

# Annual Report 2020

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Broome County  
Department of Planning



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Jason Garnar, County Executive  
Beth Lucas, Director



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# **BROOME COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

## **Staff**

### **PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Beth Lucas, Director  
Lora Zier, Senior Planner  
Stephanie Brewer, Planner  
Christina Cramer, Program Coordinator  
Lori Darling, Senior Account Clerk  
Frank Evangelisti, Director (Retired)

### **GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS**

Douglas English, GIS Administrator  
Joseph Gaynor, GIS Specialist  
Brian Damour, GIS Technician

***[www.gobroomecounty.com/planning](http://www.gobroomecounty.com/planning)***

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# Mission

The Department of Planning and Economic Development provides professional services to many departments in Broome County Government, local municipalities as well as other public and private entities. These services include preparing comprehensive plans, researching land-use planning issues, preparing and administering grants, assisting with economic development, conducting environmental studies and assessments, carrying out reviews of development proposals, preparing tax maps, providing GIS mapping, and coordinating municipal training on a wide variety of subjects.

Planning staff works in close collaboration with the Agency (Broome County Industrial Development Agency), Environmental Management Council, Binghamton Metropolitan Transportation Study, Broome County Flood Task Force, Broome County Land Bank, the Broome-Tioga Stormwater Coalition, the Broome County Agriculture Task Force, Safe Housing Task Force and the Susquehanna Heritage Area.

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# Annual Report

2020 was a unique year for the Planning Department, marking a period of change and adjustment. While facing the challenges of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Department saw a change in leadership with the retirement of the former Director. Staff were challenged with several changes including remote working, shifting priorities and workloads, and funding uncertainties. Despite these many challenges, Planning has had a productive year with projects and programs making significant progress, as well as contributing to COVID response and recovery.

Through creation of the COVID-19 Dashboard, the GIS Division provided a resource to inform the community and officials of trends related to COVID statistics, risk, and impacts. The Planning Department also worked with partners to develop the COVID-19 Recovery Plan, aimed at identifying the realized and anticipated impacts of the pandemic and strategies for aiding in the short-term recovery goals and implemented one of the key recommendations for reopening through Open and Safe Broome County.

Other areas where Planning had significant achievements and progress included leading Broome County's 2020 Census efforts, completion of the Government Plaza Green Infrastructure Project design, initiation of the first round of public art through the Greater Binghamton Fund grant, continuation of planning initiatives in the Innovation Districts, and construction of several waterfront improvements at Grippen and Round Top Parks. This year we also added a new position, the Program Coordinator, with a focus on housing issues and community services.



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# COVID-19 Pandemic

In mid-March, Planning staff began working remotely as a State of Emergency was issued and pandemic response was underway. While there was a brief period of in-office work in the summer, staff shifted back to primarily remote working in the fall as COVID numbers rose, and this has continued into 2021. At this time, Planning was also asked to provide staff to assist with contact tracing efforts associated with COVID positive cases. The Program Coordinator began to work with the Health Department in this capacity, with a variable workload, in addition to Planning work. This continues into 2021 as well.

Due to the nature of our work, Planning has been able to work very productively in a remote environment. Much of our work was able to continue as normal. Through video conferencing, we were able to resume meetings with County, municipal and project partners. Our GIS mapping services have continuously been available, highlighting our online request form, and providing technical assistance for use of the County's online interactive mapper.

While the Department has functioned well during COVID, there have still been challenges. Many of our projects and programs rely on the ability to reach and receive input from the public. This was especially significant during outreach related to the Census and planning initiatives. While virtual options have provided some benefits, a virtual forum does limit the ability to meet all demographics and isn't conducive to creative and interactive public outreach. However, working with our partners and consultants we have had successes in this area that may carry into the future, such as virtual municipal trainings.

Financial uncertainties at the local, state, and federal level did have an impact on staffing and projects, causing some delays. Upon advice of our New York State granting agencies, some grant funded projects were put on hold temporarily until later in the year. Other projects intended to be completed in 2020 were pushed to 2021 while the financial impacts of COVID were being assessed. In addition, the development of the Comprehensive Plan was put on hold as we reassess the approach in light of the significant impact of COVID on our community.

## COVID Response and Recovery Tasks

### COVID-19 Dashboard

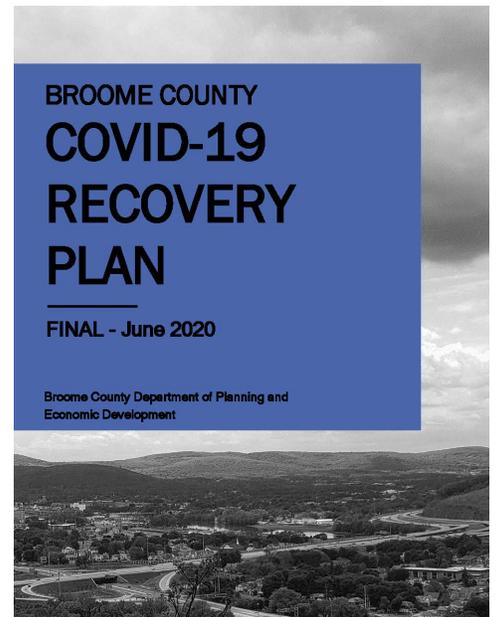
In late March, the GIS Division of the Planning Department created a COVID dashboard through ArcGIS Online. This tool continues to provide updated information each weekday to the public about Broome County active cases, cumulative cases, recoveries, deaths, and hospitalizations. By the end of 2020 these dashboards were viewed over 1.6 million times and averaged over 5,800 views per day.

## COVID-19 Post Disaster Recovery Plan

When COVID-19 led to wide-spread shutdown of local businesses and facilities, the Planning Department assisted in efforts to assess and deal with the community impacts, similar to its role in other disasters. Planning gathered a team of local stakeholders to coordinate development of the COVID-19 Post Disaster Recovery Plan that aimed to identify the significant community impacts and strategies for mitigating the short and long term effects on County residents and businesses.

The Plan primarily focused on issues affecting our short-term recovery in the context of persistent threat and uncertainty. The Plan outlined a focus on protecting the public health and tempering expectations for the length of recovery. The major areas of focus for the Plan included:

- Communication
- Provision of supplies
- Safe operations/reopening
- Healthcare system
- Childcare
- Mental Health
- Vulnerable communities
- Documenting and monitoring impacts
- Municipal aid
- Coordination with partners
- Economic recovery
- Housing insecurity
- Maintaining efforts through recovery and beyond
- Preparation for additional shutdowns



### Open and Safe Broome County

One of the recommendations of the Recovery Plan was to promote businesses that adopt safe reopening protocols, implementing social distancing and other COVID-safe strategies, and have submitted a reopening plan to New York State. The Open and Safe Broome County initiative was an effort to recognize these businesses and all they have been doing to keep our community up and running. All businesses that submitted reopening plans received a letter and certificate acknowledging that it had been received and encouraging them to post information reassuring their patrons and welcoming them back to their facilities.

# 2020 Census

One of the most important priorities this year was assisting with the 2020 Census efforts in the County. Between January and April, materials with the census message were shared with municipalities, Broome County's school districts, the Food Bank of the Southern Tier, Broome County Transit buses, and directly with thousands of residents in our hard-to-count areas. Through use of flyers and direct mailers, over 10,000 residents in Broome County were reached through early outreach efforts.

