

# 2019

# Annual Report

Oneida County Department of Planning (OCDP)  
Herkimer-Oneida Counties Comprehensive Planning Program (HOCCPP) &  
Herkimer-Oneida Counties Transportation Study (HOCTS)



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*\*\*\*\*Transferred in 2019*

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## Census Data Affiliate

### Census 2019

Herkimer-Oneida Counties Comprehensive Planning Program (HOCCPP) continued to operate the regional Census Data Affiliate office. This included providing direct assistance to Herkimer and Oneida County departments, public and private agencies, businesses, and citizens of the region. Specific activities included providing longitudinal data for planning, program assessment, and business related endeavors. In addition, other data resources are maintained and monitored in order to keep a broad picture of our county's status in terms of such topics as (but not limited to) economic trends, health statistics, and educational progress.

As part of the post-2010 Census, staff continued to assist local municipal governments in accessing census data. As new information was released over this past year, staff provided guidance to local governments, agencies, and citizens in understanding the data, as well as the geographies, of the previous Census.

### Census 2020 Preparation

In preparation for the 2020 Census, staff spent considerable effort on the Local Update of Census Addresses (LUCA) program. LUCA involved the review of more than 100,000 residential addresses within the region in a database containing approximately a half million records in order to identify any addresses that may be missing from the Census Bureau's master address file. Nearly 4,000 addresses were found to be missing and were subsequently submitted to the Census Bureau for inclusion in the master address

file for the Herkimer and Oneida County region. The Census Bureau accepted more than 95% of the “found” addresses submitted from the region.

In addition, the Census Data Affiliate also reviewed new residential construction projects in the region to be sure that any constructed after March 2018 that would be occupied prior to April 1, 2020 were also included in the master address file of the Census. Approximately 500 such dwelling units were submitted to the Census for consideration.

## **Cost of Living Index**

Regional Census staff continued to participate in the Council for Community and Economic Research’s Cost of Living Index (COLI) activities by collecting data on the cost of local goods and services three times each calendar year. Participating in the COLI data collection provides city-to-city cost comparisons between our region and other places within New York State, as well as across the country. COLI is the only local level cost of living index available within the US.

## **Environmental**

### **Sauquoit Creek Channel & Floodplain Restoration Project**

Construction of the Sauquoit Creek Channel & Floodplain Restoration Project at Dunham Manor Park in the Town of Whitestown began in March 2019 and culminated in September 2019. Oneida County and Whitestown secured almost \$6 million in grants to complete Phase 1 of the project to increase the resiliency of the Sauquoit Creek during adverse flood events through the construction of innovative floodplain ‘benches’ that will store and slow floodwaters while protecting downstream communities. Phase 1 of the project included the construction of two large benches on municipally-owned property, bank stabilization, and in-stream structures.

The total project includes the construction of 12 floodplain benches along a 1.25-mile-long corridor of the lower Sauquoit Creek adjacent to Commercial Drive in Whitestown and ending at the CSX bridge in Whitesboro. Phase 2 has begun and the engineering

and environmental studies are near completion for the next round of benches near the CSX tracks in Whitesboro. This next phase of the project includes the creation of an 11-acre flood storage area, culverts under the CSX bridge, and land acquisition of private property. Phase 2 is being completed in partnership with National Grid, Oneida County, CSX, the Town of Whitestown, New York State Department of Transportation, New York State Office of Government Services, and the Village of Whitesboro. The Town of Whitestown was recently awarded more than \$2 million in additional state and federal grants to start Phase 2.

The construction of the Sauquoit Creek Channel & Floodplain Restoration Project’s floodplain benches will be accomplished in multiple phases over the next several years as funding is secured. As each bench is constructed, the impacted areas will be provided an immediate benefit. Each additional floodplain bench that is constructed will provide further flood relief.



**Flood Bench Project**

### **Energy Efforts**

#### **The Climate Smart Communities Program**

The Climate Smart Communities Program is jointly sponsored by the following six New York State agencies: Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC); Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA); Department of Public Service;

Department of State; Department of Transportation; and Department of Health. Municipalities in New York State can take a stand on climate change, which poses a real and increasing threat to our local environment, by adopting the Climate Smart Communities Pledge. To become a registered Climate Smart Community, the municipality's governing body must adopt a resolution that includes all ten elements of the pledge and submit the resolution to the DEC.

