



NEWSPAPER Quality Communities

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THE QUALITY COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE demonstrates New York State's commitment to working with local government leaders to find smart, innovative solutions to strengthen our economy, improve the quality of our natural environment and enhance the livability of the place we call "home."

A Message from the Quality Communities Interagency Working Group

New Yorkers recognize that quality of life is intimately connected to land use patterns and governmental decisions at all levels. However, the popular term "smart growth" applies to a fraction of the issues relevant to the creation of a quality community. Consideration of land use policies, building codes, and governmental actions related to the built environment and control of sprawl is just the beginning.

On January 21, 2000, Governor George E. Pataki created the Quality Communities Interagency Task Force, appointing the Lieutenant Governor as chair and the Secretary of State, vice chair. The Task Force, which included 18 agency leaders, was given the charge: to study growth and to seek measures to assist communities with implementation of creative strategies to balance future development with environmental protection in ways that enhance both economic vitality and quality of life.

On February 5, 2001, the Task Force released its report "State and Local Governments Partnering for a Better New York." The report made 41 recommendations for enhanced cooperation between State and local government... and articulated principles for community center revitalization, open space conservation, farmland protection, advancement of technology, sustainable economic development and recognizing the value of planning.

This past Spring, the Governor authorized the first official step toward implementation of the Quality Communities recommendations and principles by establishing an expanded interagency working group of 25 agencies. With continuity of leadership, the Working Group is providing the structure to adopt the Principles within state agencies and to collaborate among agency personnel and local governments to achieve Quality Communities projects. This newsletter provides a snapshot of some of the activities and accomplishments already registered.

As 2002 progresses, the Working Group will continue to identify new and innovative ways to partner with local government, the business community, not-for-profits and the people we all serve. In this way, we will be well positioned to leverage the resources needed to revitalize every part of the State from New York City to the North Country, from the Finger Lakes to the Great Lakes. Quality of life for all New Yorkers, in all communities is our mission as a partner to local governments and their citizens.

Mary O. Donohue

Mary O. Donohue
Lieutenant Governor
Chair, Quality Communities
Working Group

Randy A. Daniels

Randy A. Daniels
Secretary of State
Vice Chair, Quality Communities
Working Group



Governor Pataki started laying the ground work for the Quality Communities Interagency Task Force in January of 1995. In his State of the State address this year, he called upon all of us "to recommit ourselves to the priorities that have been the hallmarks of our progress for the past seven years." That progress has included protecting more than 300,000 acres of open space. "We must do more," he said. "I am setting a goal of preserving over one million new acres ...over the next decade." The Governor then noted that Quality Communities and the new Open Space Plan "provide the perfect framework for achieving that goal in cooperation with local governments across the state."

Stories in this and future newsletters will reflect our State's commitment to partnering with local governments — to protect the environment and spur economic development to contribute to the quality of life in our communities.

Transportation and Liveable Neighborhoods



Route 50 in Saratoga Springs



A vision of Route 50 with sidewalks, trees, period lighting and a planted median.

Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) are being incorporated routinely in delivering capital transportation improvements around the State. The Department of Transportation has embraced CSS as a means of designing transportation projects in harmony with the community. Project designs advanced under this philosophy, involve the community in identifying the environmental, scenic, aesthetic, cultural, natural resources, community and transportation service needs and developing solutions within the context of the project. The goal is to build and maintain safe, sustainable transportation projects without disrupting community character or harmony.

