residents. In the 2009 Comprehensive Plan, the Community Services policy area focused on providing safe, healthy, and enjoyable ways for Ulysses residents to enjoy its natural, cultural, and historic resources. Additionally, it focused on identifying appropriate opportunities for all age groups to actively participate in the local community. The Community Well-Being Element seeks to do the same with an expanded assessment of how various factors can impact someone's overall well-being. Access to services, feeling a sense of belonging, and access to social and recreational amenities can improve the overall well-being of individuals. In this element, challenges that may negatively impact an individual's well-being are identified. Recommendations to address these challenges involve a collaborative approach among local organizations, county resources, and the community. Several guiding laws, policies, planning efforts, and community guidance includes the following:

- Tompkins County Countywide Planning Policies
- 2008 Route 96 Corridor Management Study
- 2001 Cayuga Lake Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan
- 2023 New York State Hazard Mitigation Plan – MitigateNY
- The Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act

- 2022-2024 Tompkins County Community Health Assessment
- New York State Human Rights Law
- Public outreach and visioning comments received as part of the public participation process for the plan update.

This element is not meant to be free-standing; it relates to a number of other elements in a complementary manner. In particular, the elements concerning transportation, land use, housing, natural resources, and the built environment, all have issues involving community well-being.

B. OVERVIEW OF COMMUNITY WELL-BEING FROM THE 2009 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

In the 2009 Comprehensive Plan, community well-being was primarily discussed in the Community Services Policy area. This included objectives such as maintaining and expanding park and recreation facilities, coordinating the delivery of utilities in Ulysses while preserving and protecting the rural character of the community, providing social and recreational programs for all ages, and coordinating the delivery of public services in Ulysses to ensure the needs of residents and visitors are addressed.

II. PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES INFLUENCING ULYSSES' COMMUNITY WELL-BEING ELEMENT

A. TOMPKINS COUNTYWIDE PLANNING POLICIES

The Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan has various planning principles pertaining to the community-well being of residents. This includes ensuring Tompkins County is a place where the built environment promotes healthy, safe, and active lifestyles; ensuring housing is affordable, safe, energy efficient, and appealing; and a place where the entire community is prepared for the economic, environmental, and social impacts of climate change.

B. SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

Tompkins County conducted a Community Health Assessment and Improvement Plan from 2022-2024 that focused on promoting health equity. Health equity occurs when every person has fair and just opportunities for optimal health and well-being. The study identified that disparities are primarily across wealth and race. Inequity is also evident in housing and access to healthcare, with the latter often due to a lack of transportation options. Social Determinants of Health, which are the conditions in which we live, work, and play, were analyzed to assess well-being barriers that may not be assessed by a health assessment. Tompkins County follows the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Social Determinants of Health framework to classify and understand the different domains which are:

- ***Education Access and Quality*** (early childhood development and education)
- ***Neighborhood and built environment*** (access to foods that support healthy dietary patterns, crime and violence, environmental conditions, and quality of housing)
- ***Social and Community Context*** (civic participation, discrimination, incarceration, and social cohesion)
- ***Health Care Access and Quality*** (access to health services, access to primary care, and health literacy)
- ***Economic Stability*** (employment, food insecurity, housing instability, and poverty)

Understanding these different domains can help us understand what challenges certain community members may experience and how it impacts their overall well-being. Different elements in this plan take social determinants of health into consideration, which can contribute to a more well-rounded approach to improving not just the physical environment, but the well-being of the people in our community.

COMMUNITY PRIORITIES AND CONCERNS AT-A-GLANCE

- Insufficient communication about local events and activities
- Need for more community (third) spaces, especially for teens
- Demand for expanded public and multi-modal transportation
- Difficulty maintaining a volunteer pipeline for local organizations and events
- Affordable housing options for families and seniors
- Continued natural resource and outdoor space preservation
- Collaboration with school district and other local agencies
- Expanding recreational amenities and programming while keeping them affordable
- Support for the library and related programming

C. ULYSSES VISIONING EFFORTS

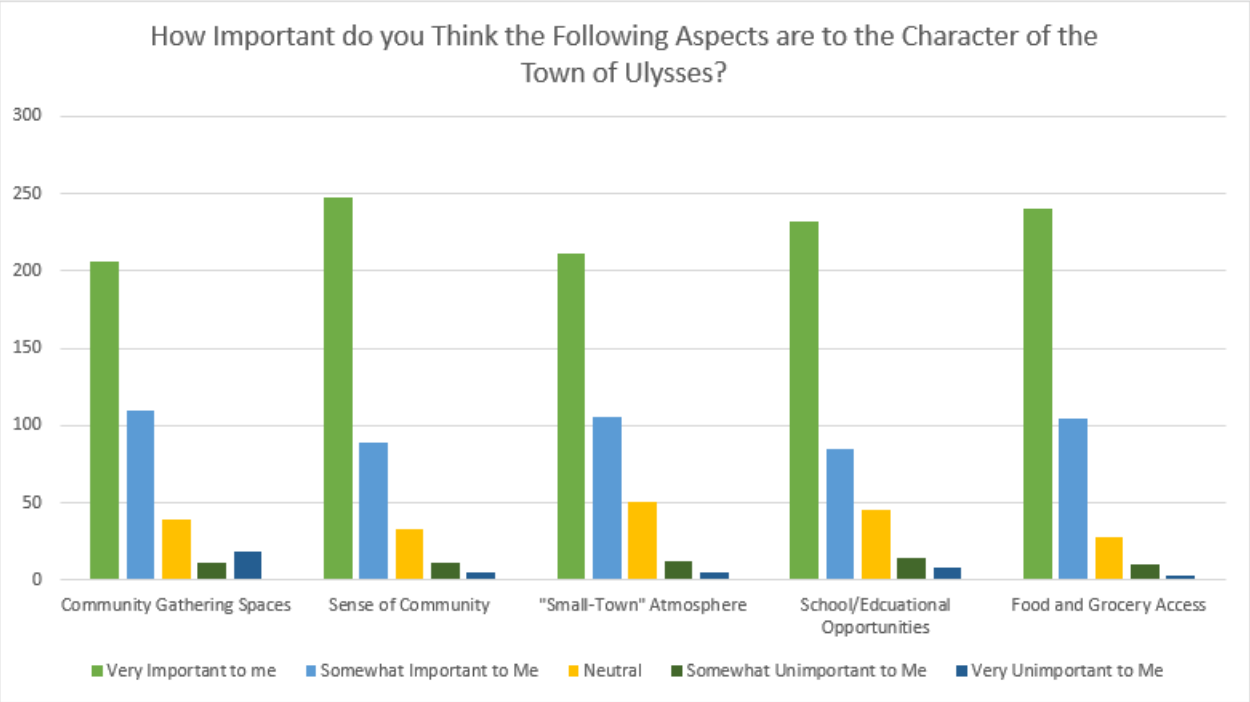
During the visioning phase of the comprehensive planning process, various exercises were conducted to facilitate feedback from the public about community well-being. The following topics were brought up as priorities that the comprehensive plan update should focus on:

