

## **Congratulations 2006 Award Winners!**

Every year, the New York Upstate Chapter of the American Planning Association recognizes outstanding achievements that advance the art and science of planning. The selection criteria consist of quality, originality, transferability, implementation, comprehensiveness, and effectiveness/results. Each of the plans, projects, and individuals honored with an award has made significant contributions toward improving the quality of life for people throughout Upstate New York.

This year the Chapter will be handing out eleven planning awards in eleven different categories. Each of the eleven plans, projects, and individuals receiving a 2006 award at the Chapter's Awards Luncheon here in Auburn are well deserving of their recognition.

Congratulations to all.

The 2006 Awards Committee consisted of the following Chapter members:

Rocco Ferraro, AICP, Awards Chair  
Arnie Hausler, AICP, Capital District Section  
Jane Rice, Central NY Section  
Richard Perrin, AICP, Genesee/Finger Lakes Section  
Frank Evangelisti, Southern Tier Section  
Jeffrey Lebsack, AICP, Western New York

Many thanks to the Awards Committee for a very difficult job well done!

The following is a brief description of each of the 2006 award winners selected by the New York Upstate Chapter of the American Planning Association. The PDF file for each of these Award winning projects is posted on the Chapter Web site at [www.nyupstateplanning.org](http://www.nyupstateplanning.org).

## OUTSTANDING PLANNING AWARD FOR A COMMUNITY BASED PLAN

*Village of Montour Falls & Watkins Glen Downtown Improvement Plan.* This study brought together two communities approximately three miles apart to develop a business district improvement strategy that capitalized on the assets and market opportunities of each community. The tasks to identify the key issues, assess the market potential, evaluate the infrastructure, and develop specific implementation strategies was guided by a Downtown Advisory Committee that included businesses, residents, and organizational representatives from both communities. In addition, public workshops were intentionally designed for the attendees representing each Village to be co-mingled in order to maximum interest and the exchange of ideas and strategies between the two communities.

The Plan is nicely laid out in a manner that applies the four tenets of the Main Street Approach created by the National Trust for Historic Preservation: Economic Development & Restructuring, Marketing & Promotion, Design, and Community Organization. For each of these four items, specific strategies are presented that include a time frame and responsible parties and partners for implementation. In addition, there is a chapter outlining the infrastructure necessary to support a thriving downtown area in both communities.

Among other things, the Plan successfully met the challenge to collaboratively organize two communities to address the changes that were threatening the economic vitality of each of their downtowns. The coordinated planning effort linking the two communities provided the opportunity to share resources and create a joint vision.

The document represents a collaborative effort among the many stakeholders in the two villages under the direction of the **Schuyler County Partnership for Economic Development** and was prepared by **Bergmann Associates, RKG Associates, and the Steinmetz Planning Group.**

## OUTSTANDING PLANNING AWARD FOR A REGIONALLY BASED PLAN

*Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Preservation & Management Plan.* The Preservation & Management Plan is a comprehensive document intended to serve as a roadmap to preserve the scenic, cultural, and historical treasures of the Erie, Champlain, Oswego and Cayuga-Seneca canal systems. The Plan encompasses 524 miles of navigable canal that comprise the New York State Canal System plus the historical alignments of these canals and the 234 cities, towns and villages that lie immediately adjacent to the navigable waterway and the historical alignments.

While the Plan is set at a regional scale, many of the implementation strategies and ideas outlined in the document are designed to be used by the municipalities and organizations at the local level. The Plan also recognizes and builds upon the previous work done by others. However, it goes beyond the simple recitation of past efforts and outlines original ideas and implementation strategies. Special focus is given to local needs through "demonstration projects" that would fit not only the subject locality but are transferable to other localities as well.

The preparation of the Plan incorporated an extensive citizen participation and public outreach process involving local, regional, state and national representatives and stakeholders. The goals and objectives are designed to bring together entities and partnerships across the state to advance the preservation and development of New York State's Canalway communities.

The Plan was prepared under the direction of the *Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission* by a team of consultants led by *Beyer Blinder Belle* and *Sasaki Associates*.

## PLANNING IMPLEMENTATION OF A PLAN

***Western Clifton Park Land Conservation Plan and Generic Environmental Impact Statement.*** Located in Saratoga County, Clifton Park is one of the fastest growing communities in the fastest growing county in New York State. While the eastern part of town adjacent to Interstate 87 (Northway) is nearing full build-out, the western part of Town remains largely undeveloped. The 13,900 acres in the study area is composed of large lot residential areas, farms, undeveloped lands, some of which are environmentally constrained, and three historic hamlets. Faced with development pressure, the Town in 2003 adopted an Open Space Plan and imposed a one year moratorium to prepare a Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS) in order to assess the implications of development under the current zoning.