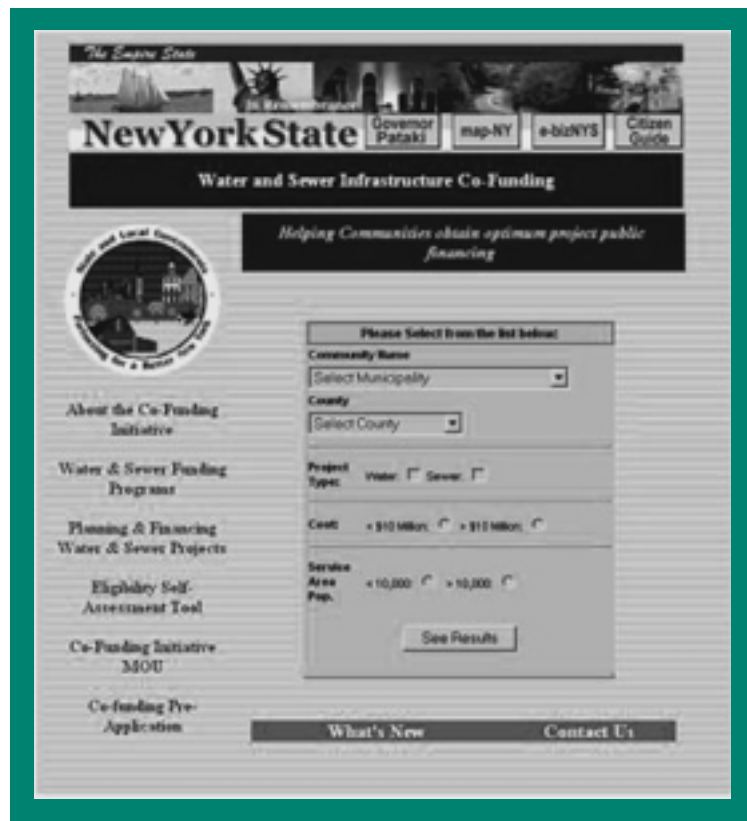
CSS is especially important for Main Street projects. In 2001, The Department of Transportation, together with community support and involvement, has let or has had under construction some 25 Main Street projects across the State. In 2002, more than 45 Main Street projects will be advanced either by the Department of Transportation directly, or localities with funds under administration of the Department of Transportation. Within the next five years many more Main Street projects in neighborhoods and communities across the State are being planned. These Main Street projects may involve, in addition to highway or bridge improvement, underground utility work, new sidewalks, accommodations for bicyclists and transit passengers, period lighting, plantings, and other treatments designed to complement the local architecture.

A \$750,000 grant program is being initiated this year to provide funding to localities for technical assistance in traffic engineering and transportation planning as part of the Quality Communities initiative. Eligible activities include funding for the preparation of the transportation element of a comprehensive plan, assistance for the transportation component of collaborative local visioning and input for context sensitive solutions. The Department will execute Local Agreements with selected localities to hire a consultant for eligible activities, financed by 80% State reimbursement and 20% local match.

Looking Ahead...Work on Quality Communities Clearinghouse Begins

As members of the Quality Communities Task Force traveled the State meeting with leaders from the public and private sectors, they heard repeated requests for a clearinghouse website. Local officials were keenly interested in having instant access to data, programs and state resources useful for planning, developing, and sustaining a quality community. For future website development, a recent survey of local governments asked what Quality Communities Principles and information were most important to them. Economic development, grant information and technical assistance for planning were among the most popular responses.

The NYS Environmental Facilities Corporation (EFC) has developed the first Quality Communities model link. Designed to assist communities seeking sewer and water infrastructure funding, the site contains a self-assessment form to determine eligibility for grants available from five participating agencies. This co-funding infrastructure site is expected to be operable on the EFC website soon.





Leaders from the County, eleven towns and villages, as well as the Palisades Interstate Park Commission, signed the agreement they hope will improve planning and development along the Hudson River.

Rockland Riverfront Communities Join Forces with Help From a Quality Communities Demonstration Grant

The Quality Communities Demonstration Grant Program provided “aid to municipalities to enter into collaborative and cooperative agreements to accomplish effective planning for long term community and regional vitality.” In 2000, a Request for Proposals for \$1.3 million drew 179



Haverstraw's municipal park set the scene.

applications amounting to \$17.9 million in requests. The 28 grants awarded were to communities ready, willing and able to embrace innovative (and intermunicipal) planning and community development techniques, linking environmental protection with economic prosperity and community well-being.

One of the largest and most historic grant projects is that of Rockland County in cooperation with Westchester County. This is an

intermunicipal planning grant for the communities on both banks of the Hudson River near the Tappan Zee Bridge. “For the first time, all of our riverfront communities have officially agreed to work together,” stated Rockland County Executive Scott Vanderhoef. On January 16, 2002, Lt. Governor Donohue joined the County Executive, presiding over a ceremony establishing the Rockland Riverfront Communities

Council. Eleven towns and villages, the County and the Palisades Interstate Park Commission signed the unprecedented Intermunicipal Agreement forming the new organization ‘to preserve and enhance the character of Rockland communities along the Hudson.’ The new council will work collaboratively on riverfront issues with its east bank counterpart, The Historic River Towns of Westchester.

John Nolon, Director of the Land Use Law Center at Pace Law School who assisted in preparing the agreement, also observed that “the Quality Communities initiative is arguably the most important and far reaching program going on in the State today.”

“We’ve started to think about how we affect each other.”

Rockland County Executive Scott Vanderhoef



County Executive Vanderhoef and Lt. Governor Donohue helped celebrate the historic agreement.