However, just as data collection got underway, the COVID-19 pandemic led to unprecedented change and impacts for the 2020 Census. The COVID-19 response and ensuring public health/safety became a primary priority, and all census activities needed to adjust accordingly. Shutdowns, restrictions on gatherings, and social distancing guidelines forced the US Census Bureau's timeline to change, local census events to be cancelled, limited access to public libraries, and limited the type and amount of in-person contact that could be provided. As a result, the Broome County's Complete Count Committee adapted their approach using digital communication to promote the 2020 Census.

In August 2020, Broome County received a grant from New York State to assist with 2020 Census promotion efforts. The grant allowed the Planning Department to partner with two non-profit organizations including the Broome County Urban League (BCUL) and the New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC) to help us promote increased awareness, motivate self-response, and directly reach our hard-to-count communities. The 2020 Census Outreach grant provided funds that allowed Broome County and its partners to develop a multi-faceted approach to encourage participation in the 2020 Census.



**DID YOU COMPLETE YOUR CENSUS FORM YET?**



Respond ONLINE:  
[my2020census.gov](https://my2020census.gov)

OR CALL:  
**1-844-330-2020**

**DO YOUR PART. IMPORTANT PROGRAMS & SERVICES RELY ON YOU!**

Communities across New York State and the country experienced difficulties meeting response rates from the prior effort in 2010 due to COVID, making local efforts even more important. Specific outreach efforts in Broome County included:

**Television Advertisements:** Over 440 television commercials on 11 networks were purchased to promote the 2020 Census to residents in the county. Broome County purchased 204 commercial spots on three networks, CBS, ABC, and NBC, with an estimated net reach of 231,788 residents in Broome County. The BCUL created two commercials and purchased 238 commercial spots on influential television networks including Arts & Entertainment (A&E), Black Entertainment Television (BET), American Basic (FX), Spectrum Cable News, Video Hits One (VH1), Galavision (GALA), SYFY, and ESPN.

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**Radio Advertisements:** The BCUL created three radio ads, one in Spanish, and purchased airtime to be aired hourly on our local urban contemporary radio station, WJOB.

**Direct Mailers:** The NYIC created and mailed 16,000 direct mailers to households in hard-to-count/low response areas in Broome County.

**Online/Social Media:** The NYIC created and ran a multi-lingual social media campaign, in English, Chinese, Vietnamese, Arabic, and Spanish languages, that promoted the Census resulting in approximately 400,000 impressions.

**Phone/Text:** The NYIC organized and sent texts and robocalls to approximately 30,000 individuals reinforcing the census messaging.

**In-Person:** Broome County purchased over 12,000 pieces of promotional 2020 Census PPE including 9,400 hand sanitizer bottles and 3,205 facemasks. The PPE was distributed through community service providers and organizations including Broome County Transit, Broome County Department of Social Services, Broome County Department of Motor Vehicles, Broome County Office for Aging, Binghamton City School District, the Broome County Public Library (Binghamton), Your Home Public Library (Johnson City), George F. Johnson Public Library (Endicott), the American Civic Association, the Broome County United Way/Lee Barta Community Center, Community Hunger Outreach Warehouse (CHOW), Downtown Binghamton Farmer’s Market, Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) of Broome County, Mothers & Babies Perinatal Network of Broome County, and Greater Opportunities for Broome, who directly serve many hard-to-count populations groups. The BCUL created 1,000 Census flyers and used staff to canvas the hard-to-count neighborhoods, attended community events to promote the census, and had staff available during normal business hours and extended hours to residents to complete their forms.

## Comprehensive Plan

Prior to COVID, the Planning Department began the process of updating the Broome County Comprehensive Plan (previously adopted in 2013). The intent was to assess progress made since the previous plan was adopted and assess the alignment of previously identified and new actions with the current vision moving forward. As part of this process we formed a steering committee consisting of representatives of higher education, workforce development, the Legislature, the Executive Office, the Office for the Aging, Public Works, the agricultural community, rural villages, and urban centers, solicited public input, surveying over 1,200 residents, and met with a wide array of stakeholder groups including the Broome Leadership Institute, the Environmental Management Council, downtown business owners, the Susquehanna



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Heritage Area, students at Binghamton University, and high school students who are part of Cornell Cooperative Extension’s Citizen U program.

In early 2020, the Planning Department had completed the bulk of the sections providing an overview of various topics within the County including demographics, economic development, open space, cultural resources and others and began working with the steering committee to identify recommended actions to achieve the overall vision defined through the planning process. However, it was at this time that the COVID-19 pandemic led to a full shut-down, halting our efforts. Planning intended that after a brief hiatus, we would resume the comprehensive planning process after reopening. However, as the long-term nature of the pandemic and the widespread community impacts became more apparent, it was clear that we would need to take a step back in our planning process to take a deeper look at how the impacts of COVID have changed the characteristics of Broome County and the vision moving forward.

In late 2020, Planning reconvened the steering committee with the intent of capturing their feedback regarding community impacts and action items related to COVID, and how we should best reflect that in the Comprehensive Plan. Some of the key areas identified included rapid integration of remote work and technology, providing modern municipal services, the importance of outdoor public spaces, importance of resiliency to disasters, enhanced focus on issues of childcare and healthcare, housing impacts, and others. Planning has begun integrating these issues into the previously developed sections of the Plan and is working to add a new chapter addressing resiliency overall as it relates to the variety of stresses we may face as a community.

## Innovation Districts

One of the most successful ideas in the 2013 Comprehensive Plan was to create Innovation Districts (iDistricts) in the downtowns of Binghamton, Endicott, and Johnson City. Through the Upstate Revitalization Initiative, New York State made \$20 million available for the Greater Binghamton Fund to carry out projects in the iDistricts.

## Murals and Mosaics Program

Broome County was awarded \$240,000 from New York State through the Greater Binghamton Fund to install public art in the Binghamton, Johnson City, and Endicott iDistricts. The goal of this program is to create more public art in our downtown areas and further



enhance the cultural identity of these areas. The Planning Department will also create an online promotional tool to promote the new and existing public art as part of tourism efforts through the County and our partners.

In 2020, the Planning Department began organizing partners for Round I of the iDistricts Murals and Mosaics Public Art Program. We partnered with the Broome County Arts Council to release a Call for Artists to be considered for the iDistricts Murals and Mosaics Public Art Program. A panel reviewed the responses and selected 25 artists to participate in the program. During the summer, the Planning Department held meetings with municipal officials from the three iDistricts to discuss the public art program and identify priority mural/mosaic locations. In September, a Call for Walls was opened to collect information from property owners interested in participating in the program. Ten locations were identified for Round I of the program and projects are scheduled for the Summer of 2021.

## iDistricts Art Parks

Broome County was awarded \$1.32 million from New York State through the Greater Binghamton Funds to create three Art Parks in each of the iDistricts. The goal of this project is to enhance public spaces in the iDistricts with innovative and interactive features.

In 2020, plans for the Binghamton and Johnson City iDistrict Art Parks progressed. In the Binghamton iDistrict, the Art Park is part of a larger project to integrate green infrastructure improvements into the existing public plaza (see more details below). Construction for this project is expected to begin in spring 2021. The Johnson City iDistrict Art Park is located at the existing Jenison Park on Willow and Corliss Avenue. In the fall of 2020, the Planning Department released a public survey to identify community priorities for the art park. Taking that information and the goals of the Art Parks into consideration, the Planning Department is working with the Village and the consultant to develop a conceptual plan for the park. The Planning Department is identifying a location for the Endicott iDistrict Art Park with municipal representatives.