The Oneida County Board of Legislators passed the Climate Smart Communities Pledge in July 2019, which is comprised of the following ten elements:

- pledge to be a Climate Smart Community;
- set goals, inventory emissions, and plan for climate action;
- decrease community energy use;
- increase community use of renewable energy;
- realize benefits of recycling and other climate-smart solid waste management practices;
- reduce greenhouse gas emissions through use of climate-smart land-use tools;
- enhance community resilience and prepare for the effects of climate change;
- support development of a green innovation economy;
- inform and inspire the public; and
- commit to an evolving process of climate action.

The benefits of passing the pledge and joining the Climate Smart Community Program include recognition of local leadership's commitment to climate action and enabling high-performing communities to receive rewards from funding sources and gain additional points in the grant review process.

### **Energize NY Open C-PACE Financing Program**

The Oneida County Board of Legislators passed a local law to authorize the establishment of an Energize NY Finance Program on August 26, 2019. The Energize NY Open C-PACE (Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy) Financing Program allows property owners to pay back the cost

of clean energy upgrades to commercial or non-profit property through a special charge on their property tax bill. Open C-PACE enables those with eligible buildings to secure funds to tackle significant energy upgrades and renewable energy projects. This financing structure is available through the Energy Improvement Corporation (EIC); a local development corporation and a New York State non-profit established specifically to assist municipalities and property owners in achieving long-term energy savings and/or generate renewable power for use on site.

To participate, Oneida County established a local law to authorize the establishment of an Energize NY Finance Program, and to enter into a municipal agreement with EIC to implement the finance program, which provides property owners with application support, finance analysis tools, and assistance with contractor qualifications. Businesses will see energy savings through these updates, and will receive financing to improve local building stock, generate new energy efficiency, and complete solar projects in Oneida County.

### **Energy Training**

An Energy Symposium was held on October 19, 2019 at Mohawk Valley Community College with speakers from the NYSERDA Clean Energy Siting Team and the Mohawk Valley Clean Energy Communities Coordinator. Presenters shared information on solar energy development including zoning, permitting and State Environmental Quality Review, steps to



**ENERGY SYMPOSIUM**

becoming a certified Climate Smart Community, and resources for municipalities converting streetlights to LED technology. Approximately 40 municipal board members attended the event.

## GIS Division

During 2019, mapping products and services were delivered to hundreds of people, firms, County Departments, and agencies. Examples of these products include:

- 2017 imagery and tax parcels for timbering activities provided to foresters;
- Light Detection and Ranging (LIDAR) derived contours for engineering applications;
- drone imagery and data collection;
- digital applications set up for local officials to manage their infrastructure;
- Global Positioning System (GPS) collection of sanitary, water, and storm sewer systems; and
- agricultural district mapping.

Additionally, our GIS Division is now the E911 addressing authority for Oneida County, generating and confirming all new and existing addresses in the County.

