



Quality Communities

Fall 2005
Vol. IV Issue 1

George E. Pataki
Governor

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."

New Grant Program to Encourage Efficiency and Savings through Shared Services

Governor Pataki's Executive Budget recognized that for New York taxpayers, the fiscal affairs of the State and its local governments cannot be separated. Among the initiatives the Governor recommended was an expansion of State aid to improve local fiscal performance. This included "Shared Municipal Services Incentive Awards" within the new Aid and Incentives for Municipalities program.

The budget provides for shared services assistance payments to two or more municipalities including counties, cities, towns, villages, or school districts. "Grants may be used to cover the costs associated with consolidations... including, but not limited to... capital improvements and other necessary expenses." A maximum of \$100,000 may be awarded per municipality with a ten percent local match required.

The Department of State (DOS) will complete the process of rule making to establish eligibility requirements and procedures in November. News of this program has been posted on the DOS website (www.dos.state.ny.us) on the Division of Local Government announcements page. Some of the types of activities interested municipalities have suggested for funding include consolidated town-village police forces, village dissolution studies, a consolidated county-wide highway department and shared customer service facilities.

Chief elected officials will receive a letter and application form when the funding round is announced in the fall. Readers may sign up to receive e-mails about this program by writing to localgov@dos.state.ny.us. Put "SMSI List" in the subject line.

Mail Call for QC Grant Applications



This was just one day's delivery of Quality Communities Grant Applications. The Department of State's Local Government Division was inundated with 250 applications from 350 municipalities for the 2004-05 round of grants. As part of the FY 04-05, Governor Pataki and the Legislature provided \$1,000,000 in funding for the Quality Communities Program "to enhance the opportunities and incentives for innovative community planning and development of implementation tools and strategies that link environmental protection, economic prosperity and community well-being." The photo above clearly demonstrates that interest and demand for this program is high. Requests totaled close to \$13 million for projects costing nearly \$64 million.

\$3 Million in 05-06 Grants!

As we go to print, award announcements for FY 04-05 are about to be made. And there's more good news, the Governor asked for more funding to be made available in this year's budget. The Legislature agreed and a new QC Grant Program will soon be announced for \$3 mil-

lion in a new round of grants. Packets of information will be mailed to all chief elected officials this fall. For more news about these and other grants, keep an eye on the Quality Communities Clearinghouse website home page at www.qualitycommunities.org.



"New York's Canals:
What the World
Is Coming To"

The New York State Canal Conference held in Rochester

September 11-13, 2005

The Canal Society of New York State, NYS Canal Corporation and the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission joined forces to offer participants from around the State an opportunity to discuss current initiatives and future directions for New York's legendary canal system. For details, visit www.canalsnys.org.

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Randy A. Daniels
Secretary of State

For information or a CD-ROM of the Quality Communities Report, *State and Local Governments Partnering for a Better New York*, call 518-473-3355. The report is available at www.qualitycommunities.org.

Member agencies of the Quality Communities Working Group are dedicated to assisting local governments in implementing effective land development, preservation and rehabilitation strategies that promote both economic vitality and environmental protection.

Quality Communities Working Group

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Statewide Teleconference Promotes Open Space Conservation

On June 21, Lt. Governor Mary Donohue and Secretary of State Randy Daniels welcomed hundreds of participants to the third Quality Communities satellite teleconference. Choosing an appropriate topic for summer, the teleconference, **Open Space and Farmland Conservation: Saving the Land for Environmental and Economic Benefit**, downlinked to more than 40 sites across New York State. Two of the seven Quality Communities Principles — “Promoting agricultural and farmland protection” and “Conserving open space and other critical resources” — were addressed.

Speakers presented information on how the State and local government can work together to protect valuable assets. Two Department of State (DOS) panelists spoke in detail about tools municipalities can use, such as open space plans, cluster development, recreational land dedication under the subdivision review process, transfer of development rights, and incentive zoning. Supervisor Bill Carpenter related how the Town of Pittsford had used many of those tools, and others through community consensus, to create a “Greenprint” for his Town’s future.