## Streetscaping Improvements

Planning also continued to coordinate with the three local municipalities on their funded streetscaping improvements as part of the Greater Binghamton Fund. Broome County Planning had assisted the municipalities in development of the EJ BOA Revitalization Strategy and the Endicott iDistrict Revitalization Strategy. These documents identified improvements that would become the basis for the local applications to improve the condition of these vital downtowns. Broome County also

coordinated with the City of Binghamton for placement of public art through our grant to complement the Deco District improvements, implementing a plan developed through County funding in part. Planning collaborated with these entities throughout the year as project planning moved forward and will continue into the coming year.

## Government Plaza

Broome County received grant funding through several sources for design and construction of green infrastructure at Government Plaza. The Plaza houses the County Office Building, Binghamton City Hall, and the regional New York State Office Building. The site features an extensive two-level public plaza for which Broome County provides operations and maintenance services. Planning identified an opportunity to integrate innovative water management solutions while improving the overall aesthetics and functionality of the property through the addition of green infrastructure. Additional funds received through the Greater Binghamton Fund will also help in funding the non-green infrastructure related components.

The design includes green roof and stormwater planters in the green infrastructure improvements. The design also includes opening the front wall along Hawley Street, creating an outdoor café space with storm water fountain, and building a public stage. In 2020, Planning, in cooperation with Engineering and Facilities, completed the project design with the assistance of Delta Engineering and construction is anticipated to begin in late spring of 2021.



Government Plaza Conceptual Design  
Binghamton

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In addition to the green infrastructure improvements, Planning received funding through the Clean Energy Communities program for installation of a flexible PV solar canopy. The canopy will be part of the design of the stage along Hawley Street.

## Parks and Recreation

The Broome County Parks Plan was adopted by the Broome County Legislature in 2019. The intent was to develop recommendations and actions to be used to improve our parks facilities and pursue grant opportunities through the Consolidated Funding Application (CFA) and other funding sources. Planning worked on implementation in 2020 through projects to improve these vital County assets.

### Dorchester Park

In 2020, Broome County initiated planning for the Pathways to Play project at Dorchester Park in the town of Triangle. This project will make accessibility improvements to the park's playground and waterfront. These improvements include replacing existing playground equipment in one of the park's play areas with a universal design playground, installing an ADA kayak launch at the boat rental area, purchasing a beach wheelchair, and adding paved connective pathways to the new amenities.

During 2020, the Planning Department worked with DPW's Engineering Division and the Parks Department to develop plans for the project. Preliminary designs for the playground feature and the accessible boat dock were developed. While progress on the project was slowed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, anticipated completion date for the Pathways to Play project is Summer 2021.

In a separate project, the Planning Department worked with the Parks Department and the Whitney Point Rotary on a trail extension project in the Whitney Point Recreational area owned by the US Army corps of Engineers. The trail extension project involves creating a 3-mile rustic trail that connects the northern end of the park area to the Upper Lisle Bridge. In 2020, members of the Rotary made significant progress on identifying the trail path for clearing. The trail is accessible to the public, but signage and trail markers are needed to make it more user-friendly.



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## Riverfront Improvement Projects

Over the summer a project to construct several riverfront improvements along the Susquehanna were completed as part of the Susquehanna Riverfront Improvements Project. The Planning Department was awarded funding for several riverfront improvements along the River in western Broome County through the State and Municipal Facilities program with the assistance of NYS Assemblyperson Donna Lupardo. Projects included in this request were an enhanced boat launch and scenic outlook at Grippen Park, a scenic overlook at Roundtop Park, and boat launches and amenities at Riverview, William H. Hill, and Harold Moore Parks.



## Chugnut Trail

The Planning Department continued to partner in the design of the Chugnut Trail extension located in the Village of Endicott and Town of Union. The existing trail is a one-mile paved trail located along the Susquehanna River behind Union-Endicott High School. The planned trail components will extend the Chugnut Trail from its current ending point, at the Vestal-Endicott Bridge, to Nanticoke Creek. This crosses Broome County owned properties along the river at Round Top and Grippen Parks.

The Planning Department was awarded a grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission to construct a portion of the trail connecting Grippen and Roundtop Parks, increasing their value to the community as riverfront assets. The project includes the paved trail along the riverfront and a natural surface hiking trail leading people up the hill to the main part of Roundtop park. The project also integrates additional riverfront amenities funded by a State and Municipal Facilities Grant, described above.

In 2020, Planning worked with the partner municipalities on finalizing the trail design and submittal for permits. We expected permits to be granted in 2021. Planning also worked with the Endicott Rotary who volunteered for trail development tasks to create the hiking trail from the new scenic outlook at

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Round Top down the hill to Grippen Park. When the paved trail is constructed, this will be an important link between the two parks.

## Go All Out Broome

In 2020 there was continued promotion of outdoor recreation opportunities through Go All Out Broome. Go All Out provides readily accessible information for residents and visitors related to outdoor recreation as a tool for tourism, economic development, wellness, alternative transportation, and other related initiatives through Facebook, Instagram, and the website: [www.GoAllOutBroome.com](http://www.GoAllOutBroome.com). While staff limitations made it difficult to create significant new content, Planning continues to use Go All Out resources to promote outdoor events and activities which have proven even more significant in this age of social distancing.



We continued to partner with the Triple Cities Hiking Club on the Broome County Dozen Hiking Challenge, a program to highlight twelve unique hiking spots throughout the County and reward participants with a patch showing that they have completed the challenge. The project is a true partnership with information housed on [goalloutbroome.com](http://goalloutbroome.com) and promoted by Go All Out and all submissions being managed by the TCHC.

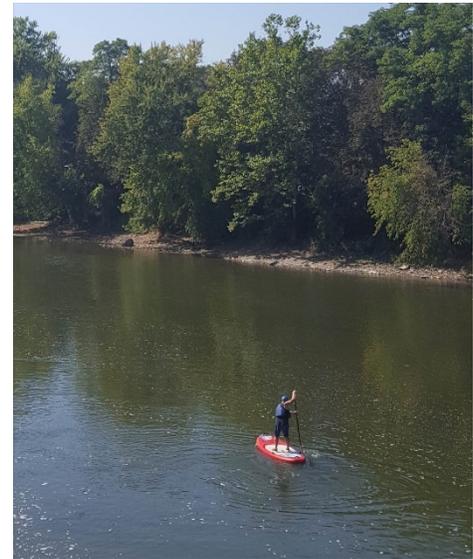
We plan to continue promotional activities through events in the community and social media. Go All Out will be a key part of promoting many of the new parks and waterfront improvements going on at the County including new boat launches, scenic outlooks, playgrounds, and trails. We also plan to add more data to the interactive map on the website.

## Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan

The Planning Department received a grant from the NYS Department of State for developing a County-wide Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP) to update the 2011 County-wide Inter-municipal Waterfront Access Plan and prepare a River Trails Plan.

The project includes updating the current plan, including identification of implementation projects in waterfront areas. We will also create a River Trails Plan that will lay out details associated with wayfinding for recreational river use, evaluation of existing services, solutions for identified hazard locations, and development of a river guide showing the river trails, access points, amenities, and services for use in awareness and promotion.