Governor Pataki Expands Open Space Protection

New York is a leader in open space conservation — not only in sheer number of acres but in its development of new ways to conserve land. For example, the “working forest” conservation easement the State obtained from the Long Pond Timber Company in St. Lawrence County provides public access to 18,950 acres while allowing the property to remain in private hands, managed for sustainable timber production. The easement also protects the headwaters of the North Fork of the Grasse River and other sensitive areas. At the same time, the working forest easement reduces the company’s tax burden, maintains the municipal tax base, and preserves jobs in the forestry industry.

This method of conserving open space is a direct result of a partnership among private and public sectors. As noted in its January 2001 Report, “The Quality Communities Task Force found near unanimous support in Roundtable discussions for the State to become a greater partner with local and regional governments and private landowners to conserve open space resources.” Recently, Governor Pataki gave another boost to open space conservation partnerships by announcing that he will expand the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) to provide not-for-profit organizations a mechanism to fund land acquisition projects that protect water quality.

Land acquisition to protect water quality has long been a key strategy in environmental protection, and often a less costly alternative than construction of water treatment plants. Providing public access, protecting wildlife habitat and even preserving

scenic vistas can be added benefits. Allowing not-for-profit organizations the ability to access CWSRF funds for water quality protection is the most recent example of how the State is partnering in open space conservation.



Tivoli Preserve in Albany County is a recent Conservation Success Story. Pictured above, the Governor leads a tour with members of community groups, Department of Environmental Conservation, Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, the City of Albany and other partners working to expand opportunities for the public to enjoy this natural resource.

“A central finding of the (QC) Task Force’s report is the need for the State to conserve open space...”

Summary Draft for NYS Open Space Plan

Town Gown Partnership Grows in New York

The State University of New York (SUNY) is a key partner in the Quality Communities initiative. SUNY is working on new approaches to share expertise in planning, design, economic development, communication and technology with communities. Recently, the City University of New York (CUNY) and Cornell also have joined the partnership and are preparing programs to assist localities achieve their visions and plans by sending them students and teachers well-versed in subjects ranging from urban design to landscape architecture.

At the 2001 Quality Coasts, Quality Communities Conference, Chancellor Robert King unveiled the SUNY Sourcebook of Community Assistance programs, a project prepared by SUNY-Environmental Science and Forestry Council for Community Design Research and funded by NYS Department of State, Division of Coastal Resources and SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry. This 80-page reference will help communities take better advantage of SUNY programs by providing details on the types of assistance available and contact information.

Currently, SUNY is enhancing the community design assistance program to better serve more communities. The Department of State and other involved state agencies are deciding how they can collaborate with communities and SUNY on downtown revitalization projects throughout New York.

For a copy of the Sourcebook, contact Lisa Tessier at SUNY-ESE, One Forestry Drive, Syracuse, New York 13210. Phone 315-470-4721.

Strategies for Protection of NY Farmland in Areas Not Yet Experiencing High Development Pressure

The New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets issued a Request for Proposals in July 2001 to conduct a study of strategies to protect New York farmland and land suitable for farming from conversion to non-farm uses. The parameters of the study were established in consultation with the NYS Advisory Council on Agriculture, which will help in overseeing the project as well. Unlike other studies, the thrust of this one is to determine how Purchase of Development Rights and other conservation tools can be adapted to work effectively in farming communities that are just beginning to feel development pressure. Ag. & Mkts. expects the study to provide useful guidance on how farmland protection programs might be administered, or modified, to decrease conversion of farmland and how new programs might be structured to accomplish this goal. A contract for the study was awarded to The Saratoga Associates in January. Upon completion in the Fall, the study is designed to produce a series of policy recommendations applicable to farmland statewide.

In the meantime, the Department and the Center for Community Design at SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry are working with three neighboring towns in Ontario County to explore effective approaches to protecting agriculture and open space while they are rewriting their comprehensive plans. Geneva, Phelps and Seneca are collaborating to assure that their planning works in tandem as they attempt to address similar development and quality of life concerns.