Experts who participated as panelists included Ruth Moore, First Deputy Commissioner of Agriculture and Markets; Lynette Stark, Department of Environmental Conservation Deputy Commissioner for Natural Resources; Rick Zimmerman, Deputy Commissioner of Agriculture and Markets; Carmella Mantello, Executive Director of the Hudson Valley Greenway; Francis Sheehan, Director for Natural Resources Planning at DEC; Bill Carpenter, Supervisor of the Town of Pittsford; Kevin McDonald, Conservation Project Director for the Long Island Chapter of The Nature Conservancy; Julia Stokes, Chair of the Board of Directors of Saratoga PLAN; Richard Hoffman, Associate Attorney at DOS; and Peter Manning, Land Use Training Specialist at DOS.



Local and State officials participated in the latest Quality Communities Teleconference. The first panel included (l to r) moderator Lori Heithoff from DOS, Ag. & Markets First Deputy Commissioner Ruth Moore, DEC Deputy Commissioner Lynette Stark, Town of Pittsford Supervisor Bill Carpenter, Kevin McDonald from The Nature Conservancy, and Peter Manning from the DOS Division of Local Government.

Lori Heithoff, DOS Land Use Training Manager, served as host and moderator for the interactive teleconference.

Viewers were encouraged to phone in, fax, or e-mail questions to the panel. Panel responses were fortified by an expert studio audience which included representatives from the Department of State’s Coastal Division, American Farmland Trust, Department of Agriculture and Markets, NYS Office of Real Property Services, the Canal Corporation, Hudson River Valley Greenway, New York Planning Federation, Department of Environmental Conservation, and Hudson-Mohawk Land Conservancy.

To order a free DVD of the teleconference, contact the Quality Communities program at (518) 473-3355 or QC@dos.state.ny.us.

Behind the Scenes



The first of what we hope will be many teleconferences produced by the Division of Local Government at the Department of State was led by Quality Communities

Program Manager Bernard Schmelz (pictured above), ably assisted by Phil Gerwitz, also from DOS and the professional staff at New York Network/State University of New York in Albany. Production funding was made possible by the Governor’s Office for Small Cities.

Main Street Program Hits the Ground Running



This historic brewery building is the local anchor at one end of Varick Street, a significant part of Utica's Main Street master plan.

Judith Calogero, Commissioner of the Division of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR), recently led a two-day tour of Utica, Ithaca and Cortland, three of the 59 recipients of inaugural grants from the New York Main Street program. More than \$11 million was awarded in the first round of grants.

"The New York State Main Street Program is one of the most exciting initiatives I've had the honor of leading for Governor Pataki," said Ms. Calogero. "The Varick Street Renewal Project in Utica is just the kind of undertaking we had envisioned when the program was developed."

A \$200,000 grant will be used here for façade renovation, interior building

renovations and streetscape improvements. Growest Inc., a local non-profit organization, will administer the program to provide commercial and mixed use rehabilitation of thirty-six low income housing units and twenty commercial units in the Varick Street area. The Main Street grant is part of a larger \$550,000 facelift. The rest of the money is coming from local businesses and the City of Utica.

In the picturesque college town of Ithaca, local civic leaders presented plans to rehabilitate the Ithaca Commons neighborhood. This bucolic town, which is home to Cornell and Ithaca College, has been recognized as one of the nicest small towns in America by *Kiplinger's Magazine*. With the infusion of dollars to spruce up downtown, that reputation is certain to continue.

The walking tour of Ithaca Commons, an auto-free zone in the middle of the downtown, took the group past small stores and restaurants. The centerpiece of the tour was the State Theater, a des-

ignated landmark that has had money earmarked for Main Street restoration.

Ithaca Downtown Partnership will administer a \$196,800 Main Street grant. It is part of an overall \$626,200 plan to rehabilitate the neighborhood. Additional funding will be provided by Ithaca Urban Renewal Agency, State Theater, Finger Lakes Wine Center and property owners' equity.