Planning began development of the LWRP with the assistance of our contractor, Bergmann Associates in 2020. Initial stages of plan development included formation of a steering committee for the plan made up of municipal representatives of the waterfront communities and stakeholders with an interest in waterfront development, recreation, tourism, and other related areas. We also began holding individual meetings with the involved municipalities to get their feedback on waterfront areas of interest and their ideas for potential projects. Moving into 2021, the project team is wrapping up some of the initial inventory and analysis of the conditions along Broome’s waterfronts. Project development and the major work for the River Trails Plan will take place through the spring and summer with Plan completion expected by the end of the year.

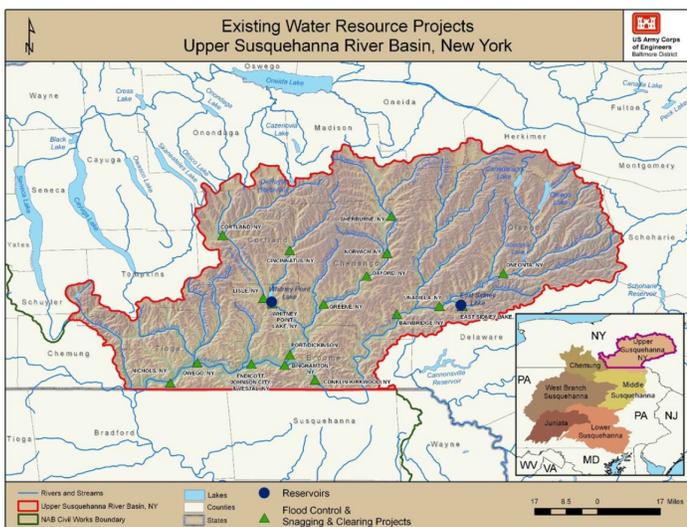


## Flooding and Hazard Mitigation

The US Army Corps of Engineers, in partnership with the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation finalized the *Upper Susquehanna River Basin Comprehensive Flood Damage Reduction Feasibility Study* in late Spring of 2020. The intent was to comprehensively evaluate flood risk management needs and opportunities in the Upper Susquehanna and to assess potential for large scale flood projects improving the capacity of these systems. Study results indicated that no large-scale projects would be feasible, meaning that additional investment by the federal government to enhance the capacity of the existing flood control structures is unlikely at this time. Prior to release of the final study, Planning, with the assistance of Shumaker Engineering, submitted a lengthy response to the draft study outlining several uncertainties regarding the data used in the study and the potential for

more focused mitigation alternatives. These comments were formally supported by our partners at the DEC and our federal representatives.

Through the Broome County Flood Task Force, Planning has continued to update and coordinate the impacted municipalities regarding options for levee accreditation/improvement in light of the various recommendations coming out of these planning processes. A major focus into the future will be working with the local



communities on a plan for the levee systems to best protect residents, minimize flood insurance and economic development costs, and maximize resources for implementation.

## Agriculture

In 2020 the Planning Department continued to work as part of the Ag Task Force to address issues surrounding agriculture and agricultural economic development in Broome County. In 2019, the Planning Department completed an update the County’s Agriculture Economic Development Plan which was adopted by the Legislature and the Task Force works together toward implementing the Plan. The Director also worked with the Ag and Farmland Protection Board on the annual additions to the County’s agricultural districts. In 2020 there were a total of 7 additions totaling approximately 145 acres.

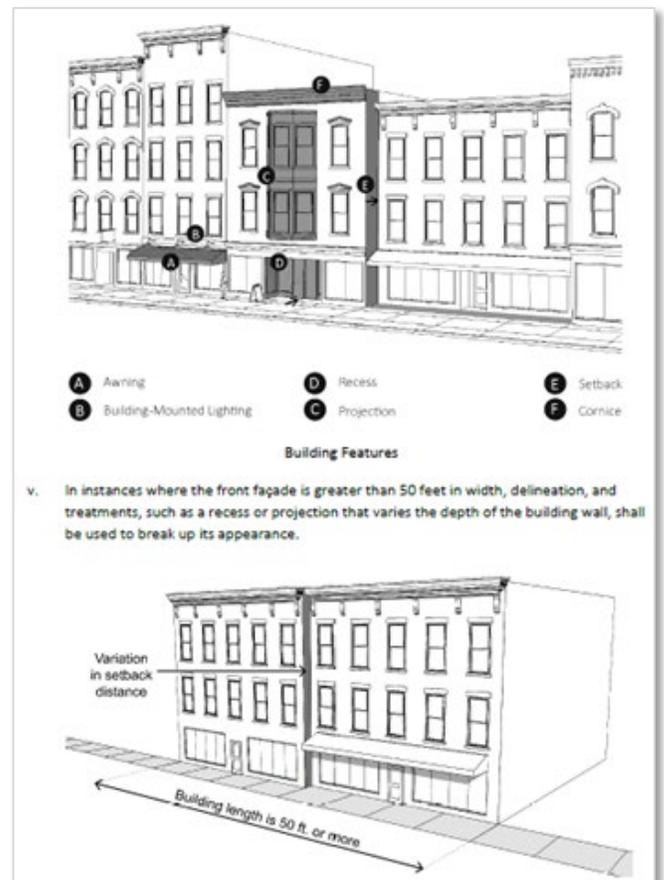
One of the recommendations of the Agriculture Economic Development Plan was the consolidation of the County’s three districts into one. This would streamline the administration of the agricultural district program. At the end of 2020 Planning and Cornell Cooperative Extension began planning for the process of consolidation and will move this forward in 2021.

## Brownfields

### EJ Industrial Spine Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA)

#### *Design Standards*

In 2020, the Planning Department worked with the Village of Johnson City to develop additional plans and reports for the EJ BOA to outline a cohesive strategy for urban design, regulatory changes, and guiding investment within the Village of Johnson City. In 2020, the Village’s Design Guidelines were developed into Design Standards that will make it easier for the Village to review and enforce. The design standards are intended to protect the existing historic character while developing high-quality building and site designs that improve the attractiveness of the i-District as well as the health, safety, and economic prosperity of the community. The Village expects to adopt the Design Standards as part of their code in 2021.



## JC Rail Trail Feasibility Study

A portion of the E-J BOA funds were used to develop the Johnson City Rail Trail Feasibility Study. The purpose of this study was to assess the conversion of a one-mile segment of an inactive railroad, in downtown Johnson City between Main Street and Route 201, into a connective multi-use path, with the goal of creating a safe and welcoming environment inspired by the railroad, local history and recent “iDistrict” designation. The feasibility study also includes conceptual designs for amenities and public gathering spaces along the trail.



The study will serve as a guide for future implementation of the trail. Once constructed, this trail will become an invaluable community asset and serve as an important regional link for village residents, UHS employees, and Binghamton University staff/students.

## Environmental Assessments

### Former Travelers Inn

The Travelers Inn at 771 Upper Court Street in Kirkwood was devastated by the flood of 2011. The business never recovered from the disaster and ultimately the County foreclosed on the property for unpaid taxes. The Planning Department contracted with Delta Engineering to prepare a Phase I environmental assessment and asbestos pre-demolition survey in advance of demolishing the flood-ravaged buildings. The building has now been demolished and the site is largely cleared. The property is now under private ownership.