### Drone Imagery and Mapping

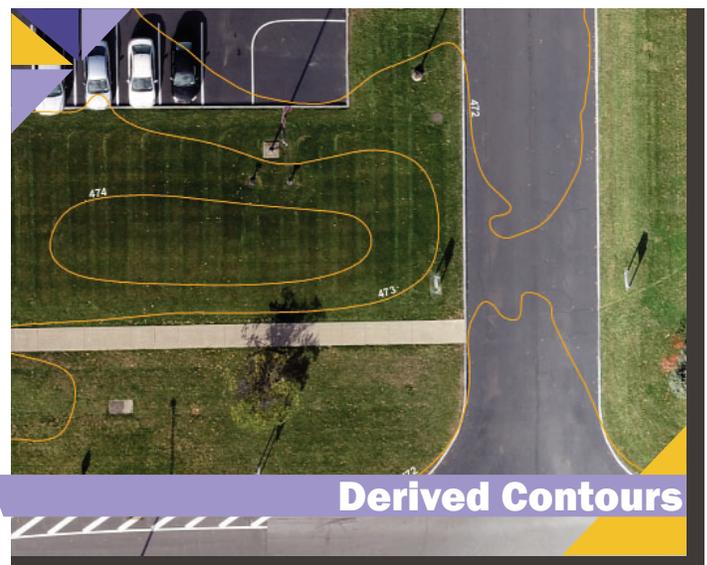
Drones are now being used in many industries, including planning, for GIS and mapping projects. To leverage this technology, our goal in 2019 was to develop the workflow, piloting capability, and software necessary to successfully collect mapping data using drones. In the initial year of this implementation we partnered with an outside vendor for piloting the drone because of the licensing required to commercially fly drones. Next, we expanded our internal GPS capability to include the high accuracy positioning necessary for mapping with drones. Lastly, through our partnership with New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT), the software to complete the data post-processing was acquired. As a result, we successfully flew seven data collection missions on seven different sites throughout Oneida County. These data sets were delivered to economic developers

to help market sites and give them the ability to convey the as-is condition of properties to potential site users.

Several different spatial data products were created on each of these seven missions. The most obvious data product is very crisp, new imagery. A digital terrain model was built depicting the actual shape and slope of the ground surface, and contours were created to assist in engineering and mapping efforts. Finally, a 3D point cloud was built to create a full scale model of the entire scene that was captured in the imagery.

Looking to the future, we have taken additional steps to enhance our capabilities with drones. We had a staff member complete a drone licensing prep-class and gain licensure as a drone pilot in December. We also put funding in our 2020 proposed budget to purchase a drone. That funding was approved and we will be purchasing that equipment in early 2020, which will enable the entire data collection process to be completed internally.

Shown below is an example of drone imagery and derived contours from a photogrammetric data collection in Griffiss Business and Technology Park in Rome.



## E911 Addressing

In 2019, our staff continued to support E911 call center data management efforts by creating and maintaining addresses throughout Oneida County. Daily interaction with the public, realtors, police and fire agencies, United State Postal Service employees, local municipalities, and many others is required to maintain accurate and functioning E911 addresses for Oneida County. In 2019 our Department created or modified more than 600 addresses in our effort to keep this data as current as possible. An example of some of the complexities we experience is shown in the picture below, depicting a series of addresses that residents use, but are on a road that technically does not exist. An artificial street centerline (Genesee Ct) was added to aid emergency services with physical locations.



## **Human Services**

HOCCPP has continued its agreements with both the Oneida and Herkimer County Departments of Social Services (DSS) and the Oneida County Youth Bureau. In the role of human services planner for both county's DSS, HOCCPP staff prepares planning documents, conducts surveys, researches social policy, analyzes data, attends and organizes various planning groups, and writes grant proposals.

## Child and Family Services Plan Updates

Both Herkimer and Oneida County DSS are required to submit an Annual Plan Update of their Child and Family Services Plans. HOCCPP staff assisted both county departments with preparation of their updates to the strategic component of plan, which outlines the activities of the services units, i.e., Preventive Services, Child Protective Services, Foster Care, Youth and Young Adult, Adult Protective Services, Persons in Need of Supervision Diversion Services, Child Care, and Non-Residential Domestic Violence. The Child and Family Services Plan added the Municipal Comprehensive Runaway and Homeless Youth Services Plan & Needs Assessment. Planning staff also assisted the Youth Bureau in updating the new portion of the plan.

## Raise the Age Plan

In 2018, the state budget included legislation to raise the age of criminal responsibility to 18 years of age. New York had previously been one of two states that automatically prosecuted 16- and 17-year-olds as adults. New York State raised the age to 17 on October 1, 2018 and then to 18 on October 1, 2019. Planning staff assisted Oneida County DSS and Oneida County Probation in creating the 2018-2020 Raise the Age Plan in response to this change in protocol. This plan outlines additional staff and programs needed to provide appropriate services for this population.

