

TC CPI | Tompkins County Climate Protection Initiative

2024 TCCPI MEMBER ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Alternatives Federal Credit Union

Alternatives Federal Credit Union (Alternatives) is a regional cooperative Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI), serving seventeen counties in New York's Finger Lakes, Central, and Southern Tier regions. Since 1979, Alternatives has grown its impact by fulfilling a mission to build and protect wealth for people with diverse identities who have been historically marginalized by the financial industry, especially those with low wealth or identifying as Black, indigenous, or people of color.



- As a CDFI, we have always been guided by community needs, and we expect to see those needs continuing to change with a changing climate. We are dedicated to working with our community and partners to explore solutions and design financial products and services that will best support resiliency and stability for low to moderate income households and our small business members.
- Access to financing starts with account access. We aim to make the account opening process accessible for all, with options to [open accounts online](#), as well as [easy appointment scheduling for in-person or virtual account consultations](#).
- Members and potential members can also easily:
 - Schedule appointments and consultations with our [account services staff](#) – for information on opening business, personal, or youth accounts, or simply seeking information (Spanish speaking appointments available).
 - Schedule appointments with our [business services team](#) – from technical assistance to lending consultations.
- To save on energy and transportation costs, we encourage our members to use our Digital Services, including Online Banking, Bill Pay, Mobile Banking and Remote Deposits. These and other services are available to members and member businesses and offer convenience, flexibility, and ease for completing their necessary and day-to-day transactions -- from anywhere.
- In 2024 we continued to deliver financing supporting energy efficiency upgrades for our members, including for solar panels, heat pumps, weatherization services, and electric vehicles.
- Our rooftop solar panels continued to provide a substantial part of our electricity during the year and we also enjoyed use of solar powered lights in our parking lot.
- Our facilities staff and the staff "Green Team" works on improving energy efficiency and reducing waste, including managing composting in the staff lunchroom, maintaining bottle filling stations to reduce single use plastic, and encouraging mindfulness regarding use of space heaters and extra lighting.
- Many Alternatives staff work on a hybrid home/office work schedule, reducing the number of us commuting to work alone in gas fueled cars. Hybrid and remote work schedules for some of our staff have also reduced the overall energy consumption in the building due to fewer lights, small heaters, fans, computers, and other electronics running constantly throughout the day.

Central NY Rotary Environmental Sustainability

CNY Rotary was formed on July 1 through the merger of three rotary districts. The new district has over 2800 members serving 111 communities. Rotary urges collaboration with community partners to make a bigger impact. Protecting the environment is one of the seven focus areas of Rotary.

The Environmental Sustainability Rotary Action Group, ESRAG, has divided the world into 13 regions.



Our region is Eastern North America from Canada to the Caribbean. CNY Rotary is very active in ESRAG. Many organizations and projects in our district have made presentations to the ESRAG community including Finger Lakes Re-Use, New Roots Charter School,

Health for Haiti, Biochar development, and the Susquehanna Watershed project. The ESRAG link is <https://esrag.org/>

ESRAG facilitates collaboration. The Cape Cod and Southern Tier regions have been collaborating for over three years through ESRAG and Tier Energy Network. Both regions have significant projects and programs. One collaboration effort is Cape Cod's "Connected Communities" project to provide net zero solutions for carbon emissions and water discharge. This project has been recognized and supported by the State of Massachusetts and Federal agencies. Now this project has been featured in a proposal to the 2025 Earth Shot Competition. The goal of the proposal is to scale "net Zero" solutions in the greater Northeast and to developing countries. CNY Rotary is one of the partners in this development.

ESRAG has identified 6 strategies. There are over 100 project areas under these strategies. No one club or district can manage the entire strategy. Collaboration within and beyond Rotary is essential.

CNY Rotary is home to many amazing natural areas and watersheds, including the Susquehanna (5th oldest river in the World), Finger Lakes, Great Lakes, Catskills, and many more. The Great Lakes provide 21% of the world's fresh water supply. Each of these watersheds face environmental challenges. We are facing a growing threat from invasive species. One example is the spotted lanternfly that is getting dangerously close to our vineyards and apple farms.

Rotary members are getting involved in many new and established programs. For example, Binghamton 2 Degrees at Binghamton University focuses on the impact of climate change to our community from the crops we grow to increased river flooding. What steps can we take today to manage and mitigate future risks.

CNY Rotary actively seeks collaboration opportunities and to support community education. A few of our higher priority projects include:

1. Further a holistic strategy on the Susquehanna Watershed that ultimately includes the entire length of the river and the Chesapeake Bay. A holistic strategy involves protecting our natural assets, bio-diversity, the climate challenge, community well-being, and the economy. Expand the watershed strategy to other high profile water bodies, including the Delaware River, Finger Lakes and the Great Lakes.
2. Continue to build support for "Climate Restoration" that focuses on natural solutions to eliminate current and historic harmful emissions.
3. Actively support the Earthshot proposal to scale "net Zero" solutions in the Northeast and in developing countries. Develop a global grant for the next phase of development in a community in Rural Haiti. This work can be scaled to other locations in Haiti and beyond.
4. Scale solutions developed in the CNY district, including Finger Lakes ReUse, Ithaca 20/30 district, micro-forests, conservation areas, clean-up projects, and many more.
5. Implement programs developed by ESRAG, including every club climate friendly, Habitat Solar, Lithium-ion battery recycling, lunch out of landfills, million solar panel challenge, operation pollination, solar safe water (watersheds, rivers, and oceans).

6. Map all participants in environmental sustainability by county. Support community projects and organizations.

Citizens Climate Lobby, Southern Tier and Finger Lakes Chapter

Citizens Climate Lobby (CCL) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, grassroots advocacy organization focused on national and state-level policies to address climate change. Our Southern Tier and Finger Lakes chapter has 1,050 members from three Congressional districts: NY-19, NY-23, and NY-24.

Many climate solutions are needed. CCL focuses on bipartisan climate policies. In particular, we support national and state-level solutions that:

- A) lower carbon emissions significantly
- B) don't raise overall costs for low- or middle-income people, and
- C) have bipartisan appeal, so they can pass and last.



Citizens' Climate Lobby

To raise awareness and support of such policies, we have local conversations, publish media, and reach out to our legislators. It's also important to us to civilize dialogue across the political spectrum. Our volunteers span that spectrum, and we work with legislators of all stripes. We'd love to work with you!

In 2024, members of our Southern Tier and Finger Lakes Chapter:

- Published 10 letters and op eds in local papers including Finger Lakes Times, Buffalo News, and Rochester Democrat & Chronicle
- Did a radio interview about carbon pricing on Finger Lakes Air
- Participated in 23 lobbying events. We lobbied our legislators: Senators Gillibrand and Schumer; Representatives Molinaro, Tenney, and Langworthy; and State Assemblymember Kelles. And we lobbied other legislators: Senator Peters; Representatives Ocasio-Cortez, Velasquez, Stefanik, Jeffries, Garcia, Malliotakis, LaLota, Williams, and Garbarino; and State Senator Krueger.
- Met with representatives of other environmental groups to coordinate action
- Participated in coalitions to support state climate bills and counter disinformation
- Did phone banking and wrote postcards for the Environmental Voter Project
- Participated in other New York state-level actions, such as analyzing state legislative priorities and researching potential utility reform legislation
- Held 38 outreach actions (presentations, tablings, and climate conversations)
- Contacted legislators 778 times

City of Ithaca



Revised Climate Action Plan (CAP): In late 2024, the city's Sustainability and Climate Justice Commission recommended a major overhaul of the CAP. The new approach, titled *Dignity Toward Decarbonization*, reframes climate action by prioritizing social equity in six key sectors: housing, labor, public health, equity, emergency response, and power reliability.

The goals of the Green New Deal remain the same, but the updated CAP offers a more robust roadmap to ensure we don't reinforce existing vulnerabilities, displace residents, or overlook urgent threats to our social and physical infrastructure.

Focus on local action: The new CAP strategy emphasizes local, community-driven projects over large external partnerships. This shift came after previous efforts, such as the building electrification initiative with BlocPower, were stalled by the company's change in strategy.

Justice50 policy: In May 2024, the Common Council unanimously passed the Justice50 policy. This landmark legislation requires that 50% of the city's funding for its energy transition and major infrastructure projects be directed toward residents most at risk from climate change.

Justice50 & the 2025 Capital Budget: A preliminary analysis of prioritized and necessary projects identified during the 2024 capital budget process showed just under 40% of the capital budget serving Climate Justice Communities (CJC). To reach the city's 50% goal, the committee agreed the best course of action was to increase resources and services to populations experiencing homelessness.

Mixed results on 2030 carbon neutrality target: An analysis released in February 2024 by the Ithaca Green New Deal Scorecard, a platform to keep track of the progress, indicated that the city's progress toward its ambitious 2030 carbon-neutrality goal was mixed. While some areas are moving forward, the overall effort had fallen behind its original targets. Progress on new initiatives, however, shows the city is still headed in the right direction.

Building electrification efforts: The city continued to advance building electrification efforts. Electrification projects taking advantage of NYSEG incentives for commercial buildings are projected to prevent nearly 680 metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions annually. New building codes adopted in 2024 require all new construction to forego fossil fuels for heating and cooling and to be net-zero energy by 2026.

Community Choice Aggregation (CCA): After a nearly two-year delay, the city's CCA program finally received state approval in December 2024, and will launch in phases throughout 2025. The program aims to cut city-wide Scope 2 emissions (from purchased electricity) by matching 100% of municipal energy use with renewable energy credits.

Vehicle electrification plan: The city began a four-year transition for its light-duty fleet in 2024, with plans to electrify approximately 25% of the fleet annually. An initial analysis in 2024 identified about 35 vehicles that could be immediately electrified and leased. Grant funding was also secured for the necessary charging infrastructure.

Charging Infrastructure: In May 2024, the city initiated a competitive bidding process for a "Charging-as-a-Service" project to install and maintain charging infrastructure for its growing EV fleet.

The Climate Reality Project, Finger Lakes Greater Region NY (FLGR-NY) Chapter



The Finger Lakes Chapter of Climate Reality includes inspired climate activists located in the Finger Lakes and Southern Tier regions of Central NY. We are working to unify climate activism over a widespread area, with plans to improve public awareness of the climate emergency and to actively promote the completion of the goals of the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA) for our region and the Ithaca Green New Deal. The Chapter also aims to reach out

and work cooperatively with other active environmental, climate justice, and sustainability groups within the region. At the global level, we support and include working toward the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>. We welcome all trained Climate Reality Leaders living in our region as well as community members who are interested in participating.

Chapter email: fingerlakesgreaterregion.ny@gmail.com

Website: <http://climaterealityfingerlakes.org/>

IGND Scorecard website: <http://igndscorecard.org/>

LinkTree: <https://linktr.ee/ClimateRealityFingerLakes>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/climaterealityfingerlakes>

Facebook (Book Group): <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2971646586421809>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/FlgrNy>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/climaterealityflgr/>

2024 Accomplishments

- This year the Chapter membership increased from 141 members to 188, of whom 79 are trained Climate Reality Leaders. We continued to grow our following in Facebook (111) and Twitter (248). Note, however, that we are transitioning away from Twitter (X) and going forward, we will use Bluesky for more of our social media messaging, along with Facebook.
- In 2024, the Chapter held meetings every month, which included joint quarterly meetings with the NYS Coalition. Our Book Group has remained active including attendees from outside our

region. All Chapter meetings are held virtually through Zoom. Additionally this year, we participated in some live activities such as the NYS Coalition meeting/tour/gathering at the Wild Center (Tupper Lake) in May, the End Fossil Fuel March in Rochester in September, and a tour of the AES Wind Farm in Bliss, NY with Western NY Chapter in October. We will continue to explore other possible live interactions and have been working with the planning group for the 2025 NYC Coalition Retreat being held at The Ashokan Center on March 14-16, 2025.

- The IGND Scorecard Team continues to update and promote it. The scorecard has been featured in several media pieces. Currently, we have paused active assessments of the IGND program pending major changes forthcoming to the IGND Climate Action Plan. Some changes in the structure of the scorecard will be forthcoming.
- We continue to work on Federal and NYS Advocacy with the NYS Coalition (8 local chapters in New York State). On the Federal level, we continued work on advocating for preserving the intended purposes of the additional conservation funds (guardrails) provided by the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). For NYS, we have been supporting bills which will help enable the Scoping Plan to meet the goals of the Climate Act (CLCPA). We have continued to table at local events, providing public information about Federal (IRA), NYS and local incentives available to local communities. A model electrified house (wooden dollhouse) became one of our featured items for tabling.
- Our Chapter is an Affiliate Local Chapter of Beyond Plastics and a member organization of NY Renews and are also involved in their legislative advocacy. We continue to network with other groups within our region. We are very active in Ithaca, Binghamton and Rochester, with our connections to TCCPI, Climate Solutions Accelerator, Tompkins and Broome County Cooperative Extension, Tompkins County and Broome County EMCs, Tier Energy Network, and Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter/Finger Lakes Group. We are working on increasing our outreach in Syracuse, Corning, and Elmira. We have started a closer collaboration with the Climate Change Awareness & Action (CCAA) group in Syracuse and People for a Healthy Environment (PHE) group in the Elmira/Corning area.

Cornell Cooperative Extension Tompkins County Environment Team

Smart Energy Choices, the Regional Clean Energy Hub for the Southern Tier, continued to grow its effectiveness and impact throughout the 8-county Southern Tier



region. With 15 staff housed at 6 Cooperative Extension associations in the region, we engaged close to 9,000 residents, mostly from low- and moderate-income households, at 233 events: mobile food pantries, community festivals, and hands-on energy workshops. Community Energy Advisors (CEAs) provided personalized energy advising to close to 1,700 households and registered 270 high-impact actions, from insulating basements and attics, to installing heat pumps, or signing up for subscription solar.



Smart Energy Choices staff, in front of our tiny home "PowerHouse."

Our tiny home "PowerHouse" has been a pillar in our outreach and community engagement. While it was featured in only 31 of the total events staff attended, through it we engaged over half of our reach – close to 5,000 people – which demonstrates its power of attraction. The PowerHouse continues to be used for limited fee-for-service activities, helping bring in funds that help cover its operating costs.

Our team's approach and strategies are being shaped by a study conducted in 2023 and 2024. The Regional Assessment and Barriers Analysis (RABA) compiled data and insight from previous studies and reports, as well as the input of over 300 residents, mostly lower-income people interviewed in person at mobile food

pantries, and dozens of non-profit partners and energy contractors. The RABA [has been published](#) and shared with decision makers.