- Improved communication on local events and activities
- Creating more community spaces (third spaces), especially for teens
- Advocating for expanded public transportation and supporting expanding multi-modal transportation options
- Attracting more volunteers for local organizations and events as older volunteers step down
- Supporting more affordable housing options for families and seniors
- Continuing to preserve natural resources and outdoor spaces
- Continuing to collaborate with the Trumansburg Central School District and other local agencies
- Expanding programming and recreational amenities, and identifying ways to make them more affordable for residents.
- Continuing to support the library and its programming.

In the community survey, 54% of respondents indicated that community spaces are very important to the character of Ulysses. 64% of respondents indicated that a sense of community was very important to the character of Ulysses.

III. INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS OF EXISTING AND PROJECTED COMMUNITY WELL-BEING NEEDS

Figure CW-1



A. EXISTING CONDITIONS

The Town of Ulysses is served by various local, county, and regional services and organizations. These services provide residents with an array of benefits such as access to basic needs, social connections, financial assistance, child care, recreational programming, senior and youth services. All of these services can positively contribute to one's overall well-being and make them feel included in the community.

Organizations and Services

There are a variety of organizations and services available to residents in the Town of Ulysses. These organizations exist at the local, county, and regional levels and serve various members of the population with different needs and interests.

Town Departments

- Youth Services Department
- Recreation Department
- Trumansburg/Ulysses Youth Commission

Organizations

- Jacksonville Community Association
- Cayuga Lake Watershed Network
- Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County
- Finger Lakes Land Trust
- Ithaca Neighborhood Housing Services (INHS)
- Bishop Sheen Ecumenical Housing Foundation

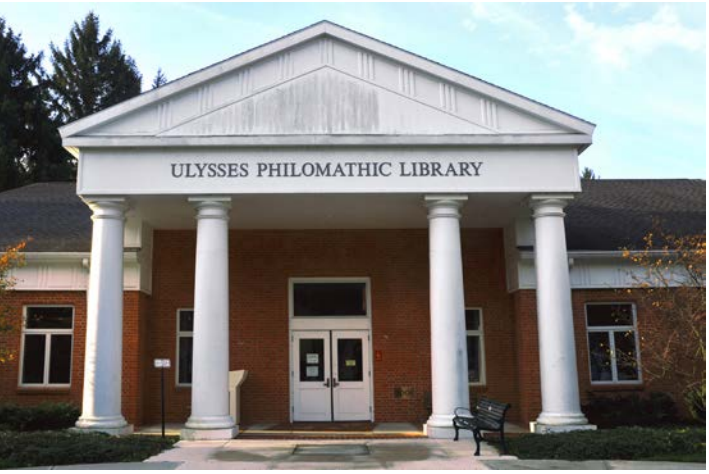
County Services

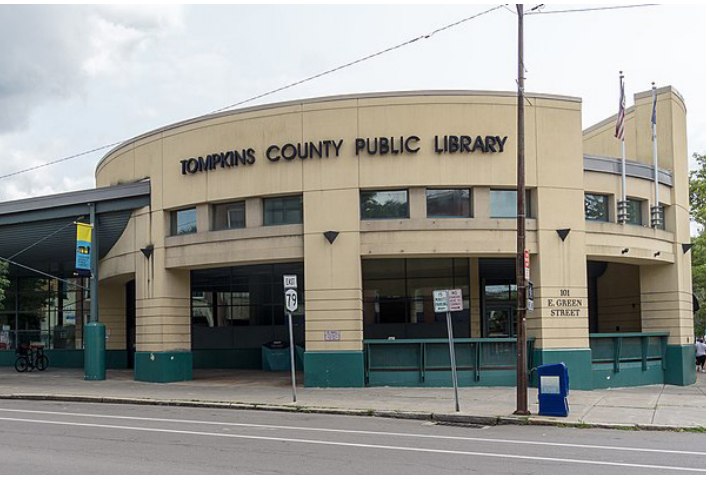
- Youth Services
- Workforce Development
- Social Services
- Human Rights
- Tompkins County Whole Health
    - MOMS Plus + Program
    - Supplemental Nutrition Program
    - Women Infants and Children Program
    - Children with Special Health Care Needs Division
    - Mental Health Services
- Office for the Aging

Library Resources

Town of Ulysses residents have access to the Ulysses Philomathic Library located in the Village of Trumansburg. The Ulysses Philomathic Library is part of the Finger Lakes Library System, which includes a total of 32 libraries.

Just a little further south, residents can also use the Tompkins County Public Library located in Ithaca. The Cornell University Library is also available to all County residents for an annual fee, or to the Cornell Community at no additional charge.





WITH 7,900 SQUARE FEET OF SPACE THE ULYSSES PHILOMATHIC LIBRARY PROVIDES:

- Books
- E-books and audiobooks
- Magazines
- Newspapers
- Kanopy video streaming
- CDs and videos
- Printing, Copying, Fax, and Scanning self-service
- Computers and Wi-Fi access
- Research Resources
- Community program spaces

Transportation

Tompkins County Consolidated Area Transit (TCAT) is a public transportation network that provides service to the City of Ithaca and surrounding areas. TCAT's mission is to contribute to the overall social, environmental, and economic health in our service area by delivering safe, reliable, and affordable transportation and, at the same time, being a responsive, responsible employer. Currently, TCAT Route 21 serves portions of Ulysses along NYS Route 96 through Jacksonville up to the Village of Trumansburg.[1] Service is offered Monday-Friday with consolidated service on Saturday and Sunday. TCAT is an independent organization that is not operated by the Town of Ulysses. While TCAT has stops throughout Ulysses, the service does not reach all of the Town's rural areas. This can be a challenge for residents who depend on public transportation for work, school, attending medical appointments, or getting basic necessities. The Town does not have the authority to expand TCAT services to areas of need, however, they can advocate for expanded service to better serve those who depend on it.