## Steps to End Homelessness Program Grant

Oneida County DSS applied for the Steps to End Homelessness Program (STEHP) Grant through the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTADA), with assistance from planning staff. OTADA awarded Oneida County DSS a 5-year contract STEHP grant, with a maximum annual amount of \$163,604 for 5-years, to provide street outreach services throughout Oneida County.

## Runaway and Homeless Youth Committee – 5th Annual Invisible Youth Summit

The 5th Annual Invisible Youth Summit was held on November 12 at Mohawk Valley Community College's Rome Campus. This annual event brought awareness and education to the tri-county area regarding the homeless youth population, with planning staff assisting in the coordination and planning of the event. The program featured a photo voices video presentation with a panel discussion that included professionals from the local school district, public library, criminal justice agencies, and direct service staff. Additionally, former homeless youth were present on the panel to share their experiences as the youth voice. Presentations were given by Safe Harbour: NY – youth trafficking, YWCA – domestic violence, and Grady's Way, a youth homeless shelter for males in Utica, scheduled to open in 2020.

The program ended with a dance choreographed and performed by one of the youth voice panelists. There were 90 attendees at the event including direct service staff to homeless youth, professionals from private and public sectors, and college students. To give back, attendees were encouraged to donate warm winter items for local area homeless youth programs. More than 239 warm winter items were donated.

## Teen Assessment Project

Human Services Planning efforts included conducting our Teen Assessment Project (TAP) Survey in Oneida County during the Fall of 2019. The TAP Survey is a voluntary and anonymous student survey that communities throughout the United States have used to document the concerns, perceptions, and behaviors of teens. This is the sixth time the survey has been given to 7th, 9th, and 11th graders in Oneida County since it was first used here in 1999. The questions cover such topics as how teens spend their time, the importance of their education, what worries them, how closely their parents monitor their behavior, their use of illegal substances, their level of sexual activity, and much more. Analysis of the survey results is ongoing and anticipated to be released in the Spring of 2020.

## Land Use

### New York State Agricultural Districts

#### Herkimer County

The annual open enrollment period for New York State Agricultural Districts in Herkimer County was January 1-31, 2019. In 2019, eight landowners submitted applications to have their properties added to existing agricultural districts. As a result, 3,414.7 acres were added to Consolidated District #1.

In 2019, the existing five agricultural districts were consolidated into one district, which has been renamed Consolidated District #1. The consolidated district was approved by the County Legislature and was certified by the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets (Ag & Markets). The next renewal of Consolidated District #1 will be in 2027.

#### Oneida County

The annual open enrollment period for New York State Agricultural Districts in Oneida County was January 1-31, 2019. In 2019, 14 landowners submitted applications to have their properties added to existing agricultural districts. As a result, just over 550 new acres were added to existing districts.

Agricultural District #3 went through the required 8-year review. District #3 includes properties within the Towns of Boonville, Forestport, Remsen, and Steuben. The 2019 renewal included 123 landowners and 18,140.1 acres, with over 4,000 acres added since the 2011 8-year review.

### Herkimer County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan Update

In 2018, Herkimer County received a grant from Ag & Markets to update the 2002 Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan. The Herkimer County Farmland Protection Board (FPB) is overseeing the development of the plan, and a consultant was hired in 2018 to complete the plan. The initial kick-off meeting regarding the plan with the consultant and the FPB was held in February.

Tasks completed in 2019 include:

- gathered and compiled statistical information on agriculture in the county;
- held focus group meetings with various sectors of the agricultural community;
- summarized results of surveys to farmers and municipal officials;
- created maps for the plan;
- completed audits of municipal zoning regulations and comprehensive plans for agriculture friendliness;
- developed a ranking system for priority farmlands in the county; and
- developed initial goals, objectives, and an action plan for implementation of the plan.

In 2020, the goals, objectives, and the action plan will be finalized and a final draft plan will be presented to the public for input. The final steps will include adoption of the final plan by the County Legislature and approval from Ag & Markets. It is anticipated that the plan will be approved over the summer of 2020 with distribution of the plan to municipalities to follow.