The results of these efforts resulted in a combination of regulatory and incentive based recommendations to guide the future development of the western part of Town. The solutions put forth have been endorsed by both developers and conservationists alike.

The Town has moved forward to implement the recommendations including rezoning all residentially zoned lands to Conservation Residential and rezoning the Hamlets to more compatible Hamlet Zoning categories. The Town has also purchased either outright or the development rights of several critical parcels identified in the Open Space Plan that should remain undeveloped. Voluntary agreements have been

entered with several landowners to keep their land undeveloped or in agricultural use in exchange for property tax abatements. Finally, in exchange for approval of a higher density cluster subdivision alternative which is reviewed on a case by case basis, a per lot fee is assessed for each additional lot that is allowed beyond what is permitted under the Conservation Zoning requirements. The money goes into the Town's dedicated Open Space fund for future land purchases in the western part of Town. Where applicable, land set asides are also required to accommodate an interconnected trail system per the requirements of the Open Space Plan.

The cumulative result has been the successful implementation of a multi faceted program to preserve the rural and agricultural character of the western part of Clifton Park as envisioned by the Land Conservation Plan & GEIS.

The Conservation Plan and GEIS were prepared by *Clough Harbour and Associates and Behan Planning Associates*. The implementation of the Plan was spearheaded by *Jason Kemper, until recently the Director of Planning for Clifton Park and Jennifer Viggiani, AICP the Town's Open Space Coordinator*.

## PLANNING IMPLEMENTATION OF A PROJECT

***Binghamton River Trail.*** The Binghamton River Trail is the realization of a number of planning initiatives begun five years ago by the City of Binghamton Department of Planning, Housing and Community Development that includes the Binghamton Metropolitan Greenway Study prepared by the Binghamton Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and the Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan.

Phase I was the construction of Confluence Park which serves as a hub for the River Trail. Previously undeveloped and inaccessible, the Park overlooks the Susquehanna and Chenango Rivers and has become a heavily used park hosting a number of events. Phase II extends the trail from the newly constructed park north along the east bank of the Chenango River to Court Street. Previously inaccessible, there are two parallel trails along the Waaterfront, one for pedestrians and the other for bicyclists. The trail extends north from Court Street to the Clinton Street Bridge. This segment includes a stage, playground, and seating. Construction of Phase III is currently underway which takes the Trail from the Clinton Street Bridge north to a skateboard park and ultimately to Otsiningo Park in the neighboring Town of Dickinson. Within Otsiningo Park, there area an additional 1.8 miles of trails. The completed aesthetically appealing trail system is providing city residents , including some of the most economically depressed parts of the city, with river access in an attractive well planned setting that here-to-fore was not available.

The trail system was developed under the leadership of *Laurie Kimball*, a Community & Urban Design Planner with the *City of Binghamton Department of Planning Housing & Community Development*.

## PUBLIC EDUCATION

***Broome County Internet GIS.*** In 1999, Broome County made a commitment to develop a comprehensive GIS system. The initial step included assembling data to create a GIS for departmental use. In 2003, the effort was accelerated with the promotion of Douglas English to the newly created position of GIS Administrator. By the end of 2003 he had developed an online system for municipalities, and by early 2004, the online GIS system became available to the general public.

The online system has eight custom user-friendly applications designed to address the needs of the community. The three main applications are:

- Unified Parcel Information System where the visitors can access all of the available GIS data about a particular parcel.
- Voting Information System where information is provided to the user about their election district and location of their polling place as well as direct links to the websites of all the elected officials specific to their address.
- Transit Route Locator where transit patrons can get information about bus routes.

The County GIS has over 60 data layers on line including property lines, ownership and assessment data, zoning, floodplains, wetlands, slopes and contours, school districts, Empire Zones, and political boundaries. In addition an external data link is provided for virtually every data point provided in the GIS including Census information. This allows the visitor to generate customized demographic reports for a user specified radius surrounding individual properties.

The GIS system continues to be maintained and updated regularly with new materials and overlays and is widely used by the general public and local officials. The system has been enthusiastically embraced by users in a range of government and non profit agencies and by the private sector. Over 25,000 visitors have been to the site during the first quarter of 2006. In response to a recent online survey, over 70% of the users gave it a very high rating for usefulness.

The Broome County GIS system ([www.bcgis.com](http://www.bcgis.com)) has been developed entirely in house by *Douglas English, GIS Administrator*.