In January, Smart Energy Choices published an article on our blog and newsletter [on the NYSEG rate hikes](#) that received over 1,500 views. Our communications staff publish an e-newsletter with over 2,000 subscribers and maintain a regular presence on Facebook.

In addition, Smart Energy Choices supports the work of the Energy Warriors team, whose accomplishments are described elsewhere in this report.

Energy & Climate Change Team

New Leadership

After an open search, Chris Skawski moved from Clean Energy Communities Coordinator to Energy and Climate Change team leader, replacing Guillermo Metz who moved on to lead the Ag and Solar program for CCE Tompkins (see below).

Earth Day Festival

The team's smash success of 2024 was the Earth Day Festival, held on the Ithaca Commons in partnership with the Ithaca Green New Deal. Our team coordinated nearly 40 community-based organizations for an afternoon of family-friendly fun that included food, games, puppet shows, and more. The point of the event was to show up and remind folks that there was a lot of good work being done in our community on climate change. We estimated that over 1,000 people came by on a windy and cold April day. We cooked chili on an induction cooktop that was plugged into the back of the CCE Tompkins electric pick-up truck, which also powered WRFI's DJs spinning music all day long. We brought together resources on a wide array of topics, including composting, reuse, and upcycling of clothing materials, and the good work done by our local governments. We heard from our partners that festival goers engaged and took advantage of their presence to sign up for new services like the recently relaunched Ithaca Carshare.



Clean Energy Communities

The Clean Energy Communities Program was renewed by NYSERDA at the end of 2023 through December 2026, with the release of Program Opportunity Notification (PON) 3.0. The program supports municipalities in taking action to lower energy use, curtail emissions, and play an active role in deploying renewable energy. Our team of Clean Energy Communities coordinators, including Michael Brown, Kristina Zill, and Chris Skawski worked with municipalities across the 8-county Southern Tier to document and earn credit for over 100 High Impact Actions through that program. These efforts included documenting and reporting greenhouse gas emissions reductions from energy upgrades, rooftop and community solar engagement (including helping to facilitate community solar outreach sponsored by the municipalities), and the purchase and deployment of battery electric vehicles and equipment.

As a result of these efforts, more than 50 municipalities were able to take advantage of the CEC program in 2024 alone, bringing the total participation by municipalities in our region to 125.

These municipalities together brought in over \$3 million in funding from NYSERDA for clean energy and energy efficiency projects, including building upgrades, comprehensive energy audits of municipal facilities, new solar arrays, and zero-emission vehicles and infrastructure. Over \$1 million was committed to projects in Tompkins County alone.

Climate Smart Communities

Our Climate Smart Communities Coordinator, Jerry Sheng, continued providing service to 10 active municipalities in Tompkins County. Building on the successes of 2023, he helped to establish or restart Climate Smart Communities Task forces in Enfield and the Town of Lansing, and helped advance projects in Ulysses, Enfield, Newfield, Caroline, the Town of Dryden, the Town and Village of Lansing, and the City and Town of Ithaca. These actions included preparation of shade policies for municipal structures, compilation and documentation of conservation and open space plans, and coordination of cross-municipal initiatives. Our team helped organize a pilot ReUse table at Newfield Old Home Days and is putting on a Clothing Swap and Mend for the Earth Day Festival, supported by the towns of Caroline, Newfield, Dryden, Enfield, and Ulysses, as part of the CSC program's waste reduction campaign actions. The event was co-staffed by Soil Factory, a project of WEAVE Community Inc..

Lansing Non-Pipes Alternatives

The Lansing Non-Pipes Alternatives project is an effort by NYSEG to reduce natural gas demand along portions of the gas distribution system in Northeast Tompkins County, especially in the Town of Lansing, in response to concerns about pressure and potential reliability issues. As part of this strategy, our team has helped provide outreach and education to residents in the Town and Village of Lansing on the benefits of electrification and available incentives. Our NPA educator, Siobhan Hull, reached hundreds of residents via 50 community events in 2024 alone. Together with Anne Rhodes, they also helped develop stronger relationships among sustainability-focused groups working in Lansing, such as the Lansing High School Sustainability Club, classroom educators from several local schools, and the County Community Justice Center Resource Hubs.

The NPA educator was instrumental in working with the Town of Lansing on a proposed ground source heat pump system by providing dedicated project support and working with town staff on cost-benefit analysis and application for state funding.

Other Community Work

Congregations

Anne Rhodes continued her work with several local congregations, including the Unitarian Church, Tikken v'Or Temple, and the Society of Friends, supporting small groups within each congregation to think about how to engage the wider congregation in climate action. The focus is on projects educating members about the climate crisis and spurring action among them. Through this work our team has connected congregations to ideas, resources, people, and information that allows interested groups to take the work forward. Congregations have developed tools for sharing resources and encouragement among spiritual groups across the county, developing a new network to activate more people.

Agriculture

Ag Energy

Through the Ag Energy NY program (<https://agenergyny.org>), Gabriel Gurley continued to support farmers and Extension educators across the state in implementing measures to improve on-farm energy efficiency. Working with NYSERDA and EnSave, through on-line and printed resources and presentations and webinars he directed farmers to energy audits to identify energy waste and find funding to upgrade equipment.



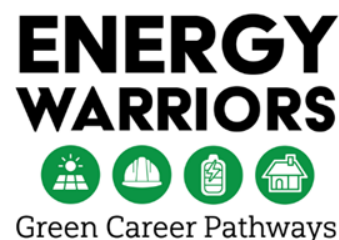
Ag Solar

Guillermo Metz, who had been managing the Ag Energy NY program with Gabriel Gurley and working on large-scale solar issues for the past several years secured foundation funding to focus exclusively on this work. In the fall of 2024, he left his position of Energy and Climate Change team leader within the Environment team to build the Solar and Agriculture Program. This work supports Extension educators, farmers, and municipal officials across NY in navigating large-scale solar development, including helping to preserve active and prime farmland and exploring the potential for combining ag with solar (agrivoltaics).

Because of its strong connection to the ag community, this work and the Ag Energy NY program are now housed within the Agriculture and Horticulture Program at CCE Tompkins.

Energy Warriors: Green Career Pathways

The program connects Tompkins County residents with training, knowledge, and practical skills to join the green career workforce. The training series is based in Roots of Success, a nationally-recognized environmental literacy curriculum; field trips and hands-on work help participants gain familiarity and comfort with technology and skills needed in the green economy. The program prioritizes climate justice communities – those disproportionately burdened by the negative impacts of climate change – as well as those facing barriers to employment. Participants are paid for their time and connected with employers at the end of the course. Training is tailored to the career goals or interests of those who enroll as they develop familiarity with heat pumps, solar arrays, insulation and weatherization, reuse practices, and other clean energy sectors.



A key part of the training has been the Cozy Basements program, which provides hands-on supervised training for Energy Warriors as they seal the rim joists of local low-income households. As a result, 57 local homes have been made more comfortable and energy-efficient while Energy Warriors participants learn about air sealing and insulation best practices. In September, program director Aloja Airewele was named a New York Times Changemaker and invited to present his work at the NYT Climate Forward Event. A Changemaker is an “accomplished climate leader responding to the crisis in new, creative ways.” Energy Warriors continues to enroll for 2025, looking to welcome the largest incoming cohort so far and developing plans to expand outside Tompkins County.

Cornell on Fire



Cornell on Fire (CoF) is a coalition of Cornellians and community members calling for a just and comprehensive university-wide response to the global climate emergency. CoF has a set of concrete [demands](#) to Cornell, and encourages Cornellians and local community members to sign them and help build pressure on the university to prioritize a livable future at every level of its operations. CoF operates as a broad-based movement, working in partnership with a range of allied movements and groups, both established and emerging, with different stakes in Cornell's actions.

Movement building

At the start of 2024, our movement was only a few months old and interest in our demands both on and off campus was building momentum. Over the course of the year, we took steps to develop our communications to reach a broad base of supporters (students, faculty, staff, alumni, local community members) and grow our audience.

- During Spring and Fall semesters, we issued weekly posts and monthly newsletters to update our audience with the latest news on Cornell's response to the climate crisis, our advocacy actions, and to motivate new contributors to our work.
- We developed our movement website, launched in Fall 2023, creating new sections for our investigative reports, our positions on current debates in the Cornell community, and our films.
- We held weekly in-person office hours on Cornell Campus during semester, informing Cornellians of our cause, demands, actions, and website, and enlisting new subscribers. Having a reliable physical presence on campus has meant many people interested in engaging use the opportunity to come and meet us in person.
- We established a social media presence, spreading word of our demands, actions and investigative reports, and connecting with movements with shared interests. Instagram proved useful for connecting with international academics and students and student groups.
- CoF members published op-eds in the Tompkins Weekly, Ithaca Times, Cornell Daily Sun, and were interviewed on radio shows on WRFI, WICB and WSKG. Our actions were covered in news

reports by the Ithacan, Positive News, the Ithaca Times, Ithaca Voice, WSKG radio, and the Ithaca High School Tattler.

Investigative reports

Research reports evidencing the present state of Cornell's climate action are the backbone of our advocacy work. While there is abundant publicity of Cornell's sustainability achievements available online, we found worrisome gaps and shortcomings to Cornell's climate action hidden from view. Together with our alliance partners, in 2024 we published five reports:

- 1) Climate justice at Cornell: Profit over planet
- 2) Climatizing Cornell education: A missing vision
- 3) What the climate cares about: The concerning state of Cornell's climate action plan
- 4) Big Oil + Big Red Climate Doublespeak
- 5) Decarbonize Cornell: Cornell should join Ithaca's fossil-fuel phaseout

In December 2024, after many months of research, we completed and disseminated our collaborative white paper on "[Estimating the Operational Emissions of Cornell University Heat Decarbonization Pathways](#)." The white paper brought together Cornell's engineering faculty experts with student and interdisciplinary collaborators to provide an independent modeling analysis of decarbonization pathways at Cornell. This paper has proven essential to challenging Cornell's attempted amendments to the Ithaca Energy Code Supplement, which are designed to exempt Cornell's district energy system and gas-fired power plant from Ithaca's fossil-fuel phaseout. Our research, op-eds, presentations, and public communications on this topic explain why Cornell's arguments are not sound, and why Cornell should participate in Ithaca's fossil-fuel phaseout.

Throughout 2024, we engaged in research-based advocacy to intervene on Cornell's plans to install several new artificial turf playing fields. Our public comments focused on the need for credible, independent science to review the health and environmental impacts of fake plastic grass fields on Ithaca's ecosystem and climate justice beyond our backyards. With alliance partners, we collected over 80 signatures from Cornell faculty, scientists, and community members calling for credible science from Cornell; we published an op-ed; and we collectively submitted hundreds of pages of evidence-based public comments to Ithaca's Planning Boards. Our work was cited by the Planning Boards and local press in their decisions to require stricter (but still inadequate) environmental standards around Cornell's artificial turf fields.

Dialogue with the Cornell administration

In 2024, CoF used multiple channels to open dialogue with members of the Cornell administration for the purpose of advocating for CoF's demands and discussing ways forward. CoF members submitted questions at Cornell events such as the annual Cornell State of Sustainability Address and shared the resulting exchanges with Cornell administrators widely. In March 2024, CoF representatives met with the Carbon Neutral Campus Committee. We asked them to demonstrate radical climate leadership by reporting accurately on their lack of progress on reducing emissions, and by committing to a 1.5 degree pathway that draws on insights from climate justice communities. While individuals within the Committee showed commitment to climate change mitigation, the Committee ultimately continued to argue for incremental change far short of what expert bodies such as the IPCC have demonstrated is needed. Following our meeting, Cornell appeared to heed our request for transparency in changing the opening paragraph of its [Cornell's Baseline Inventory](#) to acknowledge that upstream methane emissions are not included in its reporting of university emissions over time. Another outcome was that a CoF working group member was invited to join Cornell's Climate Change Curriculum Working Group and began advocating for CoF demands on climate change education at meetings.

Protest actions

To further increase pressure on the Cornell administration to take our demands seriously, we organized protest actions during the Spring and Fall semesters. These actions drew some local media attention and helped raise awareness of our demands. Some also enabled brief exchanges with individual trustees and President Kotlikoff.

- 1) Protest at the March 2024 trustee meeting
- 2) Graduation protest: Big Oil + Big Red Climate Hypocrisy
- 3) Reclaim Earth Day 2024

- 4) Protest at Fall 2024 trustee meeting
- 5) A D White statue 'Don't look away' protest act and meditation

Bringing the climate crisis onto the agenda at Cornell

In 2024 we collaborated with Cornell's Atkinson Center and the Department of Psychology to hold two seminars for the Cornell community with external speakers on climate activism at universities. We also worked with the Center for Teaching Innovation (CTI) to introduce a workshop on teaching in the context of climate crisis for instructors across all programs, and with the Knight Writing Institute to tag writing seminars with content on this topic, drawing the attention of students. One CoF member introduced a 3-credit undergraduate course titled Confronting Climate Change, including a practical component. A CoF member taught a lesson on fracking and climate change to second graders at one of the elementary schools in Ithaca. CoF was also a community partner for an undergraduate course, mentoring a student group in their development of Resolution 20 to the Student Assembly, [Climate Renewal Vows](#), later unanimously passed by the Assembly.

Public discussion

We produced two short films: a comedic drama satirizing the Cornell administration's response to our demands, and a promotional film introducing our movement and its demands to the public. We launched the films at two public screening and panel discussion events in September, at Cinemapolis in downtown Ithaca and on Cornell campus. Following the screenings, speakers included activists representing allied movements on and around campus, and we encouraged audience discussion. The events generated lively discussion and enduring connections. We published the films on Youtube, where they have been viewed 224 and 119 times respectively, and shared trailers on social media.

Cornell University

- In 2024, Cornell University maintained a Platinum Rating from STARS, the highest rating possible. Only 14 institutions worldwide have achieved this rating.
- \$83M+ saved and 248,000+ MTCO₂e avoided — driven by Cornell's Energy Conservation Initiative (ECI).
- 60 plus student sustainability groups were active in 2024.
- Dozens of sustainability-focused majors and minors offered.
- 89% of academic departments offer sustainability-focused and/or sustainability-inclusive courses, totaling over 857 classes available to both undergraduate and graduate students.
- 660 acres of natural areas are managed for biodiversity.
- 20% of campus electricity needs are met by renewable energy.
- 60% of construction materials are reused or recycled.
- 100% of entering students had the opportunity to participate in sustainability-focused orientation activities.
- 100% of newly constructed or renovated buildings receive LEED certifications.
- Over 1,000 acres of grounds managed organically or in accordance with an Integrated Pest Management Program (IPM).
 - 296 acres of grounds managed organically.
 - 712 acres of grounds managed in accordance with an IPM program.
- 64% of materials were diverted from landfill by recycling, composting, donating, or re-selling.
- 43% reduction in potable water use per weighted campus user since 2005.
- 10 electric vehicles were added to the campus fleet in 2024.
- First ground source heat pump was added to the Cornell's Child Care Center, an ideal decarbonization solution for standalone buildings beyond the reach of district energy



[Keeping campus warm: steam to hot water conversion](#)

Hidden beneath Cornell's campus, a vast energy system powers the university. A major upgrade is now slashing emissions and advancing Cornell's net-zero goal.