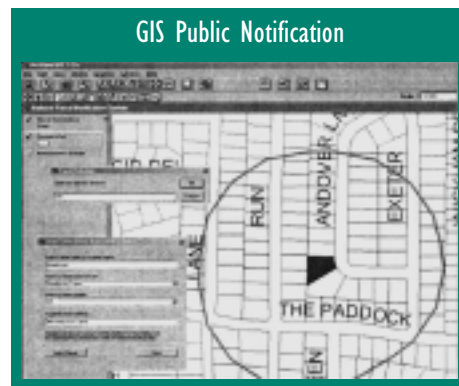
Get In the Swing with GIS

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology allows municipal officials, planners and citizens to visualize impacts that change can make in their communities. While GIS is widely used for planning and environmental management, its use is growing in economic development, public safety and transportation management, too. Whether you use orthoimagery (aerial photography) with data on tax parcels, wetlands or zoning, or any of the thousands of datasets available to communities through the NYS GIS Data Sharing Cooperative, GIS can be a powerful tool to enhance decision making and the quality of your community.

Join the Data Sharing Cooperative Today. Significant GIS data is available to governments and not-for-profits through the NYS GIS Cooperative, operated by the New York State Office for Technology. Membership is free and GIS data is not necessary to join. As a member, there is no charge to use any other member's data. And, there is only one standard data sharing agreement to sign.

To find out more about the NYS GIS Clearinghouse, as well as other GIS programs and free training

available from the Office for Technology, visit: www.nysgis.state.ny.us or contact bruce.oswald@oft.state.ny.us or elizabeth.novak@oft.state.ny.us at the Office for Technology, P.O. Box 2062, Albany NY 12220-0062. Phone 518-443-2042.



The Town of Amherst used GIS to create a time-saving public notification system. The program identifies addresses and generates notices and envelopes automatically.

Coming this Fall
Quality Coasts, Quality Communities
QC² Conference
October 2002 in Albany, New York



A working landscape

NYSiteFinder — A New Economic Development Tool

NYSiteFinder is a state-of-the-art internet site aimed at serving as an economic development tool to better meet the needs of New York's customers, the site selection consulting industry, corporate real estate executives, facility managers, and others seeking locations in New York State for their business expansion or relocation projects.

NYSiteFinder is an integrated statewide data management system to support the collection and dissemination of information on industrial and commercial properties throughout the State. It was designed and implemented by Empire State Development (ESD) working with Keane, Inc. and MapInfo of Troy, NY.

Information on sites and buildings is entered into the system by local development corporations, utility companies, real estate developers, commercial realtors and other economic development partners.

Over 50 pieces of information on each property are recorded in the system, including the number of acres

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Field Notes from the Department of State

The NYS Department of State (DOS) has incorporated the Quality Communities Principles into the fabric of all training and technical assistance programs. DOS is working hard to provide local boards with the tools they want and need to take on innovative planning and zoning projects.



Community participants at the first meeting of a corridor planning effort in the Town of Geddes.

A QC Demonstration Grant, coupled with technical assistance led one Orange County town to undertake an ambitious zoning code change that includes provisions for Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) to protect valuable farmland.

Additionally, the Department launched a Quality Communities

“Thanks for all your help... You do a great job. When you come back to the Finger Lakes, we’ll be glad to show you ‘the rest of the story.’”
Ruth Young, Schuyler County Legislator

Assessment Team initiative last summer. Designed to send DOS expertise into the field to communities that request guidance, Assessment Teams helped three towns in Schuyler County with an intermunicipal planning effort, provided a town in Otsego County with recommendations for help with downtown revitalization, and made suggestions to an Onondaga County Community for attracting greater public involvement in plans for a key commercial corridor. DOS, in cooperation with other state agencies and not-for-profit organizations, also is offering an expanded program of Local Government Days and training sessions to help communities deal with more regional issues and to prepare for the kind of change that will keep them growing better, and better.

Quality Communities News

is a publication of the NYS Department of State. For additional copies of this publication or a CD-ROM of the Quality Communities Interagency Task Force Report, call 518-473-3355 or email localgov@dos.state.ny.us. The Task Force Report is available at www.state.ny.us/governor/lsgov.



Warwick residents study a proposed zoning map.

NYSiteFinder continued from page 5

or square footage available, utility services, distances to highways and other transportation hubs. Up to five images for each property can be attached, ranging from photographs, aerial views, site plans to floor plans.

Each report includes a link to interactive mapping and GIS data. Fifty GIS layers include transportation features, Empire Zones, wetlands, colleges and universities. Demographic, Census Bureau, labor and education data is also available for all 62 counties.

This database is fully searchable, allowing the user to design their own customized inquiry using any combination of the 40 searchable fields. A radius search tool also allows users to search specific geographic areas of New York State. These custom searches yield a results table from which detailed information on a selected property can be viewed.

NYSiteFinder is featured on ESD’s website at www.empire.state.ny.us.

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