### Former IBM Country Club

At the height of its local employment, IBM provided many services and amenities for its employees. The most visible of these amenities is the former country club on 4301 Watson Boulevard in the Town of Union. When IBM reduced its local presence, it sold off this landmark property. In an effort to see the site developed, Broome County worked with the Agency to have an environmental assessment prepared for the property, completed in 2020. With this information in hand, the Agency issued an RFP for

development proposals at the property. Submissions are currently under review heading into 2021.

### ***The Agency's Brownfields Grant Committee***

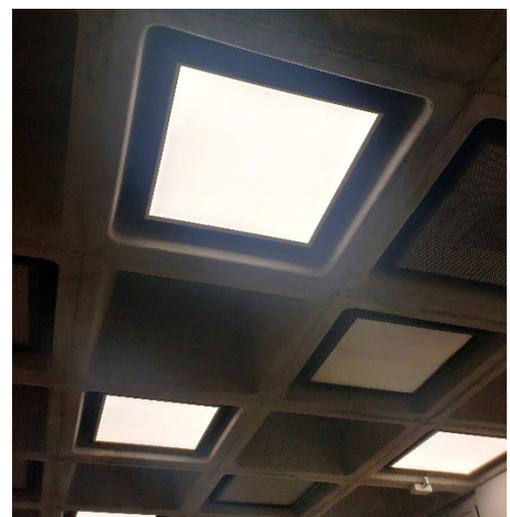
In 2020 the Agency (Broome County Industrial Development Agency) was awarded a grant for several brownfields assessments including several Phase I and Phase II Environmental Assessments and some redevelopment planning on select sites. Planning was invited to sit on a committee along with municipal economic development representatives to help guide this process and select target properties. We will continue to collaborate with the Agency and other stakeholders into 2021.

## **Climate Smart Communities**

In 2019 Broome County was awarded bronze certification as a Climate Smart Community by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation as well as designation as a Clean Energy Community by NYSERDA. The status achieved under these programs gives Broome recognition as a leader in sustainability and an extra advantage when applying for state grant funds.

As a Clean Energy Community, Broome County received a grant to retrofit interior lighting at the County Office Building with more efficient LED light fixtures, managed by Planning. It is anticipated that this changeout will result in significant energy and cost savings at that facility. With the success of this project, Buildings and Grounds is interested in working together to identify funding for similar projects at additional facilities. This grant also provided funding for installation of a flexible PV solar canopy to cover the stage as part of the Government Plaza Green Infrastructure Project. Construction is currently planned for Spring/Summer of 2021.

Certification as a Climate Smart Community helped Public Works obtain two grants under the CSC grant program for installation of remote monitoring at the counties flood control reservoirs as well as drainage improvements in Deposit. These projects were delayed as the State assessed their finances during COVID, but contracts began to move forward in later 2020. Planning continues to work with Public Works and other departments on furthering progress under the framework of this program.



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# Housing and Community Services

This year Planning added a new position, the Program Coordinator, to support County efforts related to housing and community services. The role of the Program Coordinator is to utilize available funding and coordinate community stakeholders to improve living conditions for, expand economic development opportunities for, and provide new or improved public facilities in areas of low and moderate income persons, as well as developing safe housing throughout the county. This year, that included grant administration for previous subrecipients, continued development and management of the Shared Services Initiative, and reforming subgroups of the Broome County Safe Housing Task Force.

The Safe Housing Task Force is collaborative coalition that brings together department representatives, community leaders, and local housing experts to implement projects and programs that promote stable, decent, and affordable housing in Broome County. This year, the Task Force played an important role in dealing with the anticipated and realized impacts of COVID on housing and displacement, coordinating programs to ensure effective application of funding, and preventing eviction and displacement throughout Broome County during a public health crisis.



Through the efforts of the Program Coordinator, Broome County's project team was awarded funding as part of New York State Attorney General's Anti-Displacement Learning Network for preventing displacement and encouraging safe, permanent housing. Funds awarded through this grant are especially significant in providing the assistance needed in the wake of COVID. The first round of funding will add staff to Legal Services of Central New York and Legal Aid Society of Mid-New York to support housing specific caseloads as courts slowly reopen. Coordinated Care Services, Inc will also hire new local staff and launch a program to fill the gap of relocation assistance. In the coming year, the project team, under the lead of the Program Coordinator, will develop additional proposals for a second round of Anti-Displacement Learning Network funds.

The Program Coordinator also began transitioning into the role of Runaway and Homeless Youth Coordinator. In the coming year, the role will include coordination between local RHY programs and New York State, including Countywide annual reports, assisting in development of runaway services, and involvement in the Youth Bureau.

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# Occupancy Tax

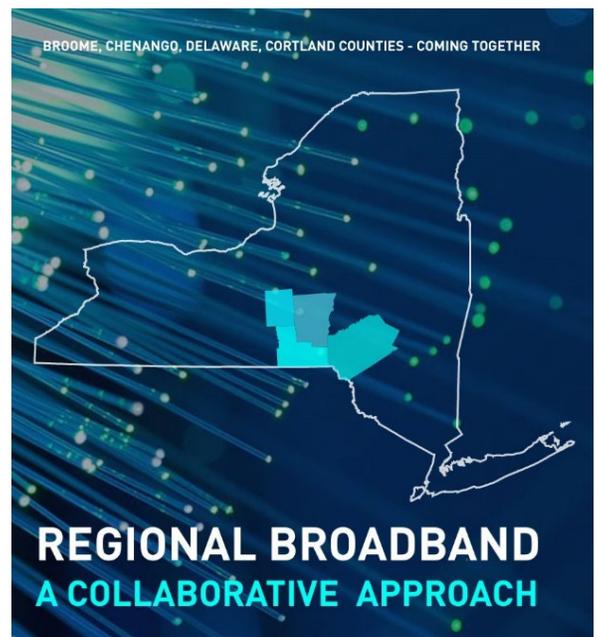
In 2020, the Director continued administration of the Hotel Motel Occupancy Tax Fund. The total Hotel Motel Occupancy tax, a tax on stays in the County’s hotels and motels, is 5%. Of this, 3% of funds go to the contract agencies for economic development and tourism. The remaining 2% is allotted for three purposes, economic development and marketing, brownfields, and the Small Community Fund. Expenditure of these funds is determined by the Hotel Motel Committee consisting of representatives from the County Executive, Legislature, Budget, Finance, and Planning. Planning provides administrative assistance to this committee through management of applications to the fund, coordination of the group, and management of the finances with the assistance of the Budget Director.

The status of the fund is directly related to the success of our local hotels and motels, so when the COVID pandemic hit in early 2020, this was a big hit on the fund, with little coming in. As a result, the County was forced to put a halt on submittal of applications for economic development and tourism, and brownfields funds, and unfortunately no additional awards could be made through the end of 2020. The Small Communities Fund program was also put on hold for the 2020 round. Moving into 2021 the County will continue to assess the status of the fund and the potential for moving forward with programming.

## Regional Collaboratives

### Broadband

In the wake of the COVID pandemic, with remote work and learning becoming a necessity for everyone, accessible internet access became a priority from the standpoints of economic development, resiliency, and equity on a nationwide scale. Locally, Broome County partnered with neighboring counties (Chenango, Delaware, and Cortland) to work together through the Regional Broadband Collaborative. The group has worked together on assessing the local broadband needs, identifying the barriers to accurate service data and funding, and monitoring state and federal broadband policies that may impact our ability to make progress in broadband expansion.