The last stop on the tour was Cortland. The \$200,000 Main Street grant is part of a \$704,750 program to revitalize the central business district. Half the money is targeted for façade renovation and the rest is for building renovation. One quarter of interior building space in Downtown Cortland is currently vacant. In order to revive the downtown area, a strategic plan has been drafted and is now being implemented. The façade and building renovation program is one piece of this plan.

During the tour, the DHCR group saw some recent or ongoing renovations, including a brick building with a clocktower, which is being rehabilitated by a local businessman. They also saw a building that SUNY Cortland will turn into graduate university housing.

"All of these visits are important," said Ms. Calogero. "They point out that our state has hundreds of downtowns, all of them unique and all of them worth keeping vibrant and alive. That's what New York Main Street is all about."

Appendix K

New York State's New "Rehab" Code

The new rehabilitation provisions of New York's Uniform Fire Prevention and Building Code are changing the way developers and investors look at existing buildings across the State. Known as Appendix K, this new and progressive approach to building rehabilitation is providing much needed flexibility to allow for the safe and cost effective revitalization of our existing buildings.

With the shift of focus by some businesses from cities to suburban and rural areas, many large buildings once used for manufacturing have fallen into dormancy. The City of Syracuse, however, is effectively using the progressive provisions Appendix K to convert a former factory into a condominium complex. Since Appendix K evaluates the past use of a building and compares the previous fire and life safety hazards to the proposed occupancies, the developer is offered options on how to make the project comply. In this case, the manufacturing building is far larger than the code would allow for a



After sitting dormant for years, this downtown manufacturing building in Syracuse is starting its life over as an upscale loft apartment building.

new residential complex. Appendix K evaluates existing construction methods to determine equivalency with the safety intent of the code without requiring overly strict conformance to new construction requirements.

A New Transportation Menu

New York State Department of Transportation's (NYSDOT) goals for Quality Communities include improving the environment and reducing traffic congestion. Fewer auto trips results in less congestion, cleaner air, less noise, and reduced gas consumption. Disruptions to the community from roadway construction and repair are reduced and less acreage is needed for parking. The environment becomes more hospitable to pedestrians and bicyclists and more travel options are available to those without a car. Increased reliance on existing infrastructure counteracts the tendency toward sprawl leaving us with more green, less gray; more quality, more community.

In the Hudson Valley, NYSDOT Region 8 is moving ahead with ambitious and innovative projects. Recognizing the void in suburb to suburb bus and train service, DOT has initiated several inter-county commuter bus services. More than \$4 million per year in "flexible" highway funding has been committed. Buses will now carry more than 1000 passengers per day.

Similarly, DOT contracts with several transit operators to provide shuttle services to train stations where parking and traffic congestion are constraining demand for the train. The shuttles also ease "spillover" parking and traffic problems experienced by businesses and residences in train station neighborhoods. Ten shuttles carry 2,000 commuters each weekday to and

from train stations throughout the Valley. A new internet-driven, one-trip-at-a-time carpooling network named NuRide also will be introduced later this year at a train station with limited parking and no shuttle bus service.

Park and Ride lots are crucial to suburban transportation networks and are particularly relevant to the Quality Communities Initiative because their size, location, appearance and functioning influence how people commute and how their communities develop. In close consultation with local interests, DOT locates and designs its Park and Ride lots to give proper priority to the speed and convenience that long-distance commuters require. That means a strong highway orientation. But DOT also values

"More choices means more green, less gray; more quality, more community."



The HART commuter bus shuttles suburban commuters to and from the Brewster Metro-North Railroad Station reducing traffic congestion and parking demand.

the traditional and desirable role that buses have played in serving town and village centers. That "connection" is maintained (or created) by having some of the express buses originate "downtown," or in other cases, a shuttle service initiates from downtown "out to the highway interchange" where passengers can transfer at a discounted rate to the express bus.