Detailed information relating to transportation can be found in the Transportation Chapter of this Comprehensive Plan.

Trumansburg Community Recreation
Source: Facebook

Recreation

Recreational programs can help improve mental and physical health, and contribute to a positive quality of life. The Town of Ulysses offers recreation programming for school age children through a joint Village and Town agreement. This agreement provides programs to all youth who attend the Trumansburg Central School District and the Ithaca City School District. Examples of programs offered through this agreement include summer recreation programs, open gym, the summer reading program, youth services, and youth employment opportunities. Additionally, youth who attend Ithaca City Schools are able to participate in programs offered through that school district.

1. *TCAT. (2025, June 20). Summer 2025 schedules. https://tcatbus.com/bus-schedules*

Trumansburg Conservancy of Fine Arts
Source: Facebook

Additional programs and activities for youth within the community include:

- Scouting of America
- Girl Scouts of America
- Youth Sports Leagues
- Activities sponsored by area churches
- Ithaca Youth Bureau (member of the recreation partnership)
- The Trumansburg Conservatory of Fine Arts which offers music and dance programs.

While there are some outdoor recreational programs available for school age children, ***there are limited opportunities and facilities for other indoor recreational programs and activities for both youths and adults within the Town of Ulysses.*** There currently isn't a recreation center located within Ulysses that could offer additional programming and community gathering spaces for residents.

Parks

Cayuga Nature Cente

The Town of Ulysses features a variety of parks and natural areas including Jacksonville Community Park, the Cayuga Nature Center, Black Diamond Trail, Salo Habitat Nature Preserve (Town owned), and Taughannock Falls State Park. In the future, the Town will develop a park for public use on recently acquired land on Cold Springs Road. Parks and natural areas provide an opportunity to interact with nature, and enjoy the scenic beauty of Ulysses. Engaging with the outdoors through physical activity offers reduced stress, improves mental health, and reduces the risk of chronic diseases.[2] Parks can provide environmental benefits as well, by reducing air and water pollution and mitigating urban heat islands.

According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), parks can help reduce risk of illness and injury by providing safe spaces where people can play and exercise away from busy streets and commercial zones.[3]

2. *"Improve Your Health and Wellness at National Parks (U.S. National Park Service)." National Parks Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 19 Apr. 2022, www.nps.gov/articles/000/health-and-wellness-benefits-of-parks.html.*

Education

School-age children in the Town of Ulysses attend public school in either the Trumansburg Central School District or the Ithaca City School District. The Trumansburg Central School District consists of one central complex located on Route 96 in the Village of Trumansburg. The complex includes Trumansburg Elementary School, Russell I. Doig Middle School, and Charles O. Dickerson High School. Residents of the southern portion of the town who live along New York State Route 89, DuBois Road, portions of Willow Creek Road, and east-west oriented streets between those roadways are generally within the Ithaca City School District. Pre-school services are also available in Ulysses. The Namaste Montessori School located on the south end of New York State Route 96 provides pre-school education services. In Ulysses, Smart Start provides day care and preschool services. The Trumansburg School District provides preschool services through their Universal Pre-K program, which is an application-based lottery program. The Trumansburg Community Nursery School also provides early educational services for young children between the ages of 18 months and 5 years.

Limited physical and transportation access to food stores can increase the risk of food insecurity and create negative health impacts.

Food Access

NYS Route 96 features a variety of markets, convenience stores, and stores to purchase food within the Town of Ulysses, the Village of Trumansburg, and the City of Ithaca. A few small markets are found within Ulysses including a Mirabito with a connected convenience store, Brownies Market, and Stick and Stone Farm. Other markets are concentrated within the Village of Trumansburg, and include Shur-save, the Trumansburg Main Street Market, and Trumansburg Farmers' Market. Large grocery stores, such as Wegmans and Aldi, are located further south in the City of Ithaca.

While food sources are available within a 20-mile range, those in rural communities who do not have access to a vehicle may have a challenging time getting to markets and grocery stores.

Limited physical and transportation access to food stores can increase the risk of food insecurity and create negative health

3.. *"Parks, Recreation and Green Spaces." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 16 Mar. 2022, www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/activepeoplehealthynation/everyone-can-be-involved/parks-recreation-and-green-spaces.html.*

impacts. Food insecurity can result in chronic conditions in children and severe chronic conditions such as coronary heart disease, diabetes, obesity, and cancer in adults.[4]

B. CHALLENGES IMPACTING COMMUNITY WELL-BEING

Limited Public Transportation

While public transportation is available through TCAT, service is limited along the NYS Route 96 corridor. Not all rural areas of Ulysses have access to public transportation, especially if they live further away from the current NYS Route 96 TCAT route. Throughout public engagement, residents expressed their desire for more public transportation options – particularly expanded TCAT service. Another challenge is that the Town of Ulysses does not own or operate TCAT. Therefore, it does not have control over the service route. The Town can advocate for expanded service and convey the need for service to residents and rural areas.

Limited Community Spaces

The Trumansburg School District and a few local organizations have community spaces, but they are limited and not entirely open to the public at all times. During focus groups, the open house, and the community survey, residents expressed the importance of having more community spaces throughout the community. The need for youth spaces was especially conveyed as a priority. The need for more recreational spaces and programs was also expressed. Residents shared that while they appreciate the current parks and fields that the Trumansburg school system has, they are limited to how and when they can access them.

Creating more parks, fields, and expanding recreational programming, especially for youth and seniors, are priorities for the future that the community identified.