### **Agriculture-Friendly Oneida County Initiative**

The Agriculture-Friendly Oneida County Initiative is an initiative of the Oneida County Executive and a component of the implementation of the Oneida County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan. The purpose of this initiative is to provide guidance to local governments on how to lessen the burden on agricultural operations that may be created through their land use regulations and policies. Cornell Cooperative Extension Oneida County (CCE), with the assistance of the Oneida County Department of Planning (OCDP), developed a farm-friendly guidance document for municipalities that includes information on how to conduct a farm-friendly audit, sample wording to use in their land use regulations and comprehensive plans, and sources for further information. The County Executive presented the document in July 2019. Copies of the document were sent to all towns in the county. The document was also posted on the Oneida County website and the CCE website.

### **Oneida County Dairy Farmer Sustainability Action Plan**

The 2018 Oneida County Dairy Farmer Sustainability Action Plan was an initiative of the County Executive to address the issues facing dairy farmers and, to the extent possible, retain the dairy industry in the county. One of the initial action items in the plan was the creation of a steering committee to oversee the implementation of the plan. The steering committee was created in 2019 with members appointed by the County Executive. Dairy farmers, agriculture suppliers, and organizations that work with the dairy industry comprise the steering committee. Staff from OCDP, CCE Oneida County, and Mohawk Valley EDGE also attend meetings of the steering committee. Some of the tasks completed by the steering committee in 2019 included meeting with the various dairy cooperatives that do business within the county and meeting with HP Hood, LLC to discuss ideas of how to retain the dairy industry within the county. The steering committee intends to meet quarterly in 2020 to update the 2018 plan.

### **New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets Dairy Transitions Farmland Protection Initiative**

Funding for this initiative was announced in 2018. As stated in the application, "This grant opportunity is being offered to enable eligible applicants to specifically implement Conservation Easement Projects with owners of viable agricultural lands that are associated with a dairy farm operation at risk of conversion to non-farm uses. Proceeds from the sale of a conservation easement (known as Purchase of Development Rights, or PDR) on viable agricultural land will offer these landowners an opportunity to either reinvest those monies to enable greater diversification of the farm operation or the transfer of ownership to a new owner of the same or different type of farm operation. Moreover, the viable agricultural land permanently protected as the result of each awarded Conservation Easement Project will remain in continuing agricultural use." Eligible applicants include county agriculture and farmland protection boards, county soil and water

conservation districts, municipalities with an agriculture and farmland protection plan, or a non-profit conservation organization.

Since the applicant must be the entity that holds the easement, only a conservation organization would be applicable to Oneida County. The Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust (THTLT) is currently the only land trust within the county and in 2018 THTLT submitted an application for the Jones farm in the Town of Trenton. The application was successful and it was announced in January of 2019 that the Jones farm received \$1.7 million to maintain their dairy operation. This was the first Farmland Protection Implementation Grant for Oneida County.

A second Dairy Transitions grant application was submitted in 2019 by the THTLT for the Paddock dairy farm in the Town of Remsen. In August of 2019, it was announced that \$417,690 was awarded to the Paddock farm, making it the second successful application in Oneida County.

OCDP's role with the grant applications was to provide information on development pressure to THTLT, which is one of the criteria used by Ag & Markets in ranking grant applications. Ag & Markets announced a second round of funding in late 2019. The THTLT intends to submit an application for the Stanko farm in the Town of Deerfield in 2020.

### **New York State Community Development Block Grant Program Housing Rehabilitation Program**

Oneida County was awarded \$650,000 through the New York State Office of Community Renewal to assist with providing a Housing Rehabilitation Program. This project will address the housing needs of low-income homeowners in Oneida County. Assistance will be provided in the form of grants to eligible homeowners to make energy efficiency upgrades, electrical improvements, and other health and safety repairs. Previously, funding and program parameters had limited the resources available to address the specific needs of this under-served segment of the housing market. The HomeOwnershipCenter and Oneida County have collaborated on many

housing rehabilitation projects and will continue this relationship through this program.