Intelligent, thoughtful transportation investments can advance Quality Communities throughout the State. Please call Janine Simonsen at (518) 457-6700 on general NYSDOT/Quality Communities matters, or David Markowitz at (845) 431-5743 with specific questions on NYSDOT Region 8 programs.

Town of Goshen Wins 2005 Greenway Visions In Planning Award

The Town of Goshen in Orange County won the second annual *Greenway Visions in Planning* (VIP) Award. The VIP Award recognizes the best municipal project in a design-

nated Greenway Community in the Hudson River Valley Greenway Area that exemplifies the implementation of the Greenway Criteria. The Greenway Criteria include: Regional Planning; Economic Development; Public Access; Natural and Cultural Resource Protection; and Heritage and Environmental Education

The Town of Goshen was chosen by a seven member independent panel of public and private agencies for their exemplary work in developing a Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code. As a municipality in one of the fastest growing counties in New York State, the Town of Goshen has addressed development pressures and threats to the environment by conducting various goal-specific studies as part of the overall Comprehensive Planning Process. These studies included water quality and availability, bio-diversity, traffic and recreation. Building on the results of these studies, the Town has developed agricultural use incentives, aquifer overlay districts and provisions for affordable housing and open space. The Town's achievement exemplifies not only the Greenway Criteria in practice, but also exceptional land use planning and a high level of commitment to community revitalization.



Celebrating Goshen's award are (left to right): Nancy Calhoun, Assemblywoman 96th District; Charlie Murphy, Department of State, Annie Rabbitt, Assemblywoman 97th District, Carmella Mantello, Executive Director of the Greenway, Jim Moogan, Deputy Commissioner for Operations for the Hudson River Valley; Honey Bernstein, Supervisor of Goshen, Lou Cappello, Goshen Councilman; and Dick Roberts, Goshen Councilman.

City, State and Schools Collaborate in Albany

The University Heights area of Albany is host to a number of prestigious educational and health facilities. They include the Albany Medical College, Albany School of Pharmacy, Albany Law School, and The Sage Colleges. The recent expansion of the University Heights campus demonstrated the need for close collaboration between “town and gown.” The schools have joined the City of Albany, a QC Pilot Community, in a program to improve the quality of life in the neighborhoods surrounding their campuses known as the Midtown Colleges and University Plan.

With help from State of New York Quality Communities Demonstration Grants, the City of Albany and the University Heights colleges have formulated a plan that will create opportunities for new employer-assisted housing programs, joint facilities planning, and infrastructure improvements. With donations from each of the participating institutions, a home ownership plan has been unveiled that will provide low-interest loans to employees of the educational institutions in nearby neighborhoods. The schools also have committed their aid to the City in a block by block planning effort to renew the neighborhoods in a new “educational district.”



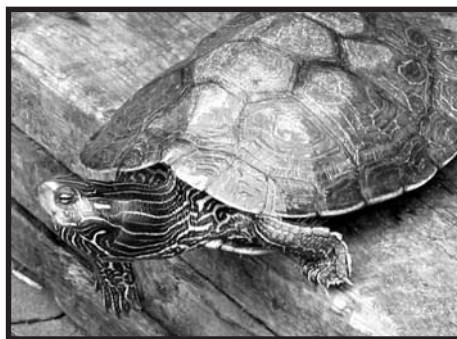
Albany Law School Dean and President Thomas Guernsey, Lt. Governor Mary Donohue, Associate Dean and Director of the Government Law Center Patty Salkin, and Albany Mayor Jerry Jennings led members of the Quality Communities Interagency Working Group on a tour of University Heights.

Hudson River Estuary Biodiversity Outreach: Helping Towns Protect their Natural Heritage

Since 1996, the Hudson River Estuary Program of the Department of Environmental Conservation has focused on the biologically rich uplands of the Estuary’s watershed. The region’s plants, animals and habitats play an important role in water quality, quantity, scenery, public health, and quality of life in the Hudson Valley. According to Karen Strong, the program’s Outreach Coordinator, “This natural heritage is threatened by the same thing that threatens water quality and supplies in other parts of the state: sprawl.”