## 2006 CURRENT TOPIC: NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING

***East Delavan Planning Community Neighborhood Plan.*** The National APA chose Neighborhood Planning as the Current Topic in honor of Jane Jacobs. Ms. Jacobs would have been proud of the accomplishment of those responsible for the preparation of this Buffalo neighborhood plan. The Plan truly represents a neighborhood vision. The "experts" responsible for the Plan's preparation were the residents of the East Delavan neighborhood with guidance provided by the City of Buffalo planning staff. As noted on the Plan's cover, the Community Vision is ***"To be a renewed, safe and beautiful community that provides its residents with quality housing, a vibrant economy, and healthy environment"***.

The Neighborhood Plan illustrates how best practices can and should be applied to the East Delavan Neighborhood. The Plan is very descriptive with illustrations depicting ideas and strategies that tell East Delavan's story and future vision. Special emphasis was focused on economic recovery of the community. Specific recommendations include changes to the zoning code, establishment of design guidelines, and infrastructure improvements intended to link the commercial corridors and preserve the historical character of the neighborhood.

An outgrowth of the planning process was to establish a "train the trainers" program. What began as an alliance to provide neighborhood residents a forum to plan their community evolved into a process that produced a report that serves as a model for developing neighborhood plans in other parts of Buffalo and across the country. Following a prescribed process, the final document became the neighborhood's official training manual since it not only describes what needs to be done to improve their community, but also explains how and why such steps should be taken. The two year exercise resulted in community residents gaining a better understanding of the neighborhood planning process empowering them to determine the future direction of their community. Without question, Jane Jacobs would have embraced their efforts and final product.

The East Delavan Planning Community Neighborhood Plan was prepared by the ***East Delevan Good Neighbors' Planning Alliance*** with staff support from ***Allita Stewart*** a community planner with the ***City of Buffalo***.

## OUTSTANDING STUDENT PROJECT

***The Purple Path; the University at Albany.*** The Purple Path is a proposed multi use 5k loop pathway to be constructed adjacent to the campus perimeter road at the University at Albany. In addition to establishing a continuous pedestrian and

bicycle trail within the campus, future pathway connections are identified to adjacent areas. The Purple Path will accommodate walkers, runners, and bicyclists and will include substantial landscaping and amenities.

The Plan succinctly documents and visually depicts the conditions of the existing system of discontinuous sidewalks and paths along University Drive, the perimeter road. The proposed design guidelines are equally impressive. Several design options are discussed and recommended for various sections along the proposed path system. Cross sections and photo simulations are incorporated in the document illustrating recommended improvements along the trail. Overall the report provides the reader with a clear outline of the proposed improvements to establish a continuous Purple Path within the University campus.

Public participation was also a critical component of the design studio. Capping the outreach efforts from within and outside the University community, a public open house and discussion with interested stakeholders was held to gather input and feedback about the proposed trail system. A presentation was made to the President of the University, the late Kermit Hall, who, prior to his untimely death, publicly embraced the project and made its construction an official priority of the administration.

The Plan was prepared by students enrolled in the *Graduate Planning Studio class at the University at Albany's Department of Geography & Planning under the direction of Jeff Olson, Adjunct Professor and Instructor.*

## OUTSTANDING STUDENT PROJECT

***Memorial Park Neighborhood, Niagara Falls NY.*** The Neighborhood Revitalization Plan outlines a vision and strategy for the revitalization and growth of a forty block neighborhood in Niagara Falls anchored by the Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center (NFMCC) and the Niagara Arts and Cultural Center (NACC). The neighborhood plan is a practical, user friendly document that outlines a series of strategies to revitalize the neighborhood. The document includes a statistical analysis of the neighborhood based on data from the 2000 Census supplemented with other sources. The two institutions are identified as the most significant and important entities in Memorial Park. As such, the Plan recommends specific actions to enhance the connection which will mutually benefit the economic well being of both the institutions and neighborhood.

The Neighborhood Plan outlines a series of recommendations associated with urban design, transportation, housing, greenspace and the commercial district. The Plan is

well written and includes visual materials, including maps, illustrating existing conditions and recommended improvements. In addition to presentations to representatives from NFMCC and NACC, there were two public meetings with neighborhood residents.

Both the Arts Council and the Medical Center have glowingly endorsed and support the Neighborhood Plan and intend to use the document as a guide for future improvements. In addition, the Memorial Park Neighborhood Association was formed as an outgrowth of the planning process. Overall, the Neighborhood Plan is a laudable student accomplishment that provides a pragmatic vision and road map for all the stakeholders in the neighborhood to revitalize their community.