4. *"Health-Related Social Needs." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 29 Oct. 2024, www.cdc.gov/places/measure-definitions/health-related-social-needs.html#:~:text=In%202023%2C%20around%2018%20million,to%20address%20food%20insecurity21.*

C. PROJECTED COMMUNITY WELL-BEING NEEDS

- Developing more community spaces for all ages
- Advocating for expanding public transportation options
- Advocating for more child care options
- Inclusion of the rural communities in Town initiatives
- Diversifying housing options
- Expanding recreational programming, especially for youth and seniors
- Support and encourage more local fresh food options

IV. GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

The following section contains the goals, objectives, and policies for the Community Well-Being Element of the Comprehensive Plan. This section states the Town's policies for addressing community well-being needs. This section also provides recommendations for local, regional, state, and federal resources that can be utilized to implement goals centered around improving community well-being. Goals, objectives, and policies also focus on collaborative opportunities with local and regional partners to create alignment with initiatives at the town and regional level.

Goal:

CW-G-1 Improve park and recreational facilities for the continued use and enjoyment of residents and visitors of the Town of Ulysses.

Objective:

CW-O-1.1 Identify opportunities to expand parks, recreation facilities, and community spaces.

Policies:

CW-P-1.1.1	Collaborate with the Jacksonville Community Association to identify opportunities to create playing fields and gathering spaces for Town-sponsored recreation programs, and/or special rentals that can generate revenue.
CW-P-1.1.2	Support the creation of new community spaces throughout Ulysses that can be accessed by all residents.
CW-P-1.1.3	Support the development of the Black Diamond Trail as a multi-use recreational, health, and open space amenity within the Town of Ulysses.
CW-P-1.1.4	Identify underutilized buildings and facilities within the Town that could be used for recreational and social programming.
CW-P-1.1.5	Continue to plan for Three Falls State Park and collaborate with the communities that are a part of the Three Falls Local Development Corporation and New York State Parks.

Goal:

CW-G-2 Expand multi-modal transportation options to support safe traveling for all.

Objective:

CW-O-2.1 Improve access to community destinations by supporting safe and convenient multi-modal traveling options for residents.

Policies:

CW-P-2.1.1	Develop a transportation improvement plan that addresses public transportation, safety, accessibility, and service gaps.
CW-P-2.1.2	Provide opportunities for residents to share their ideas and concerns related to transportation to aid in decision making.

Goal:

CW-G-3 Improve access to fresh food throughout Ulysses

Objective:

CW-O-3.1 Identify opportunities to expand access to fresh food for residents.

Policies:

CW-P-3.1.1	Collaborate with local farmers and businesses on expanding the existing farmers market by adding pop-up vendors.
CW-P-3.1.2	Promote current food banks and human services resources on the Town website. Share new resources as they become available.
CW-P-3.1.3	Assess barriers to accessing fresh food. Provide ways for residents to provide input on food access issues.
CW-P-3.1.4	Support new businesses that can provide fresh food and/or dining.
CW-P-3.1.5	Identify ways to help seniors and residents without transportation who have challenges accessing food.

Goal:

CW-G-4 Promote a sense of community.

Objective:

CW-O-4.1 Promote a welcoming and inclusive community that residents feel connected to.

Policies:

CW-P-4.1.1	Establish advisory committees, as needed, to support implementation of plan priorities such as housing, agriculture, historic preservation, and community programming.
CW-P-4.1.2	Engage with families, seniors, and active senior groups to identify ways to improve and expand programs, services, and facilities for youth and seniors.
CW-P-4.1.3	Collaborate with the Tompkins County Office for Aging to learn how to best support seniors and keep them connected to the community. Especially focus on seniors in rural areas who may be isolated.
CW-P-4.1.4	Support new youth programs, organizations, daycares, and businesses that can provide services to support current families and attract new families to Ulysses.
CW-P-4.1.5	Work with the Trumansburg Central School District and the Ithaca City School District to identify ways to collaborate on programming and services for youth. Provide ways for families to share ideas for programming and service needs.
CW-P-4.1.6	Encourage residents to be part of current Town of Ulysses committee groups.

Goal:

CW-G-5 Create a healthy long-living community.

Objective:

CW-O-5.1 Integrate healthy living principles into Ulysses.

Policies:

CW-P-5.1.1	Based on Town leadership interest, create a working group of leaders and community members that will inform the community on the benefits of healthy living principles.
CW-P-5.1.2	Identify community-wide needs and collaborate on policies and projects that can improve community health and well-being.

CHAPTER 10

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A. 2025 UPDATE: CREATING A NEW BUILT ENVIRONMENT ELEMENT

The Built Environment Element is a new chapter for the Town's Comprehensive Plan intended to address the three-dimensional, built environment. It examines the general image of the community; the character of its neighborhoods; the quality of buildings, streets, and public spaces; and its historical attributes. It's based on several guiding laws, policies, planning efforts, and community guidance, including the following:

- Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation Law
- Tompkins County Countywide Planning Policies
- 2008 Route 96 Corridor Management Study
- 2001 Cayuga Lake Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan
- Public outreach and visioning comments received as part of the public participation process for the plan update.

This element is not meant to be free-standing; it relates to a number of other elements in a complementary manner. In particular, the elements concerning transportation, land use, housing, and community well-being all have issues involving the built environment. In addition, the built environment relates to the economic policies of Ulysses in that the community's perceived strength is derived in part from its visual characteristics. Accordingly, policies regarding design and historic preservation issues need to be examined in the implementation of other parts of the comprehensive plan, and vice versa.

Helping property owners get their properties listed could connect property owners to historic tax credits for residential properties.

To help achieve the Town's vision for the future, historic resources and the built environment should be preserved and protected. Ulysses is a community that contains both relatively old and new construction, and the character of Ulysses' neighborhoods varies greatly. The historic resources within Ulysses contribute to the character that makes it unique from other communities in the Finger Lakes Region.

Greek Revival homes, especially in and around Jacksonville, are found throughout Ulysses, many of which are eligible for State and National Registry listing. There are also historical agricultural assets found throughout Ulysses such as historic barns. These are resources that are important and should be preserved.

However, with preservation and rehabilitation efforts comes an expense that is not always feasible for all property owners. It can be challenging for a property owner to get their property listed on the State/National Registers because SHPO typically prefers district nominations to individual listings. Helping property owners get their properties listed could connect property owners to historic tax credits for residential properties.