[Emily Pape '26 rallies the Big Red team for the greater good](#)

Emily founded a new club, [Cornell Student Athletes for Sustainability \(CSAS\)](#). The mission of the organization is to build a strong community of student-athletes who simultaneously develop a sense of awareness and active responsibility surrounding sustainability in athletics and beyond.

[Olin Hall Boosts Sustainability with Major Energy Efficiency Upgrades](#)

Olin Hall's Heat Recovery Project significantly enhanced energy efficiency and sustainability by replacing 39 individual lab exhaust fans with a centralized heat recovery unit installed on the roof, reducing energy consumption by 8% and improving the building's overall environmental impact.

[Countdown to Net Zero Emissions](#)

Together, Cornellians are finding ways to reduce waste in dining halls, conserve energy in teaching and research spaces, and innovate new technologies for cooling and heating campus.

[Advancing Reuse for a Circular Economy & Sustainable Future \(Hybrid\)](#)

We hosted a panel in March to examine sustainable materials management. A Q&A discussion followed on how to transform our campus and region into a collaborative system rooted in the principles and practices of a circular economy.

Downtown Ithaca Alliance

- The Ithaca Downtown Conference Center on W. Green Street, which officially opened in 2024, is the first all-electric conference center in the U.S.
- Solar trash compactors along The Commons continue to help reduce the carbon footprint. Powered by the sun, these eco-friendly compactors operate in every type of weather: snow, rain, or shine.
- At least 11 of our businesses on The Commons – Alley Cat Cafe, Thai Basil, Taste of Thai, Casablanca Pizzeria, The Greenhouse Cafe and Cocktail Lounge, Lou's Street Food, Sangam Indian Curry, Capital Corner Restaurant, Gorgers, Jimmy John's, and Mercato Bar & Kitchen – support Zero Waste Tompkins' Ithaca Reduces program. These restaurants and eateries support the program by asking customers to bring their own containers and cups.
- The DIA, in collaboration with the Center for Community Center for Transportation and Tompkins Consolidated Area Transit (TCAT), is currently operating a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) program called GO ITHACA. GO aims at helping employees and residents in the urban core forgo their single-occupancy vehicles and instead use more efficient modes of transportation, such as walking, biking, and carpooling.
- Downtown Ithaca is an important green retail showcase with several independent, locally-owned stores that specialize in reused and recycled products. Such stores include SewGreen, Pastimes Antiques, Trader Ks, Autumn Leaves Used Books, and Home Green Home.
- Press Bay Alley, two blocks southwest of the Ithaca Commons, has offered a Food Hub where people can pick up fresh produce, baked goods, and other items. The Alley also serves as a pickup spot for the Full Plate Farm Collective CSA (Community Supported Agriculture).
- Downtown Ithaca is the regional transit hub for Tompkins Consolidated Area Transit (TCAT), which its industry peers have recognized as being the best transit system of its size in North America.
- Additional art bike racks installed around the urban core, thanks to a grant from a local foundation, provide ample amounts of bike parking in the urban core, which decreases dependency on automobiles and increases biking and access to public transit.



- The DIA has implemented composting and recycling systems for its major downtown events, such as the Apple Harvest Festival, the Summer Concert Series, Chowder Cook-Off, and Chili Cook-Off, which over 100,000 locals and tourists attend. Local service organizations like the Master Composters from Cornell Cooperative Extension have helped to oversee these composting stations.
- The DIA also offers and encourages the use of reusable cups during the Summer Concert Series and offers reusable spoons and encourages attendees to bring their own reusable spoons for its Chowder Cook-Off and Chili Cook-Off.
- City Centre includes many green features such as energy-efficient windows and lighting and low-flow toilets. City Centre is also eliminating the need for venting to accompany clothes dryers by outfitting them with heat pumps.
- Downtown Ithaca is home to Coltivare, a farm-to-table restaurant and bar as well as a major culinary education facility. Coltivare, an initiative of Tompkins Cortland Community College, offers a unique hands-on experience alongside working professionals for students studying sustainable food systems and entrepreneurship. *Note: Coltivare closed in January 2025.*
- Press Bay Court on W. Street offers a free-to-use community bike repair station. By providing tools for people to make simple bike repairs, we're making it safer for people to bike around the community.
- Harolds Square on the Commons is an energy-efficient building. Designed per NYSEDA and ENERGY STAR® standards, the building uses at least 35% less energy than a similar conventionally built building.
- Downtown Ithaca is home to the Center for Community Transportation headquarters, which operates Ithaca Carshare, a non-profit car-sharing service with a growing fleet of fuel-efficient vehicles shared by over 1,500 members, and Ithaca Bikeshare, Ithaca's first non-profit, community-owned and operated bikeshare.



EcoVillage at Ithaca, Inc.

- EVI, Inc. continued to pursue its mission in 2024 to steward the 140 acres outside the village area for the preservation and conservation of open space, development of sustainable agricultural practices on this land, and promotion of sustainable high-density community living.
 - Throughout the year, the EVI, Inc. board worked closely with the four organic farms located on the nonprofit's land: West Haven Farm, Groundswell Center for Local Food and Farming incubator farm, Kestrel Perch, and Three Story Farm. As part of this process, the leases were updated.
 - New Roots Charter School took over the Kestrel Perch operation in 2024, incorporating it into its farm program.
 - The board discussed the growing interest in adding animal livestock to existing farm operations as well as a proposal for a new ostrich farm, a reforestation proposal that would be funded by a DEC grant, a request from City Light for a possible land purchase, improved electric service for the four farms, and a new trail to allow people to walk to the mailboxes without using the road.
- The board continued to manage its process for investing the funds from the sale of land for the refugee housing project, so that they would generate interest to support projects that the board may want to undertake in the future.



Finger Lakes Land Trust

During 2024 Finger Lakes Land Trust (FLLT) conserved 2,267 acres in 2024, totaling 33,500 acres permanently conserved, over 11 miles of streambanks protected, and more than 55 miles of trails open to

the public. The Land Trust also accomplished the following in the greater Ithaca/Tompkins County area last year:

- The FLLT purchased in March 26 acres located off Tucker and Iradell Roads in the town of Enfield. The property, which contains 1,200 feet of frontage on a tributary to Taughannock Creek, will be added to the FLLT's adjacent Lower Nature Preserve.
- In March, the Land Trust and Finger Lakes Institute hosted over 400 attendees for a conversation with Dan Egan, author of "The Devil's Element: Phosphorus and a World Out of Balance," on Phosphorus and the Health of Our Lakes.
- The FLLT was awarded \$100,000 in May through the NYS Conservation Partnership Program to improve accessibility at its popular Roy H. Park Preserve in the town of Dryden. Located just 20 minutes from downtown Ithaca, the 240-acre preserve is located within a complex of 8,000 acres of contiguous conservation land including Hammond Hill and Yellow Barn state forests. The grant will allow the FLLT to make improvements to the preserve's hiking trail and wetland boardwalk to provide universal access and ensure compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- The FLLT formally opened in June its 223-acre Sims-Jennings Preserve at Cayuga Cliffs in the town of Lansing. The preserve protects over 4,000 feet of wooded bluffs above Cayuga Lake as well as a mosaic of meadows, woodlands, gorges, and panoramic lake views. Nearly two miles of hiking trails guide visitors past cascading waterfalls and creeks with multiple vista points, each with a handmade bench that offers glimpses of Cayuga Lake.
- Also in June, Gov. Hochul announced the permanent protection of the 287-acre Cayuga Shores Wildlife Management Area, which provides public access to 3,500 feet of pristine shoreline on the east side of Cayuga Lake in Tompkins County. Located in the town of Lansing, the Cayuga Shores Wildlife Management Area features a variety of exceptional fish and wildlife habitat including multiple streams, wooded hillsides, and extensive fields.
- In September, the FLLT agreed to sell 213 acres of fields in the easternmost portion of the former Bell Station property to AES with the understanding that it will be utilized for solar power generation. The purchase was undertaken by AES as part of a project involving a portion of the defunct Milliken Station coal power plant in Lansing.
- The FLLT and NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) in September protected 260 acres in Summerhill, Cayuga County, as part of the state's Water Quality Improvement Project program. The property features 10,000 feet of frontage on Fall Creek, the source of Cornell University's drinking water supply and the largest tributary to Cayuga Lake.
- In October, the FLLT and the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation announced the formal opening of a 140-acre property adjacent to Robert H. Treman State Park in the town of Enfield. The parcel was donated to the FLLT in 2022 by the late Margaret Bald, a Tompkins County resident whose family owned the property since 1950.
- The FLLT purchased 23 acres in the town of Ulysses from the Cayuga Nature Center in November. The property, a mix of meadows and woodlands, is located along the Black Diamond Trail at the Houghton Road crossing. The FLLT intends to transfer the parcel to the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, which owns and manages the Black Diamond Trail.



Finger Lakes ReUse

In 2024, Finger Lakes ReUse accepted a record number of drop-off donations, keeping more than 800,000 items in use and out of the waste stream. With a growing number of materials flowing through our donation intake, we are committed to offering quality materials at affordable prices. Last year, we granted more than **900 households** over **\$200,000 in our resale value**, giving access to quality materials to a record number of Tompkins County residents. ReUse in action takes dedication and hard work, and in 2024, 87 living wage employees, 33 trainees (through our ReUse Skills & Employment

Training program), and 19 youth were compensated through partner programs. More than 600 volunteers helped us work towards our vision of a just, resilient, waste-free world.

In 2024, Finger Lakes ReUse:

- Received **60,267** material donation drop-offs from the community, a 22% increase over 2023.
- Kept **811,821** items in local use and potentially out of the landfill.
- Hosted the Ithaca Fixers Collective & the Community Quiltmaking Center in our Triphammer



ReUse MegaCenter Community Space, offering free weekly programming open to the public.

- Partnered with **40 local human service agencies** to provide **904 households in need with \$216,158.74** in gift card value through the ReUse Materials Access Program (ReMAP). ReUse also provided **253 families with a free delivery** through this program.

- Provided **32 nonprofits** and community organizations with free materials for community projects and initiatives.

- Through the ReSET (Skills and Employment) job training program, ReUse worked with **33 trainees**

and successfully connected **6** to permanent, unsubsidized employment.

- Provided **87 employees** with a living wage.
- **Over 600 individual volunteers and 24 groups logged more than 10,500 hours**, supporting Community ReUse Center activities.
- Worked with **19 workers under the age of 18**, through a partnership with the Ithaca Youth Bureau Youth Employment Services & Tompkins Workforce NY's Summer Youth Employment Program.

Historic Ithaca and Significant Elements

[Historic Ithaca and Significant Elements](#) are leaders locally and regionally to link preservation with sustainability. Founded in 1966, Historic Ithaca has stood together with the citizens of Tompkins County to protect the built environment and to promote those efforts through education, advocacy, and action. In 1991, Significant Elements Architectural Salvage retail store opened, and was our answer to keeping items out of the landfill and reusing those items via a circular economy. In 2024, **almost 9,000** visitors came to Significant Elements, and 562 people joined us for Historic Ithaca tours and events. In addition to our annual Walk & Talk series and Ithaca City Cemetery Clean-Up, we hosted other fun and educational events with [Wharton Studio Museum](#), [Friends of Stewart Park](#), and the City Forester, Jeanne Grace. Work Preserve, our job training program, began 15 years ago for young adults who often have barriers to employment. This program builds skills related to green jobs and trades, restoration, preservation, sustainability, retail and customer service.



There have been multiple successes in 2024:

- We have had one full year at Historic Ithaca and Significant Elements using heating and cooling through new air source heat pumps. We were among the first ten buildings in the [City of Ithaca and BlocPower's Electrify Ithaca program](#).
- We continue to be partners in the CR0WD (Circularity, Reuse, Zero Waste Development www.cr0wd.org) network, which holds weekly meetings about the circular economy, reuse, and deconstruction. The network now includes local and state government agencies, Cornell labs such as the Just Places and Circular Construction Labs, students and professors, and multiple municipalities, as well as members of the public interested in climate action through our built environment.

- As part of CR0WD, Historic Ithaca participated in four statewide conferences and presentations, including one focused on local policy at the SUNY Rockefeller Institute of Government and a Waste Reduction panel at Cornell University.
- Developing legislation on deconstruction continues to be a priority, with progress hoped for in 2025.
- Locally, we spoke to the Tompkins County PEEQ and Downtown Facilities committees about efforts in deconstruction, reuse, and preservation.
- Promoted efforts for reuse, salvage, and deconstruction through advocacy efforts for 300 and 308 North Tioga Street, both purchased by Tompkins County as their planned site for a new Government Center. We are also involved regionally with advocacy efforts to promote the reuse of the now shuttered Wells College campus.
- Worked with Cornell University facilities staff to collect salvage from buildings undergoing rehabilitation (Balch Hall and McGraw Hall).
- With support from a grant from the Historic Preservation Education Foundation, we began a series of hands-on repair and sustainability workshops that will continue through 2025. These workshops focus on door hardware, paint removal, window repair basics, and lighting basics.
- Fourteen participants completed our Work Preserve Program at Significant Elements in 2024.
- At the end of 2023, Work Preserve received a grant from the Park Foundation to foster and recruit community members who wish to be part of the green job economy. We launched the Green Jobs Skills Training program in spring 2024 and have had an initial round of participants. <https://www.significantelements.org/gjsk>
- Historic Ithaca's staff participated in many of the Ithaca and Tompkins County sustainability initiatives, and have joined Boards and partnerships to work together on important planning and goals such as the Career Pathways Project, Youth Employment Resource Team, City of Ithaca's Sustainable Justice Commission, Tompkins County Planning Advisory Board, Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Board, and the Erie Canalway Commission. We are also part of the Ithaca District 2030 and Susan Holland serves on the Advisory Board.
- The regularly updated [Energy Toolkit](#) remains one of the most heavily trafficked pages on Historic Ithaca's website. The toolkit serves as a free service to anyone who owns a property and is looking for information on energy efficiency.