To help combat the problem, the Hudson River Estuary Biodiversity Project expanded its earlier mission of

conducting biological inventories to community outreach in 2001. “We help partners identify their biological resources, help them understand their importance, and identify tools and techniques for con-



A Map Turtle from the Hudson River.

servation,” says Ms. Strong. Most often, information is integrated into an existing local initiative, like a comprehensive plan, open space or watershed plan.

The Estuary Biodiversity Project currently has partnerships with more than 70 town governments, land trusts, county agencies and conservation groups. The Program focuses on the 10 counties that border the Hudson from Troy to New York City. For more information, contact Karen at (845) 256-3061 or klstrong@gw.dec.state.ny.us.

See also www.dec.state.ny.us/website/hudson/hrep.html and click on Biodiversity Outreach and Technical Assistance.

Northeast State Planning (NESP) Leadership Retreat

The Lincoln Institute of Land Policy and Regional Plan Association (RPA) host an annual gathering of representatives from eleven state planning agencies. This year’s event was held in Philadelphia, PA and focused on “A Strategy for the Northeast Mega-Region.” During the course of the two-day forum, discussion examined smart growth initiatives in different parts of the country.

Some of the most ambitious smart growth measures such as Oregon’s growth boundaries have encountered unexpected and dramatic set-backs, while the slower grassroots-up approach necessary in home rule states appears to be yielding unanticipated advantages.

Because real decision making power to manage growth rests with local governments in New York State, the Quality Communities initiative has endeavored to partner with municipal leaders; providing training and incentives to encourage good land use, smarter development strategies, and intermunicipal cooperation at the community level. Additionally, New York’s twenty-five state agencies who work with local governments are communicating regularly with each other, collaborating on projects and leveraging local assistance dollars under the “QC” banner.

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New York State Department of State
Office of Local Government and Community Services
41 State Street
Albany NY 12231-0001

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During the State Updates portion of the NESP program, staff from NYS Department of State addressed new opportunities for intermunicipal, intergovernmental and town/gown (community and university) cooperation. The inclination and ability to collaborate across jurisdictional lines were cited for their potential to yield better planning, economic benefits, and a shared regional vision for the future.

Robert Yaro, President of RPA and a founder of the NESP Leadership Retreat, stated that New York was “in the vanguard” of states with an approach to smart growth that is working. Part of Quality Communities’ success he attributed to its collaborative nature.

October 19, 2005

SAVE THAT DATE

**New for 2005
QC2 hits the road...
...to Long Island**

QC2 has a New Mission:
Bringing the Quality Communities
& Quality Coasts message to your hometown

Plan to join us on
October 19, 2005
at Bethpage State Park
on Long Island for the NYS
Community & Waterfront
Revitalization Conference

Heritage Centers and Corridors - Looking Back for the Future

WWW.NYSWATERFRONTS.COM

ESD’s Wired Buildings Program Adds New *Wireless Communities* Grant Program

Empire State Development has announced a fourth round of grants promoting high speed broadband accessibility – with a new component. The program parameters have expanded to provide new incentives for the development of affordable wireless broadband access.

Those communities who wish to develop wireless districts in downtowns, industrial parks or other community settings may apply for up to \$200,000 in grant assistance per project. The “Wired Buildings” component retains its \$75,000 grant maximum.

Visit the Quality Communities Clearinghouse Website
www.qualitycommunities.org

To make it easier for all communities to take advantage of State programs and assistance, the 25 members of the Quality Communities Interagency Working Group collaborated with the Department of State to create a Quality Communities Clearinghouse Website.

Organized by QC Principles, the Clearinghouse is a quick and easy-to-use directory of grant information, technical assistance, success stories, data, news and other tools designed to assist local governments, community organizations and citizens in their efforts to build Quality Communities.