Historic preservation efforts and built environment initiatives should help meet the needs of the community in an equitable and appropriate manner that preserves the historic fabric of Ulysses. The policies contained in this element concern broad choices the Town might make about where and how to develop, and attempt to address all parts of the community. Historic preservation goes beyond saving aging structures and/or structures that are historically significant. It can help the community to be more climate resilient. Adaptive reuse of existing buildings and deconstruction are impactful ways to reduce carbon emissions, preserve historical materials, and prevent construction materials from ending up in a landfill.

B. OVERVIEW OF BUILT ENVIRONMENT POLICIES FROM THE 2009 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Sustainable Land Use and Development and Community Identity were the two primary policy areas from the previous comprehensive plan that was adopted in 2009 that included built environment policies. The objective of the sustainable land use and development policy area focused on providing a high quality of life for all residents through proactive planning that supports the goals of the local community, complements the existing rural character of the Town, and protects the value of natural and environmental resources. The community identity policy area focused on community character and providing unique opportunities for small business owners, residents, and visitors. It also focused on honoring Ulysses' agricultural heritage and rural settlement patterns, and celebrating its natural beauty and resources.

II. PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES INFLUENCING ULYSSES' HISTORIC PRESERVATION & BUILT RESOURCES ELEMENT

A. TOMPKINS COUNTYWIDE PLANNING POLICIES

In the Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan, there are various planning principles and policies that influence Ulysses' built environment. The planning principles are focused on strengthening the fabric of public spaces, encouraging municipalities to protect rural character and scenic resources by limiting sprawl, promoting more housing and mixed-use developments, and preserving and enhancing the distinct identities and historic character of existing communities.

The Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan cautions that redevelopment, if not done appropriately in existing neighborhoods, may threaten important historic resources. The County stresses that the preservation of historic resources can be fundamental to community character and quality. Historic preservation in rural communities can help maintain rural character and improve climate resiliency. Adaptive reuse of historic buildings and barns is a sustainable way of preserving rural heritage, reducing waste, and conserving

resources. It can also provide tourism opportunities, such as historic tours, which can be an economic benefit for rural communities.

BUILT ENVIRONMENT PRIORITIES AND CONCERNS AT-A-GLANCE

- Promotion of historic resources with tourism
- Conditions of historic homes and farms
- Funding opportunities for historic homes
- Maintaining landmark buildings that preserve community character
- Local/regional collaboration to implement tourism and preservation efforts
- Protection of historic resources through climate change preparedness
- Access to interactive asset map of historic properties
- Local registry for historic properties that meet established standards

B. ULYSSES VISIONING EFFORTS

During the visioning phase of the comprehensive planning process, various exercises were conducted to facilitate feedback from the public about historic preservation and the built environment. The following topics were brought up as priorities that the comprehensive plan update should focus on:

- Promoting historic resources through tourism
- Improving conditions of historic homes and farms
- Finding grants and funding opportunities for historic homes
- Maintaining landmark buildings that preserve the character of the community
- Collaborating with local and regional partners to implement tourism and preservation efforts
- Climate change preparedness to protect historic resources
- Creating an interactive asset map of historic properties
- Developing a local registry of historic properties that meet locally created standards

III. INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS OF EXISTING AND PROJECTED HISTORIC PRESERVATION & BUILT ENVIRONMENT NEEDS

A. EXISTING CONDITIONS

Ulysses is home to a variety of historic resources, both within the Town and the Village of Trumansburg. These resources are historically significant residential and commercial buildings and structures that contribute to the overall character of the community. Some of these resources are listed or are eligible for listing on the State and National Register of Historic Places.

LOCAL HISTORIC RESOURCES

Cayuga Nature Center

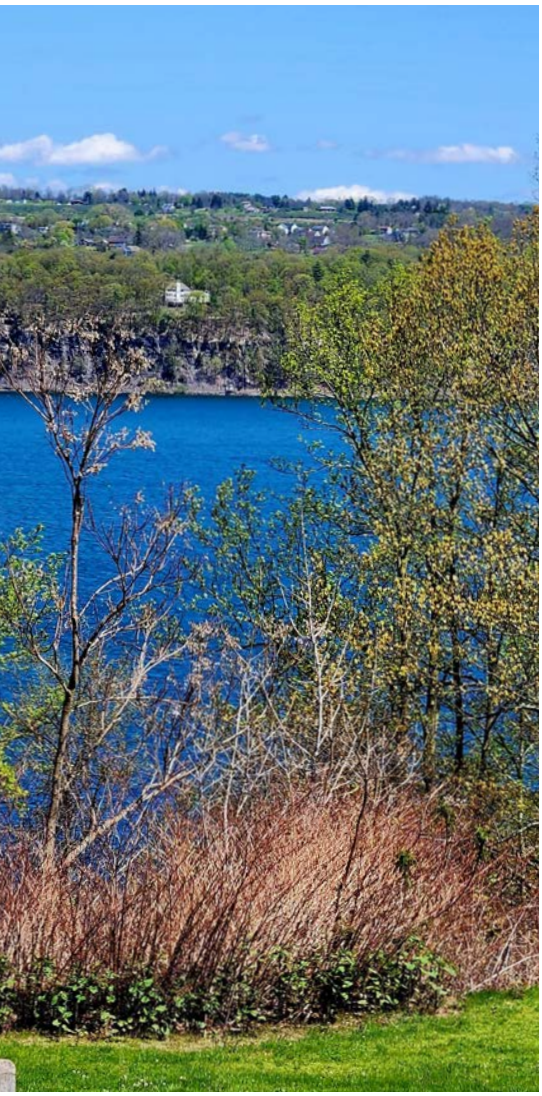
The main building of the Cayuga Nature Center began initial construction in 1936. The historical significance of the Cayuga Nature Center is that it was built during the Great Depression by the Works Progress Administration for the Cayuga Preventorium. It's primary use was for youth in the preventorium and later was used for environmental education. The Cayuga Nature Center was listed on the State Register of Historic Places in 2020 and listed by the National Register of Historic Places in 2021.