With the assistance of Southern Tier 8 Regional Planning, the group worked together on outreach to local school districts and municipal representatives to collect information about the gaps in broadband availability, establish priorities for broadband expansion efforts and identify funding opportunities to meet those goals. This collaboration continues into 2021.

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## Opportunity Zones

Through another collaborative effort lead by Southern Tier 8, in 2020 Broome County has participated in the development of a regional Opportunity Zone portal. The goal of the Opportunity Zone (OZ) program is to attract private investment and create jobs in distressed community. In Broome County there are OZs located within the urban areas of Binghamton, Johnson City and Endicott. In general, these areas overlap or are adjacent to the designated Innovation Districts, providing an opportunity to build on the goals of each. Through the OZ program investors can benefit from OZ investments through deployment of capital gains to an Opportunity Fund and receive favorable tax incentives for doing so. Opportunity Funds can also provide access to capital with potentially favorable terms for the right investment opportunity.

The goal of the effort being led by ST8 is to create an online tool that communities can use to highlight the region match potential projects within the Opportunity Zones with investors. Through the latter half of 2020 Broome County worked with our other local economic development professionals to collect information to be integrated into this regional portal. As we move into 2021, this information will be integrated into the web-based tool, along with a strategic promotional strategy.

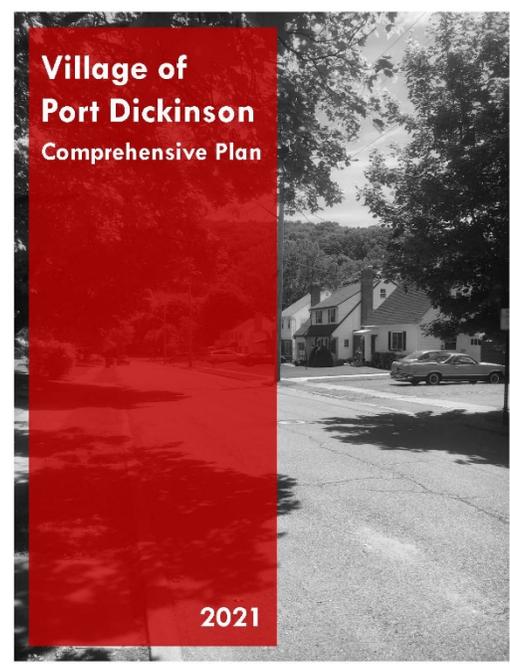
## Local Land Use

### Comprehensive Planning

The Broome County Planning Department offers support and technical assistance to local municipalities to write their comprehensive plans. By preparing a comprehensive plan, a community lays out its shared vision and builds consensus for public investment and regulatory policies. The plan can be used to protect resources, give validity to local land use decisions, guide infrastructure investments, support grant writing, and foster economic development.

#### Village of Port Dickinson Comprehensive Plan

Working closely with the Comprehensive Plan Committee, the Broome County Planning Department made substantial progress on the Village of Port Dickinson Comprehensive Plan. Using a variety of data sources, this plan examines the existing conditions for a range of physical, social, and economic matters and makes recommendations to achieve the Village's goals for the future. The Plan's chapters include: Public Input, People,



Housing, Workforce, Environment, Transportation, Public Services and Facilities, Land Use, Local Laws, COVID-19 Impacts, and Recommendations. In November 2020, a draft of the comprehensive plan was made available on the Village’s website for public review.

On December 9, 2020 a virtual public meeting was held to review highlights of the comprehensive plan and obtain input from residents on the proposed recommendations. Specific recommendations relate to the following topics: Historic Resources, Environmental Protection, Hazard Mitigation, Transportation, Housing and Neighborhood Character, Quality of Life, Government, Local Laws, and Implementation and Maintenance of the Plan. Approximately 20 residents attended the virtual public meeting, and their input was incorporated into the final draft of the plan. The Village of Port Dickinson Comprehensive Plan is expected to be adopted by the Village in February 2021.

## Municipal Training

New York State requires all zoning and planning board members to receive 4 hours of training each year. In 2020 we continued our successful partnership with lawyers from Coughlin and Gerhart, LLP to provide municipal training. Due to Covid-19, we reimagined the municipal training and went to a virtual format.

Through Zoom and YouTube live video we provided four one-hour municipal trainings in the evenings over the course of several weeks in the fall with very good attendance. After the trainings we made the video recordings and PowerPoint presentations available for those board members who could not attend. We provided certificates for the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals members who attended the trainings or who studied the materials on their own.

### MUNICIPAL TRAINING REIMAGINED 2020



**BROOME COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT**





#### TRAINING DETAILS

**When:** October-December 2020

**Where:** no training will be held via Zoom. You only need a computer with speakers or a mobile device.

**Who:** Legislative Boards, Planning Boards, Zoning Boards of Appeals, Planning and Zoning Staff, Municipal Engineers, Code Enforcement Officers, Municipal Attorneys

**Credit:** We recommend PG and ZBA members receive 1 hour of credit for each course attended. Certificates will be sent after the training.

**Questions:** Contact Lori Jeter at 607.778.2370 or [Lori.Jeter@BroomeCounty.US](mailto:Lori.Jeter@BroomeCounty.US)

#### COURSES

**COVID-19 Impacts On Planning And Zoning**  
October 1, 2020  
5:00 PM – 6:00 PM  
Keegen Coughlin, Esq., C&G  
A new and unique challenge for our local government is how to best manage the impact of COVID-19 on our communities. This presentation will focus on the impact of COVID-19 on our communities and provide solutions on decisions and more.

**Article X: Renewable Energy Siting**  
October 22, 2020  
5:00 PM – 6:00 PM  
Bob Heary, Esq., C&G  
Article X of the SEQRS (Article X) has been amended and requires the siting and construction of renewable energy facilities. This presentation will provide an overview of the new legislation and requirements with a focus on energy siting and other municipalities.

**LUNCH AND LEARN: SEQR Basics**  
November 6, 2020  
12:00 PM – 1:00 PM  
Beth Lucas, Acting Director  
Attendees will receive a brief overview of the SEQRS with a focus on practical application. Course will provide an overview of SEQRS and how to ensure compliance on informed environmental review.

**Case Law Update: What's the Latest?**  
December 3, 2020  
5:00 PM – 6:00 PM  
Nathan D. Venhuy, Esq., C&G  
A review of recent zoning and planning case law will be presented. Topics will include the impact of the SEQRS, the impact of the SEQRS on the SEQRS, and the impact of the SEQRS on the SEQRS.

The trainings covered these four timely topics: *Covid-19 Impacts on Planning and Zoning, Article X: Renewable Energy Siting, SEQR Basics, and Case Law Update*. This new format will enrich our library of municipal training materials available on our website. We also kept the municipal boards informed of other trainings provided by other agencies such as the New York State Department of State spring and winter webinars.

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## **Land Use Reviews (239)**

The Department has a legal obligation to conduct reviews and render advisory opinions on land-use proposals covered under NYS General Municipal Law 239 (l) and (m). The Department reviewed 186 cases and provided opinions on 184 case in 2020.

