

Tompkins County Energy and Economic Development Task Force

Executive Summary

Final Report, June 13, 2016

In 2014, a proposed gas distribution pipeline along West Dryden Road sparked community debate over the apparent conflict between Tompkins County's economic development and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions goals. The County Legislature and Tompkins County Area Development recognized the need to create an environment for productive discourse and development of practical solutions to meet both goals.

The Energy and Economic Development Task Force served over a 12-month period and developed eight key recommendations and related tactics. The intent was that the recommendations could be initiated within the next five years, would be under local control, would advance the County's GHG emission goals, and would support the County's economic development goals:

- 1. Work with the Public Service Commission and NYSEG to reduce dependence on natural gas, while supporting the ongoing Energy Smart Community collaboration with NYSEG to support increased dependence on distributed energy resources**
 - Tactics include: meet with the Public Service Commission and NYSEG to assess alternatives to the West Dryden Road pipeline and establish a model process to reduce use of gas.
- 2. Provide secure and reliable energy to support local industrial processes**
 - Tactics include: leveraging resources of Cornell University, local industry and NYSERDA to help transition industry processes to non-fossil fuels.
- 3. Reduce fossil fuel energy use in commercial and industrial buildings**
 - Tactics include: create a program to assist businesses with planning and financing energy improvements and develop financial tools that support the incremental costs of making energy investments.
- 4. Develop the energy infrastructure needed to support an energy system that primarily relies on renewable energy resources**
 - Tactics include: work with NYSEG to accommodate large amounts of renewable generation; promote a REV type program for natural gas; zone for renewable energy development.
- 5. Reduce fossil fuel use in transportation**
 - Tactics include: develop a community-wide Transportation Demand Management program and encourage major employers to adopt electric vehicle-friendly policies.
- 6. Develop housing in ways that limit energy use both in buildings and transportation**
 - Tactics include: create an energy rating system for housing; enact land use codes that promote density in "smart growth" locations; resolve the split incentives problem between residential building owners and tenants to improve energy efficiency in rental buildings.
- 7. Educate decision makers, contractors, developers, and the public at large on critical facets of energy and economic development**
 - Tactics include: create materials and sponsor workshops and forums to help forge a common understanding of energy and economic development issues.
- 8. Implement the strategies and evaluate progress regularly**
 - Tactics include: consider these recommendations in developing the Tompkins County Energy Strategy Update and convene a task force at least once a year to review progress.

The EEDTF proposes that these actions – if taken together - will support economic growth in Tompkins County while simultaneously meeting the County's goals for reduced GHG emissions.