Hamlet of Jacksonville

The hamlet of Jacksonville was settled in 1799 and was originally known as Harlow's Corners. In the late 1800s, it was home to a variety of small businesses and other civic institutions, such as churches. Prominent historic buildings within the hamlet include:

Table BE-1

Structure Name	Year Constructed	State/National Registrar Status
Jacksonville Community Methodist Church	1898	SR Listed (2018) NR Listed (2018)
Methodist Episcopal Church	1827	SR Listed (2018) NR Listed (2018)
The Trees	1865	Not SR/NR Listed



Grove Cemetery

The Grove Cemetery features over 1,500 plots, many of which are associated with the Town's early families. The red sandstone chapel within the cemetery was constructed in 1893. Grove Cemetery is not listed on the State or National Register of Historic Places.

Nicholl Halsey House

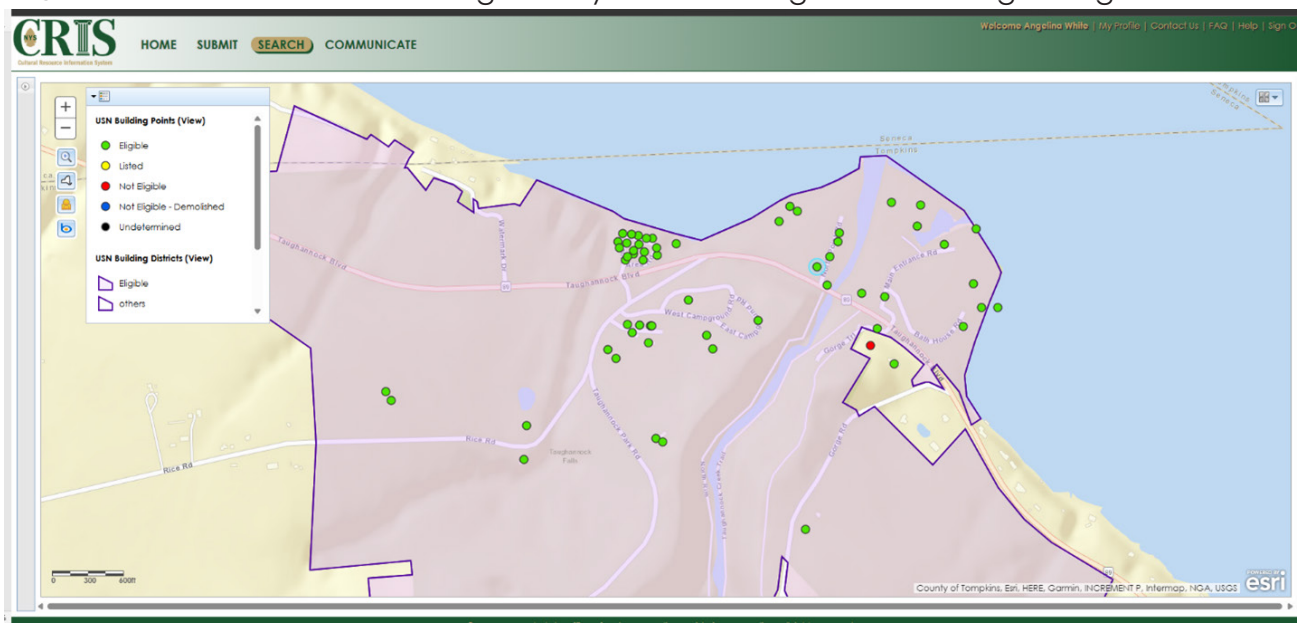
Located on Trumansburg Road, the Halsey house is a 6,000 square foot Greek Revival style home that was constructed in 1829. This house is known for its massing, original clapboard, and façade symmetry that was typical of earlier Federal designs. The Halsey house was listed on the State Register in 1993 and the National Register in 1994.

State Park Historic Resources

The Town of Ulysses has a unique location next to Cayuga Lake, which is a part of the Finger Lakes. Taughannock Falls State Park is a scenic resource that's cherished by locals and tourists. Additionally, the Finger Lakes Region of the State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) has a main office located in Ulysses.

Taughannock Falls State Park encompasses a variety of historic resources, many of which are considered eligible for listing on the State and National Register of Historic Places. Examples of eligible historic resources within the park include cabins, shelters, pump houses, contact stations, and the Lehigh Valley Railroad Taughannock Gorge Bridge.

Figure BE-1



Gayogo̱hó:nǫʾ Learning Project

The Gayogo̱hó:nǫʾ Learning Project is a collaboration of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people working to promote awareness and practice of Gayogo̱hó:nǫʾ(Cayuga) language and lifeways in their ancestral homelands and beyond. The Gayogo̱hó:nǫʾ Learning Project provides the following:

- Events and classes
- Language resources including collections of videos, articles, websites, and more.
- Cultural Resources

State Resources

The New York State Division for Historic Preservation offers a set of interconnected online tools known as the Cultural Resource Information System (CRIS) for searching and submitting historic resource data. These applications support field data collection, research, environmental review, historic recognition, tax credit programs, and other initiatives administered by the Division.

- CRIS System
- CRIS Trekker
- CRIS Mobile

The Cultural Resource Information System allows you to do the following:

- Submit project documentation for federal (Section 106), state (Section 14.09), or SEQR environmental review.
- Search for historic buildings, sites, and districts.
- View historic resource inventory forms, National Register nominations, and survey reports.
- Submit properties for an evaluation of eligibility or potential nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.
- Historic Preservation Grant Program.

B. CHALLENGES IMPACTING HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

For private owners, there are generally limited preservation funding assistance options, especially to owner occupants.

Various challenges exist for historic resources and the methods needed to preserve them. Aging housing, housing conditions, policies, and funding resources can all have an influence on historic preservation efforts.

Funding Resources

Funding resources exist at the local, state, and federal levels. However, the availability and qualifications to obtain this funding can be limited and challenging. For private owners, there are generally limited preservation funding assistance options, especially to owner occupants. A private owner of a residential or commercial property may be able to obtain federal, state, or local funds through their local municipal agencies in the form of loans and/or grants. According to the NYS Parks Recreation & Historic Presevation, while the age and condition of a property may be considered in these programs, the focus may be affordable housing, creating employment opportunities, or investing in local communities rather than preserving historic and cultural resources.