## **Broome County Construction Data Reports**

The Department prepared the 2019 Construction Data Report in 2020. This report, available on Planning's website, provides an indicator of countywide growth and development patterns and trends, residential and nonresidential building data from municipalities, and tables and charts documenting annual building permit activity within the municipalities. The construction data is online here: [gobroomecounty.com/planning/pubs](http://gobroomecounty.com/planning/pubs)

## **State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA)**

Planning continued to complete SEQRA reviews and provide technical assistance to Broome County departments for the compliance with the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) as it pertains to County projects.

## **Public Engagement**

The Broome County Planning Department understands the importance of public engagement, and values the opinions of our residents, businesses, and other organizations. In 2020, the Planning Department facilitated a virtual public meeting for the Village of Port Dickinson Comprehensive Plan and a public hearing to the Broome County COVID-19 Recovery Plan. Over the course of the past year, the Planning Department's social media page, made 84 posts that were viewed 26,989 times and engaged 2,140 people. We will continue to use social media and other public outreach tools to engage our community.

## **Stormwater Management**

Broome County is a member of the Broome-Tioga Stormwater Coalition (BTSC), a group of municipalities that collaborate to address local storm water issues and meet federal and state Storm water mandates. Planning staff works with other BTSC members on implementation and compliance by providing public education, opportunities for public participation, and training and outreach services.

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Beth Lucas served as the Chair of the group for 2020 and a representative for Broome County along with Engineering. Planning specifically is responsible for documenting activities related to public education and public participation activities conducted throughout the year for the Annual Report required by New York State. The annual report is a compilation of the activities of all regulated municipalities under the state regulations, as well as Coalition wide activities for submittal to the NYSDEC.

Public education and participation activities typically include attendance at local events, such as the annual Earth Fest, and coordination of the annual Riverbank Cleanup. However, these efforts were stalled in 2020 due to the impact of COVID-19 restrictions. The BTSC did continue implementation of the public education campaign, “Water from Rain”, [www.waterfromrain.org](http://www.waterfromrain.org).



## Environmental Management Council



The Broome County Environmental Management Council (EMC) serves as a citizen advisory board to county government on environmental matters. The EMC conducts environmental research and planning, reviews environmental plans, reports, and impact statements, and helps raise awareness through public participation and education programs. Planning provided technical, bookkeeping, and other support services. The EMC typically meets bimonthly. Planning generally provides administrative report to the EMC through meeting organization, membership administration, and other tasks. However, due to limited staff resources in 2020 and the impacts of COVID, this became even more limited. After a short hiatus after COVID, members took on some of the administrative tasks for meeting later in the year. Some of the regular public events that the EMC participates in also were impacted by COVID, such as the cancellation of the annual Earth Fest, which would have commemorated the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Earth Day. However, the EMC did participate in a virtual event that was held, highlighting their activities.

While COVID did change the other major EMC events, the Riverbank Cleanup and the Environmental Photography Show, these events did go forward in 2020. Due to COVID concerns and limited staff resources, Planning was unable to organize the Riverbank Cleanup on behalf of the EMC in 2020. However, staff provided guidance for groups wishing to set up their own cleanup event including recommended locations and coordination with the municipal trash haulers. The EMC members

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organized a cleanup at Ostiningo Park as part of the scaled back event, commemorating 30 years of the event, a major milestone. The event helps promote the preservation of water quality and helps the County to meet our requirements under state and federal stormwater regulations.

The Joyce KL Smith Environmental Photography Competition began solicitation of entries in late December to be submitted by mid-March, with winning photos to be highlighted at a show in March. The shutdown due to the COVID pandemic occurred around the contest deadline. With the situation surrounding COVID so uncertain at that time, the EMC decided to proceed with selection of winners and organization of the show in the event that it could proceed. However, as May approached, the original show location, the Artisan Gallery at the Broome County Arts Council, was still closed, so the show had to be postponed.

In October, the EMC was able to partner with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Broome County to host the show at their Taste NY building. The site includes the Taste NY Store featuring local goods and is adjacent to the Regional Farmers Market and as a food provider, the facilities remained open during COVID, making it a great location to feature the show. At this new location, the show has been able to remain for several months into 2021, with an expected end in March.

## Susquehanna Heritage Area

The Broome County Planning Department in partnership with the Tioga County Economic Development and Planning Department, provides administrative and technical support for the Susquehanna Heritage Area. The Planning Department implements the goals (preservation, education, recreation, revitalization,



marketing, and partnerships) and recommendations of the *2010 Susquehanna Heritage Area Management Plan*. The current plan builds upon previous plans that have been developed since the Susquehanna Heritage Area was recognized by the New York State legislature in 1982.

The goals of the plan are to identify, promote, and develop the historic, cultural, recreational, and natural resources of an expanded Susquehanna Heritage Area, encompassing Broome County and Tioga County. The plan guides the implementation of programs and projects to foster economic revitalization and enhance quality of life throughout the region.

### Grant Funding

The two counties and all 39 municipalities and non-profit agencies are eligible to apply for State Heritage Area funding. The Planning Department coordinates the Commission review of the projects

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applying for Heritage Area, Historic Preservation, and Parks Environmental Protection Fund grants; reaches out to the municipalities and nonprofit agencies informing them of the grants; facilitates the meetings with the Commission, Advisory Board, and applicants; gives the applicants technical assistance in meetings and emails; reviews the projects for consistency with the *Susquehanna Heritage Area Management Plan*; and prepares the Commission resolutions of endorsement and support for the applications. Due to Covid-19 the State postponed the 2020 CFA grant funding round. However, the Planning Department provided technical assistance to the one local town that requested assistance in anticipation of applying in 2021.

## **Education, Marketing and Promotion**

The Planning Department provides direction and coordination for the local participation in the *New York State Path Through History Weekends* – a bi-annual statewide event to promote the historical and cultural resources of New York State. Planning staff partner with Visit Binghamton to provide local meetings, technical assistance, and direction for the local programming and reach out to Broome County municipalities and historical and cultural groups to garner their interest and participation. Planning and GIS staff design the interactive map, handout, poster, and event descriptions designed to promote these sites and events and to raise awareness of the historical and cultural resources of Broome County and the Susquehanna Heritage Area. Broome County Planning uses the Go All Out Broome website to promote these two Path Through History Weekends. Due to Covid-19, the local events for the New York State Path Through History Weekends were put on hold in 2020.

For more than 25 years Broome County has provided the jeweled buttons for the Ride the Carousel Circuit with the Planning Department coordinating this effort and each year partners with Visit Binghamton to promote this program. Due to Covid-19, the Ride the Carousel Circuit was also put on hold. We look forward to working with our partners on this and other programs in the future.

In 2020 the Planning Department wrote a letter of support for the nomination of the Chenango Canal Prism, Towpath and Lock 106 on CR 79 and CR 32 (Stillwater Road) to the State and National Registers of Historic Places. The State informed us that this historic resource was listed on the two registers in December 2020.

## **Municipal and Non-Profit Representation**

The Susquehanna Heritage Area Commission and Advisory Board is comprised of representatives of the City of Binghamton, Village of Endicott, Village of Johnson City, Town of Colesville, Broome County, Tioga County, Visit Binghamton, Goodwill Theatre, Inc., Preservation Association of the Southern Tier (PAST), Broome County Arts Council, Tioga County Historical Society, and the local historian and landscape architect profession. Lora Zier serves as the Broome County Program Administrator, Commission Secretary, and Commission Representative for the Broome County Executive.