## **Transportation Planning**

The end of 2019 garnered the Transportation Group and Herkimer-Oneida Counties Transportation Study (HOCTS) a list of accomplishments, which allowed both programs to reinforce their integral nature throughout the region. Through the administration of specific planning programs, focused projects, utilization of national resources, involvement with local groups and organizations, and providing technical expertise, the Transportation Group and HOCTS refined its impact throughout the community. Program and project highlights include the following:

- Kicked-off the System-Wide Analysis of Transit Based Transportation Connections for Oneida County study. The focus is on improving the efficiency and effectiveness of rural and urban transit service of the two systems;
- Hosted an Active Transportation & Complete Streets Workshop with a national Complete Streets expert, which was provided for free to municipalities;
- Distributed more than 3,000 copies of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Trail Guide: 2019;
- Received the Best Practice Award from the New York Upstate Chapter of the American Planning Association for the Bicycle and Pedestrian Trail Guide: 2019;
- Completed "Going Places", the Long-Range Transportation Plan for 2020-2040, which provides a 20-year vision and plan for addressing transportation needs. Going Places was adopted locally by the Policy Committee and then deemed to be complete by the Federal Highway Administration in December 2019;
- Developed the 5-year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for highway and transit projects capital investments, in coordination with NYSDOT, for the years of 2020-2024;
- Developed an initial database and map for planning the build-out of trails and connections between trails within Oneida County;



## Looking East Over the NYS Rte 5s Safety Project (Oriskany St., Utica)

- Worked with United States Department of Transportation (USDOT), Volpe Center to update the transportation integration plan for Fort Stanwix National Park in Rome;
- Began to incorporate drone photography to look at areas before and after transportation projects have been implemented;
- Assisted with ongoing transportation impact reviews for Oneida and Herkimer County land-use through the General Municipal Law-239 review process;
- Initiated a discussion regarding the need for a feasibility study for the redesign of New York State Thruway Exit 31 Interchange in Utica;
- Obtained training for staff from the New York State Walking College: Creating Complete Streets for Everyone, the stated mission of which is to build internal capacity to sustain the challenging work of policy, systems, and environment change for human-powered transportation;
- Worked with the Creating Healthy Schools and Communities program to enhance walking, biking, and Complete Streets opportunities;
- Spoke at the American Automobile Association for Navigating our Transportation Future - Autonomous Vehicles Summit regarding autonomous vehicles and challenges on rural roadways;
- Participated on a panel at the Transportation Informatics (TransInfo) Symposium sponsored by the University at Buffalo (UB), USDOT, and UB's Connected and Autonomous Vehicle Applications and Systems Program;
- Provided information to communities on how to incorporate bicycle, pedestrian, and non-motorized transportation into their local planning practices;
- Provided oversight of three federal transportation grants; and
- Provided continued support of member municipalities including, but not limited to, providing transportation data, review of transportation elements of local plans, access to programs and projects, notification of funding opportunities, and mapping needs.

# Oneida County has 521 BRIDGES

Oneida County has no shortage of infrastructure. As of 2019 there are roughly 2,300 miles of county-owned roads. This number excludes all local and state roads.

## OVER 20 FEET

### GENERAL MUNICIPAL LAW 239-l, -m, -n Reviews

**198**

10 yr avg.  
201

**34**

10 yr avg.  
42

Section 239 l, m, and n of General Municipal Law (commonly called 239 Review) is a State law that requires local municipalities to send certain projects to County planning for review and comment. The intent of the law is to identify actions that might have inter-municipal and county-wide impacts. Over the last decade (2010-2019) the Department of Planning has reviewed over 2,428 projects (2,013 in Oneida County; 415 in Herkimer County).

## FACTS AND FIGURES



Starting in 1999, the Department of Planning began the process of creating an inventory that locates every manhole that contributes flows into the Oneida County Water Pollution Control treatment plant in Utica. By the end of 2019 over 12,606 manholes have been located and stored into the Geographic Information System (GIS) database.

## HOLE-Y MOLY!

## TAP SURVEY

The Teen Assessment Project (TAP) Survey in Oneida and Herkimer County has received over 35k responses from teens in both counties. 25k came from Oneida County, and 10k from Herkimer County since the first survey was conducted in 1999.

**OVER 35K**