According to the National Park Service, rehabilitation is defined as *"the process of returning a property to a state of utility, through repair or alteration, which makes possible an efficient contemporary use while preserving those portions and features of the property which are significant to its historic, architectural, and cultural values."*

Rehabilitation & Property Maintenance

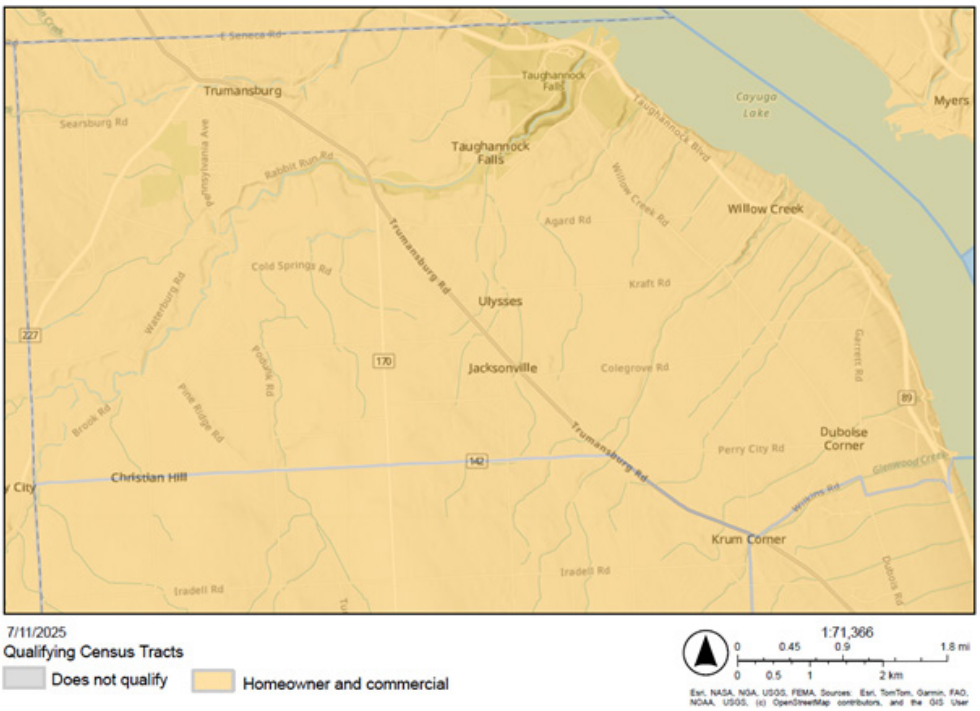
With an aging housing stock, housing conditions may start to decline and become difficult to maintain. Rehabilitation and restoration efforts could be expensive, especially if there are limited funding resources available. Materials costs can also pose a challenge for homeowners. The National Park Service's standards for rehabilitation state that deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities, and, where possible, materials. While someone may wish to use original materials, such as slate or copper, they may find that the cost of those materials to be quite expensive. Senior homeowners and those who are income-restricted can especially face the monetary challenges of rehabilitation projects.

Private owners of a residential or commercial property that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places could potentially be eligible for a preservation tax credit if they are planning rehabilitation work. The federal historic rehabilitation tax credit program allows a 20% tax credit if substantial

rehabilitation of historic properties is completed. [1] The map below shows census tracts in New York State that may be eligible for New York State's historic tax credit programs. For the Town of Ulysses, both homeowners and commercial owners may qualify.

Figure BE-2

Qualifying Census Tracts



source: NYS GIS Clearinghouse, OPRHP

Farmers can also benefit from historic tax credits if they're eligible. The Farmer's Protection and Farm Preservation Act allows for an income tax credit equal to 25% of the cost of rehabilitating historic barns.

However, there are qualifications that need to be met in order to be eligible, including that the barn must be: income producing, in non-residential use, placed in service before 1936, and work must not materially alter the historic appearance of the structure.[2]

1. *Substantial rehabilitation is determined using an Internal Revenue Service formula measuring the value of the building against the dollar amount of the proposed work. The final value of the credit is based on the cost of the rehabilitation; in effect, 20% of the rehabilitation costs will be borne by the federal government. The work performed (both interior and exterior) must meet federal preservation standards and be approved by the State Historic Preservation Office.*
2. *NYS Parks Recreation & Historic Preservation*

C. PROJECTED HISTORIC RESOURCE AND BUILT ENVIRONMENT NEEDS

- Rehabilitation of historic homes, barns, and structures
- Grant assistance for residential & commercial rehab efforts
- Collaborating with local and regional partners to implement historic preservation efforts
- Promoting cultural and historic resources within the Town
- Enhancing the physical character of communities
- Streetscape improvements to conserve and enhance the physical environment
- Developing design standards

IV. GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

The following section contains the goals, objectives, and policies for the Built Environment element of the Comprehensive Plan. This section states the Town's policies for addressing historic preservation needs. This section also provides recommendations for local, regional, state, and federal resources that can be utilized to implement goals centered around historic preservation. Goals, objectives, and policies also focus on collaborative opportunities with local and regional partners to create alignment with initiatives at the town and regional level.

Goal:

BE-G-1 Collaborate with local and regional partners to implement historic preservation efforts.

Objective:

BE-O-1.1 Establish and strengthen connections with local and regional partners and discuss opportunities for collaboration.

Policies:

BE-P-1.1.1	Actively communicate with the Village of Trumansburg, Tompkins County, and cultural organizations about collaboration opportunities for events and programming.
BE-P-1.1.2	Continue to work with the OPRHP to promote and market Taughannock Falls State Park and its amenities as a desirable destination for residents and visitors.
BE-P-1.1.3	Work with County and State entities to create an inventory of historic resources. Continue to work with the State on registering eligible properties to the State and National Register of Historic Places.
BE-P-1.1.4	Collaborate with members of the Gayogo̱hó:nǫ' Learning Project to implement Gayogo̱hó:nǫ' -led priorities and create inclusive culturally responsive spaces.
BE-P-1.1.5	Work with the Trumansburg Central School District and local institutions to create opportunities for community members to learn about historic preservation. Collaborate with the Ulysses Historical Society to create volunteer opportunities for students interested in that field.

Goal:

BE-G-2 Promote cultural and historic resources within the Town.