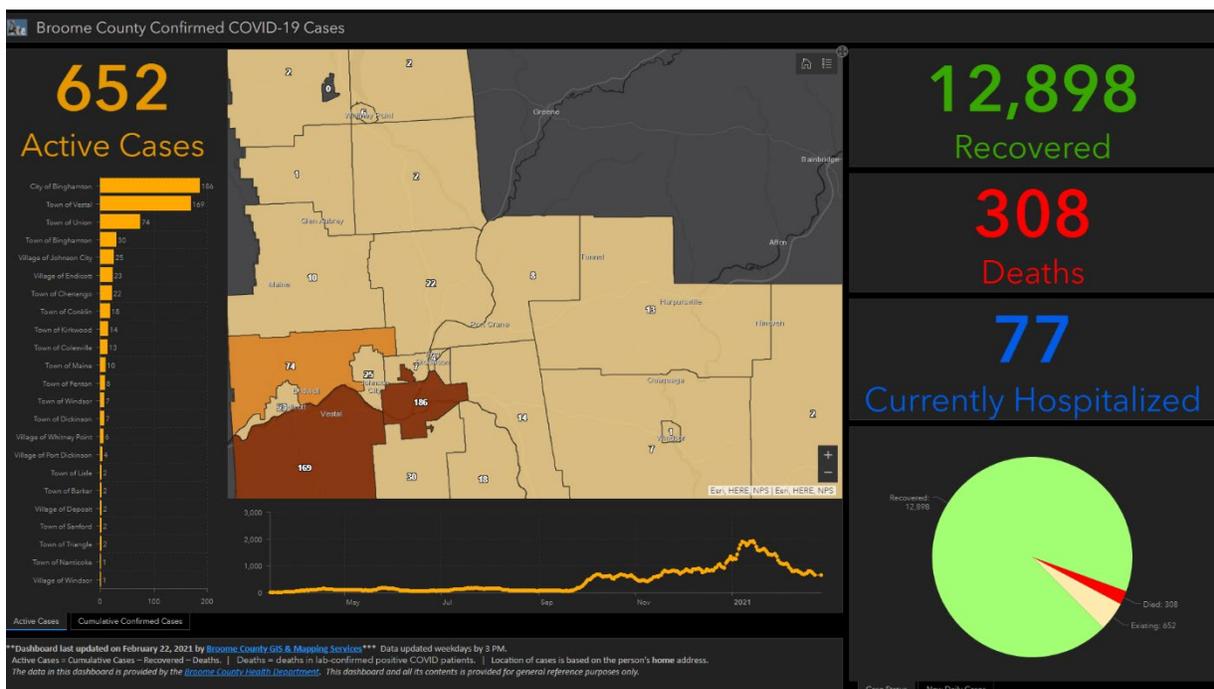
## Commission and Advisory Board Meetings and Membership

In 2020, the Planning Department partnered with the Broome County Arts Council to hold the Susquehanna Heritage Area January meeting, the first meeting of the year, in the new Broome County Arts Council conference space on Court Street. The meeting included discussion of the new grant opportunities and projects going forward in the new year and a tour of the Broome County Arts Council gift shop and office space. Due to Covid-19 subsequent meetings were postponed for the year.

# Geographic Information Systems (GIS)

## GIS Portal Website and Mapping Applications

The GIS Portal website and mapping applications continue to be highly-demanded and a growing online county resource. This trend was likely accelerated in 2020 due to the COVID pandemic. In 2020 the GIS Portal website received over 342,500 visits by nearly 112,000 unique users. This represents a 16.5% increase in visits and a 18.5% increase in unique users over 2019. The most viewed resource on the site was the *Parcel Mapper* with over 197,000 views (+8.5%). Parcel detail sheets were another popular resource with over 102,500 views (+2.7%). The *Election Mapper* also saw a dramatic increase in views over 2019 at nearly 4,500 (+86.4%), likely due to 2020 being a Presidential Election year. PDF tax maps were viewed over 8,600 times (+5).



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In late March, a COVID dashboard and mobile dashboard were developed on ArcGIS Online. These dashboards were created to provide updated information each weekday to the public about Broome County active cases, cumulative cases, recoveries, deaths, and hospitalizations. By the end of 2020 these dashboards were viewed over 1.6 million times and averaged over 5,800 views per day.

Other online GIS notes: the 239 reviews layer and dashboard were updated to include municipal-wide and district-wide reviews; sample ballot links were added to the *Election Mapper* for the 2020 general election; an online map was created to show the predicted crest heights of the rivers during December flooding.

## County Departments

The GIS Division supports nearly all county departments in some capacity with mapping, data, and analysis. Some highlights from individual departments include:

- *Emergency Services*: continued to assign all 911 addresses within the county; continued to support 911 dispatch mapping; updated online damage assessment forms for data collection and mapping using Survey123 for December flooding; created an online map to record snow removal requests by priority after a historic snowfall event in December.
- *Sheriff's Office*: continued to provide weekly, monthly, and year-to-date maps and data for long term, strategic/administration planning; continued to provide access to online web maps using ArcGIS Online.
- *Security*: provided school district and municipal court district maps and GIS data for school bus camera project.
- *Real Property*: continued to support tax mapping functions; continued to provide PDF tax maps and access to RPS data online through Image Mate Online from the GIS Portal website.
- *Planning & Economic Development*: continued to update 239 review information in the parcel data and the 239 review layer in the *Parcel Mapper*; provided maps for the Village of Port Dickinson comprehensive plan; provided various maps and/or data for different projects and grants.
- *Health*: developed and updated the COVID dashboard; geocoded and provide other related COVID maps and data.
- *Elections/Legislature*: fulfilled various map and data requests for Elections and the Legislature; produced maps of annual additions to agricultural districts for the Legislature.

## City of Binghamton

In 2020 over 380 GIS projects and 26 map prints were provided to the City of Binghamton. Some highlights include:

- *Police*: incidents and cases dashboard updated daily; continued collaborating with SUNY Cortland to predict aggravated assaults using Risk Terrain Modeling (RTM); continued to provide technical support to the City’s Environmental Policing Task Force; continued to provide weekly, monthly, and year-to-date map, charts, and graphs for long term, strategic/administration planning; provided support for the City Crime Intelligence Center; utilized ArcGIS Online to create web maps for police use; participated in various meetings.
- *Fire*: provided fire quadrant maps and implemented boundary changes to City fire quadrants based on revisions of the maps.
- *Planning*: provided mapping for various projects and grants; continued to provide updated data and server map services for the City’s Building Blocks application.
- *Mayor’s Office*: provided maps showing fireworks complaints in the summer; updated polling place and election district maps.

## Boards and Memberships

Planning staff served on the following boards and committees in 2020:

- Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board
- Agricultural Task Force
- Aging Futures Partnership
- BMTS Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory Committee
- BMTS Planning Committee
- Broome County Chronic Disease Leadership Team
- Broome County Community Health Assessment Steering Committee
- Broome County Environmental Management Council
- Broome County Flood Task Force
- Broome Tioga Stormwater Coalition
- Census Complete Count Committee
- Communities Organizations Active in Disasters (COAD)
- Department of Public Art
- Greater Binghamton Fund Work Group
- Greenway Steering Committee
- Headwaters River Trail
- Local Emergency Planning Committee
- NYS DEC Region 7 Open Space Committee
- Southern Tier 8 Regional Planning Development Board
- Susquehanna Heritage Area Commission and Advisory Board
- New York State Path Through History Local Committee