HOLT Architects



HOLT Architects is a leading firm specializing in the design of Healthcare, Higher Education, and Community sector projects throughout Pennsylvania, Idaho, and New York State. With a deep commitment to sustainability and high-performance design, HOLT is uniquely positioned to drive the development of environmentally responsible, energy-efficient structures. In 2024, we continue to advance sustainable design by educating and collaborating with our clients, refining construction details to enhance building

performance, and improving both the efficiency of our own facility and the sustainability practices of our team. Additionally, we remain dedicated to expanding our expertise through industry conferences and in-house training, ensuring our staff is equipped with the latest knowledge and skills to deliver innovative, high-performance solutions.

- Project highlights, Certifications, and Awards:
 - **INHS Village Grove Housing Development** – This 46-unit, mixed-use, mixed-income community in Trumansburg, NY, has achieved Passive House Certification, making it the first housing development in Tompkins County to earn this distinction. Designed to dramatically reduce energy consumption while enhancing indoor air quality and thermal comfort, the project also features ground-source heat pumps and is on track to achieve NetZero status through the purchase of off-site community solar.
- Improvements to standard practice construction details:



- Conducted a thorough evaluation of HOLT's standard envelope assemblies to exceed evolving energy efficiency codes while optimizing thermal performance. Our approach prioritizes efficiency, embodied carbon reduction, cost-effectiveness, and constructability to deliver high-performance, sustainable, and practical design solutions.
- Performance of our building and behavior of our team:
 - We continue to operate and monitor our LEED Gold & WELL facility at 619 West State Street.
 - We continue to investigate methodologies for better understanding the energy needs of our 619 West State Street offices as well as potential actions for lowering the overall energy use.
 - As an all-electric building, our on-site PV system continues to provide the majority of energy that we use in our building, in 2024 offsetting 73% of our total annual electricity.
 - We transitioned to a coffee maker that does not use K-Cups, significantly reducing plastic waste and minimizing our environmental footprint.
 - We actively compost to divert organic waste from landfills, reducing our environmental impact and contributing to a more sustainable waste management system.
- Staff training and continuing education:
 - Two project managers from HOLT presented an electric vehicle (EV) car charging initiative in collaboration with the American Institute of Architects (AIA) New York Southern Chapter.
 - Five HOLT designers participated in an on-site visit to observe a blower door test in action, gaining firsthand experience in assessing a building's airtightness and overall energy performance.
 - Two HOLT designers began studying for their LEED Accreditation exam (Zen and Mia).
 - Five HOLT team members attended the NYS Green Building Conference, gaining valuable insights into sustainable building innovations, energy efficiency, and eco-friendly materials.

Ithaca 2030 District



- The District as a whole in 2024 reduced its energy consumption by 36% from the baseline, just about the same as 2023, and used 55% less water compared to the baseline, a significant improvement over the 46% in gallons avoided in 2023. This is the second year in a row that we've met both the energy and water targets for 2025.
- By the end of 2023, there were 31 property members, 55 buildings, and 922,298 square feet that belonged to the District (compared to 583,269 square feet in 2023).
- We continued to collect monthly energy data and quarterly water data for the property owners, which we uploaded to Portfolio Manager and then migrated to interactive, online building performance dashboards. We carried out reviews of the individual dashboards on Zoom with the owners or designated building managers to make sure that they understood how to operate the dashboards and to see if they had any questions. The dashboards track progress regarding energy and water consumption at both the individual building and district levels.
- We carried out our sixth annual commuter transportation survey of member buildings. Commuter emissions remained an area of concern in 2024. Emissions dropped from 1706 kg CO₂e/commuter/year in 2021 to 1403 in 2023, but then rose in 2024 to 1480. As a result, even though the District remained below the baseline of 1501, the District was well above the 2020 goal of 1200, with a 51.6% reduction needed to reach the 2025 target. The full 2024 annual progress report can be found [here](#).
- We held monthly Advisory Board meetings and four District Partner meetings on Zoom as well as published four issues of the e-newsletter. The District Partner meetings bring together the

property owners and other stakeholders to discuss issues of mutual concern and provide updates on the progress of the 2030 District.

- Topics discussed at the quarterly District Partner meetings included commercial building electrification and the NY HEAT Act, the impact of climate change on New York's built environment, Ithaca's new all-electric conference center, and the 2024 NYS Energy Conservation Construction Code.
- The executive director attended monthly meetings of the directors in the network to discuss issues of mutual interest, helped organize the network's museum group's webinars, and he participated in the annual 2030 Districts Network Summit.

Ithaca College

- **AASHE Stars Gold Rating:** Ithaca College (IC) continues to hold a **Gold Rating** from the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System (STARS) administered by the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE). AASHE is a member-driven organization with a mission to empower higher education to lead the sustainability transformation. STARS is AASHE's reporting framework for universities and colleges to track their sustainability performance. IC scored a total of 67.16 total points out of 100 possible points. IC completes this report every three years – with the next update due in late 2025 – which includes hundreds of metrics from academics to operations to community outreach.
- **Top Green College:** IC was again named as one of the nation's most environmentally responsible colleges by the Princeton Review based on the AASHE Stars Rating and student surveys.
- **Green Power Partner:** In 2024, IC was recognized by EPA as a 7-year member of the Green Power Partnership for its continued commitment to buying completely renewable electricity, which helps to eliminate the school's Scope 2 Emissions.
- **Geneva Solar Farm:** IC celebrated the eight-year anniversary in 2024 of its 2.9 MW solar farm in Geneva, NY, which to date has produced 22.9 GWh of electricity for the College.
- **Lansing Community Solar:** IC continues to subscribe to energy produced at a Nexamp Lansing community solar farm for a portion of our College Circle Apartments electric needs.
- **Electric Vehicle Charging Expansion:** IC broke ground on a significant expansion of its electric vehicle charging network. It will take IC's existing 4 Level 2 chargers and add another 28 Level 2 chargers and two dual port DC Fast Chargers. Chargers are planned to be energized and function in the summer of 2025.
- **Sustainable Service Learning:** Received Americorps VISTA funding in 2024 and hired Rosie Bostian as the Inclusive Sustainability Coordinator who started in June 2024. Her service will extend until June 2025. The college procured additional funding for a Year 2 VISTA position as well, starting in June 2025.
- **Eco Reps:** Student Eco Reps continued to act as peer-to-peer educators by engaging student, faculty, and staff in campus-wide sustainability dialogue. Eco reps continued to support composting in the College Circle Apartments in 2024 and expanded that work to the Garden Apartments. The group further increased circulation and improved monthly "Installments," a quick read posted in campus restrooms that highlights global sustainability issues. Eco Reps also help to foster and curate on-campus reuse through the Take It Or Leave It operation and reuse shop.
- **Academic Outreach:** The Office of Energy Management & Sustainability (OEMS) developed and presented content for the Ithaca College Seminar Series (ICSM) lectures, "Choices for a Sustainable Future." OEMS further presented monthly Student Leadership Initiative (SLI) discussions geared at engaging students in Sustainable Transportation, and developed content and presented as guest-lecturer for over a dozen courses.

**IC a Sustainable
Future**
BLUE + GOLD = GREEN

Ithaca Neighborhood Housing Services

INHS strives for a holistic and sustainability-driven approach to all of its activities, from repair and homeownership programs to real estate development and property management. In 2024, construction of Village Grove, the recipient of a NYSERDA Building of Excellence Award for its net-zero passive house design and incorporation of geothermal heat and off-site community solar, was completed in the Crescent Way subdivision in Trumansburg. Construction of several homes intended for inclusion in INHS's Community Housing Trust also began in 2024 in Crescent Way; these homes are designed to achieve LEED Gold certification and to meet applicable Energy Star standards. Lastly, three substandard



manufactured homes were replaced with Energy Star rated high-efficiency homes through the INHS Manufactured Home Replacement Program, reducing their carbon footprint and lowering utility costs for their owners by more than 30%.

In addition to development work, INHS leveraged more than \$600,000 to conduct or finance critical home improvements for 141 households across its seven-county service area, bringing efficiency and other home improvements to more than 234 people. A core component of the INHS mission, these repairs and upgrades are a critical path to increased home efficiency and a healthier home environment for the people they serve.

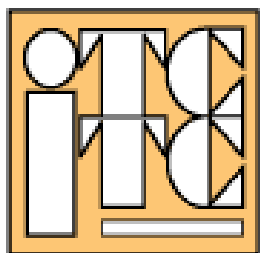
INHS also prioritizes environmental justice and climate adaptation for underserved communities in strategic planning by prioritizing nodal development, visitability and accessibility, supporting access to a variety of support services for residents, and by advertising to, and serving, income constrained and marginalized communities. These efforts ensure increased access to multi-modal transportation and micro mobility options, mitigate the negative local and global impacts of climate change, and facilitate climate adaptation for all of INHS's residents and clients.



To date, INHS solar arrays have produced about 430 MWh.

More broadly, INHS is a national leader in real estate development incorporating green building and is one of the developers that helped create the LEED for Homes building standards, the leading national residential green standard. INHS develops housing that consistently exceeds industry green building standards, including 85 units that are certified as LEED Platinum, 93 as LEED Gold, and 77 as LEED Silver. The remainder of INHS-developed housing units are built to meet or exceed, a variety of other green-building certification requirements. All new INHS developments will be all-electric and the majority will include electric vehicle charging stations. INHS's Community Housing Trust Program, has to date built or rehabilitated 70 affordable for-sale homes that meet or exceed the LEED Gold standard. Proactive maintenance and operations practices at all INHS-owned buildings ensures their continued performance and energy efficiency for generations to come.

Ithaca-Tompkins County Transportation Council



Here are some efforts where the [ITCTC](#) played an important role. As always, the ITCTC works in collaboration with municipal, county, and state partners so in all initiatives below there were multiple parties involved in search of successful outcomes.

All ITCTC reports and work products can be found in our website:

<https://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/All-Departments/Ithaca-Tompkins-County-Transportation-Council>

Ongoing grant implementation:

- Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) – Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) grant. Federal funding to develop a Safety Action Plan project across 10 municipalities, Tompkins County, and NYSDOT. \$600,000 federal award plus \$150,000 local match = \$750,000 total project funding available. City of Ithaca is lead applicant.
- The City of Ithaca was awarded \$463,855 in Carbon Reduction Program under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Legislation. This project will analyze the City of Ithaca road network with the goal of developing an Active Transportation Network plan that will be implemented over time. The goal is to have a safe, convenient network of enhanced routes for bicycling, walking and other personal mobility modes.
- TCAT served as a lead applicant in a successful grant application to advance different transportation electrification strategies – implementation work continued in 2024.

Completed/Ongoing Projects:

- Various active transportation projects in the ITCTC's Transportation Improvement Plan have been completed or continue to advance to construction:
 - City of Ithaca, Black Diamond Trail Bridge over Flood Control Channel (open to public)
 - Town of Dryden, Dryden Rail Trail bridge over Route 13 (approaching construction)
 - Village of Cayuga Heights, safe walking path to the IHS/Boynton Middle School campus.
 - Updated bicycling suitability map was published spring 2024.
 - Updated 2045 Long-Range Transportation Plan – approved December 2024.

Other significant transportation activity in 2024:

- ITCTC has been working to support the Center for Community Transportation reestablish itself after the state induced pause in operations due to outdated insurance regulations. With much community support, NY State passed legislation to allow non-profits in NY to have expanded access to vehicle insurance. This was a critical action, needed to allow Ithaca Carshare to re-start operations in March 2024. However, the CCT took a significant financial hit and now needs community help until it restores full operations.
- Three projects in Tompkins County received Transportation Alternative Program funding: Village of Trumansburg-Sidewalks; Village of Dryden-Sidewalks; Town of Ithaca-Eastshore Dr. bike & ped safety.

Looking ahead 2025:

- Implementation of different grants listed above.
- Bridge construction over Rt.13 for the Dryden Rail Trail.
- Complete the process of updating the 5-year Transportation Improvement Program of federally funded surface transportation projects. Approval date - June 2025.
- Stabilize operations of CCT (Ithaca Carshare, Ithaca Bikeshare and BikeWalkTompkins).
- Support trail planning efforts in Town of Lansing and Town of Dryden.
- Support wildlife (salamander) crossing project in Town of Caroline.

Local First Ithaca

- Produced our 14th Annual Guide to Being Local.
- Became the 2nd city in the U.S. to launch a Crowdfunding Investment program, the Ithaca Exchange, allowing people to invest small amounts of money in businesses they know and love, and receive a modest return on their investment.
- Hosted talk at May 15th launch by Stephanie Geller, director of Community Wealth Builders.
- Featured local businesses throughout 2024 on our Facebook page.
- Continued our work with the Ithaca 2030 District Advisory Board and Tompkins County Climate Protection Initiative Steering Committee.



New Roots Charter School

New Roots is a small public high school with a big mission located in the heart of downtown Ithaca. Open to any student in New York State eligible to attend high school, the tuition-free college and life preparatory program engages students in learning actively, thinking critically, and solving real world problems



creatively and collaboratively, developing the knowledge and skills to turn 21st century challenges into opportunities. New Roots features a unique four-year learning sequence that fully integrates Education for Sustainability (EfS) standards and interdisciplinary, community-based projects featuring sustainability themes while meeting all New York State graduation requirements. The lower school program (grade 9-

10) cultivates foundational understandings and skills that prepare students to become actively involved in their school and local community as leaders, entrepreneurs, and activists when they move into the upper school program (grades 11-12). Students can earn over 40 college credits through Tompkins Cortland Community College's CollegeNow Program for completing core high school courses by meeting college standards.

In the 2024-25 school year, New Roots continued to invest in local partnerships that ultimately support young people in finding pathways to meaningful livelihoods in our growing green economy in upstate New York. New Roots' College and Career Program Coordinator and EarthForce Program Manager built connections with local employers to create internship opportunities that allowed students to learn new skills and apply classroom learning to the real world. Notable partnerships and collaborations in 2024 included the US Department of Agriculture, Tompkins County, the Town of Ithaca, the Park Foundation, Cornell Cooperative Extension, and the Learning Web.

New Roots is pleased to share the following updates on our school-wide climate protection, clean energy, green workforce development, and overall sustainability initiatives in 2024:

USDA Farm to School Grant & Farm Internship Program

During the 2024 year, New Roots continued its implementation of a two-year, \$100,000 USDA Farm to School grant awarded in July of 2023 to expand the size, capacity, and learning opportunities at the school farm, which is located at EcoVillage at Ithaca. The goals for the grant were to increase food production, local food procurement, and agricultural education opportunities for students by investing in



school garden infrastructure and collaborating with community partners such as West Haven Farm, Groundswell Center for Food and Farming, and Tompkins Cortland Community College (TC3). In 2024, 400 pounds of produce grown at the school farm were used in the school's kitchen for the free farm-to-school lunch program. Surplus produce from the school farm was also given away to students and families through the school's Newt's Grocery Store weekly free food donation program. The school partners with the local organization Friendship Donation Network, a local food rescue nonprofit, for our schoolwide food donation program for students and families in need.