Objective:

BE-O-2.1 Enhance, preserve, and promote the historic character and historic communities of Ulysses.

Policies:

BE-P-2.1.1	Continue to develop and implement the Jacksonville Special Area Plan and incorporate design guidelines that protect and enhance the historic character of the hamlet.
BE-P-2.1.2	Identify funding opportunities to support the efforts of the Ulysses Historical Society, Ulysses Philomathic Library, the Trumansburg Conservatory of Fine Arts, and the Cayuga Nature Center as valuable cultural resources.
BE-P-2.1.3	Identify, document, and protect historic resources through tools such as historic districts, a local historic register, and preservation planning efforts.
BE-P-2.1.4	Support educational programs, tours, and events that highlight the Town's historic, agricultural, and natural heritage.
BE-P-2.1.5	Install wayfinding and interpretive signage to historic sites, cultural resources, and community landmarks.
BE-P-2.1.6	Encourage adaptive reuse of historic buildings.
BE-P-2.1.7	Ensure that new development and building alterations near designated historic structures are compatible with the scale, massing, and design character of historic resources.

Goal:

BE-G-3 Incorporate hazard mitigation and climate resiliency methods into historic preservation and built environment improvement efforts.

Objective:

BE-O-3.1 Explore opportunities for incorporating landscaping green infrastructure techniques into historic preservation and built environment initiatives

Policies:

BE-P-3.1.1	Encourage green infrastructure such as permeable pavement, rain gardens, and vegetated swales on historic sites to reduce stormwater discharge and lower pollutant loads.
BE-P-3.1.2	Develop a hazard mitigation plan that takes in consideration historic properties, lakefront structures, and preserving the historic character of Ulysses
BE-P-3.1.3	Partner with local higher education institutions to have students assist with developing recommendations and visuals for green infrastructure techniques that the Town can utilize for preservation efforts.
BE-P-3.1.4	Preserve major stands of trees, riparian corridors, and vegetated ravines with new development because they are a significant part of Ulysses' image.
BE-P-3.1.5	Encourage designs for buildings and public spaces that maximize use of natural light and provide protection from inclement weather.

Goal:

BE-G-4 Explore funding opportunities for rehabilitation and preservation efforts.

Objective:

BE-O-4.1 Assist residential and commercial property owners seeking grant funding for rehabilitation projects.

Policies:

BE-P-4.1.1	Create a community resource advisor role to assist residential and commercial property owners with applying for local, state, and federal grant programs. Assist property owners with determining their eligibility and scope of work.
BE-P-4.1.2	Encourage rehabilitation of historic structures by promoting available incentives, including tax credits, grants, and other financial assistance programs.
BE-P-4.1.3	Actively communicate with property owners to learn about property maintenance needs and challenges impacting rehabilitation efforts.

Goal:

BE-G-5 Maintain and enhance Ulysses' unique character and sense of place, including its natural setting, history, human-scaled development, and community identity as the Town grows.

Objective:

BE-O-5.1 Create a positive, pleasant impression for residents and visitors with attractive entryways, focal points, and dramatic viewpoints.

Policies:

BE-P-5.1.1	Provide major entrance points into Ulysses with attractive, welcoming signage and landscaping to create a visually dramatic and attractive gateway effect.
BE-P-5.1.2	Provide a comprehensive system of wayfinding signs to direct residents and visitors from major arterials to amenities in the town, including the village, hamlets, parks, lakefront, scenic viewpoints, institutions, historic districts (when created), and other points of interest.
BE-P-5.1.3	Protect public views of key designated vistas whenever feasible, as new development is proposed.

Objective:

BE-O-5.2 Ensure that development, particularly commercial and multi-family development, has a high quality of design with respect to elements such as public spaces, pedestrian amenities, landscaping, building forms, and materials.

Policies:

BE-P-5.2.1	Develop and adopt a new land use code that is primarily a transect form-based code that is user friendly.
BE-P-5.2.2	Use zoning tools and natural features to ease the transitions from the building intensities of larger developments near the village, hamlets, and commercial arterials to lower-density developments of surrounding areas.
BE-P-5.2.3	Enhance the quality of development throughout the Town over time by developing and implementing design guidelines/standards and design review.
BE-P-5.2.4	Encourage the mixing of commercial uses with higher density housing in key designated areas when larger redevelopment occurs.
BE-P-5.2.5	Encourage transit-oriented development in key designated areas when larger redevelopment occurs.
BE-P-5.2.6	Ensure that building and site designs for new development encourages trips by walking, bicycling, and other non-motorized modes.

POLICIES OBJECTIVES GOALS

Goal:

BE-G-6 Enhance the physical character and distinctive qualities of neighborhood communities throughout the Town.

Objective

BE-O-6.1 Encourage redevelopment and infill in appropriate future land use character areas that will incorporate a mix of uses, support pedestrian activity and transit services, support appropriately scaled economic activity, and exhibit a distinctive design character. Redevelopment should support appropriately scaled economic activity in various locations throughout Town.

Policies:

BE-P-6.1.1	Preserve and encourage small scale, mixed-use development in certain locations to serve as the focus for neighborhoods; offer opportunities for locally owned shops and services; and provide for the daily needs of nearby residents.
BE-P-6.1.2	Encourage locally-oriented shops and services in neighborhoods for the convenience of residents and visitors.
BE-P-6.1.3	Require major development projects within each neighborhood to contribute positively to the character of their surroundings, including appropriate trees and landscaping with continual maintenance.
BE-P-6.1.4	Focus on bringing vacant residential and/or tax abandoned parcels back to productive use to expand the housing inventory within the Town.
BE-P-6.1.5	Partner with agencies/non-profits to revitalize vacant and abandoned properties.

Objective:

BE-O-6.2 Enhance the visual appearance of all new developments and for the Town as a whole.

Policies:

BE-P-6.2.1	Require the design of civic and institutional facilities as community focal points, incorporating such elements as unique and dramatic architecture, usable outdoor space, specimen plantings, artwork, water features, and views.
BE-P-6.2.2	Establish design overlay districts, with individualized guidelines.
BE-P-6.2.3	Require quality planting design, incorporating native species when possible, and provide continued maintenance to help soften development.

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APPENDICES