The Plan was prepared by students enrolled in the *Graduate Planning Studio class at the University at Buffalo's Department of Urban & Regional Planning under the direction of Thomas DeSantis, Project Advisor.*

#### DISTINGUISHED LEADERSHIP: ELECTED OFFICIAL

*John T. McDonald, III, Mayor of Cohoes, New York.* Mayor McDonald is a lifelong resident of the City of Cohoes whose commitment to planning is evidenced not only by his support of local planning initiatives, but his dedication to implement them. Since he took office in 2000, Mayor McDonald has been involved and provided critical leadership on a number of initiatives to improve the quality of life for residents and businesses, alike, in the City of Cohoes. They include the following:

- State Route 470 Corridor Study
- Downtown Redevelopment Plan
- Harmony Mills International Incubator Feasibility Study
- Urban Waterfront Rediscovery Plan
- Cohoes Zoning Update
- Western Gateway Corridor Study

Each of these plans and studies are in various stages of implementation. Since 2000, the total public and private investment has exceeded \$19 million. In addition to publicly funded infrastructure improvements, there has been significant private sector investment in the City including the conversion of the once abandoned Harmony Mills complex into market rate housing, new residential units along the waterfront, and the rehabilitation of buildings in downtown Cohoes to accommodate retail uses on the ground floor and residential units on the upper floors.

Mayor McDonald's commitment to planning extends beyond the City's borders. He actively participates in a number of regional planning initiatives including serving as Chairman of the Capital District Transportation Committee, the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Capital Region, and as a member of the technical advisory committee responsible for the preparation of the Long Term Control Plan to address combined sewer overflows into the Hudson River.

A registered pharmacist and local businessman, Mayor McDonald's leadership and approach to planning are a model for other elected officials across the state.

## DISTINGUISHED LEADERSHIP: CITIZEN PLANNER

***George R. Grasser.*** George Grasser retired in 2002 from the law firm Phillips Lytle after 35 years as a practicing Attorney in Real Estate Law. He is presently the President and CEO of ***Partners for a Livable Western New York***. Founded in 1999 by Mr. Grasser, the organization has been a tireless advocate of new urbanism principles and smart growth initiatives. The organization and Mr. Grasser specifically, has been involved in a number of initiatives, including the sponsorship of workshops and speaking engagements to raise community awareness and understanding of the merits of smart growth as an alternative to urban sprawl. Mr. Grasser was also a contributing member of the Buffalo/Niagara League of Women Voters' Education Campaign of Urban Sprawl, which won both a Chapter and National APA Education Award in 2003. The following are some of the many accomplishments Mr. Grasser has achieved:

- 1 President and co-founder of Partners for a Livable Western New York.
- 2 Editor of the Partners for a Livable Western New York newsletter.
- 3 Co-chair of the Buffalo Niagara Partnership, Buffalo Development Council, Committee on Government Structure and Operations.
- 4 Member of the Advisory Committee for the Daemen College Center for Sustainable Development and Community Involvement.
- 5 Former co-chair of the New York State Bar Association, Real Property Section, Committee on Condominiums and Cooperatives.
- 6 Co-founder of the Western New York Chapter of the Community Associations Institute.
- 7 Former Director of the New York State and Buffalo Niagara Builders Association.
- 8 Author of two publications: ***Property Taxes and Homeowners Associations and Condominium Development, Forms, and Commentary.***
- 9 Recipient of Numerous Awards and recognitions for his leadership and community service in Upstate New York.

## MICHAEL J. KRASNER DISTINGUISHED LEADERSHIP: PROFESSIONAL PLANNER

### *Jean Pearl Waterbury, Senior Planner, New York State Tug Hill Commission.*

Jean's entire professional career has been spent at the Tug Hill Commission. She began her career as an intern at the Commission immediately following her graduation from SUNY Plattsburg with a degree in Environmental Science/Environmental Planning. Upon completion of her six month internship, she was hired on a full time basis by the Commission as a Planning Technician and has been employed there since, presently as its Senior Planner.

Jean has been actively involved with the New York Upstate Chapter for over fifteen years. She began her service to the organization in 1991 serving as Treasurer for two 2 year terms. In 1995, she began a one year term as Membership officer followed by another one year term as Vice President. Between 1999 and 2001 she served as Chapter President and then as Immediate Past President during Mike Krasner and Rocky Ferraro's periods as President. During her term as President, Jean represented the Chapter at the National APA Chapter President's Council Leadership meetings. Jean continues to serve on the Executive Committee as the Chapter's Web Master responsible for maintaining the web site.

Jean was serving as Immediate Past President when Mike Krasner, at the time when he unexpectedly passed away, was President. She was one of the many that stepped up and assisted during the transition offering advice and guidance based on her many years of experience on the Board. For those who know Jean and have had the pleasure of serving with her on the Chapter Board or working with her as a professional planner, there is no one more deserving of this award in 2006 honoring our beloved friend Mike than Jean Pearl Waterbury for her many years of service and dedication to the New York Upstate Chapter of the American Planning Association.