In 2024, New Roots took over stewardship of the berry farm and community CSA at Kestrel Perch, an opportunity that arose when the berry farm's previous manager retired. The berry farm features blueberries, raspberries, strawberries, gooseberries, and red and black currants. The berry CSA is open to the wider community and now generates additional income for the farm operations. 50 berry CSA members participated in the 2024 summer season.

In 2024, New Roots also established a partnership with the Learning Web, a local nonprofit organization dedicated to youth and development of their life skills and career exploration. The Learning Web supported our student farming internship program by funding a portion of our paid internship positions for students, which proved to be very popular among students. Interns worked on planting, weeding, harvesting, and berry plant pruning and maintenance. Over the summer, a total of 12 students participated in our farm internship program, and 2 students participated in the winter/spring farm internship program.

In 2024, New Roots continued to incorporate farm to school activities and topics into the school's curriculum. School farm manager Aaron Snow taught an Intro to US Food Systems class in the Fall 2024 semester, which covered agriculture and environmental science. Units in the course covered topics such as agricultural history, food insecurity, food waste, food safety, and more. The course is also a concurrent enrollment class eligible for TC3 college credit.

Electives offered in the 2024-25 school year included Berry Farming, Vegetable Farming, and Regenerative Agriculture. During the quieter winter season, students in these electives made berry jam in a local commercial kitchen, which was sold at the school's summer farmers' market booth, and started and tended to seedlings under grow lights. The seedlings were transplanted up at the school farm in the spring. During the milder seasons, students visited the school farm and participated in hands-on farmwork.



Earth Day of Service 2024

New Roots hosted its annual Earth Day of Service on April 22, 2024, a schoolwide day of service and celebration of Earth Day. Students participated in service projects such as farming at the school farm, Cayuga Wetlands restoration work, removal of invasive species at Lighthouse Woods to support bird habitat, and cleanup and beautification of the Clinton House and sidewalks surrounding the school.

Sense of Place Week 2024

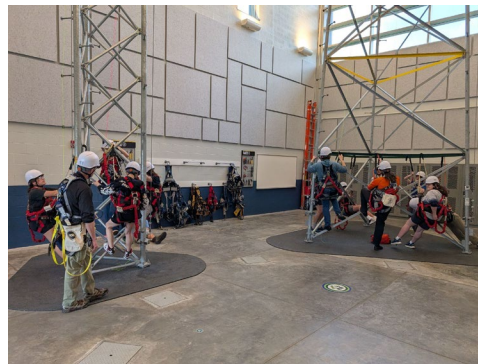
The "Sense of Place" fall orientation is a hallmark feature of the school year at New Roots. Towards the beginning of the school year, students spend a week participating in hands-on learning activities and fieldwork in the local region. The outings and activities, which are organized by grade, help build community, and orient students to the local community, history, and natural areas.

During the Fall 2024 Sense of Place Week, students participated in an array of educational, hands-on activities and fieldwork. Ninth grade students learned about water systems and visited Cascadilla Creek to do water quality testing, and took a field trip to the school farm to help out with fall farm maintenance and harvesting. Tenth grade students participated in a tree climbing and team building activity led by the Ithaca Youth Bureau, and worked on a habitat improvement project for local birds at Lighthouse Woods. Eleventh grade students visited Stewart Park to learn about the significance of Cayuga Lake to the Gayogohono people, participated in a tree climbing and team building activity with the IYB, and took part in fieldwork at the Cornell Botanic Gardens. Twelfth grade students participated in a place-based leadership and collaboration session hosted at EcoVillage, and delved into interviews with local professionals working in industries of interest.

The Sense of Place Week projects and activities are thoughtfully designed to tie in to the interdisciplinary curriculum for each grade level, which is based on the Education for Sustainability (EfS) learning standards, and with guiding questions that connect to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

SUNY Morrisville Field Trip

All students in 10th grade, the Roots of Success course, the Energy & the Environment course, and the Internship elective went on a field trip to SUNY Morrisville's Renewable Energy Programs and Agricultural and Clean Energy Technology Center. SUNY Morrisville offers both 2-year and 4-year hands-on clean energy degrees which include internships that prepare students for careers in wind, solar, and HVAC. Students attended sessions such as a tour and demo of residential and commercial heat pump systems, a walk-through of the on-site solar farm, a demonstration of pressing sunflower seeds into biodiesel, and wind turbine lab activities.



Student Council Initiatives

New Roots Student Council members led several sustainability initiatives during the 2024-25 school year based on ideas generated by students, including the elimination of disposable plastic cups in school and the elimination of plastic cutlery. Student Council members organized a communication campaign about the phaseout of plastic cups, and organized the acquisition of reusable water bottles, which were given out at no cost to students for whom cost was a barrier. Student Council also organized a program to replace plastic utensils with reusable metal utensils for students who take a to-go lunch from the school cafeteria. Student Council members developed a daily system to collect the used metal utensils, return them to the kitchen for washing, and return the clean metal utensils to the school. Students also reported on their monthly progress at the school's Board of Trustees meetings during the school year.

Environmental Protection Agency Environmental Education Grant

In 2024, New Roots Charter School was notified by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that the Environmental Education grant application submitted by the school in winter of 2023 was moving forward in a second round of funding for the program. The school remained in communication with the grant project officer as the process moved forward for the second round of funding. While the program faced administrative delays, the school received official notification that the funds would be awarded in fall 2025. The project will engage all students in our small public charter high school in a multi-year sequence of



learning activities integrated throughout our curriculum that engage them in moving along the environmental education continuum from awareness and knowledge to informed action and stewardship. Guided by partners from the Gayogohono Nation, our students will integrate traditional ecological knowledge with scientific knowledge to understand the issues impacting water quality in Cayuga Lake, the primary source of water for our city and a major recreation area, and how these issues impact our health and

quality of life, particularly for marginalized communities.

The project will combine school-based disciplinary and interdisciplinary study with a series of hands-on experiences designed to move students from general awareness and environmental information to building their capacity for problem-solving and decision-making skills as contributors to the health of our local water system. We will lay the groundwork for the community-based project work by developing the integration of disciplinary and cultural learning through an interdisciplinary study of the historical and cultural aspects of water in Gayogohono culture in grade 9, then in grade 10 and 11 science classes focusing on understanding the role of wetlands and the analysis of water quality and the impacts of our school's multi-year project. Ultimately, these whole-school, interdisciplinary experiences culminate in opportunities for students to take action and exercise stewardship through community service and education, both as part of the regular school year curriculum as well as in our summer Youth Ecological Restoration Corps program.

Roots of Success

First piloted to juniors and seniors in the spring of 2022, with thanks to the Park Foundation, Roots of Success has continued to be integrated into the school curriculum. The Park Foundation has generously renewed its funding to support the Roots of Success program annually since the pilot year. Funding has expanded our teaching capacity for this course, providing us with a dedicated, Roots of Success-certified adjunct instructor from the Cornell Cooperative Extension's Green Energy Warriors program.



While it was offered as an elective course in its first two years, Roots of Success has now been established as a required course in the school's four-year College and Career Success Seminar sequence. The Roots of Success course introduces students to topics in environmental literacy and green careers, with field trips to local sites such as the water treatment plant and the electrical bike rental company, and guest speakers from related fields, like the City of Ithaca's sustainability planner. As an added benefit for students, the course is now approved as a concurrent enrollment class eligible for TC3 college credit.

In addition to earning college credit, students participating in Roots of Success receive an Environmental Literacy certification from the U.S. Department of Labor, a credential we anticipate that regional employers will be looking for when hiring employees at all levels. New Roots Charter School is a member of a new regional green workforce development consortium which, along with partners such as TC3, will open up pathways for young people to bring their gifts and passions to the growing green economy in our region.

Green Workforce Development at New Roots: EarthForce

In 2024, New Roots continued to offer an array of programming under the umbrella of EarthForce, a sustainable workforce development program for youth first launched on Earth Day 2023 with a \$160,000 grant from the Tompkins County Community Recovery Fund grant program. In fall 2024, New Roots hired Katie Church to serve in the role of EarthForce Program Manager. Church previously ran the Youth Farm Project and brought a wealth of experience with education, youth programming, farming, grants, and nonprofit management to the role.

The school's EarthForce program aims to engage low-income Tompkins County youth ages 12-18 in developing the workforce knowledge and skills necessary to obtain high-quality employment in the growing green economy, focusing on the following priorities outlined in the Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan: 1) preparation for the economic, environmental, and social impacts of climate change; 2) preserving existing wetlands and restoring wetland functions; 3) reducing the adverse impacts to native species and ecosystems caused by invasive organisms and climate change; and 4) promoting parks, community facilities, recreational activities, and networks that support regular social interaction and physical activity.

The new program built on existing New Roots programming such as the Youth Entrepreneurship Market (YEM), the Youth Ecological Restoration Corps (created in partnership with leaders of the Gayogohono Nation and funded by the Department of Environmental Conservation and the Park Foundation), Roots of Success, the Farm to School program, and other service learning projects in local parks and natural areas.

To diversify its career exploration offerings in response to workforce trends and demands for skilled trades workers, New Roots developed a relationship with Historic Ithaca's Work Preserve initiative. A Preservation and Trades class was offered at New Roots as an elective course in Spring 2024. Students work together with expert builders at Historic Ithaca's workshop, learning to use basic hand tools and power tools on a preservation project, such as refurbishing a lamp, and also building something from wood themselves. These projects teach hands-on practical skills in construction, woodworking, and wiring, and focus on re-use and preservation of materials.

New Roots Charter School Digital Media: [WEBSITE](#) // [FACEBOOK](#) // [INSTAGRAM](#) // [YouTube](#)

Paleontological Research Institution, Museum of the Earth, and Cayuga Nature Center

- Education is a climate solution. In 2024 we reached almost 3,000 people through our climate change education programs at the Museum of the Earth, the Cayuga Nature Center, online webinars, education conferences, local events, and at partner schools and colleges.
- We continue to publish online content on climate change such as blog and social media posts, web pages, YouTube videos, and Instagram reels. Our climate change-themed videos and reels published in 2024 have over 8,100 views, and our previously published videos continue to generate thousands of views. Our blog post "[Ten Ways You Can Mitigate Climate Change](#)" (2022) remained the most visited webpage on PRI's [priweb.org](#) website in 2024. Our 2024 blog posts include:
 - [Think Globally, Teach Locally](#)
 - [Taking the First Step: How Should We Introduce People to Climate Action?](#)
 - [Why We Should All Know & Care About Antarctica](#)
 - [In the Greenhouse Videos: Resources for a Hands-on Climate Change Curriculum](#)
- Our climate-focused content on [Earth@Home](#), PRI's free, online resource for learning about Earth and its history, had over 89,000 views in 2024.
- The New York Climate Change Science Clearinghouse, which PRI staff curated, shut down in 2023, leading to a loss of a New York-focused source of climate change data and maps. In 2024 we recreated sector-themed lists of these resources on PRI's [Clearinghouse webpage](#).
- We are continuing to explore ways to move away from fossil fuel heating and cooling systems on PRI's West Campus.
- We began working on a project for PRI to become a Resilience Hub for our community. This would involve education programs, community events, and having the Museum of the Earth serve as a cooling center during extreme heat events. We are working with two faculty partners at Cornell and other community partners.
- At our summer camp at the Cayuga Nature Center, elementary school-age campers enjoyed climate change education programs, with themes of climate science and solutions. We ran summer climate change education programs for the public on Saturdays throughout the summer, and visitors to the Nature Center got to try out flooding scenarios and solutions using our fun, hands-on flood simulator.



Park Foundation



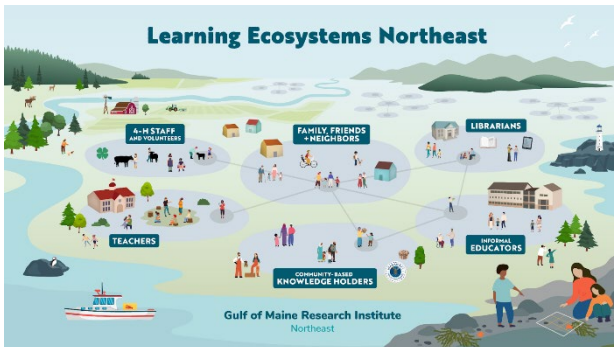
In 2024, the Park Foundation awarded approximately \$7.6 million in grant funds to 114 organizations and programs around the country advancing climate protection and clean energy. About \$1.4 million of these grant funds (19%) were awarded to 25 organizations and programs in Tompkins County, mostly through the Sustainable Ithaca grant program.

- Grants supported a wide variety of projects in alignment with the Foundation's mission of advancing a more just, equitable, and sustainable society and environment. Project focus areas included, among others, the fossil fuel transition, GHG emissions reduction, the Ithaca Green New Deal, sustainable agriculture, ecosystem conservation, social justice, green jobs, low-carbon transportation, waste reduction, plastics/petrochemicals, climate resilience, and green finance.
- During 2024, Park developed the pilot Building Decarbonization Fund (BDF) to equitably distribute funding for projects like energy efficiency upgrades and heat pump installations in local non-profit buildings. The BDF launched in January 2025, making available \$500,000 in grants and \$500,000 in low-interest loans. The pilot fund was designed to align with the City of Ithaca's Justice50 initiative by directing at least half of the funding towards Climate Justice Communities.
- In addition to grantmaking, Park provides Program Related Investments (PRI) – mission-aligned low-interest loans – to local organizations in Tompkins County. As of December 31, 2024, PRI commitments totaled \$4.3 million dollars, about half of which were dedicated to sustainability-related projects.

- All Park Foundation investments are screened to ensure alignment with its priorities. Park estimates conservatively that about a quarter of its portfolio – valued at about \$365 million at the end of 2024 – is invested in climate solutions.

Sciencenter

- In 2024, Sciencenter joined *Seeding Action*. Led by the Association of Science and Technology Centers (ASTC), *Seeding Action* catalyzes and supports science centers, museums, and public engagement networks as they cultivate a culture of hope and action to improve community and planetary health.



- The Sciencenter continues to facilitate a local Connected Learning Ecosystem (CLE) dedicated to climate education and data literacy. Our Ithaca CLE is part of a regional network, *GMRI's Learning Ecosystems Northeast*, funded by NASA. In Ithaca, we're convening informal and formal educators, including middle school science and social studies teachers, and informal STEM educators from various institutions and community-based organizations to do professional

development and learn about each other's work and programs. The overall goal is to better broker connected learning experiences for Ithaca youth and families across learning contexts.

<https://sciencenter.org/ithaca-cle/>

- In 2024, 1,221 students from Tompkins County and Cayuga County learned about alternative energy using the engineering design process in our *Power the Future* classroom-based field trip at the museum.
- Our *Future Science Leaders (FSL)* middle school program engaged in water quality testing and monitoring, data and climate science, and met with experts as they developed climate literacy and communication skills. The middle schoolers also worked closely with experts and prototyped and provided feedback on a NOAA sponsored game about how and who makes decisions related to climate induced lake level rise and engaged in community science.
- Many of our 2024 *Science Connections* programming featured activities related to climate science and public discourse. The *Science Connections* program is designed to engage a family audience visiting the museum during weekend programs. Related programs included presentations by students in Cornell's Naturalist Outreach Course, hands-on activities with Bike Walk Tompkins County, a program to Reimagine Ithaca with the National Society of Black Engineers, our celebration of Earth Day in April, events with Cornell's SEED (Science Education Engineering Development) student group, and many more.
- This past year, Sciencenter completed updates to the *Changing Skies* exhibition gallery which interprets weather and climate. This renovation included a new tornado exhibit focused on extreme weather events and artistic representations of climate data created by members of our *Future Science Leaders* program.
- The Sciencenter team worked with local Ithaca artist Rachel Feirman to enliven the walls of our Family Learning Area. The



new [pollinator-themed mural](#) transforms the 275.5 square foot space with vibrant bees, plants, and flowers that ignite curiosity and educate families about pollination.

Sunrise Ithaca



Sunrise Ithaca (bit.ly/sunriseithaca) is a local youth climate justice organization. In 2024, we:

- Knocked doors in Southside to let people know about Justice50 and our upcoming community meeting
- Hosted a 2-hour community meeting about Justice50 at the Southside Community Center with significant news and radio coverage
- Presented to 150+ IHS students during Social Justice Week about channeling youth voices for climate justice
- Urged Common Council to pass Justice50 through public comments
- Worked with Extinction Rebellion, Mothers Out Front, Cornell on Fire, and others to organized a 2.5 hour Community Potluck and Gathering for Ithacans interested in climate justice, with attendees spanning 14 different local organizations
- Tabled at CCE's EarthFest
- Coordinated the IHS component of Reclaim Earth Day
- Tabled and spoke at IHS's Climate Action Expo
- Wrote a mission statement: *At Sunrise Ithaca, we mobilize young people to fight for climate justice. As a local branch of the national Sunrise Movement, we strive to push for the climate and social policy that will best benefit Ithacans from all socioeconomic backgrounds. We work to combat systemic issues through youth-driven action, spearheading city-wide legislation such as the Ithaca Green New Deal. We recognize that the climate crisis is now, and we need everyone's help. For the communities of tomorrow and the strengthening of our own, climate justice is a necessity.*
- Created a finance system; we are accepting donations [here](#)
- Created a [website](#) with a [cross-organizational climate justice calendar](#)
- Tabled at Cornell's EcoFest
- Hosted a community meeting and discussion circle about climate justice at the Unitarian Church
- Collaborated with Ithaca Murals to host a free public murals tour
- Presented to a Climate Reality Finger Lakes meeting
- Made public comments at the City Sustainability and Climate Justice Commission about transparency, community engagement, and youth + CJC representation on the commission
- Organized a post-election climate justice rally downtown
- Tabled at Southside Community Center post-election Organizing Fair



Sustainable Finger Lakes



We marked the 20th anniversary of Sustainable Finger Lakes (SFLX), which began in 2004 as Sustainable Tompkins, with a celebration on September 8th at Taughannock State Park. From the Finger Lakes Climate Fund to Neighborhood Mini-Grants to our groundbreaking heat pump pilots to many years

of hosting conferences, workshops, study circles and teach-ins, our organization has been at the forefront of regional sustainability efforts for the past two decades.

The mobile home pilot project supported by a grant from the Tompkins County Recovery Fund continued to make headway in 2024. The project aims to retrofit 50 mobile homes with envelope improvements and

heat pumps, targeting households earning below 300% of the federal poverty level. By the end of the year, the project had successfully enrolled 78 households, completed 21 installations, and has 28 more in progress.

The Clean Energy & Equity Pilot (CEEP), funded by NYSERDA's Innovative Market Strategies program to install heat pumps in the homes of low-income tenants in the Ithaca area, still faced significant challenges in 2024. The rental pilot is focused on fossil gas systems, and the thin margin of savings from heat pumps was eroded further by the increased electric delivery rates approved for 2024 and rising prices for heat pump systems. Even with the substantial incentives provided by the CEEP program design, several landlords decided to stay with gas systems.

Since 2008, our Neighborhood Mini-Grant Program has awarded over \$98,000 in 241 grants to support sustainability-related projects in the region. The Neighborhood Mini-Grant Program was designed to stimulate resident-based, grassroots initiatives that improve quality of life and long-term health in local communities, promote environmental stewardship and green practices, generate collaboration between differing groups, and create opportunities for leadership and civic engagement.

In 2024 SFLX awarded 11 neighborhood mini-grants totaling \$4,461 for projects that included renovation of a school vegetable garden, establishment of a bike seat library, public bicycle repair station, food for a zero-waste community reception, repair of a community center gazebo, and a library cart for adult English as a Second Language classes, among others.

In another significant development, we were invited in November to join WE ACT as their Community Voices partner for the NY Southern Tier in their new EPA-funded program to bring technical assistance to environmental justice groups across NY and NJ. WE ACT is a long-established leader in addressing decades of environmental racism in West Harlem, and continues to organize for climate justice, clean air, and healthy homes.

SFLX will be the liaison in our region over a two-year outreach partnership to help community groups plug into the full array of resources and technical support at their Thriving Communities Technical Assistance Center (WE ACT TCTAC). In addition, we will work together to determine regional environmental, climate, and energy justice priorities and deliver an in-person training for community groups, on topics such as navigating federal grant applications and managing grant funding.

Finger Lakes Climate Fund

The Finger Lakes Climate Fund works to promote clean energy projects in the Finger Lakes area while strengthening our regional economy and assisting local families in need. The Climate Fund provides a way for people to support our community while offsetting greenhouse gas emissions from their buildings or travel.



In November 2024, we awarded our 100th climate fund grant. The program since its launch in 2010 has awarded grants in 14 different counties in the Finger Lakes region. It has resulted in almost 10,000 tons of carbon emissions offset and more than \$175,000 invested back into communities. In 2024 alone, we awarded 17 grants totaling \$38,679 and offsetting 2,177 tons of CO2 emissions in four counties of the Finger Lakes.

Our partners in climate action include our regional installers, NYSERDA, Performance Systems Development, Tompkins County Mobile Home Task Force, Energy Navigators, and the Southern Tier Clean Energy Hub. In addition, the County assessor's office, Tompkins Community Action, and the Ithaca Housing Authority provided assistance in reaching Section 8 tenants and LMI mobile homeowners.

Taitem Engineering



At Taitem Engineering, we're proud to have contributed to regional and national climate action that advances building decarbonization. Throughout 2024, our team has partnered with local governments, housing authorities, educational institutions, and private developers to create sustainable, resilient, and healthy buildings. As a longstanding TCCPI member, we're pleased to share these accomplishments that demonstrate our ongoing commitment to carbon reduction and climate resilience in Tompkins County and beyond.

Local Projects

- *City of Ithaca Decarbonization Roadmap*: With NYSERDA matching funds, Taitem completed comprehensive energy studies for eleven City facilities and developed a strategic decarbonization plan. The final report is currently undergoing NYSERDA review.
- *GIAC Gym*: Delivered full engineering services (mechanical, electrical, plumbing, fire safety, and structural) in collaboration with local architect STREAM Collaborative for this new community facility on West Court Street.
- *Cayuga Park Medical Office Building*: Completion of the new healthcare facility off Route 13 targeting both LEED and WELL certifications. Senior Engineer Rob Rosen presented Taitem's energy modeling approach at the American Society of Healthcare Engineers conference. Taitem's commissioning work for the project continues.



Affordable Housing Excellence

- *INHS Village Grove* (Trumansburg, NY): Completed design work for this NYSERDA Buildings of Excellence project that achieved Passive House certification.
- *Town and Country Apartments* (Binghamton, NY): Delivered designs for this 256-unit affordable housing complex meeting New York Homes and Community Renewal's rigorous sustainability standards.
- *Southwood Square* (Stamford, CT): Combined expertise from Taitem's Design and E+S departments to complete a comprehensive decarbonization study and schematic design for this 54-unit complex, including existing conditions assessment, energy efficiency improvements, and decarbonization strategies.

Innovation and Research Initiatives

- *Advanced Buildings Construction*: Nearing completion of this U.S. Department of Energy-funded project at Syracuse University, showcasing cutting-edge technologies and methodologies for deep energy retrofits.
- *NYC HPD Electrification Program*: Expanded our support role in New York City's Department of Housing Preservation and Development's electrification initiative to include both retrofits and new construction projects across the city.
- *Clean Heat for All (CH4A)*: Successfully concluding this demonstration project for "plug and play" window heat pumps with the New York City Housing Authority, NYPA, and NYSERDA. Taitem's performance analysis validated these energy-efficient units' effectiveness, supporting their broader adoption.

Thrive EVI Education Center

Thrive is a sustainability education organization based at EcoVillage at Ithaca (EVI). The ecovillage is an intergenerational community with over 230 residents living in sustainably designed homes with abundant natural habitat and four organic farms on 175 acres, just two miles from downtown Ithaca. Thrive has offered sustainability education programs at EVI for more than three decades on green design, renewable

energy, regenerative agriculture, dynamic governance, and more. Today, our programs share practical experiments in sustainable living with a focus on community-based climate resiliency.



In 2024, Thrive led educational programs – including field trips, workshops, internships, research, and service-learning projects – for students from:

- Cornell University
- Ithaca College
- SUNY Potsdam
- Rochester Institute of Technology
- La Universidad Peruana Unión
- Kean University
- Tokyo Metropolitan University
- Whitman College

We hosted public education programs, including the Post Carbon Institute's Think Resilience program, a Forest Bathing workshop, and an Experience Weekend for exploring residents. Thrive staff presented at the Alliance for Resilient and Regenerative Communities gathering and the American Psychological Association annual convention and led educational workshops for the CoHousing Institute of America and the Foundation for Intentional Communities. We also offered consulting for new and forming ecovillage and cohousing communities and hosted planners from Conifer Realty, LLC, who are designing a 400-unit community on West Hill, to share sustainable design strategies.

Thrive began collaborating with the Global Ecovillage Network's Keystone Communities program in 2024, using climate resiliency indicators to conduct an internal assessment at the EcoVillage at Ithaca. We are establishing benchmarks, creating goals, and convening action teams to bolster our climate resiliency focusing on land management, decarbonization, emergency planning, and climate psychology.

Tier Energy Network

The Tier Energy Network (TEN) is an industry-led collaboration of business, non-profits, government and education to support the development of an industry cluster in clean energy technology in the Southern Tier.



The Executive Committee provides a broad skill set in the energy industry:

- Jeff Smith: President of TEN, retired utility executive, member of many regional organizations.
- R. Michael Straight: VP of TEN, extensive experience in clean energy projects
- Rick Mancini: Retired Director of Wholesale Market Services for Customized Energy Solutions, retired from NYSEG with experience in electric supply and the NY energy markets
- Cliff Olin: Chief Development Officer at C4V, Founder and Managing Director of Olin Capital Advisors
- Dennis Lockhart: Principal of CIMSEE Consulting. Has developed lean manufacturing projects for Fortune 500 companies around the world
- Joe Rusin: Program Manager – Government and Community Relations for NYSEG
- Robert Lofthouse: Chair of Engineering Science Department at SUNY Broome
- Diane Stefani: Broome County Environmental Management Council, retired Human Resource Executive for Lockheed Martin Aerospace and Defense Business, Climate Reality Project

Southern Tier Update

Our region is entering a once in a lifetime opportunity for job growth due primarily to clean energy services and manufacturing, in-shoring and transportation. Greater Ithaca has been a leader in climate mitigation. Leading edge programs such as the Ithaca 2030 District, the Ithaca Green New Deal and Finger Lakes ReUse receive broad recognition. The Greater Binghamton Area has become an industry

cluster in clean energy manufacturing. We are now a Federal Tech Hub for the battery industry. Binghamton University led collaboration has received major funding, including a National Science Foundation Regional Engine Grant. The Western Southern Tier is a state leader in development of large - scale wind and solar projects. Across the Tier manufacturing companies from Alstom to the Raymond Corporation are making strides. Our universities and industries conduct leading-edge research. BAE is emerging as a key player in electric aviation.

A little to the north along the Thruway, major developments are emerging for the semi-conductor industry from Albany to Buffalo. Many of our companies, such as Corning Inc., serve both industries. These two industries are synergistic. The Micron plant outside of Syracuse will require 1 GW of green electric supply by 2035.

Everything Happening at Once

Our municipalities are challenged. The regional priorities have intensified and will require significant collaboration and sense of urgency at all levels to:

- Implement major industry and organic growth opportunities
- Reduce barriers to employment: housing, transportation, day care, food insecurity, poverty, etc.
- Meet NYS and Federal climate goals, including support for under-served populations
- Re-imagine our communities to attract and retain the resources we require
- Address infrastructure gaps: electric capacity, sites, water and waste water, internet access

TEN Focus Areas 2025-2027

- Maintain a monthly forum for companies and organizations involved in clean energy and climate mitigation. Recent programs have featured the NYS ISO, Ithaca 2030 District, New Energy New York, Steuben County IDA, Connected Communities Project on Cape Cod, Climate Reality Project, Raymond
- Produce the monthly energy market update on energy policies and regulations, industry updates, and operating and planned energy projects.
- Support development of climate modelling and research to support industry and municipalities
- Evaluate and promote the many new funding sources at the State and Federal level including the IRA, the Defense Act, the Chips Act, DOE, USDA, and others.
- Support development of the entrepreneurial community through mentoring, sponsorship of breaking down the silos, and funding
- Communicate industry developments to the public, education, government, industry, and non-profits
- Promote and support broad-based collaboration of education, government, industry, and non-profits on the regional priorities

Regional Collaboration is Ramping Up

Many opportunities are emerging to move our region forward in economic development, community well-being and environmental sustainability. A few to consider: Binghamton 2 Degrees, Broome County Food Council, Climate Reality Project, Regional Incubators, Environmental Sustainability Rotary Action Group, Broome County Environmental Management Council, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Cape Cod/Southern tier Earthshot Proposal, and many more. We would be happy to match your interests and skills to collaborations making a difference.

Tompkins County

Clean Energy Communities (CEC)

Throughout the year, the County successfully completed all eligible actions under the Clean Energy Communities (CEC) program, earning the highest tier of points and qualifying for \$825,000 in grant funding. We submitted a grant application and were awarded funding to install solar canopies at the Whole Health Department. This grant is a significant achievement and will enable the installation of solar canopies in 2025, advancing the County's efforts to improve energy resilience and sustainability. The

award aligns with the County's long-term goal of reducing reliance on fossil fuels and increasing the use of clean, renewable energy sources.

Energy Communities Induction Cooktop Program

The Clean Energy Communities grant awarded in 2023 for the induction cooktop program, in partnership with Whole Health through the Healthy Neighborhoods Program (HNP), has made significant progress. We issued an RFP and successfully selected a vendor to provide induction cooktops, along with pots and pans, to participants in the HNP program. To date, over 200 community members have expressed interest in participating. Additionally, three cooktops were placed at the Tompkins County Public Library as part of their "Library of Things" initiative, allowing community members to test the cooktops before deciding if they are right for them. These cooktops will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve indoor air quality. A participant survey has been developed to assess the program's effectiveness and will be distributed six months after the cooktops are distributed to gather feedback and evaluate their impact on cooking habits.



Navigating Electrical Outages: Proactive Steps for Today and Tomorrow's Electrified World

The "Navigating Electrical Outages" plan was developed and successfully presented to the Legislature by the end of 2024. This plan aims to enhance the community's preparedness for electric grid outages, particularly in light of increasing electrification in heating, cooling, and transportation. The development process included extensive data collection, interviews, and stakeholder engagement. Both short-term and long-term actions were identified to address the growing risks of grid disruptions. After final revisions, the plan was accepted by the Legislature, marking a significant milestone in ensuring the County is better prepared for future electricity emergencies.

EV Charging as a Service

The County advanced its efforts to expand EV charging infrastructure by issuing an RFP for public EV charging services on behalf of local municipalities. After receiving site submissions from municipalities, the RFP attracted eight responses, which were thoroughly evaluated. Discussions are currently underway with the airport regarding the installation of public EV chargers. The project is now under review by the County's legal team to determine the next steps.

GHG Emissions County Employee Commute

A significant step was taken in tracking and reducing GHG emissions from county employee commutes by launching a GHG emissions for employee commutes survey. The survey, which was sent to all county staff, received an impressive 407 responses. The data from the survey is currently being synthesized, and the results will be shared early in the next year. This information will provide insight into the commuting patterns of County employees and help guide strategies for reducing the carbon footprint of their daily commutes.

Business Energy Advisors Program

The Business Energy Advisors (BEA) program continued to thrive in 2024, completing a total of 11 projects by the end of the year. These projects spanned municipalities, local businesses, large developers, and nonprofits. To build on this success in the coming year, the County pursued funding opportunities with the Park Foundation. This effort led to securing a two-year grant of \$108,000, which will allow the County to maintain and expand its energy advisory services for local businesses and municipalities. Additionally, the County is in discussions with the Park Foundation to explore opportunities for expanding the BEA program to work with Park's new Building Decarbonization Fund.

Downtown Government Campus District Geothermal Heating and Cooling Feasibility Study

In 2024, the County successfully secured a \$50,000 grant from the Park Foundation to fund the feasibility study for geothermal heating and cooling in the Downtown Government Campus District. The study will explore the potential for a district-wide geothermal HVAC system, including the new Center of Government and buildings in the Dewitt Park block. The process included selecting a consultant, CHA, and developing the scope of work for the study. The consultant is now in the process of preparing a

FlexTech application for NYSERDA funding, and the project is set to advance further once the contract is signed.

Submitted IRA Funding for Last Year's Green Facility Projects and Vehicle Purchases

The County has made significant progress in securing funding through the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) to offset costs related to green facility improvements and vehicle purchases. In 2024, the team successfully completed the IRA submission in collaboration with the Finance Department and Insero. The submission included funding requests for green facility projects from the previous year and vehicle purchases made in 2023 and 2024. The County is now awaiting final approval. This funding will support ongoing sustainability efforts across the County's fleet and facilities.

EV Arcs – Federally Directed Congressional Earmark Funding for Solar Car Chargers

In 2024, the County successfully secured Federal Congressional Earmark funding to purchase and install solar-powered car chargers, known as EV Arcs, at critical County-owned locations. Three EV Arcs were deployed at the Public Works Department, the Sheriff's Department, and the Department of Emergency Response, enhancing the County's reliance on renewable energy and providing much-needed EV infrastructure to support County operations. This project is a key step in the County's transition to sustainable energy sources.

Tompkins County Climate Protection Initiative

- The Ithaca 2030 District continued to be the flagship program of TCCPI in 2024. Fifty percent of the coordinator's hours are committed to this project. The 2030 District is vital to achieving two important strategic goals for TCCPI: 1) strengthening the involvement of the business community in efforts to reduce the community's carbon footprint; and 2) establishing a process for collecting building performance data in downtown Ithaca and benchmarking it against both national and local baselines. For more details, see the Ithaca 2030 District report above.
- The TCCPI monthly general meetings continued to be very well attended, with an average of about 30 participants. That the meetings continue to attract a sizeable number of community leaders and activists after more than fifteen years reflect the continued strong interest in TCCPI.
- Topics in 2024 included:
 - NYS Climate and Clean Energy Legislation: Prospects and Challenges – Anna Kelles
 - The NYS Climate Impacts Assessment – Allison Chatrchyan
 - The Cozy Basements Program – Jaden Beck & Ethan Bodnaruk
 - Green Workforce Development – Aloja Airewele
 - The Humphrey Fellows Program – Hyomi Eom & Bossombra Kouamé
 - The Hudson River Watershed Alliance – Simon Gruber
 - Cornell on Fire – bethany ojalehto mays
 - The Climate Reality Project – Diana Stefani & Tom Hirasuna
 - How the NYS Electric Grid Works – Marguerite Wells
 - Cornell Climate and Energy Update – Bert Bland, Sarah Carson, and Wayne Bezner-Kerr
 - The New Roots EarthForce Program – Tina Nilsen-Hodges
 - The Ithaca 2030 District – Peter Bardaglio
 - Climate Change in the News – Peter Bardaglio
 - Climate Change, the Energy Transition, and Local Municipalities – Dan Lamb
 - Recent Findings on Methane, Blue Hydrogen and LNG – Bob Howarth
 - A New Direction for Decarbonization: Rebecca Evans
 - Climate & Clean Energy Priorities in the Upcoming Legislative Session – Anna Kelles
 - Distributed-Scale Green Hydrogen to Prevent 'De-Celerating' the Energy Transition – Paul Mutolo and William Dailey
 - The Climate Solutions Accelerator of the Genesee-Finger Lakes Region – Kristen Van Hooreweghe



- The [TCCPI Newsletter](#), which comes out every two months, had a subscriber base of about 420 and the average open rate during 2024 was 54% for its six issues. The combined TCCPI/Ithaca 2030 District subscriber base was about 500; there is significant overlap among the two groups of subscribers.
- The TCCPI [website](#) continues to be a rich resource on climate change and clean energy issues, and was updated monthly. All of the meeting notes, annual reports, and newsletters can be found archived on the site, dating back to 2009.
- On the social media front, regular postings were made on the Facebook pages for TCCPI and the Ithaca 2030 District. In addition, the TCCPI coordinator continued to post information regularly about energy, climate change, and sustainability issues on X/Twitter, and has 2,250 followers.
- Outreach efforts included articles by the coordinator about the NY HEAT Act in the Ithaca Times in January 2024 and the Bottle Bill reform campaign in the Ithaca Voice in February 2024. Also, the latest Ithaca 2030 District annual report received coverage in June in the Ithaca Voice. In addition, the coordinator presented on TCCPI and the Ithaca 2030 District for the Perspectives in Global Development Seminar Series at Cornell University in January 2024 and for Kendall at Ithaca in October. TCCPI now has its own channel on YouTube, where selected talks recorded at our monthly meetings are posted regularly.
- TCCPI continued its advocacy activities in 2024, focusing on climate and energy legislation in Albany and actively participating in the NY Renews, Renewable Heat Now, and Climate Can't Wait campaigns.
- The TCCPI coordinator served on the boards of the Groundswell Center for Local Food and Farming, New Roots Charter School, PRI/Museum of the Earth/Cayuga Nature Center, and EcoVillage at Ithaca, Inc, and he was a regular attendant at meetings of the Tompkins County Climate and Sustainable Energy Advisory Board.

Tompkins County Water Resources Council

The Tompkins County Water Resources Council (WRC) serves as an advisory board to the County



Legislature on matters related to water resources management and planning. The Council's mission is to identify problems, propose priorities, and facilitate coordination of activities to protect the County's water resources. Additionally, it provides a public forum for local communities and stakeholders to discuss their water resources concerns while fostering collaboration among local governments, public and private institutions, agencies, and organizations throughout the County.

The Tompkins County Water Resources Council (WRC) had a productive and impactful year in 2024, with significant achievements in watershed protection, public education, and interagency collaboration. Key accomplishments included:

- Providing education and outreach support for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approved Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for Phosphorus in Cayuga Lake after 22 years of development.
- Hosting eight expert presentations on critical water resource topics including invasive species management, flood mitigation, and watershed protection strategies.
- Conducting two well-attended municipal training sessions on culvert management and stream health, reaching 37 participants from 14 municipalities.
- Distributing the updated Clean Boating on Cayuga Lake map1 to marinas and lakeside venues, promoting responsible recreational use of the lake.
- Advocating for consistent application of Public Health Law regarding watershed protection through formal communications with the Governor's office.
- Completing and approving the 2025-2027 Water Quality Strategy, incorporating TMDL actions, and restructuring the document for improved usability.

- Facilitating collaboration between municipalities, Cornell University, and state agencies to implement water protection measures across jurisdictional boundaries.

The Council continued to serve as the County's primary forum for water resource management discussion, bringing together diverse stakeholders to address shared challenges. This report details the activities and accomplishments of the WRC and its committees throughout 2024.

2024 Presentations

The WRC regularly invites guest speakers to present on water-related topics. In 2024, presentations included:

- Water Quality Project Funding: Owasco Lake Ditch Remediation Program – Ann Robson, Owasco Lake Watershed Association; Dan Kuhn, Roadside Ditches Remediation Manager
- Water Quality Project Funding: Seneca Lake Sediment, Nutrient, and Pollution – Ron Klinczar, Seneca Lake Pure Waters Association
- Tompkins County Soil & Water Conservation District 2024 Work Plan Forecast – Jon Negley, TCSWCD
- Finger Lakes Land Trust Update of Local Projects – Max Heitner, Finger Lakes Land Trust
- MyCoast NY: A Statewide Tool for Engaging Communities and Documenting Flood and Storm Events – Kristen Hychka, NYS Water Resources Institute
- Cayuga Lake Hydrilla Treatment and Future Funding – Cathy McGlynn, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC); Richard Ruby and Mike Voorhees, U.S. Army Corps of Engineering
- Scientific Research Updates on Hydrilla and Other Aquatic Species – Bernd Blossey, Cornell University
- Trees on Farms for Water Quality and Flood Mitigation – Harry Greene, Propagate

2024 WRC Committees

Cayuga Lake Monitoring Partnership Committee

After 22 years in development, the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for Phosphorus in Cayuga Lake was approved by the EPA on July 24, 2024. That news was made public on September 4, 2024. The Monitoring Partnership worked with Tony Prestigiacomo, director of NYS Department of Environmental Conservation Finger Lakes Hub, and our partner organizations, the Cayuga Lake Watershed Intermunicipal Organization (CWIO) and the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network (Network), to schedule four public outreach meetings across the watershed, with in-person and virtual options. All the meetings were open to the public; however, each had a target audience, including agriculture, County agencies, municipalities, and the general public. This allowed for in-depth discussions with specific stakeholder groups.

The committee accomplished several key initiatives throughout 2024:

- Completed the review of Dave Bouldin's carbon, calcium, and nutrient model for Cayuga Lake. This has implications for how we understand phosphorus availability in the lake, the occurrence of algal blooms, and vulnerability to climate change. Outreach with the results is pending.
- Discussed opportunities for using CSI data to identify priority spots for phosphorus reduction projects in line with the TMDL recommendations.
- Continued to review the state response to the draft Owasco Lake Watershed Rules and Regulations and provide comments supporting the need for more protection of Owasco Lake as a source of drinking water.
- Discussed possible opportunities to implement Drinking Water Source Protection Plan projects that could also support Cornell University's Phosphorus Offset Program.
- Provided a venue to engage with local watershed organizations and resource managers to exchange information about their work and upcoming events. Regular participants include Cayuga County Planning Department, Community Science Institute, Cayuga Lake Watershed Network, Cayuga Lake Watershed Intermunicipal Organization, Cayuga Lake Environmental Action Now, Cornell University, and Tompkins County's Environmental Management Council, Planning & Sustainability Department, and Environmental Health Department. Several other entities are represented less regularly.

Education & Outreach Committee

The Education & Outreach Committee distributed the updated Clean Boating on Cayuga Lake map to marinas and lakeside venues across Tompkins County. This resource includes information for boaters on dining options, restroom facilities, boat repair services, fuel locations, and other amenities. The committee ensured accurate, up-to-date information was included on the map to enhance the boating experience while promoting responsible lake usage. Distribution focused on locations where both residents and visitors could access the maps when enjoying Cayuga Lake. Feedback collected will help inform future updates.

Executive Committee

The WRC Chairperson and Executive Committee act on behalf of the WRC in issuing letters of comment and advocacy to local, state, and federal agencies. These letters are drafted by WRC members or committees and then approved by the entire Council. In cases where a timely response is needed and deadlines do not align with the WRC's regular meeting schedule, the Executive Committee is empowered to approve and submit letters on the WRC's behalf.

Throughout 2024, the WRC Chairperson and Executive Committee delivered two letters:

January: The WRC wrote to Governor Hochul to urge New York State to consistently uphold Public Health Law Section 1100, Title 10 granting water purveyors the authority to develop and update watershed rules and regulations for the preservation of public drinking water sources and protection from point and nonpoint source pollution. This would allow City of Auburn and Town of Owasco to update the Owasco Lake Watershed Rules and Regulations, in a manner consistent with the City of Syracuse and New York City.

October: A second letter was sent to Governor Hochul expressing support for the updated Owasco Lake Watershed Rules and Regulations and requesting the Department of Health to re-open discussions with Owasco Lake stakeholders, including Tompkins County and the Town and Village of Groton.

Membership & Nominating Committee

The Membership & Nominating Committee works with County staff to manage the recruitment process for Council positions. In 2024, the committee identified candidates and process applications for open seats. The Council structure includes 21 voting representatives, along with non-voting associates. With support from the County Planning & Sustainability Department, the committee brought several new individuals to the Council. As part of its annual responsibilities, the committee prepared and presented the officer nominations for the year to ensure leadership continuity.

Municipal Training Committee

In 2024, the committee assisted in hosting two trainings, with a total of 37 people attending from 14 municipalities and the County:

Training 1: Culvert Data Management and Stormwater Financial Planning

This training was presented by Michelle Wright, deputy supervisor for the Town of Ulysses, to the Tompkins County Council of Governments on Thursday, July 25, 2024. Michelle explained the need for municipalities to have a culvert inventory and discussed:

- The Town of Ulysses culvert data project
- Paving and culvert capital planning
- Geographic information system (GIS) based culvert data
- Resources and opportunities in Tompkins County

The presentation was attended by 18 people representing 13 municipalities.

Training 2: Stressed-Out Streams: When to Act or Not

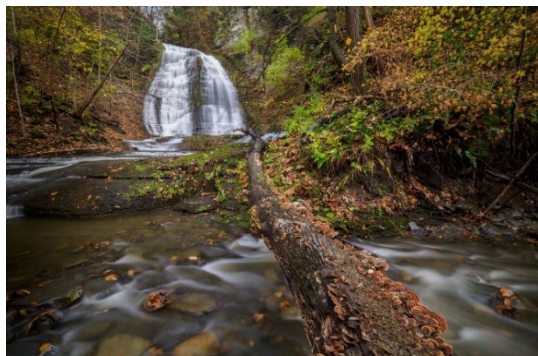
This training was geared toward highway department and municipal staff and focused on stream health and processes. It expanded upon the 2022 Streams 101 Course (though attending that course was not a prerequisite).

The training was held November 12, 2024, at the Tompkins County Highway Department and included a two-hour classroom session followed by a 1.5-hour site visit. The trainers were Mike Lovegreen, formerly with the Upper Susquehanna Coalition, and Angel Hinickle of the Tompkins County Soil and Water Conservation District.

Their presentations covered:

- Basics of how streams work and change over time
- Causes of changes to streams
- Signs indicating stream instability
- When to act to restore a stream or remedy a problem

The site visit was at Upper Buttermilk Falls State Park to explore flooding and erosion issues along Buttermilk Creek and their possible solutions.



The training had 19 attendees representing seven municipalities, Tompkins County, NYS Parks, and Cornell University. There were many questions from participants during the presentation and lively discussion of past, current, and ongoing stream issues during the field visit.

Water Quality Strategy Committee

The Water Quality Strategy Committee was charged with updating the 2022-2024 Tompkins County Water Quality Strategy, which was adopted in November 2021.

In March, the committee members led the WRC in a brainstorming exercise with breakout rooms in Zoom to discuss actions to implement in the next three years. Ideas from that meeting informed more discussion and small group goal setting in May. In September, New York State released the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for Phosphorus for Cayuga Lake. The committee regrouped and focused on the TMDL actions that could be incorporated into the Water Quality Strategy for the WRC to implement. The committee shared proposed actions in October and November.

The WRC approved the 2025-2027 Water Quality Strategy on December 16, 2024, and Chair Cynthia Brock shared an overview with the Planning, Energy, and Environmental Quality Committee in January 2025.

Watershed Rules and Regulations Committee

The Watershed Rules and Regulations (WRR) Committee brings together representatives from the Tompkins County Whole Health Department and three surface water public drinking water utilities: Bolton Point, Cornell University, and the City of Ithaca. This committee provides a forum for sharing information as all three utilities develop or implement their Drinking Water Source Protection Plans (DWSP2), with additional representation from other agencies and WRC members. At the close of the year, both Bolton Point and Cornell University had DWSP2s in final review at the state level.

Key developments include:

- The City of Ithaca's DWSP2 received a \$45,500 grant from the Great Lakes Basin small grants program for a Build-out analysis along the Six Mile Creek corridor, completed in October 2024. Results were shared with the towns of Caroline, Danby, Dryden, and Ithaca, alongside a completed review of local laws addressing large-scale solar development and associated stormwater impacts.
- The City of Ithaca established an intergovernmental agreement with Tompkins County Soil & Water Conservation District to increase project implementation in the Six Mile Creek watershed, supporting the DWSP2. This collaborative model was shared with other water purveyors and may lead to new partnerships.

- Tompkins County Planning & Sustainability Department received their contract in late 2024 for the \$75,000 award from NYS DEC Non-Agricultural Nonpoint Source Planning grant for a comprehensive stream assessment, with work scheduled to begin in 2025.
- The committee actively monitored and provided comments on the draft Owasco Lake Watershed Rules and Regulations, advocating for water purveyors' rights to use WRRs as a source water protection tool.
- Discussions explored how other water purveyors utilize WRRs, additional protection tools including New York's Agricultural Environmental Management Program, and local land use controls.
- The committee examined how the newly released TMDL for Phosphorus in Cayuga Lake could align with DWSP2 goals.

Tompkins Food Future



- The [final comprehensive Tompkins County Food System Plan](#) was brought to the Tompkins County Legislature in July 2022 and accepted unanimously. Since then we have been working to get the word out about the plan and build support for it in the community.
- We convened a Tompkins County Agriculture Summit in March 2024 to learn about programs, emerging markets, and funding opportunities to address climate change, improve resiliency, and protect farmland for the future of farming.
- We held a Food System Art Show in June, "Picturing a Resilient, Equitable, and Healthy Food Future."
- We also hosted an experiential field visit to Food Bank of the Southern Tier.
- In addition, we held the following workshops:
 - Local Funder Panel in March
 - Tompkins County Agriculinary Microgrant Program in April
 - Better Together for Mental Health in May
- Throughout the year, in meeting with groups and organizations and in our newsletters, we have been encouraging them as well as individuals to take the [Community Food System Pledge](#).

Town of Caroline

Town of Caroline Zoning Law: On March 20, 2024, the Caroline Town Board adopted the town's first zoning law. The work to develop the zoning law occurred over the past three years. The zoning law promotes the goals of the town's Comprehensive Plan to encourage livable residential centers and protecting open space. Highlights include:

- Four types of districts are established: Agricultural/Rural, Hamlets (7), Focused Commercial, and a "Stream Corridor Overlay" District. These districts were defined by current patterns of development and environmental conditions, with the goal of protecting and promoting the quality of life in each of the parts of the town and the town overall.
- Housing of all types is permitted in all districts and there are incentives for senior and affordable housing units.
- Design Standards are established for commercial businesses.
- Home Business and Residential Secondary Businesses are permitted throughout Caroline, supporting local businesses and the local economy.
- Agricultural Operations and Structures are permitted in all districts. Major Subdivisions and commercial developments are required to establish buffers with adjacent Agricultural Operations.

- Two measures promote preservation of open space and are protective of agriculture in the town. In the Ag/Rural District the zoning law establishes a 3-acre average for future subdivisions. This is a modest subdivision limit that promotes the preservation of open space and gives landowners the right to establish how their land is subdivided. The second measure is the Conservation Subdivision provision for Major Subdivisions in the Ag/Rural District. It is designed to conserve open land (50%) and protect the environment.
- The Stream Corridor Overlay District establishes riparian (stream) buffers to protect our waterways and fresh waters, as well as property owners and their assets. Riparian buffers for Six Mile Creek (horizontal distance from the top of the stream bank on each side of the stream) are 75-ft in the hamlets and 100-ft in the Ag/Rural and Focused Commercial Districts. For other perennial streams, the riparian buffer width is 50-ft. For intermittent streams the riparian buffer width is 25-ft.



Municipal Broadband in Caroline: The Town of Caroline successfully partnered with the Town of Dryden to secure an \$11.6M grant from New York State's ConnectALL office in April 2024 to build out high-speed, affordable fiber-optic internet in the two towns. Internet access has been a long-standing issue in Caroline, like many other places in upstate New York, and we are excited at the prospect of providing this necessity for our residents.

The project will allow the 1,500 households in Caroline to join the 6,500 households in Dryden in New York State's first publicly owned and operated fiberoptic broadband service. Construction of the network is underway and is scheduled for completion by December 31, 2026. Customer connections will begin in July 2026. Robust, affordable broadband will enable all residents to conduct business and personal life remotely, thereby reducing the need for transit.

We are very grateful to our partners in Dryden and the Dryden Fiber Team for their vision and determination in developing this municipal broadband utility. And we are extremely grateful to New York State and the Federal government for providing the funds to make this a reality.

Local Clean Heating & Cooling Campaign: Energy Independent Caroline (EIC), the Town's sustainability committee, is continuing its efforts to reduce energy use and transition the town and its residents to renewable energy sources. EIC is proud to partner with several local programs to facilitate home heating and cooling improvements. Caroline is positioned to renew its Climate Smart Communities Bronze certification.

Recreational Trail: The Towns of Ithaca, Dryden, Danby, and Caroline have partnered with NYSEG to bring to fruition recreational trail easement agreements between each of the towns and NYSEG for use of the NYSEG property to extend the South Hill Recreational Way Trail 7.8 miles from its current terminus at Burns Road to the county border. The Caroline Town Board held a public hearing for the rail trail on April 17, 2024, and unanimously adopted the easement agreement. The easement became effective on May 25, 2025, upon approval by the NYS Public Service Commission.

We have dubbed this trail extension the Coddington Valley Rail Trail. A Friends of the Coddington Valley Rail Trail has come together and is now making hands-on improvements to identify and improve the recreational trail on the former Ithaca & Owego rail bed. The four towns are also now working to develop concept design plans for the segment from Burns to Banks Roads. The Coddington Valley Rail Trail will provide a safe corridor for non-motorized transit and recreation from Ithaca to the county border near White Church and Coddington Roads.

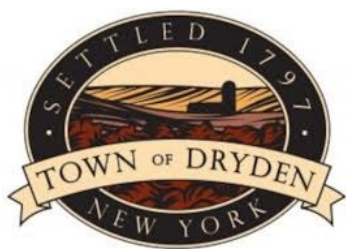
Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan: The Caroline Agriculture Committee, with assistance from Monica Roth and Cornell Cooperative Extension, completed drafting of a Town of Caroline Agriculture

and Farmland Protection Plan in 2024, and the Caroline Town Board adopted the plan at its February 5, 2025, meeting. The first Caroline Farm Directory was issued in October 2024.

Old Town Hall Renovation Project: The town received a grant in 2023 to renovate the Historic Town Hall from the New York State Historic Preservation Office. The Town has contracted with Bero Architecture for design, architecture, and administration of construction for the project. Planning is underway and the project is scheduled to go to bid in late 2025, with construction in the summer of 2026.

Town of Dryden

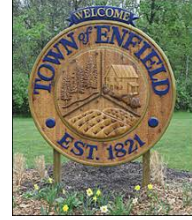
- In July 2024 the Town received a \$175,000 grant, the highest available to small municipalities in the NYSERDA Clean Energy Communities Program Southern Tier, bringing the total of grants received for clean energy actions to \$325,000. The grant was based on accumulated actions, including reducing municipal operation GHG emissions by 16% by contracting for 100% renewable energy.
 - The newest grant was used to purchase three new electric vehicles for the town Department of Public Works (DPW), code enforcement officers, and recreation department, for a total of four EV's in the town fleet.
 - The town launched a second Clean Heat/Cooling Community Campaign, promoting electrification of residents' homes and small businesses. The campaign resulted in more than 10 heat pump installations, and a \$10,000 NYSERDA grant for further GHG reducing actions. Chris Skawski of Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE-TC) assisted with the campaign.
- The \$10,000 grant was used to purchase a dual port Level 2 EV charging station at the highway barn. An earlier grant funded an EV charging station at town hall.
- The town completed a \$100,000 energy upgrade for the town DPW office building, funded by three combined NYSERDA grants. Energy conservation measures to the 3600-square-foot cement block structure, previously heated by natural gas, included installing air source heat pumps and insulating the shell of the building as well as installing energy efficient windows and a door.
- Dryden finished the year number three in the NYSERDA Clean Energy Communities Program eight-county Southern Tier region, with 7000 points and 19 high impact actions completed.
- The Dryden Climate Smart/Clean Energy Communities Task Force met monthly to implement recommendations in the Town Climate Action Plan, including completing actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from municipal operations and prepare the town for the effects of climate change.
- In June 2024, the town was re-certified as a Bronze Climate Smart Community. The task force continued working on Silver Certification, expected in 2025.
- As part of the Climate Smart Communities (CSC) work, the town sponsored an interactive workshop on responding to extreme weather events with invited town leaders. About two dozen participants worked with workshop leader Jerry Sheng of CCE-TC to consider responses to extreme weather like winter storms, flooding, and heat waves. The workshop was another step, following a community wide survey, towards creating the town's first Climate Change and Resiliency Plan (CCARP)
- In a combined effort with the Dryden Conservation Board, the task force continued to support a Dryden High School Sustainability Club effort to study and create pollinator pathways.



Town of Enfield

- Awarded a WQIP grant for a stream stabilization and culvert replacement project
- Awarded a NYSERDA grant to install solar panels on the Town Hall

- Awarded a Parks and Trails grant that was used to install a Skate Garden that hosts a pollinator garden
- Worked with Climate Smart Communities on a waste reduction campaign and hosted “Trash Talks”
- Worked with Clean Energy Communities to have an energy audit of our Highway Garage



Town of Ithaca

- The Community Choice Aggregation (CCA) program, developed in collaboration with the City of Ithaca, received state approval in December 2024, and will launch in phases throughout 2025 and 2026.
 - The goal of the CCA program is to implement a community-wide program to achieve a local energy transition by 2030 through electrification and building decarbonization.
 - Designated electric vehicle (EV) charging as an "accessory use," reducing regulatory hurdles for both residents and commercial developers and making installation more convenient for them.
 - Continued to work with interdepartmental team to advance reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in Town facilities.
 - Continued to work with interdepartmental team on developing the Town Hall Weatherization project.
- Supported Public Works in implementation of the Town's Green Fleet Policy.

